



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
18 May 2011

Original: English

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### Substantive session of 2011

Geneva, 4-29 July 2011

Item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda\*

**High-level segment: annual ministerial review**

### **Statement submitted by Rotary International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* E/2011/100.



## **Statement\***

Rotary International (RI), a worldwide organization of business and professional leaders that provides humanitarian services, has long recognized the prominent role that education plays in fostering economic development and promoting peace and stability around the world. For a child, knowing how to read can be the difference between healthy self-esteem and none at all. For a teenager, it can mean staying in school rather than dropping out. For an adult, it often means a steady income, versus a lifetime of struggling to feed a family. Because illiteracy is inextricably tied to poverty, it is a massive development issue — and requires a strong international commitment that recognizes the needs and welcomes the input of local communities. Utilizing its grass-roots organizational structure, international network of volunteers and connections with other organizations, Rotary International has committed to making education and literacy a focal point of its humanitarian work.

In 1985, Rotary declared basic literacy to be a precondition for the development of peace. Through this organizational emphasis, more than half the world's 33,000 Rotary clubs have addressed the full range of literacy and mathematical challenges for primary, vocational and adult learners, as well as teacher training.

Rotary's primary literacy tool, the concentrated language encounter (CLE) method, has been embraced by classrooms around the world. CLE instructors use one of two approaches: activity-based or text-based. The text-based learning process begins with the class reading together. Teachers then lead activities that help students unravel the meaning of what they've read. Afterwards, students write their own text as a group.

Throughout the process, teachers add exercises designed to develop broader skills, such as word recognition and sentence construction. Activity-based programmes start with a demonstration of a structured activity, such as planting a garden. Teachers and students then work together to write text that explains how to complete the activity. Both approaches emphasize group work, so students end up teaching one another and no one falls behind.

Today, CLE programmes, also known as "lighthouse" projects, are thriving in more than 30 countries. In Thailand, for example, the "lighthouse" literacy effort has been so successful that the Government adopted it as a national programme. Similar literacy initiatives have been sponsored by Rotary clubs in Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil and South Africa.

### **Adult literacy programmes**

While much of the international community's focus, with regard to primary education and training, is on the needs of children in many parts of the world, development is further hindered by the lack of education among large sections of the adult population. Many adults in both the developed and developing world lack the skills they need to hold a job or perform the basic tasks required by everyday life. The hardships caused by illiteracy, from the difficulty in finding employment to the constant pressure to cover it up, often lead to a host of other problems.

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\* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

As with its commitment to address the educational needs of children the world over, Rotary members are just as committed to addressing the literacy and education needs of working age men and women. For instance, the Rotary Club of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, sponsored a project called “Provision of educational materials to the Agency for Adult and Non-Formal Education”, with the objective of reducing the population of illiterate adults in the Rivers State of Nigeria and boosting the Federal Government Universal Basic Education (UBE) initiative.

### **Rotary and the Millennium Development Goals**

At the Millennium Summit in September 2000, United Nations Member States agreed to eight goals to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life for people worldwide. These goals parallel many of the humanitarian activities that Rotary has championed since its founding in 1905. Today, many of the service projects implemented by Rotary’s 1.2 million members support some aspect of the Millennium Development Goals.

Although much of Rotary’s humanitarian work fits within each of the eight areas identified as part of the development agenda, Goals 2 and 3 have been of particular interest to Rotary members interested in education, peace and development.

Millennium Development Goal 2, which calls for universal primary education for children everywhere by 2015, has been the focal point of Rotary’s literacy and education efforts. Some 16,000 Rotary clubs worldwide support literacy and numeracy programmes by donating dictionaries, building schools and volunteering as tutors. Project examples include:

- In 2004, Rotary clubs in Brazil established Educafé, a primary school for the children of coffee farmers in a remote part of Bahia State. Previously, 80 per cent of local children had not attended school or received regular meals. The school provides education, meals, uniforms, transportation, books, supplies and preventive health care for nearly 80 children.
- Working with Human Rights Now, the Rotary Club of Lahore Midtown in Punjab, Pakistan, established the Kasure Village School. Rotary members pay teachers’ salaries and provide materials for students who would otherwise have no access to education.
- The Rotary Club of Laredo, Texas, United States of America, and the Rotary Clubs of Reforma, Villa, and Nuevo Santander, Mexico, in partnership with the Amistad Reading Council and the Texas State Reading Association, received a Rotary grant that brought in \$20,000 to open up a library in an elementary school in Mexico. Spanish-language books appropriate for first through sixth grade were purchased, and bookshelves were built by a parent from the school. The project also provides teacher and parent training, which enables the students to get the most out of the books at school and at home.
- In Honduras, a \$33,245 Rotary grant is helping to furnish classrooms and washrooms at a vocational and literacy training school. The project’s sponsors, the Rotary clubs of Santa Bárbara, Honduras, and Campbell River, British Columbia, Canada, are separately providing uniforms, shoes, school bags, and other items.

