



Coming together to eradicate extreme poverty and exclusion

“Wherever human beings are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure these rights be respected is our solemn duty.” Joseph Wresinski, founder of ATD Fourth World, on 17 October 1987 at the inauguration of the Commemorative Stone to Victims of Extreme Poverty in Paris, France.

On October 17, 1987, defenders of human rights from across the world, marked and outraged by extreme poverty, gathered in Paris in response to the call from Joseph Wresinski, to:

- Pay homage to the victims of hunger, ignorance and violence
- Affirm their conviction that extreme poverty is not inevitable
- Proclaim their solidarity with those around the world who struggle to overcome it.

ATD Fourth World was founded upon, and continues to promote, a coming together of society’s members to unite around the cause of eradicating extreme poverty, starting with those who have first-hand experience of its reality and impact.

Poverty is a scourge in all societies and undermines peace within and between nations. In 2000, the Member States of the United Nations expressed their determination to eliminate extreme poverty, and made it the first Millennium Development Goal. The world financial crisis surfaced, however, adding to the food crisis and climate change, which

have a disproportionate impact on people living in poverty. If the dignity of every person is to be recognized, people of all origins, convictions and beliefs will need to take action, refuse to accept this injustice and insist the fight against extreme poverty is included in the reform of the international financial and economic systems and national reform packages. The crisis must be overcome without leaving anyone behind.



Strengthening the Impact of 17th October, World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty

Review of the 17th October

In December 2005, a UN Resolution concerning the implementation of the First Decade of the UN for the Eradication of Poverty requested the Secretary-General to undertake a review of the observance of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty “*in order to identify lessons learned and ways to promote the mobilization of all stakeholder in the fight against poverty.*”

ATD Fourth World co-chaired with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) a steering committee to oversee the review. Three reports were published presenting the findings of this review, which was undertaken with NGOs, trade unions, UN Member States and specialized agencies. The reports – one of which was published by the UN Secretary-General (A/61/308) in September 2006 – reiterate the intrinsic link between the eradication of extreme poverty and the respect for human rights and stress that persons living in extreme poverty

are not just beneficiaries of programmes, but rather essential actors for change and defenders of human rights.

Twelve countries (Burkina Faso, Canada, France, Haiti, Ireland, Mauritius, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Switzerland, Tanzania and the USA) carried out a more comprehensive consultation with the various partners taking part in the process. In May 2006, delegations from the countries above, including people living in extreme poverty, took part in an international seminar in Montreal along with various representatives from UN agencies and civil society partners, to identify the lessons learned and put forward recommendations to strengthen the impact of the International Day:

- How to work meaningfully with people with direct experience of poverty
- Recognising the important role children can play and providing opportunities for their involvement in efforts to eradicate poverty



→ The role of statutory authorities and the media in strengthening the International Day and long-term anti-poverty initiatives.

“Rare is the day when you can speak of poverty without shame. When I saw all those people coming together, when I sat down with people that I had never dared to approach, when I spoke up in front of everyone, it gave me a sense of courage, of strength. That day, I realized that all these people wanted us to count for something.”

Grassroots participant at a 17 October commemoration.



International Campaign: “Ending Extreme Poverty, A Road to Peace”

The international campaign, launched in 2006 and culminating on 17 October 2007 had 5 main aims:

- Support and help link together people taking action with people in extreme poverty across the world
- Promote the development of a social movement across the world of people taking action
- Encourage people to get involved to better understand the reality of extreme poverty and the ways of taking action
- Question common philosophical, cultural and religious thinking, and the academic and artistic worlds, so that they take into account this collective effort to fight poverty.
- Question public authorities at all levels - local, national and international - to ask them to recognize this social movement and to contribute to it.

The principle campaign tool was a **Call to Action**, inviting all citizens committed to justice and peace to increase the impact of 17 October, and join a movement

of people calling on the fight against poverty to be made a priority. Over 160 000 signatures from 150 countries were received. These were presented by an international delegation of ATD Fourth World members, including people living in extreme poverty, to Ban Ki-Moon, UN Secretary-General, on 17 October 2007.

“Today we are here with you, not only to speak about the poverty we experience or to evoke only the hardship we live. We are here to pledge our solidarity to all people who, throughout the world, strive to eradicate extreme poverty.”

