

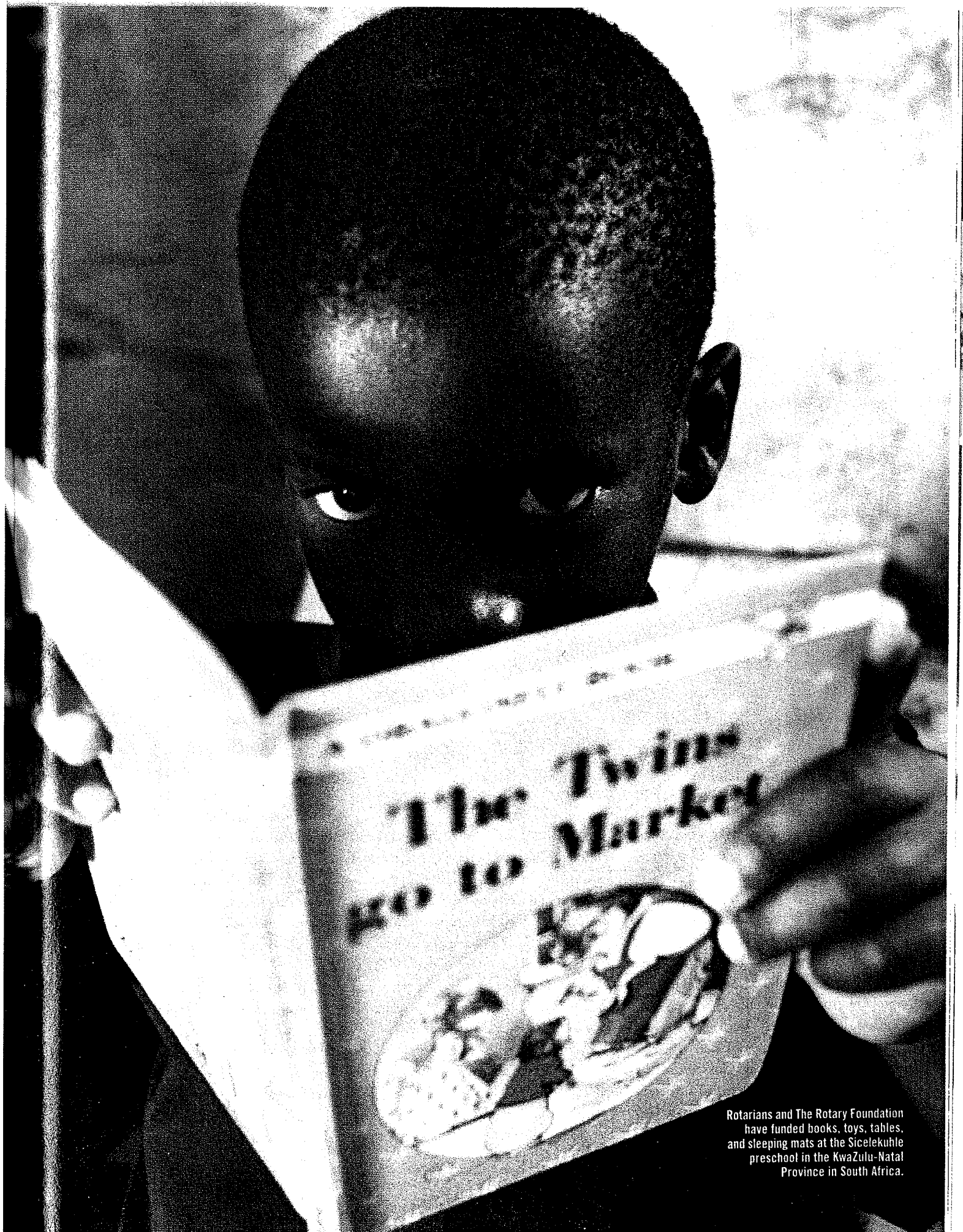


With primary education

PART 2

UN
MILLENNIUM
DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The United Nations believes that primary education should be a right, not a privilege. With that in mind, it aims to ensure that by 2015, every child will have the chance to finish primary school. In the second part of a special series on the UN Millennium Development Goals, we look at the challenges of achieving this dream and how Rotarians are helping to overcome them. *by M. Kathleen Pratt*



Rotarians and The Rotary Foundation have funded books, toys, tables, and sleeping mats at the Sicelekuhle preschool in the KwaZulu-Natal Province in South Africa.

Every weekday

at 8:15 a.m., the sound of a bell cuts through the cool morning air in Moshono, Tanzania, a village not far from Mount Kilimanjaro, and 850 children dressed in blue uniforms file into classrooms at the Rotarian-supported School of Saint Jude. Although they come from extremely poor families and live in one of the world's most impoverished countries, the students are all on track to complete primary school. In many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, this places them in an elite minority. ¶ The United Nations seeks to make this type of education the norm through the second of eight Millennium Development Goals. The goals were set by world leaders in 2000 as a way to improve lives through efforts such as reducing child mortality and lessening extreme poverty. If the goal is met, by 2015, children everywhere will be able to complete primary school. But the aim goes beyond simply sending children off to sit in a classroom every day.

