



Leaving no one behind: Case studies for implementing the 2030 Agenda with people in poverty as agents of change

After having been universally agreed upon in December 2015, the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals has now entered its second year of implementation. In July 2017, Member States will be taking part in the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council to present their progress towards the Agenda's goals and targets at the national level. The three-day ministerial meeting will also focus on the theme "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world."

Despite the global consensus and commitment of Member States to "eradicate poverty and promote prosperity in a changing world"¹, reaching Goal 1 on eradicating poverty will be a tremendous challenge, given the current trends towards greater disparities.

Within this context, the International Movement ATD Fourth World wishes to share lessons learned from its grassroots projects in both the global North and global South, in an effort to ensure that the furthest behind are reached first and that, wherever they are, their human rights are respected and fulfilled. For its experience has shown that in order to eradicate poverty, three components are required: (1) more coherent anti-poverty strategies and programs; (2) adequate financing by public institutions and international organizations, and (3) a human-rights framework to ensure that the voices of those living in extreme poverty – those who are the most concerned - are heard and taken into account in the design, delivery and evaluation of policies that affect them.

REACHING THOSE FURTHEST BEHIND FIRST: A HUMAN-RIGHTS BASED APPROACH TO POVERTY ERADICATION

Contrary to the Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals are universal in nature and hold the firm intent of leaving no one behind. Today, 1.6 billion of people still live in multidimensional poverty². Reaching those who live in pockets of extreme poverty will require special attention to the factors that imprison them in inhumane conditions. One of the reason for that is the "invisibility" of those living in deep poverty because national statistics very often do not count them in their censuses due to lack of available data and inefficient measuring tools. For instance, UNICEF acknowledged that one in three children do not officially exist, since nearly 230 million children under age five have not had their births officially recorded, therefore excluding them from education, health care, etc.³

¹ As set out by HLPF's theme this year.

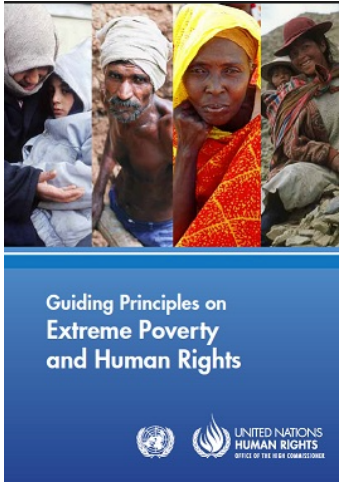
² Background note on SDG 1 for HLPF 2017 by the UN system, page 2:
https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/14379SDG1format-final_OD.pdf

³ "Challenges 2015: Toward Sustainable Development that Leaves No One Behind", International Movement ATD Fourth World, Publisher: Editions Quart Monde, 2014. Page 47.

Despite the challenges, reaching those furthest behind first should be a top global priority, not only because eradicating extreme poverty is a moral duty but also because it is a legal obligation under existing international human rights law. As acknowledged by the UN Human Rights Council in September 2012 when it adopted the [Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights](#), extreme poverty is not only a lack of financial means – it is the direct result of human rights violations. This recognition was noted by the General Assembly that same year. The international community will therefore fail to reach the Goals and targets under Agenda 2030 if development policies and programs do not target the extremely poor, respect their rights and dignity, or recognize their efforts and contributions.

The Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights provide global guidelines to ensure that public policies, including poverty eradication efforts, reach the poorest members of society, respect and uphold their rights, and take into account the significant social, cultural, economic and structural obstacles to poverty eradication.

- > They spell out the main dimensions that are the most important to people living in extreme poverty — such as physical integrity, access to legal identification, and access to justice, an adequate standard of living, adequate food and nutrition, water, housing, health care, decent work, education, and social protection.
- > They summarize the priority actions that must be taken in order to address the human rights violations that are the cause and consequence of extreme poverty.
- > They summarize States’ obligations to provide international assistance and cooperation, as established in several international human rights treaties.



This set of principles has been translated into concrete suggestions for people working at the local level in the handbook [“Making Human Rights Work For People Living In Extreme Poverty,”](#) produced by ATD Fourth World and Franciscans International, along with more than 20 grassroots organizations worldwide.

