**Press Release**

**September 15, 2021**

**Kampala, Uganda**

**Rotary International PresidentUrges Rotarians to Grow in Number so as to Do More and Increase Impact on the Continent**

**The President of Rotary International (RI), Shekar Mehta, has challenged humanitarian organisations in Uganda to prioritisestrengthening the health sector if they are to successfully empower communities.**

**Speaking at the Launch of the Maternal Child Health (MCH) Programme at Kawempe Hospital yesterday, Mehta said that there is a big demand to improve healthcare worldwide so as to reduce maternal mortality rates. “There is a lot of work to do in monetary terms, quality of health careand reach, not just for the eradication of polio, but also for mother and child care and for prevention of diseases.” He said that it is pertinent for stakeholders to collaborate and create strategic partnerships in support of government and private sector interventions. The MCH is driven under the mantra of *‘Saving Mothers and Children Together.’***

**Shekar Mehta, who arrived in Uganda on Monday 13th September and leaves today has, during histripto Uganda and Tanzania (covering Rotary Districts 9213 and 9214), visited a number of Rotary projects and programmes including the Empower Girls Initiative, the Rotary International-USAID WASH Strategic Partnership, the Maternal Health and Child Health Programme, and the**inauguration of the Board of Trustees of The Sam Owori Rotary VijanaPoa Village. Healso visited the Rotary Centenary Bank Cancer Ward at Nsambya Hospital, and the Mengo Hospital Rotary Blood Bank,both major projects sponsored by Rotarians.

Addressing Rotary Club Presidents on Monday, Shekar Mehta, whose Rotary Year (or tenure) theme is ***‘Serve to Change Lives’***, urgedRotarians to ‘dream big’ and grow their numbers, because ‘power is in numbers’. He advised the Presidents to share their dreams with each other and key stakeholders and to work at findinglocalised solutions to issues affecting the communities.

“As Rotarians and change makers, you should chisel your dreams to your vision,” he said. He commended the Rotarians in the two districts 9213 and 9214 (Uganda and Tanzania) for the projects they were implementing, especially that of Empowering Girls, which he said had inspired him to do more. ‘By empowering the girls, you are helping them to dream bigger, and by so doing, making lives better.’

He further urged Rotarians to initiate projects which impact on not only the communities they serve, but on the country and the world at large. “Let us dream of big, bold programmes which impact the continent, because we now operate in a global space,” he said.

Meeting the Speaker of Parliament Rt. Hon. Jacob Oulanyah on Tuesday 14th September, Mehta said that Rotary International has set out to work with governments, through the over 500 Rotary District Governors all over the world, to find ways of supporting the Covid-19 vaccination programmes by availing vaccines and creating awareness. He also said that the organisation had this year placed emphasis on empowering girls by addressing menstrual hygiene management, teenage pregnancies and providing scholarships to enable girls stay in school. He added that the organisation has supported education for school going children through providing content on audio visual basis on broadcast media and on electronic gadgets, and said that there are various ways that Rotary International could work with the Uganda government in these areas, if there was need.

Speaker Oulanyah commended the Rotary International President for visiting Uganda, and Rotary for being a response mechanism to the issues that afflict humankind without any bureaucracy. “There is no equilibrium in society at the moment due to the disruption of nature and the pandemic we now face, he said. I am happy that I am a small part of the response mechanism that Rotary provides, which impacts, in a sufficient way to make life better. It is always noble to respond whenever there is need, and that is what we do as Rotarians.”Honorable Oulanyah said. He added that the government was ready to work with RI in the areas they would provide support as a partnership.

RI President Mehta and his delegation attended a sitting, in which parliamentarians passed a Motion to commend the work of Rotary International in Uganda.

Duringa courtesy call with his delegation on the President of Uganda, H.E.YoweriKaguta Museveni, RI Mehta commended the government of Uganda for working closely with Rotary in service to humanity.  He highlighted Rotary’s global impact through the life changing programmes and projects specifically with polio eradication, among others. He extended an offer of partnership with the Uganda government in the area of education especially distance learning, optical health and blood banks. Mehta also offered an opportunity to 100 children to travel to India for heart surgery.

President Museveni thanked the RI President for visiting Uganda and for the offer to partner and support the government, and said that this would be taken up. He appreciated Rotary for its complementary role in service delivery and wished the RI President an enjoyable stay in Uganda.

Mehta, has toured seven African nations. His tour has exposed him to a number of issues which need to be addressed including health, literacy and education, peace and conflict resolution, and water and sanitation.

President Shekhar Mehta, who is of Indian origin, has led many major service initiatives in India and South Asia, including among others, constructing 500 homes for Tsunami survivors at Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and starting the Shelter Kit programme in India which has served about 20 disasters and benefited about 75,000 disaster victims.

**About Rotary**

[Rotary](http://www.rotary.org/) brings together a global network of community leaders dedicated to tackling the world’s most pressing humanitarian challenges. We connect 1.2 million members from more than 35,000 Rotary clubs in almost every country in the world. Their service improves lives both locally and internationally, from helping those in need in their own communities to working toward a polio-free world.

Visit [Rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org/) and [endpolio.org](http://www.endpolio.org/) for more about Rotary and its efforts to eradicate polio.

-Ends-