"Just being in school is not going to have a positive impact unless it is really of high quality. It's not going to make a big difference to lift these kids out of poverty," says Helene-Marie Gosselin, director of the UNESCO office in New York. UNESCO leads the global Education for All movement, which is striving to meet the learning needs of all children and adults by 2015. The effort's objectives, which include providing free and compulsory primary education, align closely with the second Millennium Development Goal.

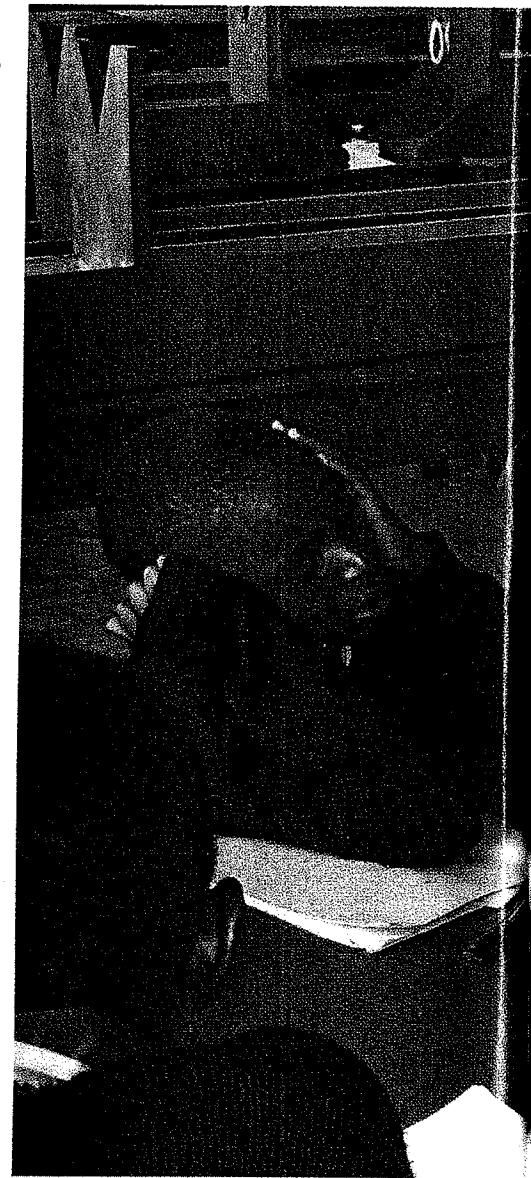
Quality education, says Gosselin, means well-trained teachers, access to sufficient educational materials in appropriate languages, and an emphasis on literacy as a

tool of learning. Schools also must be safe, clean, and child friendly.

With nearly one in five of the world's 650 million primary-school-age children out of the classroom in 2001-02, achieving the second Millennium Development Goal will require unprecedented work. Rotarians, with their capacity for leadership and grassroots connections, are in a position to make a difference. "We need goodwill from all parts, and I believe that a network like Rotary can really help significantly," Gosselin says.

Although there's been some progress, she notes, "we surely cannot say that we're anywhere close to universal primary education."

According to the UN's 2006 *Millennium Development Goals Report*, 86 percent of pri-



mary-school-age children in the developing world were enrolled in school in 2003-04, compared with 79 percent in 1990-91.

"These last 14 percent will be the most difficult," Gosselin says. "These children are essentially in rural areas and come from the poorest households, and that means that they will be also the most difficult families to reach."

Rural challenge

According to the 2006 report, surveys conducted in 80 developing countries between 1996 and 2003 indicate that 30 percent of primary-school-age children in rural areas were not attending school, compared with 18 percent in urban areas. Overall, children in rural areas account for 82 percent



Judy Geleu reads to second graders at the School of Saint Jude in Tanzania. Volunteers, including Rotarians, help the school through donations and hands-on labor.

before uniforms and books, successful educational efforts take a holistic approach. For Rotarians, this sometimes means cooperating with other groups.

To assist the out-of-school children of rural coffee harvesters in Brazil, Rotarians in District 5450 (Colorado) worked with the Denver-based organization Socially Conscious Coffee to open Centro Rural Educafé, a primary school in the state of Bahia. With support from clubs in Colorado and

of those not in school in developing countries, the report says.

In extremely poor rural areas, where basic needs like food come

Brazil, plus two Matching Grants from The Rotary Foundation, the school now serves more than 70 children, compared with 38 when it opened in 2005. The project works partly because the school goes beyond education by providing meals and health services, says Martin Postma, 2006-07 president of the Rotary Club of Westminster 7:10 and a Socially Conscious Coffee board member.

"If you don't live in a healthy way and you're sick or you're hurting, you can't learn," he explains.

According to David Fowler, general coordinator of Rotary International's Literacy Resource Group and a member of the Rotary Club of Edgbaston Convention, England, multifaceted projects like Socially Conscious

Coffee's Educafé also offer an educational incentive. "You can't just get people into a classroom and just start teaching them to read," says Fowler. "You have to have another reason for getting them there and to encourage them to want to learn to read, to realize the benefits of reading."