MOVING TO IMPLEMENTATION: CASE STUDIES ON ERADICATING EXTREME POVERTY ON THE GROUND

The interlinkages between the 17 SDGs and the need to implement them in an integrated fashion lie at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. This widely acknowledged narrative is yet to be transformed into concrete and innovative solutions at the local level. On the ground, ATD Fourth World is active in more than 30 countries spanning across the five continents and works towards translating the interconnected and transformative nature of Agenda 2030 into projects that are multidimensional and participatory in nature. The case studies presented below - in the fields of participation, education, social protection and decent work – highlight good practices and ways in which people living in poverty are meaningfully involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects aimed at eradicating poverty in all its forms.

Right to participation of people living in poverty

People with a direct experience of poverty are in the best position to point out the nature and depth of the changes that are needed, for they know first-hand the factors that keep them from

being able to lift themselves out of poverty. When they are included in the planning, implementation and evaluation of development policies and programs, and their expertise is taken into account in the initial design and subsequent implementation, programs and policies are more effective and are more adapted to reach those furthest behind.

GOOD PRACTICE: For people in poverty to accept participating in such policies and programs, gaining their trust is crucial. In the Philippines, the local ATD Fourth World team took time to meet with families living in cramped compartments or shacks under bridges and cemeteries, family by family, during the relocation process initiated by the government. They facilitated Community Forums to enable families to express their thoughts and develop a constructive dialogue with authorities responsible for managing the relocation program. The program became more effective as it took the families' needs and aspirations into account.

- > Obstacles to participation must be identified and addressed, such as stigmatization, discrimination and criminalization of people living in poverty, lack of access to relevant and understandable information.
- > Priority should be given to the poorest and most vulnerable people who have been historically - and remain at present - the most affected by environmental degradation and social and economic exclusion. Experience has shown that approaches that reach the most excluded also benefit the rest of the population.
- > Relevant decision-making bodies at all levels should establish specific mechanisms and institutional arrangements for inclusive participation. Local community organizations and religious institutions can often provide useful support to participatory mechanisms through their long-term presence in poor communities.
- > Effective strategies should be based on innovative partnerships between donors, governments, and other actors, including people living in extreme poverty.

European Fourth World People's University: Working together with the very poor to build Europe's future.

The Fourth World People's University is a space where people experiencing extreme poverty, academic researchers and training professionals share their knowledge, compare their questions, combine their insights to produce a body of jointly-written work with a set of recommendations on issues critical to the fight against extreme poverty.

In December 2014, a European People's University gathered in Brussels to create a [list of 14 propositions](#) towards a more inclusive Europe. In the 2016 European Fourth World People's University, participants further worked on two of the propositions and developed recommendations to improve minimum income benefits so they provide a decent life for all persons living in Europe. These were shared with members of the European Economic and Social Committee to inform their policy-making.

Lessons learned: People's University is a tool of participation and inclusion of the most excluded. It enables positive change at various levels:

- People with a direct experience of poverty need a space to strengthen their confidence and build an understanding of their situation to be able to contribute in decisions making processes.
- Building bridges between the poorest European citizens and EU institutions contributes in bridging the democratic gap.
- Policy-makers, practitioners and people in poverty have different understanding of the same problems. Drafting recommendations together enrich all actors and the proposals are more inclusive and comprehensive.

GOOD PRACTICE: The benchmark for measuring the effectiveness of poverty eradication programs should be the progress made by the poorest and more excluded 20% of the population – in other words, those who have been left behind the furthest.

Multi-dimensional poverty and qualitative measurement

The first-hand experience and knowledge of people living in poverty is often ignored, even though they are able to bring valuable contributions to the understanding of poverty. The multidimensional nature of poverty is now widely acknowledged by the development community and by the UN system. Nonetheless, traditional measurements continue to assess income or consumption, thereby contributing to a very partial understanding of poverty, and putting aside crucial elements such as discrimination, exclusion, insecurity, violence or lack of voice...

- > In order to better capture the different dimensions of poverty, particularly the social dimensions, it is necessary to develop new measures, metrics, and indicators through participatory mechanisms that include people experiencing poverty.
- > It is necessary to combine quantitative and qualitative data to reflect the multidimensional nature of extreme poverty and the overlapping effect of multiple deprivations.
- > It is also imperative to gather and report disaggregated data in order to monitor progress across different economic quintiles and population groups.

