



Nunzio Scibilia
District Governor
2016-2017

Palermo, 1st September 2016

My dear friends in Rotary,

in the early years of this century we have seen that the great progress with regards to literacy and basic schooling is having a well-earned and fundamental function in promoting cultural growth and peaceful relations within the present civil society. But there are important challenges to be faced.

Ban Ki Moon, General Secretary of the UN, has declared that education is a human right which helps individuals and strengthens society. 'More than ever this is now necessary at a time when the United Nations are preparing to adopt a new global agenda for sustainable development', he said while calling all governments to participate together with the private sector so as to unite in promoting universal education as essential to the future that we all look forward to.

According to the UN, much has been attained with regards to literacy, especially where access to schooling for women and girls is concerned. There is a significant improvement in the basic level of education but there must be increased efforts so as to reach the goal of universal education.

Within 2030, the UN aims at guaranteeing primary and secondary education for all, children, youths and adults of both genders, as well as the freedom and equality in the completion of this education with access to quality further tertiary technical or professional education so as to develop human rights of equal standard for both genders promoting peaceful non-violent culture for a global citizenship giving value to cultural diversity.

Hence, within 2030, the UN aims at eliminating gender inequality in education to guarantee educational equality at all levels and professional training of protected groups among which the disabled, indigenous populations and vulnerable minors. With this in mind, it will be necessary to create and activate adequate educational structures open to the various requirements which are safe, non-violent and inclusive.

Through international cooperation, it will be necessary to train qualified teachers capable to operate in developing nations especially in those which are least developed as well as in the fast growing small states.

The UN plans, within the year 2020, to considerably increase the number of scholarships, at global level, in order to guarantee access to instruction at high level to include professional training in information technology and communication as well as engineering and scientific programs both in developed and in developing nations.

In our nation, Italy, the problem of illiteracy is also present. The ability of writing and basic mathematics has been acquired by the totality of the population. However, matters are very different when one looks into how much this basic ability is put to proper use and is developed.

About 50% if Italians receive information (or do not get informed), vote (or do not vote), work (or do not work) only basing their knowledge on elementary analysis avoiding complex analysis such as facing compound events like the economic crisis, wars, national and international politics, monetary matters. In other words, half of the population suffers from functional illiteracy. This term indicates an individual's incapacity to efficiently use his ability to read, write and use basic mathematics in his daily life. An illiterate person is also one who is quite able to write his name and may even update his status on Facebook, but is quite unable to understand, evaluate, use and be involved by written texts actively participating in society so as to reach his objectives and develop his knowledge and potential.

A functionally illiterate person, although he may seem autonomous, does not understand the terms of an insurance policy, does not grasp the meaning of a printed article on a daily newspaper, is unable to take deep interest and to briefly relate a written text, he is unable to interpret a graphic design. He, therefore, is unable to understand the complex society in which he lives.

A functionally illiterate person, therefore, sees the world exclusively through his personal experience. Hence, the economic crisis is seen only as the lowering of his purchasing potential; the war in the Ukraine is a problem because the price of gas increases; tax cuts are justified although they mean cuts in public service. He is unable to analyse situations taking into consideration indirect and collective consequences on the long term and in the dimension of space and time.

Rotary, with its Foundation, has exercised a very incisive role worldwide dedicating a specific area of intervention that aims at widening and strengthening the ability of communities to promote literacy cutting down on disparity and on the limitations that, inevitably, subsist. For various social reasons that are economic, cultural and political, still today millions of persons of all ages, gender and nationality are unable to widen their knowledge for lack of adequate structures, lack of specific professional presence and didactic material.

Our personal commitment persists also in partnership with Governments and the more important Non-Governmental Organizations as well as with local entities. We shall persist by means of the Rotary Foundation to promote literacy and basic education in an effort to:

- Guarantee that minors have access to quality elementary education
- Reduce the disparity based on gender of education
- Increase adult literacy
- Strengthen the ability of communities to take specific actions in this direction
- Provide financial aid and scholarships to serve this scope

This too means to us 'Service to Humanity'.

I thank you for your commitment!



District Secretariat 2016-2017

90144 Palermo - Via Giuseppe Giusti, 3 - fax +39 091 6261740

95131 Catania - Via San Tommaso, 5 - fax +39 095 2501210

e-mail: segreteriaadistrettuale1617@rotary2110.it