



Developing a Culture of Human Rights

"We are human beings and among human beings we can dialogue and discuss things. We are all different but in matters of intelligence, we are equals. It is true that we are poor but we have the same capacities and the same rights as everyone else. We mustn't accept the fact that we are left out." Walter Tunqui, grassroots member of ATD Fourth World, Peru.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, *"the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people."* The link between human rights and extreme poverty was raised at the United Nations at the request of Joseph Wresinski in 1980s. It was subsequently recognised in a report by the UN Special

Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Leandro Despouy, to the UN Sub-commission for human rights in 1996 as a definition of extreme poverty, as originally proposed by Wresinski in his report to the French Economic and Social Council:

"The lack of basic security connotes the absence of one or more factors enabling individuals and families to assume basic responsibilities and to enjoy fundamental rights. The situation may become widespread and result in more serious and permanent consequences. The lack of basic security leads to chronic poverty when it simultaneously affects several aspects of people's lives, when it is prolonged and when it severely compromises people's chances of regaining their rights and of reassuming their responsibilities in the foreseeable future."

ATD Fourth World advocates this definition which links extreme poverty and human rights, highlighting poverty's multi-dimensional nature, as well as both the similarity and the difference between situations of poverty and extreme poverty. It makes it possible to think not only in terms of statistics or income indicators, but also qualitative criteria illustrating how people live in the most difficult conditions. It engenders an approach based on equality and participation in the fight against extreme poverty.

Through its work in this area, ATD Fourth World demonstrates how people living in extreme poverty are not only victims of human rights violations but defenders of human rights, and supports them to find solutions and seek redress.

Draft Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights

The Draft Guiding Principles (DGP) “Extreme poverty and human rights” is the first international document which sets out clearly the implications of existing international laws in relation to the human rights of people living in extreme poverty.

To this end, over the course of 2007, ATD Fourth World brought together people living in extreme poverty to enable their expertise to be included in the drafting process in: Lille (France), Cusco (Peru), Kielce (Poland), Dakar (Senegal) and Bangkok (Thailand).

involved from the initial local consultation process through to the concluding consultation in Geneva. As Doña Silvia Velasco, grassroots member from Cusco, Peru, explained at the concluding consultation seminar in January 2009, organized by the Office of



The DPGs add value to the existing international human rights framework by, among other things, reinforcing existing instruments.

The draft guiding principles were written by a working group of the UN Sub-commission for Human Rights and adopted by the Sub-commission in August 2006. In 2007, at the request of the Human Rights Council, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights carried out a broad consultation on the draft to obtain the views of all stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations, especially those in which people in situations of extreme poverty express their views.

Exchanges with other members of ATD Fourth World also occurred, particularly in Geneva (Switzerland), and with the organizations that are members of the Permanent Forum Against Extreme Poverty in the World. The fruit of this consultation was published in 2008 in the document: “Dignity in the Face of Extreme Poverty: Consultations with people in extreme poverty on the draft guiding principles” (available from ATD Fourth World’s website).

The DGP process has enabled several hundred grassroots members of ATD Fourth World living in extreme poverty from across four continents to be

the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “*The conclusions are a significant moment because we have planted a seed in the earth so that in the future our children will not live in the same poverty as us, so they can reap the fruit of this seed because they are the world’s future.*”

These conclusions pave the way for the Principles to be adopted in 2010 by the Human Rights Council.



Honourable Mention UNESCO/Bilbao Prize

On 10 December 2008, the International Movement ATD Fourth World received an honourable mention in the award of the UNESCO/Bilbao Prize for the Promotion of a Culture of Human Rights. The prize rewards the efforts of

rights becomes impossible, such as access to healthcare shelter, education or decent employment. Everywhere, it is necessary to improve relations among disadvantaged people and other actors, often characterised by incomprehension and mutual distrust. With people who are often undocumented and

European Social Charter, ratified by France.

This situation is not uncommon in France and one particular example came from the experience of a group of sedentary travellers in Herblay, outside Paris, who lived in unsanitary and indecent housing



institutions, organizations and individuals that have made a particularly important contribution to the promotion of human rights through education and research, and through efforts to raise the awareness of decision-makers and the general public.

