PEACE IN OUR TIME
FOR TEN YEARS ROTARY HAS RECRUITED SOLDIERS FOR A NEW KIND OF WAR, GIVING THEM THE WEAPONS TO WAGE PEACE

ONE YEAR AFTER the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the first class of Rotary Peace Fellows began their studies. Since then, more than 590 fellows have gone on to build peace in their communities and nations, as well as across international lines. They include graduates of a two-year master’s degree program and a three-month professional certificate program at Rotary’s partner universities.

Today, these alumni are settling border conflicts in West Africa, analyzing development aid at the World Bank, briefing U.S. generals on peace-building in Afghanistan, crafting legislation to protect exploited children in Brazil, and mediating neighborhood disputes in New York City, among many other career paths devoted to peace.

On the 10th anniversary of The Rotary Foundation’s Rotary Centers for International Studies in peace and conflict resolution, we bring you the stories of 10 fellows and a Rotarian donor, Al Jubitz, who are creating change locally and globally.

Author and film producer Alex Kotlowitz also describes the importance of the grassroots approach to peace and how it is working on the inner-city streets of Chicago, where former gang members are mediating conflicts and preventing bloodshed. And Anne-Marie Slaughter, an Atlantic contributor and Princeton University professor, writes about how technology has transformed international relations, granting individuals and small groups unprecedented power to connect to one another and influence global events. Here is a collection of dispatches from the front lines.

The elections monitor

RICHELIEU ALLISON

Rotary Peace Fellow Richelieu Allison grew up in Monrovia, Liberia, during a brutal civil war. Many of his friends became child soldiers, some on their own, but others after being grabbed off the street. “My mother said, I am not going to allow any of my children to walk out of the house to join the rebel movement,” he recalls. “I have been opposed to violence all my life because of my mom.”

To avoid the kidnappers, he stayed indoors, passing the time by learning to cook. He ventured out to accompany his mother on peace marches, which bore risks of their own. “We were in a march on our way to the president’s mansion,” he explains. “Suddenly bombs were firing all over the city. We had to run. I looked down and saw blood on my shirt and realized it was someone else.”

When the rebels invaded the area, his family fled to a refugee center. There, he formed his first advocacy group. Today, Allison, 40, is cofounder and regional director of the West African Youth Network in Freetown, Sierra Leone, which mobilizes and trains young people to help restore peace and human rights in West Africa. In late November 2010, he led a peace caravan – two buses with about 40 Rotarians and members of his youth network – to border towns in four West African countries, where they held workshops to teach conflict resolution.

Allison returned to Liberia to help monitor the successful 2011 presidential elections. “I grew up in a country that was peaceful, but all of a sudden one of the most gruesome conflicts ever seen in Africa erupted,” he says. “Look how far we’ve come.” – KATE NOLAN

Certificate class: 2006
Rotary Peace Center: Chulalongkorn University
Sponsor: Rotary Club of Freetown, Sierra Leone
Master’s class: 2012-14
Rotary Peace Center: University of Bradford
Sponsor: Rotary Club of Folsom, Calif., USA
Citizenship: Liberia
Defusing violence
by Alex Kotlowitz

IN THE IMPOVERISHED neighborhoods on Chicago’s South and West sides, violence has come to define the landscape. At the end of the last school year, a marque at Manley High School read: Have a Peaceful Summer. Signs for neighborhood block clubs, ordinarily a mark of celebration, detail all that’s prohibited. One warns: No Drug Selling. Another cautions: No Gambling. A city sign declares: Safe School Zone — Increased penalties for gang activities and the use, sale or possession of drugs or weapons in this area. On street corners and on stoops, in front of stores and in gangways, makeshift shrines appear — candles, empty liquor bottles, stuffed animals, poster board with scrawled remembrances — monuments to the fallen, victims of the epidemic of shootings in our central cities. Politicians have called for the National Guard. Chicago’s police superintendent conceded that his officers can’t respond to every call of a gun fired because there are so many gunshots. So many children have been murdered that a few years back, the Chicago Tribune began to keep a tally of homicides. For the past 10 years, New Orleans, Baltimore, St. Louis, and Chicago are among the cities with over 1.5 million people in America’s prisons, that feels like a lost argument. Moreover, lock people up, and most come back to their communities one day. (In Chicago alone, an estimated 20,000 to 27,000 men return from prison each year, and most of them to seven neighborhoods.) It’s enough to make even the most committed and persistent among us throw up our hands.

