PADG SHEILA HURST
KENYA SMILES

A Model for Improving Children’s Oral Health in Kenya, East Africa, & Beyond

A Program of Districts 5160, 9212 (Kenya), and 6150 (Central & NE Arkansas)
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**Project gets to the root of dental problems**

Over 1,000 dentists serve the 48 million people of Kenya, from the far reaches of the bush to Nairobi’s vast slums. Dental hygiene is a rarity outside privileged urban regions. In most rural areas, people have to travel long distances to see a dentist, says Stephen Irukgu, chief dental officer at Kenya’s Ministry of Health and past president of the Rotary Club of Murang’a. “Most of the patients will go to the dental clinic only because they have pain.”

Colored surveys suggest that “it’s OK if your teeth fall out, if your toothache bothers. They think people are not going to the dentist,” says Paul-District Governor Gene Musuki.

These perceptions belie the fact that tooth decay is the most common chronic disease of childhood and a harbinger of health woes in later years, says Karen Sokal-Gutierrez, a physician trained in pediatrics, preventive medicine, and public health with the Joint Medical Program of the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of California, San Francisco. “We worry about ADD and autism and TB among the world’s poorest, but tooth decay in so much more common,” she says. “Unfortunately, it’s always been neglected.” even as processed and sugared foods proliferate in developing nations. Girls are especially vulnerable to tooth decay, says Sokal-Gutierrez, because they receive less nutrition education for mothers, along with locally manufactured, energy-efficient cups – dubbed “magic cups” by their young recipients. A $20 donation funded each kit.

The team demonstrated how to use the kits with a hippo-hand puppet, accounting tooth and brush, and a whiteboard game with magnetic characters representing health and food, and unhealthful foods and drinks, which pupils tried to swipe away. “The message was ‘which one is going to stick to your teeth?’” Green says. “It was juice and smiles.”

In July, 5,000 children in Kenya received backpacks filled with items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, and collapsible stainless-steel cups. The Kenya Smiles project also funds education for mothers and helps train local dentists. The project is working with the dental community in Kenya to enhance the oral health of the Kenyan population by leveraging the members of Rotary, governmental, and medical leaders. “I have never seen a program quite like it,” Dubuisson, where 25,000-member organization serves a state with roughly the same population as Kenya, arranged meetings with dental professionals for the Kenya VTT delegation and brought the team members to the floor of the California State Assembly where they were recognized by lawmakers. “Yes, we need more dentists and more mobile facilities,” Green says. “We need more mothers instilling good habits in their children.”

In July, 5,000 children in Kenya received backpacks filled with items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, and collapsible cups. The Kenya Smiles project also funds education for mothers and helps train local dentists. Rotary’s biggest evangelists have been the children themselves: “I see the kids with great big smiles on their faces. When we talk to them, they’re so juiced about it. We cause the knowledge spread from one grade to another.”
PROJECT FOCUS:
By Laura Day
RC Anderson USA

We launched in 2011 the Rotary Foundation Global Grant Kenya Smiles, and for those who supported it and funded it, including the Rotary Foundation, the good news is the project continues to make a difference today by improving the oral health and nutritional education of children, and not just in Kenya. To date, about 16,350 people have directly benefited.

How did this happen?

Six years ago, The Rotary Foundation (TRF) realized its vision of a new and improved grant model. What better way to embrace the change than to be a part of it? Thus, was born a project involving 71 Clubs in District 5160 (Northern California, USA), District 6150 (Central and Northeast Arkansas, USA), District 9212 (Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and South Sudan), and the Rotary Club of Karen-Nairobi. We were fortunate that The Rotarian Magazine in August 2013 and February 2014 as well as breakout sessions at Rotary International Conventions in Sydney, São Paulo, and now Seoul recognized the project for its sustainability, how it brought about awareness, provided information, and promoted education. This helped boost support and interest in the project, thus contributing to its continued success.

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KENYA SMILES: ROTARY FOUNDATION GRANT AND ROTARIAN ACTION GROUPS

Kenya Smiles featured one of Rotary’s first Vocational Training Teams. A team of dental professionals, some of the best from Kenya, came to Northern California to learn and collaborate with members of the dental profession. And a US team went to Kenya to collaborate, teach, train, and educate. A big part of the project was getting the oral health and nutritional education to the children in some of the poorest parts of the country. We took backpacks filled with dental care supplies to thousands of beautiful children in many parts Kenya. Kenya dentists and dental students provided exams and treatment for children using grant-sponsored equipment and supplies. Our Team also taught local dental students and provided nutritional education for mothers and caregivers.

Vocational Training Team members, Kenya Rotarians, Rotaractors, and partners delivered oral health lessons and presented backpacks filled with dental supplies, information, and “magic cups” to thousands of children in Kenya. Women in Mukuru Kwa Njenga Slum in Nairobi opened the Nutrition for Life Bakery after completing a grant funded Training program and receiving an energy-efficient oven and baking supplies provided by the Global Grant.

So what happens when the grant dollars are spent and a successful project might seem to have come to an end?

Well, a sustainable project does not end. And our timing was good because Rotary embraced the concept of Rotarian Action Groups, and Kenya Smiles found a friend in the well-established World Health Fairs Rotarian Action Group (WHFRAG). Kenya Smiles and WHFRAG merged to create the Health Education and Wellness Rotarian Action Group (HEWRAG). Its goal is to educate and to help bring good health and wellness to people everywhere, not just Kenya. Briefly, what is a RAG? These are communities of Rotarians and other interested parties, who provide resources, conduct projects, fundraise and provide connections and collaborations.
Featured 3 times in Breakout Sessions
How did this happen?
It all started with 2 Incredible District Governors

PDG Geeta Manek, District 9200 (9212)
And her classmate

PDG Laura Day, District 5160
Joined by PDG Karl Diekman and PP Protus Lumiti
First we identified a problem worth solving.

- ~99 million people
  ~500 dentists

- ~45 million people
  ~1000 dentists

- ~39 million people
  ~30,000 dentists
Kenya has widely available healthy foods and drinks
And heavily marketed, inexpensive, sugar-based, highly processed foods and drinks
We identified some ways to address the problems

Building AWARENESS
Providing INFORMATION
Promoting EDUCATION

Prevention is the goal.
Then together we found funding to help solve it.

- $200,000+ Rotary Global Grant project
  RC Karen-Nairobi and District 5160
- $53,000 raised $10 at a time from Rotary Clubs and individuals
- Contributions from D 5160, 9212, & 6150
- The Rotary Foundation Matching Funds
- Additional gifts and donations bring the current funding total to $450,000+
Dental Kits for 5000 children

✓ Rotarians donated $10 to sponsor a dental care kit with for dental care.
✓ $53,000 raised
✓ 5000 children received dental kits and oral health lessons.
Healthy Snacks Magnetic Game
English Curriculum

KENYA SMILES

Improving The Oral Health of Children in Kenya

An Oral Health and Nutrition Tool Kit
For Health Workers, Teachers, Parents, Caregivers, and Children
Swahili Curriculum

TABASAMU KENYA

Kuboresha Afya ya mdomo ya watoto chini Kenya.

Mwongozo wa afya ya mdomo na lishe bora.
Kwa wahudumu wa afya, walimu, wazazi, walezi na watoto