

## **Principles of Sister City philanthropic engagement**

1. Listen to people in need; those who don't suffer the consequences of a problem don't understand it in the same way as those who do.
2. Encourage/support local people that are working to improve their own community.
3. Support projects that lead toward autonomy. A community should not become dependent upon outside aid.
4. Encourage local people take an activity more seriously, thus increasing local participation.
5. Act individually and collectively to avoid those that would benefit from the exploitation of others.
6. Educate people on how to take an active role in identifying needs, brainstorming solutions, developing a plan, identifying resources, executing the plans, and evaluating the results. Emphasis on education enables people to hold in their own hands the tools for building a better life.
7. Work with groups that are truly representative of and accountable to their community. Avoid individuals acting out of pure self-interest.
8. Provide support based on a clear written agreement, which includes, details on why the groups are working together, what role each organization should play, when and how the project will be evaluated, how long the support will last, what will happen afterward. Never agree to fund any project for perpetuity. Make copies of the agreement available to every interested party in their own language, and anyone concerned should be able to question the agreement.
9. Support projects, which help people, recognize the value of their own resources, their culture, knowledge, and abilities.
10. Continually reflect on experiences, learn from mistakes, and refine these principles of engagement.

"A rock in the water does not understand the suffering of a rock in the sun". The people who suffer a problem understand it the best. They also have the greatest interest in finding a solution.

Organizations that have funds, technical and material resources, and a mission of helping people in need, are rocks in the water. They are trying to solve other people's problems, not their own. They can end up doing harm while they are trying to do good.

For example;

- They can create an attitude of dependency on outside help
- The way they intervene can lead the beneficiaries to think that they can't do effective work without foreign aid
- They sometimes reinforce people who are exploiting others in the community
- The resources that are shared sometimes fail to reach the intended beneficiaries
- Outside involvement can upset the social equilibrium of the community. Even if the existing situation is unfair, turning it upside down can make things worse for everyone

Because of these sorts of problems, there are sometimes negative reactions to aid and development organizations. Suspicions can grow to the point that the intended beneficiaries believe the aid organization is part of a plot to keep the community under domination.

Nevertheless, it is possible for a sister city organization to play a positive role in its sister city community if they follow the principles of philanthropic engagement listed above