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District Governor
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Dear friends in Rotary,

for Rotarians all over the world, October is the month dedicated to Economic and Community Development. This is one of the six areas of focus by which our members are called to create work opportunities for local entrepreneurs and community leaders within the poorer areas and to promote initiatives to reduce poverty in underdeveloped communities by means of training projects, fairly paid jobs and access to financial institutions. Initiatives may take the shape of the supply of equipment, of goods and services and of professional training.

Unemployment, underemployment and the lack of opportunities and adequate education as well as the lack of social safety systems lie at the base of poverty. Work is the only resource for man to recur to in order to improve his quality of life. Therefore, it is necessary to create work to reduce destitution. Attaining economic and social cohesion, favouring entrepreneurship and sustaining every form of development would guarantee a secure income.

The emancipation of women, of disabled persons and of the young is of fundamental importance. Besides, it is calculated that a 1% increase in in pro-capita income from agriculture reduces the number of persons living in extreme poverty from 0.6% to 1.8%.

Studies show that access to micro-credit alone reduces vulnerability of the weak increasing the fluctuation of income and producing a rise in consumption. It has been shown in Nigeria that with minimal investment in education and training, the decrease of the number of poor people will be equivalent to 66% within a short period of time.

In States like Singapore, Taiwan and Malaysia, increment in professional training has been crucial in effecting the transition from a low to a high added value and enormous progress had been achieved to reduce global poverty. According to the World Bank, 1.92 million people lived with less than \$1.25 daily in 1990 and this has been reduced to only 1 million in 2011.

Various development goals have been achieved in 2015, progress has been substantial in various sectors but the pressure of other global needs persists and the reality is rather worrying. Nearly 202 million people were jobless in 2013, 74.5 million of whom were young people between 15 and 24 years of age. Today the numbers are not encouraging and various problems remain unresolved.

Agriculture is the main source of income and work for 70% of the world's poor who live in rural areas. Gender inequality in employment persists with percentage differences among men and women in the working population. Women, who are generally employed in sectors of low added value, lack the competence to accede to higher level roles.

Since 2012, Rotary Clubs all over the world work specifically with communities in order to improve their economic development. It is therefore necessary to evaluate the real needs of communities, taking into consideration the historical, cultural and social context; to evaluate the available resources, the strengths and weaknesses and have a concrete starting point for each project. This is the only way in which Rotarians may be able to work for communities in order to satisfy their requirements. Every action must be promoted in partnership with the local Clubs in order to have deep and early valuations of an appropriate project, involving the members of local Clubs who are experts on the subject so as to assure support and sustainability and to avoid wasted efforts.

We must also keep in mind that when we identify places for our project efforts we must make previous contacts with the local authorities, the governments and public administrations who will have to share and accept the opportunities of collaboration. We are also not to underestimate collaboration with organizations which already exist on the territory and which can become vital partners in projects. These may be institutions, businesses, non-governmental organizations, etc. Let us, also, when looking at community projects, look at actions which may have future sustainable development.

Often, communities are quite able to satisfy their own needs, but they may require a mediator to facilitate discussion and bring the different parties together to face their common problems and take the first step towards solution. This is where Rotary can be of help as we have been experts at conflict solution for many years and have been instrumental at solving community problems.

High impact projects which are carried out with the participation of members of the community, after careful evaluation, create responsible involvement and facilitate sharing with effects that last through time.

We are, therefore, to avoid going into a community with suggestions on what is necessary, let us not take autonomous decisions. It is not easy to evaluate a community's needs if one does not belong to the place. It is necessary, instead, to listen to the locals for guaranteed success. Let us not lose ourselves on 'do it yourself' projects which would be a waste of time and energy.

When approaching initiatives for economic and community development we are to carefully evaluate our concrete capability and we must resort to the instruments that 'our' Rotary Foundation places at our disposal through the programs, the subsidies, the scholarships ... all are important resources that allow us to always more to be 'at the service of Humanity'.

My kindest regards to all