Reinforce fundamental ties to access human rights

To overcome extreme poverty, people or groups need to reinforce fundamental ties, with their family or their community, which will allow them to access their rights, whether they be civil, political, economic, social or cultural. Without such reinforcement of ties to the family or community, access to

scarcely politically represented, it is vital to promote new forms of participatory democracy, at a local and national level, and to encourage States and public opinion to strongly commit to the fight against extreme poverty.

Below are two examples of such an approach in practice:

1. Collective Complaint lodged against France

In January 2006, the International Movement ATD Fourth World lodged a collective complaint against the French Government for breaches of the right to be protected against poverty and social exclusion and to housing for people living in extreme poverty, contrary to the revised

conditions and had been supported by ATD Fourth World's local team for more than 20 years. In April 2004 these families had received eviction orders, subject to appeal, leading to many of them fleeing from place to place, resulting in, among other things, the impossibility of their children to enrol in school.

In December 2007, the European Committee of Social Rights found that France had violated Article 31, which enshrines the right to housing and article E which protects Roma people and travellers from discrimination. The Committee also recorded a violation of Article 30 (the right to protection against poverty and

social exclusion), due to a lack of a coordinated approach to promote effective access to housing for people who are or could find themselves in a situation of social exclusion or poverty.

The lodging of the complaint embodies ATD Fourth World's approach of viewing poverty and social exclusion in terms of rights. People living in extreme poverty are not passive objects of public policy but citizens whose rights are denied. They are not asking for handouts but for legitimate access to their rights and to exercise their responsibilities. This led ATD Fourth World to involve those who were vulnerably housed throughout the campaign, particularly sedentary traveller people, from the initial expulsion hearing at the local court, right up to the hearing at the Council of Europe in September 2007.

"This is the first time anyone's ever said I was right!"

Grassroots member from Alsace, France, after the hearing at the Council of Europe.

2. Adult Forums in Manila: citizenship and access to rights

Adult Forums in Manila currently take place twice a month at the ATD Fourth World office. The majority of participants come from communities where hundreds of families live in cramped conditions on backstreets and alleys alongside the highway and canal, as well as those residing inside a cemetery. In 2006, these meetings were a vital tool in supporting and organising

families facing another wave of demolitions. Families living alongside the nearby railways were being relocated en-masse and those living under a nearby bridge hoped to benefit from similar relocation packages.

A major challenge for one of the communities was the fact that they did not have the support of a local *barangay* (a local level of government in the Philippines) official. They also faced a lack of co-ordination between authorities at all levels and the fact that no-one had overall responsibility for their situation. All of this became evident during the Adult Forum meetings where participants were able to decide together the best course of action and receive advice and support from each other and the ATD Fourth World team about their rights and the responsibilities of the different agencies involved.

The insecurity of their situation and the efforts being made by the community to overcome it were the basis for a testimony read at the Manila Rizal Park commemoration on 17 October 2006 in the presence of the National Anti-Poverty Commission Lead Convenor, City of Manila Deputy Mayor and UN Resident Co-ordinator. Whilst each of these high-level officials heard what the

community had to say, it is a far cry from the ongoing dialogue needed to satisfactorily resolve their situation and that of millions like them in Metro Manila alone. Nevertheless, the community continues its efforts to be heard despite the regular obstacles and disappointments that they must face.

In 2007, the subject of citizenship and accessing the rights that go with it, was presented at the United Nations in New York by a Manila cemetery resident with both Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and General Assembly President Kerim. At a subsequent press briefing, he was able to outline in detail how important it was to gain this official *barangay* recognition, "Things are now easier because we have access to support from the *barangay* official. Before, we had no identity in the cemetery. Being a citizen means having rights (...) to vote and the children can go easily to school. For this you need help and support from the local authorities, such as the *barangay*, and need to be recognised as belonging to a community. The help and support you can then receive includes *barangay* clearance, voting permit, school places for the children, medical assistance and to be treated as a citizen of Manila."



FOURTH WORLD