Yet time and again I have met people in these communities who haven’t given up, who see promise where others see despair. Consider Cobe Williams. Now 37, Cobe grew up on Chicago’s South Side, in a neighborhood marked by abandoned homes and struggling families. His father was in prison for much of Cobe’s youth and, shortly after getting released, when Cobe was 12, was beaten to death by a group of men. Despite his dad’s shortcomings, Cobe looked up to him, so he spent many of his teen years trying to emulate his father’s life: running with a gang, selling drugs, shooting at others and getting shot at. Cobe served three stints in prison for a total of 12 years. In his last appearance in court, he had an epiphany of sorts. His four-year-old son ran up to him in tears, and at that moment, Cobe realized he wanted to do better than his dad. He wanted to be a real father to his son. It would perhaps be too glit to suggest that he’s changed. Rather, he’s figured out who he always was — and who he wants to be.

Cobe is trying to return what he has taken from his community. He works for CeaseFire, a violence prevention program that views shootings through a public health lens. Organizers believe the spread of violence mimics the spread of an infectious disease, so they have hired individuals like Cobe, men and women formerly of the street, to intervene in disputes before they escalate. Organizers have hired men and women formerly of the street to intervene in disputes before they escalate.

PEACE SIGNS

War-related violence has caused an average of 55,000 deaths per year this century, compared with 100,000 a year in the 1990s and 180,000 a year from 1950 to 1989.

Class: 2002-04
Rotary Peace Center: University of Queensland
Sponsor: Rotary Club of Bathurst, Australia
Endowment: Hartley B. and Ruth B. Barker Endowed Rotary Peace Fellowship
Citizenship: Cambodia

The Interrupters
by Alex Kotlowitz

IN THE IMPOVERISHED neighborhoods on Chicago’s South and West sides, violence has come to define the landscape. At the end of the last school year, a marque at Manley High School read: Have a Peaceful Summer. Signs for neighborhood block clubs, ordinarily a mark of celebration, detail all that’s prohibited. One warns: No Drug Selling. Another cautions: No Gambling. A city sign declares: Safe School Zone — Increased penalties for gang activities and the use, sale or possession of drugs or weapons in this area. On street corners and on stoops, in front of stores and in gangways, makeshift shrines appear — candles, empty liquor bottles, stuffed animals, poster board with scrawled remembrances — monuments to the fallen, victims of the epidemic of shootings in our central cities. Politicians have called for the National Guard. Chicago’s police superintendent conceded that his officers can’t respond to every call of a gun fired because there are so many gunshots. So many children have been murdered that a few years back, the Chicago Tribune began to keep a tally of homicides. For the past 10 years, New Orleans, Baltimore, St. Louis, and Chicago are among the cities with over 1.5 million people in America’s prisons, that feels like a lost argument. Moreover, lock people up, and most come back to their communities one day. (In Chicago alone, an estimated 20,000 to 27,000 men return from prison each year, and most of them to seven neighborhoods.) It’s enough to make even the most committed and persistent among us throw up our hands.

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The Killing Fields survivor Puch Heang

When his Rotary Peace Fellowship in Brisbane, Australia, ended, Puch Heang headed home to Cambodia, an impoverished nation where the Khmer Rouge killed more than two million citizens between 1975 and 1979. Heang, now chief of a UNICEF field office, works to improve the lives of women and children in his country’s poorest households. He manages six programs that help millions in need.

“In Cambodia, privileges traditionally are for men and older people. Women and children are not a priority. They need access to education, health care, and training for employment,” Heang explains. “In the future, I will work in other countries. Because Cambodia needs people like me, I felt obliged to come back.”

Heang, 43,meshes his peace studies with his prior experience in a weapons eradication program and his native understanding of Cambodia. “I am in a senior position because of the analytical skills and tools I learned as a peace fellow,” he says. “Now I can influence national policy for the poor in Cambodia. [This work] is not about perception. It is about evidence.”

Reflecting on his peace fellowship, Heang says, “It changed me.” His studies explored the Khmer Rouge tribunal in Cambodia and security issues in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. At the same time, he says, he had to learn the basics of life in a wealthier nation, such as how to use an ATM.

Ruth B. Barker Endowed Rotary Peace Fellowship: Hartley B. and Ruth B. Barker Endowed Rotary Peace Fellowship, University of Queensland, Australia
At a screening of the film in Chicago, a teenage girl from the South Side got up to ask a question. She was near tears. She talked about how hard her life was, how she was getting into fights, how she was doing all she could not to give up. She turned to Cobe, who was in attendance, and asked him: “What do I do? What do I do, now?” Flamo pointed to Cobe and told her: “Take my fly.”