Multidimensional poverty measurement: People with a direct experience of poverty, practitioners, and academics collaborate to define poverty

Since 2016, ATD Fourth World has been carrying out an international research project in partnership with the University of Oxford in seven countries (Bangladesh, Bolivia, France, Tanzania, UK, Ukraine, and USA) to refine the understanding and measurement of poverty by engaging people with direct experience, practitioners and academics. The final objective is to contribute to more sensitive policy design at national and international levels and thereby to greater reductions in poverty. In each country, national research teams are composed of ATD volunteers, people living in poverty and professionals, making it a deeply participatory process. This approach called “Merging of Knowledge” recognizes people with direct experiences of chronic poverty as co-researchers on an equal footing with academics and practitioners.

Lessons learned: Even if it is too early to draw conclusions from this research, the methodology implemented has already demonstrated that it is transformative in three ways:

- In epistemological terms, new knowledge is produced.
- In social terms, positive transformative effects occur for all participants, individually and collectively.
- In political terms, the methodology is in line with a human-rights based approach to poverty that must « ensure the free, informed and meaningful participation of people living in poverty at all stages of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of decisions ... affecting them » (UN Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, 2012, article 38.) It opens a space of “ongoing deliberative participation” crucial to achieving the interlinkages between Goal 1 and Goal 16.

Decent work, access to health and social protection for all

According to ILO estimates, nearly 73 per cent of the world's population lacks access to adequate social protection coverage⁴. Social protection should be guaranteed for all. It will allow people living in poverty to have a basic security to live their lives in dignity. Promoting decent jobs (Goal 8.3) and social protection for all (Goal 1.3) can only be achieved through strong and inclusive partnerships bringing together people with direct experience of poverty, institutions, and local stakeholders. Wherever ATD Fourth World's projects take place, in the North as in the South, the emphasis is put on the importance of innovation, partnerships and inclusive processes.

GOOD PRACTICE: Social protection in Madagascar (SDG 1.3)

Between 2009 and 2011, ATD Fourth World and UNICEF conducted a cash transfer program in Madagascar to determine the impact of money people received through a social protection floor program. For two years, 300 adults (and their 450 children) who worked on a rubbish dump received a family allowance credited each month to an account at the local post office. The results showed the importance of this cash transfer: school attendance and medical consultations at the local health center went up from 30 to 60 per cent. People also invested in improving their homes and in additional income-generating activities (IGA in the attached graph), such as the raising of pigs, ducks and chickens. As a result, their resilience was enhanced.

Lessons learned:

- Very small amounts of money can have a strong impact on people's lives. In this program, each household were given 15 887 Ariary (\$6.02) per month, to which were added 8000 Ariary (\$3,03) per child aged below 6 years old and 9 000 Ariary (\$3.4) for those above 6 years old.
- Cash transfers provide a form of agency, as the individual receiving the cash will decide where to invest. Nonetheless, understanding gender and power dynamics is fundamental in order to take into consideration how the cash will be managed and spent within a household and within a group or community.
- People living in poverty have to be associated with the design, delivery and evaluation of the cash transfer project for the project to be impactful. Accountability mechanisms have to be created to monitor whether the project duly responds to the people's needs.
- Beyond the better access to health and education enabled through cash transfers, solutions also need to be found so that essential services are accessible and available free of charge on a long-term basis.

REMEMBER Because extreme poverty is the result of multiple human rights violations, it is only by adopting a coherent and multidimensional approach that it can be overcome. , Actions such as improving basic services, mobilizing community participation and empowering women are crucial to meeting other Goals, such as those related to children's education and health. A multidimensional approach contributes to the effectiveness and sustainability of an anti-poverty program by improving the community's living conditions more broadly. It is therefore necessary to take into account the broader context and to understand the social, cultural, historical and economic factors that influence a community's behaviors in order to have a more effective and appropriate strategy.

⁴ World Social Protection Report, ILO, 2014/2015

Innovative partnerships for creating decent jobs (SDG 8.3): the « Territories with zero long-term unemployment » project in France

In 2016, a unique multi-stakeholder project was launched in France to provide individuals who had been unemployed for a long time with paid work based on their skills, on a schedule of their choice. The idea is not to create new jobs to replace existing ones, but to respond to unmet needs in partnership with social service providers and local and national authorities.

