



# October 17

*United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 2013*

## Concept Note

*Theme - "Working together towards a world without discrimination:  
Building on the experience and knowledge of people in extreme poverty"*

*"We refuse to hear the words he wants to say,  
because he is considered too poor to intervene."*

*Mr Parfait, Central Africa*

The selection of the theme for the annual commemoration this year is unique because, for the first time since the United Nations proclaimed October 17th as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, it takes into account actual inputs and feedback made by activists and people living in extreme poverty to the International Committee for October 17. Through this consultative process a theme that resonates very strongly with people living in extreme poverty was identified – one that highlights the discrimination that people face on a daily basis because of poverty, their marginalization in the political, economic and social spheres of their societies, and their lack of voice and representation in the conceptualisation, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes that affect them directly and indirectly.

They are the unseen, the unheard, and the disenfranchised.

For people living in poverty, their human rights, dignity, participation, personal security,

respect and due recognition of their efforts and contribution to society are just as important as their basic human needs such as health, education, water and sanitation and housing.

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*"The worst thing about living in extreme poverty is the contempt, that they treat you like you are worthless, that they look at you with disgust and fear and that they even treat you like an enemy. We and our children experience this every day, and it hurts us, humiliates us and makes us live in fear and shame."*

*Ms. Edilberta Béjar, Peru*

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Our societies too often ignore or undervalue the knowledge of people living in the worst situations of poverty because we assume wrongly that people who lack so much in terms of material wealth, social position and political power, must also lack any knowledge or understanding that could be useful to others. Sadly, despite the best intentions of governments, development agencies and donors, our current efforts to formulate, implement and evaluate policies and programmes to eradicate poverty have overlooked or ignored the unique knowledge based on the experience that people living in



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the worst conditions have accumulated, in some cases, over several generations. As a result, all too often, the policies and programmes meant to eradicate poverty are ill-adapted to the needs, realities and expectations of the people they are supposed to be helping.

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*"That people disrespect us by calling us names like 'social case', 'bad mother', 'incapable', 'good-for-nothing' demonstrates how they are judging us and do not know about the reality we face. We experience the violence of being discriminated against, of not existing, not being part of the same world...This everyday violence is abuse."*

*Ms. Laetitia Dubourdieu, France*

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As the United Nations prepares its global development agenda for the post-2015 period, it is critical that people living in extreme poverty should have sufficient space and attention within the process in order to elaborate on and add to existing knowledge about poverty, discrimination and human rights violations.

This means more than merely allowing them to give testimony about their own experiences. It also means the creation of conditions that enable and encourage people living in poverty to contribute their own thoughts and analysis, both individually and collectively, to the whole process of creating the knowledge that will shape the policies and programmes to eradicate poverty. To do anything less than this would be blatant discrimination and denial of their dignity and human rights.

The United Nations has been exploring ways to include the contributions of people living in poverty. These consultative efforts, however, still fall far short of what is needed for

a truly inclusive process because they fail to reach the most impoverished and marginalized in our societies.

We must break the silence of extreme poverty. If we don't, then our post-2015 efforts to eradicate poverty, end discrimination and create a more sustainable world will not reach everyone, especially the poorest and most excluded.

On the 17th of October each year, we are invited to demonstrate how to break this silence, on that day and every day of the year, through our solidarity with people living in poverty, and by our commitments and action.

Celebrated at the United Nations in 1993, for the first time, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty promotes dialogue and understanding between people living in poverty and their communities, and society at large. "It represents an opportunity to acknowledge the efforts and struggles of people living in poverty, a chance for them to make their concerns heard and a moment to recognize that poor people are in the forefront in the fight against poverty." (United Nations, Report of the Secretary General, A/61/308, para. 58)

More information about the commemorations organized on 17 October in New York and worldwide can be viewed at: <http://www.overcomingpoverty.org> and <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/social/poverty/>

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#### **International Committee for October 17**

*World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty - United Nations*

*International Day for the Eradication of Poverty*

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[www.overcomingpoverty.org](http://www.overcomingpoverty.org)

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