Flamo pointed to Cobe and asked, “How can you help me? Right now. How can you help me?”

It was a plea, really. If Cobe were the police, he might have arrested Flamo at that point, but instead, Cobe did something so simple it seems almost laughable: He asked Flamo to lunch. They headed to a nearby chicken shack, where Flamo, still in tears, told Cobe: “Take my fly.”

“Take my fly.”

At the time Cobe got to Flamo’s house – with us in tow – Flamo had been downing vodka, was packing a gun, and was waiting for a friend to bring him a stolen car so he could “take care of business.” He knew who had called the police and was looking for payback. Boiling with rage, at one point, he violently kicked a wall in his house: “You ain’t just crossed me, you crossed my mama. For my mama … I come in your crib and kill every … body.”

But Cobe asked Flamo who would take care of his kids if he got locked up. He asked Flamo to lunch. They headed to a nearby chicken shack, where Flamo, still in tears, told Cobe: “Take my fly.”

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And because they’ve been there themselves, they can empathize with someone intent on revenge.
connections to solve a problem with the combined resources, energy, and talent across the web. More traditionally, connections have long been presumed to be the preserve of the powerful — connections to get a job, an audition, an interview, an opportunity. Less conspiratorially, think about how Rotary clubs empower their members by bringing diverse individuals from across a community together.

That’s the rosy side. But Al Qaeda is equally powered by global connections; it is part of what makes it so hard to defeat. Defeat it in one country and it moves to another. Global criminal networks that traffic in drugs, arms, money, and people take advantage of the same technology that human rights networks do. Governments determined to crush popular opposition can track connections at the speed of light. Revolutions occurred long before the era of Twitter and Facebook, but in recent decades, surveillance technology has steadily strengthened the power of the state to lock up activists and snuff out dissent almost before it starts. The speed and decentralization of social media gave the protesters in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen a fighting chance by enabling them to stay one step ahead of state security forces. Technology alone cannot solve the problem with the combined resources, energy, and talent across the web.

The lightning connections and communication enabled by social media have allowed the technology of liberation to stay ahead of the technology of oppression.

Do-it-yourself democracy

by Anne-Marie Slaughter

I owE my existence to Rotary. In 1956, my father went to Brussels for a year as an Ambassadortial Scholar. One enchanted evening, as he would put it, he looked across the room at a beautiful young Belgian woman and fell in love. They were engaged three months later and married in the summer of 1957. I arrived in September 1958. And every Tuesday night throughout my childhood, my father went to his Rotary club.

My family is a direct testament to how Rotary builds bridges of international exchange and understanding. Today technology is multiplying those bridges exponentially, across every country, region, continent, and ocean. It is theoretically possible to connect every human being on the planet to one another and to vast stores of knowledge and sources of assistance. All it would take is seven billion smartphones, a relatively small order in a multitrillion-dollar world economy.

Connections are wonderful in many ways. According to Steve Jobs, “Creativity is just connecting things.” The great novelist E.M. Forster wrote, “Only connect.” I have argued that in a networked world, connectedness is a measure of power. “Power over” assumes that the power-wielder is at the top of a ladder and can exercises power over those below. “Power over” assumes that the power-wielder is at the center of a web of relationships and can command all her direct and indirect connections to solve a problem with the combined resources, energy, and talent across the web. More traditionally, connections have long been presumed to be the preserve of the powerful — connections to get a job, an audition, an interview, an opportunity. Less conspiratorially, think about how Rotary clubs empower their members by bringing diverse individuals from across a community together.

That’s the rosy side. But Al Qaeda is equally powered by global connections; it is part of what makes it so hard to peace and conflict resolution will inevitably have a mixed answer. But in the Rotarian spirit of optimism, let me offer five ways in which technology is advancing peace and prosperity, at least over the longer term.

First, as the revolutions that have swept across the Middle East and North Africa over the past year continue to demonstrate, the lightning connections and communication enabled by social media have allowed the technology of liberation to stay ahead of the technology of oppression. To his Rotary club.

