

To Whomsoever it may concern

My name is Jorge Amaral, a Rotary member for 36 years, my club is Rotary Club da Senhora da Hora – District 1970 - Portugal. President of the Club in 1998-99 and 2018-19 and President of the District Subcommittee of Grants 2018-21. In 2016, I was awarded, by the President of Rotary International, Ravi Ravindran, the enormous Honor of the highest distinction in Rotary – SERVICE ABOVE SELF.

Since joining Rotary, I have seen the Rotary Foundation as a fundamental tool for helping the most unfortunate people by contributing through humanitarian and sustainable projects. Frank Devlyn, President of R.I. 2000-01 encouraged me to participate in the fight against unnecessary blindness in people with extreme lack of financial means and specialized medical assistance. It was then with the help of my Club, several clubs in the District and Governors of District 1970, that we achieved more than 13,000 surgeries in the past 20 years.

I cannot fail to mention that the success of these 20 years of fighting against Avoidable Blindness must be shared with Dr. M.V. Ravikumar from R.C. Bangalore – D.3190, current President of the District Committee on Avoidable Blindness.

Talking or writing about the humanitarian action to combat childhood blindness by Dr. Ravishankar and Dr. Uma Ravishankar is something that, no matter how much it is explained, will always fall short of the reality of the work carried out by these two personalities. I met Dr. Ravishankar in 2013, during the Rotary Convention in Lisbon. It was introduced to me by my unforgettable and late friend, Dr. Gabriel Minder, a personality who had been recommended to me by President Frank Devlyn, and who contributed greatly to the success in the fight against Avoidable Blindness, in areas of extreme poverty, in adults and especially Children.

When we met, I showed Dr. Ravishankar the projects that we had carried out in Rotary District 1970 since 2000/2001. He was immediately very enthusiastic and since then we have been involved in several projects not only in Mysore but also in Gambia. In March 2019 I decided to visit Bangalore and Mysore, I wanted to see and feel all the work carried out over 20 years, through District 1970 and TRF, with some Rotary clubs from Bangalore and Mysore as partners. I will never forget visiting Dr. Ravishankar's clinic, Usha Kiran Eye Hospital, situated in Mysore. Dozens of children accompanied by their parents, humbly dressed in their best attire, were waiting to greet me in the warmest and most affectionate way that I will never forget in my life. Dr. Ravishankar explained to me that they were part of the children who had been saved from blindness by our joint projects. I felt at that moment that my dedication to this cause was worth it!

In his clinic, Dr. Ravishankar has dedicated a large part of his professional life over the last 20 years to the most marginalized communities, performing thousands of "Pro Bono" surgeries for thousands of adults and especially thousands of children. I welcome and hope for international recognition of the humanitarian action in the fight against blindness of the couple Dr. Ravishankar and Dr. Uma.

25th October 2023

Jorge Amaral

