**Economic Empowerment report – Talat Pasha**

Assalamu alaikum everybody; which means ‘Peace be with you’.

I will not go into the number of Projects submitted this year as the data base comes up with a new number every time. All I want to say is that the diversity of projects submitted this year is very inspiring and the projects are mostly result oriented. In some, women are given an opportunity to increase their confidence and some give them a chance to increase their income through training. Each project helps to empower women at different levels.

Mock Interviews/Dress for success/Future ready careers - are examples of projects whereby girls and women are taught how to appear in job interviews and prepare for a professional life. This not only raises their confidence but also equips them with a higher level of confidence. Such projects have far reaching results because they equip the young women to deal with the first steps to a better economic status.

Workshops and Training programmes are steps towards ‘Educate to Lead. Here young women are taught skills so that they learn to utilize their education and turn it into a money making endeavour. These projects are very practical and result-oriented.

Providing a safe haven for women and giving them an opportunity to build their lives has also been a focus of various clubs. Shelter homes, Counselling, working to reduce custodial sentences and reoffending have also been given due attention.

Forging new links and partnering with other organizations has also been a popular trend this year which is greatly encouraged by us. Friendship link clubs are also finding better and closer ties with each other by working on interesting projects together.

There are some countries who have not done any project on Economic Empowerment. I would encourage all clubs to do at least one such project as Economic Empowerment is the key to the liberation of women.

As an APD for Economic Empowerment I have tried to keep up your interest by contributing to the Programme Action Magazine (popularly known as PAM) and writing regularly on my Economic Empowerment page. I was very encouraged to know that my page has been quite popular and has had a high number of hits. Please continue to read this to know more about the Programme Action work done in our Federation.

I also try to bring into focus the problems faced by women from other parts of the world specially the third world countries so that you all have the opportunity to know the true facts and ground realities and understand their perspective too. We have always encouraged diversity and are encouraged by your response to it. The programme focus forms are being submitted but I still feel that many are without photos and this becomes a big hurdle when we are looking at projects. Good interesting photos are always the best way to talk about your project so please do try to submit them along with your focus forms.

I would also like to encourage you to write to us, the APD team, on a regular basis if possible, to give your feedback – to ask us if you face any problems. Be in touch. It should not be a conference to conference contact.

The love and labour that goes into each of your projects is amazing, The far reaching benefits of these projects and women helped not only near the lead clubs but also thousands of miles away is indeed very heart warming. Thank you very much for all that you do Soroptimists. We are all very proud of you!!