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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: promoting empowerment of people in achieving
poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and
decent work for all**

Statement submitted by Associazione Casa Famiglia Rosetta, 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 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Introduction

In today's world, poverty has more than ever become a complex, globalized issue that has multiple causes and facets. Consequently, empowering people to achieve poverty eradication and social inclusion has to be seen as a challenge to be faced at several levels and by a multiplicity of actors and stakeholders.

Our approach

Based on this reality, the approach of Associazione Casa Famiglia Rosetta to people's distress has been, since its beginning 30 years ago, a global and multifaceted one, having always focused its efforts on different areas of vulnerability in the lives of the most disadvantaged groups of the population.

Our work

In fact, over the years, Associazione Casa Famiglia Rosetta has been articulating its mission and action by responding to the needs of people with physical and mental disabilities, people with drug or alcohol addiction problems, people living with HIV/AIDS, adolescents at risk, youth, women, families in psychological and economic distress, refugees and the elderly. The services offered by Associazione Casa Famiglia Rosetta span the fields of rehabilitation, health and social care, recovery, counselling, hospitality, training, advocacy, social inclusion and economic support, with special attention to gender policies. All these activities are, in the global vision of Associazione Casa Famiglia Rosetta, considered to be integral and essential aspects of any human and humanizing empowerment process.

Aware that poverty has many aspects and affects not only the countries traditionally referred to as "third world", but also what are termed the "developed countries", Associazione Casa Famiglia Rosetta operates in three geographic areas that are on different continents and have different socioeconomic conditions: Italy, Brazil and the United Republic of Tanzania.

In Italy, Associazione Casa Famiglia Rosetta runs neuropsychomotor rehabilitation centres, therapeutic communities (for drug abuse, alcoholism and pathological gambling treatment), counselling centres (psychological and genetic counselling), a cytogenetic laboratory, residential homes (for people with mental disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS and adolescents at risk), refugee shelter homes, canteens for needy people, training centres and an institute for training, research, therapy and development of social policies. In all these centres, specialized professionals offer sociomedical, psychological and sociocultural services to many poor, vulnerable, disadvantaged, stigmatized and marginalized people.

Similarly, in Brazil, Associazione Casa Famiglia Rosetta runs two therapeutic communities, one rehabilitation centre and one residential home for people with mental disabilities.

Since 2005, Associazione Casa Famiglia Rosetta has also been present in the United Republic of Tanzania, operating a residential home for children affected by HIV/AIDS and a centre for rehabilitation, training, social integration and economic development, aimed at children with disabilities or HIV/AIDS and their families, as

well as the local population at large. Next year, construction will begin on a therapeutic community and a multipurpose centre for health care, research and training, to serve both the local population and the entire East African region.

The rehabilitative, therapeutic and educational models of Associazione Casa Famiglia Rosetta aim at building (or rebuilding) a meaningful life project, supporting the feeling of self-esteem and mutual respect, enhancing individual skills and personal autonomy, healing family ties and strengthening the sense of social belonging and acceptance. Special emphasis is put on work (as a therapeutic tool and as a means of social inclusion) and on the spiritual dimension of life (as a source of positive attitudes and creative behaviour).

In the past four years, more than 2,300 children and adults with physical and mental disabilities, 700 women and men affected by drug addiction, alcoholism and pathological gambling, 58 adults and 25 children with HIV/AIDS and 114 adolescents coming from dysfunctional families have recovered hope in our centres and now face their challenges with a new awareness of being a resource for a more inclusive, healing and human society, rather than a problem or a burden. In other words, they have begun to experience a new sense of empowerment.

Microcredit programme

In its permanent efforts to respond in an increasingly comprehensive way to the needs of the poor, Associazione Casa Famiglia Rosetta has also begun recently, in the Tanzanian city of Tanga and surrounding villages, a microcredit programme aimed at families in distress as a result of economic poverty and disability or HIV/AIDS problems. Such distress is closely associated with lack of access to microfinance institutions, basic education, financial literacy and entrepreneurial and managerial skills.

The first step of the programme was training the local staff. A total of 20 young people were trained, of whom 7 were selected to act as facilitators and tutors of the beneficiaries of the microcredit. The second step was a socioeconomic survey, carried out through the administration, in the target area, of three questionnaires: a community profile survey, a consumer demand survey and a market opportunity survey. Based on the analysis of the information collected, and in close cooperation with local traditional authorities, 60 potential beneficiary families were identified. They then completed a training needs assessment questionnaire.

The training phase followed, with the participation of one representative of each beneficiary family in a capacity-building programme implemented by the facilitators themselves. Almost all representatives were women.

Finally, 50 families were given a microcredit grant to start an income-generating activity. The tutoring phase then began. Every week, the tutors visit the families directly in their workplace to see the progress of their activities and to offer support, advice and motivation.

Until now, the loan reimbursement rate has been 100 per cent and, most importantly, a tangible improvement has been observed in the general conditions of the beneficiary families, including in economic terms.

Factors that significantly contribute to such positive outcomes are training of beneficiaries, personalization of reimbursement plans, provision of interest-free loans, continuous support and enhancement of the crucial role of women in the local family system.

Behind these factors, there is the choice of Associazione Casa Famiglia Rosetta to focus on people's empowerment and welfare rather than on the financial sustainability of the programme. In other words, there is an approach based on the human person in his or her totality.

Training and capacity-building activity

By fostering empowerment through skills enhancement, Associazione Casa Famiglia Rosetta has also been engaged in training and capacity-building activities at the international level. In the 1990s, it cooperated with the United Nations and the Department of State of the United States of America in the implementation of training programmes for drug treatment workers in Eastern European countries, including Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Slovakia and Slovenia. From 2009 to 2012, it was engaged, as a non-governmental organization specializing in the field of drug abuse and HIV/AIDS issues, in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Treatment training project, in particular in Côte d'Ivoire, Mozambique and Nigeria. In 2012, Associazione Casa Famiglia Rosetta implemented a training programme aimed at guiding the recovery of women, which focused on 34 Afghan women working to help other women recover from drug addiction.

Final considerations and recommendations

Drawing on our experience, we have become increasingly aware that there is no single and simple blueprint for achieving poverty eradication and social inclusion. The impoverishment and exclusion of an ever-growing multitude in today's world must be faced and fought in all its complexity to avoid dissipating energies and resources.

At the same time, we have strengthened our belief that the empowerment of people is a critical task. However, it has to be understood as a rehabilitative process that starts from people's inner attitudes, affects their minds, bodies and knowledge, flows through their culture and social relations and results in concrete and permanent changes in their daily life, in their family, in their country and in the world as a whole.

We also share the firm belief that without personal changes there is no possibility of eradicating poverty. At the same time, however, without structural changes we can only alleviate poverty and not defeat it. Many people will run the risk of poverty recidivism. There must be something wrong in the rules of global economy in a world where the richest 2 per cent of adults own more than half of all global wealth. This situation most likely produces poverty instead of reducing it.

While civil society organizations are struggling to achieve poverty eradication and social inclusion through empowerment programmes, the United Nations, for its part, can make a powerful contribution by courageously urging national Governments to implement structural changes for a more equitable economic system and by championing such changes at the global level.

Finally, we should no longer imagine development as a high-speed train and inclusion as the effort to enable as many people as possible to jump on to it. We need a deep paradigm shift in which inclusion for all, especially for the most vulnerable, is itself the train leading the world towards true development, with the engine as justice and the track as every human being.