In Ethiopia, Cameron Chisholm, 31, worked to prevent cross-border clashes and cattle raids as part of his Rotary Peace Fellowship fieldwork. He quickly observed that the peacekeeping strategies in place were geared more towards a culture of spears than the reality of AK-47s. “I realized there was a huge gap in the field. There was no place for practical skills training in a holistic way. In Addis Ababa, I started scribbling plans,” Chisholm says.

After his fellowship, he accepted a job with the World Bank, where his team delivered daily security briefings to the bank’s president, and where he met experts sympathetic to his vision of establishing an institute that would bridge the gap. Among them was Rotarian and former Ambassadorial Scholar Peter Kyle, then a World Bank lead counsel. A year later, in 2009, Chisholm founded the International Peace and Security Institute, based in Washington, D.C. (He is now also an adjunct professor at George Washington University.) Kyle — winner of the 2009-10 Rotary Foundation Global Alumni Service to Humanity Award — serves on the institute’s board of advisors.

The organization hosted monthlong symposiums in Bologna, Italy, in 2010 and 2011, which some described as a “peace version” of the famed World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The gatherings brought together world leaders, academic experts, and seasoned peace workers to develop and deliver hands-on training based on their personal experiences. The institute will host similar events this summer in Bologna and The Hague.

“The annual training institute is a clear outgrowth of the peace fellowship,” Kyle says. “This is the next stage of peace and conflict resolution training.”

PEACE SIGNS

Over the past two decades, the proportion of cease-fires that have failed has dropped from 50 percent to 12 percent, writes Joshua S. Goldstein, author of Winning the War on War. He attributes the success rate to UN peacekeepers.

The reality teacher

CAMERON CHISHOLM

Class: 2006-08
Rotary Peace Center:
University of Bradford
Sponsor: Rotary Club of Corpus Christi, Texas, USA
Citizenship: United States

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Technology reduces global conflict by saving lives directly, particularly the lives of women, who can then anchor their communities.

is no match for a government’s willingness to use obliterating force, but even today in Syria, one of the ways the protesters maintain determination and cohesion is by persistently bearing witness to the government’s atrocities and exposing them to the world at large.

A second way in which technology is changing the face of conflict is through the individualization of both war and international law. War traditionally has been army to army, or army to insurgent force. Today the technology of drones, smart bombs, and precision-guided missiles, and soon the miniaturization of countless deadly weapons, makes it possible to fight an enemy one human target at a time. As frightening as the perpetual threat of assassination may seem, and as desperately as we need to adapt the traditional rules of war to govern new technologies and tactics, the individualization of war could save millions of civilian lives – the women, the old, and the young, who were the collateral damage of clashing armies. The individualization of international law similarly holds the promise of holding individual actors accountable for their crimes against other countries and their own people, rather than punishing their populations through sanctions and even invasion. Technology plays a critical role in making international criminal cases possible, because any bystander or even victim can photograph evidence of a government’s crimes both as they are happening and as they are covered up. It is that evidence that allows international and domestic criminal prosecutors to build their cases.

In a third and very different direction, technology reduces global conflict by saving lives directly, particularly the lives of women, who can then care for their children, educate their families, and anchor their communities. Cell phones are life-lines to better maternity care, allowing pregnant women to monitor the course of their pregnancies by receiving general information about what to expect and how to care for themselves and their fetus week by week, and by providing information about what they are feeling and experiencing well before labor begins.

Fourth, technology and globalization together enable do-it-yourself foreign policy through public-private partnerships and bottom-up coalitions of social actors. Where once development was the province of government ministries and international organizations, today actors such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, non-governmental organizations such as Oxfam and CARE, and countless smaller organizations, universities, research institutes, and corporations are all actively engaged. Where once the United States gave through USAID, hundreds of thousands of Americans now contribute hundreds of millions of dollars through Kiva, an online lending platform that allows individuals to find development projects they wish to support directly. Where government-funded foundations such as the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute specialize in monitoring elections in countries around the world, now citizens can send in real-time information about what they see happening at their local polls through Ushahidi, a software mapping platform developed by four entrepreneurial Africans. Created to allow Kenyans to share information about disputed national elections that were descending into violence, Ushahidi has been used to share and map crisis information in many different situations around the world. U.S. State Department officials helped adapt it for disaster relief efforts after the Haiti earthquake. The State Department, USAID, and the White House are all opening and expanding offices dedicated to orchestrating and welcoming public-private partnerships of many shapes and sizes.