Gender gap

Meeting the second Millennium Development Goal means making education accessible to boys and girls alike. Yet in some regions, girls are marginalized. As of 2004, in the developing world, 22 percent of primary-school-age girls were out of school, compared with 18 percent of boys, according to the 2006 report.

One of the best ways to get youngwomen to attend school is to make sure their mothers, who can have the greatest influence on them, are educated. "A child whose mother has no education is twice as likely to be out of school as one whose mother has some education," Gosselin says. "If you want to make a dent in the primary school enrollment, then you cannot not look at the issue of mothers' literacy."

In District 4160 (Mexico), Rotarians and their spouses lead a literacy program called *Yo Puedo*, or "I Can." The program gives priority to women, but also reaches children of primary and secondary school ages.

According to the *Millennium Development Goals Report*, 95 percent of primary-school-age children in the Caribbean and Latin America were in school in 2003-04, compared with 86 percent in 1990-91. The region also has had success achieving gender equality in education: In 2001-02, 94.7 percent of primary-school-age girls and 93.9 percent of boys were in school, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and UNICEF.

Proven method

Getting boys and girls to attend school is one thing, but they've got to have quality curriculums and instruction once they're at their desks. That means schools must employ, among other things, proven literacy programs. One approach is the concentrated language encounter (CLE) method, an immersion-based teaching technique that Rotarians have been helping educators implement since the late 1980s. With funding from clubs and The Rotary Foundation, as well as guidance from Rotarians, the CLE method has found its way to Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, and at least half a dozen other countries.

What are the UN Millennium Development Goals?

- 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- 2 Achieve universal primary education
- 3 Promote gender equality and empower women
- 4 Reduce child mortality
- 5 Improve maternal health
- 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- 7 Ensure environmental sustainability
- 8 Develop a global partnership for development

Each goal is tied to specific, measurable targets, with an end date of 2015. The UN uses 48 indicators, from literacy rates to condom use, to measure success. Over the next few years, *The Rotarian* will examine progress toward each of the goals and what clubs can do to help achieve them. >> Go to www.un.org/millenniumgoals.

Eight ways to support the second UN Millennium Development Goal

- 1 Celebrate Rotary's Literacy Month every March and International Literacy Day on 8 September. To observe these occasions, organize a literacy seminar, honor an outstanding educator, encourage parents to read to their children, or invite a celebrity or well-known athlete to read to students in your community.
- 2 Support educational projects through the World Community Service Projects Exchange at www.rotary.org.
- 3 Apply for a Rotary Foundation grant to establish literacy programs for girls and women, and work with a partner in a country with high rates of female illiteracy.
- 4 Train to open a library to establish a literacy center where people can receive tutoring and read.
- 5 Offer to set up satellite schools in villages if girls there are forbidden to travel far from home, and help sponsor single-sex schools with female teachers if cultural norms prohibit coeducational learning.
- 6 Donate books to students and libraries at home and abroad.
- 7 Help children who are falling behind in school.
- 8 Help improve the conditions for learning, including nutrition in a developing country. Learn more at www.cleliteracy.org.

In Bangladesh, South Africa, and Thailand, Rotary districts have joined with ministries of education to introduce the approach to hundreds of thousands of children. Because the framework for implementing the CLE method is already in place, explains Fowler, it's a relatively easy way for Rotarians to support the second Millennium Development Goal on a grand scale.

"That's a much bigger way of tackling the problem than the individual Rotary club carrying out a little project to buy books for a school," he says, but adds that clubs should decide how big or small they want their projects to be. "The opportunity, it's there. The horizons are entirely up to them and where they lift their eyes."

Success story

In the case of the School of Saint Jude, in Tanzania, Rotarians helped supply the

capital to build it, and they continue to provide funding. Gemma Sisia founded the school in 2002 with seed money from four Rotary clubs in Armidale, Australia, near her hometown of Guyra. "I'm just the daughter of a farmer in a country town in Australia," she says. "It's not as though I work for the UN or Oxfam or World Vision or anything. So when I wanted to build a school, I went to my local Rotary clubs."

She says Rotarians initially thought she was "quite mad" when she told them she wanted to build a school in Africa, but they never hesitated. They organized a fundraiser that brought in A\$20,000, then coordinated a team to travel to Tanzania to build the first classroom.

Rotarians from Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and several European countries have since donated money and time, and the school has benefited from two

Matching Grants from the Foundation. Sisia estimates that Rotarians provide a third of the school's monetary and in-kind support — and that doesn't include the publicity and heightened credibility she receives because of her association with Rotary clubs.

"It's hard to measure, because the biggest way that Rotary has helped is through word of mouth," she says. "Through Rotary conferences and districts, I've been able to get the word out about the school."

Saint Jude has grown steadily. It started with only one teacher and a handful of children but now employs 63 teachers and offers kindergarten through sixth grade. Next year, it will add a seventh-grade class. Sisia reflects on how all this came to pass: "I couldn't have built a school without Rotary." ■

M. Kathleen Pratt lives in Chicago and is a former managing editor of *The Rotarian*.