Millennium Development Goal 3 seeks to promote gender equality and empower women. Because girls do not have access to education in many parts of the world,

the illiteracy rate among women exceeds that of men. Studies of illiteracy rates in low-income countries have shown a 20 per cent difference between the genders. To address the gender disparity, Rotary clubs have worked to expand education and vocational training for girls and women.

- The Rotary Club of Budge Budge, India, started five literacy centres in villages in remote areas, extending training to children, including young girls. To attract young girls and women, the centres offer vocational training in skills such as basket weaving, tailoring and paper bag making. With these products, they can earn a living.
- In 2008, the New Zabuli Education Centre, a free year-round school located 30 miles outside Kabul, opened for girls who were not educated under the Taliban. Funded and organized by a United States Rotary club, the centre has enrolled 200 children, aged 4-15, and classes for adult women are planned. In Jalalabad, the Rotary Club of La Jolla Golden Triangle, San Diego, California, United States, has supported numerous educational initiatives for girls and young women, from elementary school through the university level for over a decade.
- In Turkey, nearly 10,000 adults — 95 per cent of whom are Kurdish Turkish women — have participated in Rotary's CLE programmes, where they acquire basic literacy skills and vocational training. Similarly, Rotary members in Egypt have managed a CLE programme that has provided nearly 5,000 students with basic literacy skills, reproductive health education and sewing instruction.
- A Rotary member in California, who was born and raised in Calcutta, established the non-profit Promise of Assurance to Children Everywhere (PACE) Universal in 2003. With support from Rotary clubs in California, Texas, India and beyond, the organization aims to nurture the educational, health, nutritional, social and cultural development of girls in impoverished areas. The first PACE Learning Centre was built outside Calcutta, with volunteer and financial support from the Rotary Club of Calcutta Metropolitan. The school serves 145 girls (with 200 on the waiting list) and 10 mothers in PACE's vocational training classes.

### **Working with other organizations**

Rotary clubs have long been encouraged to establish local and regional partnerships with charities, Governments, educational institutions, faith-based organizations and other groups to address development challenges across the globe. Since 2002 RI has itself worked closely with the International Reading Association (IRA) to encourage literacy awareness and literacy development projects between our two organizations at the local level. By combining resources and skills, Rotary and IRA members are making it possible for children everywhere to pick up a book and discover a world outside their own four walls. Examples of collaborative projects with the IRA include:

- In Sudan, a literacy project sponsored by United States Rotarians and the IRA is helping Sudanese refugees rebuild their communities by equipping them to teach future generations. The Southern Sudan teacher training initiative provides refugees from the country's decades-long civil war, who are known as the lost boys and girls of Sudan, with teacher training materials, guidance and support to help them teach students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

- The Rotary Club of Central Port of Spain and the Trinidad and Tobago Reading Association are working to train literacy tutors. The project offers research-based training to tutors who work in community programmes in high-need remote areas of the island. The volunteers are selected based on academic qualifications, attitude and willingness to learn literacy teaching skills. Volunteers have time to practise between sessions that cover diagnostic work with students and parents. They work on improving reading comprehension and word recognition, the writing process, oral skills, and monitoring and evaluating academic work, attitude and behaviour.
- In Australia, Rotary members and the Australian Literacy Association have collaborated on a project called “Tales from a dilly bag”. A dilly bag is a traditional Australian aboriginal fibre bag usually used to carry food. This dilly bag is filled with books, craft materials, activity sheets to go with the stories, a digital camera and a teacher’s folder. These items allow indigenous students to share not only oral stories but to additionally create printed and illustrated stories to help develop literacy skills. About 1,300 students have read and created books with these kits. This literacy project design reflects and aligns with evidence-based literacy research. Current research is following the effectiveness of these kits on literacy learning for indigenous Australian students.
- The Virgin Islands Reading Council and the Rotary Club of Road Town have partnered to organize a local book fair and promote reading among family members. This community book fair included guest readings by the Governor and his wife, the Deputy Premier, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Chief of Police. Teachers, parents and children got prizes and surprises; families were involved in choosing books together; and all got tips for encouraging the reading habit, working together on reading and selecting books to build personal libraries.

Beyond its work with the International Reading Association, some 115 Rotary clubs in North America and Europe currently support the Tennessee-based Dollywood Foundation Imagination Library, which provides a book each month to children from birth until age five. The programme also helps strengthen families by encouraging positive interaction between parents and children through shared reading. Today, Imagination Library serves 47 states, along with parts of Canada and the United Kingdom, and has provided children with more than 15 million books.

In its 106 years of existence, Rotary International, with the commitment of its 1.2 million members, has committed itself to addressing some of the most pressing humanitarian issues of its time. Historically, education has been at the centre of its efforts to improve the quality of life for people the world over. Over the last 20 years, Rotary has taken concrete steps to make education a focal point for its humanitarian efforts. Rotary club members are founding schools, training teachers, developing literacy curricula, and donating time and money in order bring the gift of a good education to children and adults everywhere. Working with the United Nations and partnering with other non-governmental organizations, Rotary works to fulfil the promise of universal education and achieve many of the Millennium Development Goals.