Finally, perhaps most elusive but most optimistically, scholars such as
Yochai Benkler argue that the Internet has enabled cooperative human activity, which has enabled us to survive as a species for millennia, to take its rightful place alongside the egoistic self-interested behavior that drives our markets, our conflicts, and our current assumptions about human nature. The Internet thrives on a culture of generosity, with people willing to share everything from recipes to medical information to technical assistance on almost anything. Benkler draws on psychology, neurobiology, sociology, behavioral economics, computer simulations, and his own multidisciplinary experiments to demystify the deeply rational roots of cooperation and the ways in which technology and transparency can empower cooperators as much as egoists. If in fact technology can make the two-thirds of people who are more likely to participate in positive-sum than zero-sum activity aware of one another’s preferences, thereby diminishing the fear of becoming a sucker in a ruthlessly selfish world, the prospects for genuinely improving the human condition just may be brighter than ever before.

Certainly the spirit of cooperation. When I spoke at the Rotary Club of Princeton, N.J., last spring, I was also struck by how effectively Rotary strengthens global connections at the local level, bringing together business and civic leaders who have ties to countries all over the world. Those local clubs engage in many different projects that are generated by their members, in addition to Rotary’s formal programs. They are animated by a spirit of collective human potential, powered by coming together and working together. Spreading that philosophy and acting on it, citizen to citizen, is the best long-term antidote to conflict and prescription for peace.

Class: 2007-09
Rotary Peace Center: Duke
University and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Sponsor: Rotary Club of Brasilia, Brazil
Endowment: Paul F. and Carolyn C. Rizza
Endowed Rotary Peace Fellowship
Citizenship: Brazil
In mid-June 2010, ethnic violence erupted in southern Kyrgyzstan, killing hundreds of people. As part of a UN rapid assessment team, Zumrat Salmorbekova, who had recently graduated from the Rotary Peace Centers program, traveled there after the four-day outbreak had ended. After interviewing local residents and collecting and analyzing data, she concluded that women and children remained in grave danger.

“One day the people started to kill each other, but afterward they still lived on the same street,” says Salmorbekova, 38. She recalls a woman asking her neighbor, who was from a different ethnic group, “Why did you leave the night before the violence and not tell me anything?” Her report proved crucial in preventing further bloodshed.

Salmorbekova has an understanding of Central Asia that comes from growing up there and working directly with local people. “You can’t get it any other way,” says one of her professors, Robert M. Jenkins, director of the Center for Slavic, Eurasian, and East European Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A native of Kyrgyzstan, Salmorbekova also works with the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) as an expert on the Ferghana Valley.

Before becoming a peace fellow, she focused on peace-building efforts in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Frustrated by the failure to prevent violence in the region, she applied for the fellowship to search for solutions, she says. The decision was difficult, Salmorbekova recalls. It meant moving her husband, Syrgak, a social scientist, and their two sons to the United States. In North Carolina, her Rotarian hosts provided key support, finding schools for her children and an apartment and furnishings for the family. She remains in Chapel Hill as a consultant on international peace and development, and her eldest son was recently admitted to the University of North Carolina.

“MY BIG IDEA,” says Al Jubitz, “is to have Rotary set a goal to end war. As with polio, I believe that if Rotary set the example, it could happen.” He has a plan to get people to invest in peace and to highlight Rotary’s role in building a peaceful world. He has made a considerable financial commitment to the Rotary Peace Centers program and is helping to organize a peace conference in Portland, Ore., USA, in June. He also travels to dozens of Rotary clubs, highlighting Cyprus as a model for a Rotary world peace process.

Jubitz looks like anything but an antiwar firebrand. A friendly, easygoing peace. He’s a major philanthropic force in Portland and beyond. With his wife, Nancy, he’s the latest winner of United Way Worldwide’s Tocqueville Society Award for outstanding volunteer service on the national level; past recipients include the Gates family, Bob Hope, and Jimmy Carter. The couple are also members of The Rotary Foundation’s Arch C. Klumph Society, which honors people who donate at least $250,000.

A third-generation Rotarian, Jubitz remembers joining the Rotary Club of Portland 34 years ago: “Seven hundred members, and I was the guy who worked at a truck stop.” He became club president in 2002. That year, the first Rotary Peace Fellows began their studies in conflict resolution. “I’d been a peace guy for 30 years,” Jubitz recalls, “so I was happy to see Rotary put an emphasis there.” He underwrote fellowships for $300,000, and his financial commitment has since far exceeded that amount. He considers it a successful investment: “These are outstanding people. When they apply, they already need to have done something to promote peace, and it’s amazing what these twentiesomethings have done.”