Lessons learned:

- The creation of a steering committee comprised of local elected representatives, civil society and local businesses to identify unmet needs at the local level and to create jobs that foster cooperation between local economy stakeholders is proving crucial to the project's success.
- A strong partnership between businesses, trade unions, social workers, and the French administration is critical to create innovative work solutions
- The project needs to have government backing: a law was passed in February 2016 by the French Parliament to allow this experiment to take place in 10 local territories was extremely useful.
- Innovative funding needs to be found: these additional jobs are financed through the reallocation of government unemployment allowances to the creation of a new job market that is complementary to the existing one.

GOOD PRACTICE: Health projects in Haiti (SDG 3)

In Haiti, ATD Fourth World works in a context of crisis after the country suffered greatly from the earthquake that devastated its capital Port-au-Prince in 2010 and which resulted in malnutrition, a cholera epidemic and a general deterioration of the socio-economic environment. To help the most vulnerable families, ATD Fourth World designed a healthcare micro-insurance program in partnership with a Haitian NGO, Service Œcuménique d'Entraide (SOE). This project, which has evolved over the years, now enables participating families to have access to a health system that is not limited to emergency care but also includes secondary care and access to specialists. This system's costs are low: less than \$12 per year per person, paid for through a solidarity fund. In 2013, 758 families were registered, comprising 3,175 individuals including 556 children under the age of five.

Lessons learned:

- Health care needs are increased when people are exposed to poor living conditions, a degraded environment harmful to human health, and deteriorating economic conditions. Access to care is significantly facilitated by such insurance systems, which allow participating families to be well protected against catastrophic or simply elevated health-related expenses.
- By being involved in the operation and monitoring of the health care system, the families become "agents" in promoting their own health.
- From the outset, participants have collaborated through working groups in the operation and evolution of the project, thus playing an active role in the process. In 2013, a committee was formed consisting of the staff, the managers of the health card providing access to the program, and representatives of the insured families to provide comments and feedbacks on the system.

Access to Quality Education for all

Education is one of the building blocks of life. A child's right to education is non-negotiable, regardless of the family's economic, cultural or social background. However, for children living in a family immersed in deepest poverty, the likelihood of accessing and completing primary school is substantially reduced. Specific investments should be made to ensure that inclusive and quality education (SDG 4) is made possible for all, with mechanisms to allow dialogues between educators, parents and civil society organizations to ensure that no child is left behind.

GOOD PRACTICE: Education for All in Tanzania

In Tanzania from 2014 to 2016, ATD Fourth World encouraged the involvement of people living in extreme poverty in a participatory research project entitled "Education for All," supported by UNESCO. The objective of this research was to understand the conditions needed to enable children living in extreme poverty to start and complete their primary education. This participatory project included people living in poverty in the research team.

Lessons learned:

- Pervasive discrimination of disadvantaged students and parents by school teachers and staff, as well as by fellow students, needs to be addressed by introducing measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination and stigmatization.
- The training of teachers and school staff should include an understanding of the effects of extreme poverty and other manifestations of social exclusion, and equip them with the knowledge to provide meaningful support to students who are struggling.
- Nominally free education can have hidden costs – such as school materials, transport, uniforms – which are difficult for pupils living in extreme poverty to cover. Financial barriers should be removed to allow equitable access to learning, and financial support should be provided when required to offset these costs.
- A conducive environment for partnerships between parents and schools should be created by instituting measures that involve all parents, including poor and marginalized families, in the setting of budgets and curricula for their children's schools.

REMEMBER Only a multidimensional approach provides a good understanding of the obstacles faced by a child living in poverty: the wider context of families living in extreme poverty needs to be taken into account to see how health, income, wider community relationships, etc, have an impact on a child's education.

As this series of case studies highlights, lifting people out of poverty is possible when processes are designed with the people themselves. The meaningful participation of people in poverty in programs that affect their lives is a fundamental human right and provides them with an opportunity to be active agents of change. Having their voices heard also ensures the best use of financial resources, as participatory programs are more relevant to people's needs and therefore more effective.

Agenda 2030 presents tremendous challenges, but also offers the opportunity to be transformational. The realization of its Goals will require the mobilization of both financial and human resources in new innovative ways.

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