Mr. Adonis Salas, ATD Fourth World grassroots member from the Philippines addressing Mr. Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General

Paris Seminar: Living Commitments, Engraved in Stone

120 delegates from 31 villages and cities around the world that host a replica of the Commemorative Stone in Honour of the Victims of Extreme Poverty were invited by the Mayor of Paris, Bertrand Delanoë and the Director General of ATD Fourth World,

Eugen Brand to a seminar on the theme “Living Commitments, Engraved in Stone”. Public officials, people living in extreme poverty and members of civil society organisations explored a number of questions including how the Commemorative Stone, and the numerous replicas worldwide, play a mobilising role in the fight against extreme poverty.

“The existence of the Commemorative Stone is proof of the existence of extreme poverty and the need to fight it. It invites all social classes to realise that life will not be perfect for some whilst other live in total poverty.”

Christophe Ziwaya, Mayor of Ourgou, Manega, Burkina Faso.

17 October International Committee

In June 2008, the inaugural meeting of the International Committee for 17 October was held at the International Centre in France, chaired by Cassam Uteem, former President of Mauritius. The goals of the International Committee are:

- To promote the World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty, which publicly unites all those



who are striving together to end poverty and those who want to join them, whether at global, national or local levels.

→ To promote the observance of this international day in ways that respect the original spirit and meaning of the day

→ To promote and safeguard spaces where people from very different backgrounds can meet to fight extreme poverty and violations of human rights, and to strive towards peace for all.

The composition of this committee is unique, with members coming from different backgrounds, including former heads of State and United Nations Secretary-Generals, renowned artists and academics, as well as people with first-hand experience of extreme poverty, all committed together against poverty and exclusion.

Permanent Forum on Extreme Poverty in the World

The Permanent Forum on Extreme Poverty in the World is a network of organisations and individuals who work very closely alongside people living in extreme poverty. Participants in the Forum have their own identity, objectives and philosophy. The aim is not for participants to represent or become part of ATD Fourth World. The objective of the Forum is to enable participants to share their questions, successes and failures, and to think with others about their own projects and commitment to the fight against poverty in a spirit of freedom and reciprocity.

The network communicates through the “Letter to Friends around the World” published three times a year in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish

and sent to 3000 correspondents in over 100 countries. In 2007, an ‘Asian Newsletter’ was produced and sent three times a year to correspondents in the region. In 2006, a report entitled ‘The Proceedings from the Mediterranean Seminar’ was produced in Arabic, English and French, presenting a record of the seminar held in 2005 that brought together over 60 Permanent Forum participants from the Mediterranean basin. The links established before and after the Seminar with participants were reinforced through a bi-monthly newsletter in English and French, as well as individualised correspondence.

Permanent Forum members were actively invited to participate in the civil society consultation undertaken by the United Nations to evaluate the impact of October 17, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. A number of members also contributed to ATD Fourth World’s submission to the UN Human Rights Council’s consultation on the Draft Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights.

“We are a group of about 50 mothers, who have renounced the aid programmes in order to rise above our poverty through our own means. We managed to obtain a loan from some NGOs so that we could buy some chicks to raise. After three months the hens started to lay. We sacrificed some of the hens for food and sold several others to pay back the loan. In this way we have shown that, given the opportunity, we women can work too.”
Permanent Forum member from Peru.

Partnerships with Civil Society Organisations

ATD Fourth World continued to work with organisations and networks working in the field of human rights and extreme poverty and forge and strengthen relationships with new partners. Among those include ties with Amnesty International’s International Secretariat who supported the celebration of a seminar at the UN in New York for the 17 October 2008 on the theme of participation. Partnership with Civicus was strengthened by participating and speaking at the General Assembly in 2006 and 2008 in Glasgow, UK. A new relationship was forged with the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) including collaborating in the holding of poverty hearings in the run up to the UN High-Level Event on the Millennium Development Goals in New York on 25 September 2008.



World Social Forum

ATD Fourth World delegations from Africa and Europe participated in the Polycentric World Social Forum in Bamako, Mali, in 2006, and at the World Social Forum in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2007. At both events, delegates ran workshops on mobilising civil society in the fight against poverty.



FOURTH WORLD