But Jubitz’s advocacy goes beyond writing checks. He travels widely to Rotary clubs, making the case for peace – “It’s possible, it’s popular, and it’s practical” – and for Rotarians making it a priority. “I have to tell the
cachet around the world,” he says. “The pedigree of the Rotary Peace Fellows is strong. When you have a big goal, you need access, and Rotary has access. We can go to a country and say, ‘We will need access, and Rotary has access. We can go to a country and say, ‘We will need access, and Rotary has access. We can go to a country and say, ‘We will need access, and Rotary has access. We can go to a country and say, ‘We will need access, and Rotary has access.

Jubitz also talks about Cyprus, a small island in the eastern Mediterranean, divided for decades between Turkish and Greek Cypriots. The Jubitz Family Foundation has supported Portland State University’s Peace Initiatives Project on Cyprus, led by faculty members – and Rotarians – from both the Turkish and Greek sides of the divide. The effort has brought six young Greek Cypriots and six young Turkish Cypriots to Portland to live together and study possibilities for peace. “Cyprus has just about all the ingredients of the Middle East,” Jubitz says, sounding exhilarated by a situation that most people would find discouraging. “UN troops, a small story that there is an alternative to war. My son killing your son is unacceptable,” he explains. It’s not always an easy sale. Often, Jubitz runs into Rotarian military veterans, many of whom have a different view of the issue. “I don’t confront them,” he says. “I thank them for their service.” And then he repeats his case at the next Rotary club.

Jubitz, whose presentation is titled “Advancing World Peace Through Rotary,” emphasizes his belief in Rotary as a force for peace and the vital role of Rotary Peace Fellows. “Rotary has such a strong club. And then he repeats his case at the next Rotary club.

As for his listeners, he says, “One-third say, ‘I help?’ ” One-third say, “That’s crazy.” One-third say, “How are you going to do that?” And one-third say, “How can I help?”

The human rights lawyer
FRANCESCA DEL MASE

How much does an international human rights barrister resemble Colin Firth’s character in the film Bridget Jones’s Diary? “Look at the house he’s got in London” exclaims Francesca Del Mese, 37. The job doesn’t pay as well as Hollywood might think, she observes, but that wasn’t her goal.

An established London barrister, Del Mese sought a Rotary Peace Fellowship to transition to international work. For her applied field experience, she worked in the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone. Later, she prosecuted war criminals of the former Yugoslavia in The Hague. As a consultant there, she also trained judges from Jordan on international criminal law and helped former child soldiers and other young abductees return to school in Gulu, Uganda.

Last year, she became the legal adviser, based in Geneva, for the UN Commission of Inquiry into atrocities committed in Syria. She has since moved back to the London area, but some dark memories have been difficult to escape, such as reviewing multiple torture cases. “Now I bank well-being,” Del Mese says, explaining why she spends much of her free time walking her dog, Sadie, in the quiet woods near her home. – H.P.

Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand (certificate program)
Duke University and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, N.C., USA
International Christian University, Tokyo, Japan
University of Bradford, England
University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia
Uppsala University, Sweden (September 2012)
Universidad del Salvador, Buenos Aires, Argentina (ending 30 June 2012)
The company we keep

The Sudan peacemaker

Josephus Tenga

In 1999, former banker Josephus Tenga was working for a Canadian NGO in Freetown, Sierra Leone, during the prolonged civil war, when political thugs attacked his house. He and his family fled, finding safety as refugees in Canada. “In Sierra Leone, I know what life was like before the conflicts started,” reflects Tenga, 56. “I know what I went through, and I know others can get through this.”

The journey led to Tenga’s introduction to the Rotary Peace Centers program, after a Canadian Rotarian heard him speak about the crisis in Sierra Leone and urged him to apply. Through the Canadian government, Tenga has served as technical adviser to Sudan’s Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission, which helped pave the way for establishing the Republic of South Sudan and, it is hoped, averting further war. He also has worked to prevent the spread of conflict in Darfur and organized workshops there to promote the surrender of weapons. In eastern Sudan, he assisted with a Kuwaiti-funded project to restore infrastructure and provide economic opportunities.

Now back home in the Canadian Rockies, Tenga is organizing a peace conference involving Sudan and the seven bordering countries, focused on the flow of arms in the region.

“Violence never ends. It’s an industry,” Tenga says. “People are making money off of it, and we cannot ignore it.”

— K.N.