

LETTER TO FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD FORUM ON OVERCOMING EXTREME POVERTY



International Movement ATD Fourth World
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SO WHAT DO WE WANT TO DO NOW?

The work conducted by the ATD Fourth World Movement on five continents to evaluate the impact of the Millennium goals confirms that “anti-poverty policies not thought out with the poorest only very rarely have any impact on them, and too often turn against them”.

On the other hand, if we are capable of creating the conditions to ensure no-one is left out and everyone is able to contribute, projects and policies unite people instead of dividing them, and reduce inequalities instead of making them worse. In that case, justice, freedom and peace make progress, for everyone. It is our hope to see this ambition taken up everywhere around the world, as the starting point for truly sustainable development for all.

This is also what the participants said at the Fourth World People's University held at the European Parliament in Brussels, on the 5th of March. They came from ten or so European countries - activists confronted by extreme poverty every day, citizens in solidarity, civil servants and elected representatives from European institutions. They communicated and thought

together to define proposals to help build Europe in line with its values: Human rights, democracy and peace. This meeting is one more step in the long struggle to obtain recognition for people who live in poverty as fully fledged citizens who, because of their experience of life and their skills, are capable of making a vital contribution to building a world for everyone, with everyone.

I was impressed by the discussions in the group of activists about what needs to be done to ensure people living in extreme poverty are able to participate as citizens in public life. Someone said: “*Our aim is not to speak instead of others, but to continue seeking them out.*” Seeking out those who are missing, that is the watchword to guide us in everything we do. What are we doing to make sure they have a place among us, so that they can express themselves freely and contribute to change, so that they can influence our projects and programmes?

Isabelle Perrin, Director General
International Movement ATD Fourth World



WORDS FROM THE FORUM ON OVERCOMING EXTREME POVERTY TEAM

Forum correspondents are continually seeking out those whose contribution is missing and making sure no-one is forgotten because “the richness of our world depends on us all”.

Everyday, we receive your news that shows us your strong commitment to human dignity. From Morocco, Adonis M. shares with us what he discovered when he joined in with relief efforts for victims of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. Mamadou G. in Senegal tells us about the school he built so children and families weren't abandoned in his neighbourhood. In Portugal, the whole of a community neighbourhood

is making sure that everyone can have something to eat without being stigmatised or ashamed. Zaw MH from Myanmar helps us to find out about the lives of people in great difficulty by sharing their hopes through his poems.

The four articles in this Letter to Friends Around the World help to highlight the ongoing work of the Forum to collect and share your efforts so no-one is abandoned because of poverty. These efforts can also be publicised through the World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty, so that is why we are giving you some echoes from last years 17 October.

● ALONGSIDE MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

In 1997 Mamadou G, a young man from a poor area, was put in charge of a small initiative running a government infant nutrition programme.

The women were used to malnutrition, to needing vaccinations, and to frequent illnesses, particularly diarrhoea and malaria which is a big problem in this part of Dakar which is frequently flooded.



At the end of the programme in 2002, there was no more funding, so no more salaries, no premises.

What were they to do?

Definitely not abandon these women and children. In his youth Mamadou had been able to study thanks to a charity and said 'I need to do the same for others that was done for me'. The garage of his home served as premises and he covered the costs by taking an agricultural job.

His educational work, which was assisted by a facilitator from the initial programme, became more concrete through the creation of Keur Fatou Kaba (the Fatou Kaba

School). He accepted children who hadn't been officially registered with the state, but he also helped the mothers to obtain the papers which were indispensable to get enrolled in school. They were encouraged to register them before the age of 6 months, which was much cheaper than appearing later in front of the tribunal.

Thanks to his work during the holidays, and through small loans, Mamadou built a new classroom each year and in 2007 created an organisation called ANAVI (To be born and to live) to support the school whose needs were urgent.

This is what Catherine G from AGIRabcd discovered in 2011 during the World Social Forum in Dakar. The priority need was teacher training: 'It's more important for the school than having a roof'. AGIRabcd worked not 'for' but 'with' ANAVI, supporting the involvement of a retired teacher and trainers. About 15 people now form the teaching team, including Mamadou's wife who cooks for the pupils.

The work with the women hasn't stopped. ANAVI organises evening classes and is hoping to build a multi-purpose hall as a welcome centre, and to improve literacy for young girls in order, through education, to fight against poverty and child begging. 'We want to restore the young people rejected by the system'.

Mamadou lives in this neighbourhood and this is where he started his elementary school. Neighbours bring help, in particular at times of difficulty. 'What has allowed us to arrive at this point and welcome over 300 children is trust'.

FROM THE TESTIMONY OF MAMADOU G.,
PRESIDENT OF ANAVI, SENEGAL

● CARING FOR THOSE WHO ARE ISOLATED

Adonis is a medical student from Cameroon. Wherever he goes, whether it is Togo, Morocco, or elsewhere in the world, he is determined to reach out to the most isolated populations: "I want to go to remote areas so I can volunteer my time and help people get through difficult situations." Here, he shares with us his experiences in the Philippines in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan.

I decided to spend my 2013 annual leave by doing volunteer work, donating my knowledge and time to those in need. Thanks to financial support from friends, I was able to travel to the Philippines to assist victims of the typhoon.

One day, I had finished work earlier than usual and decided to spend time down by the sea. This is when I noticed a very flat island. I learnt that it was called Salvacio and that it was badly damaged by the typhoon. It had been submerged, and because there are no mountains, the population had nowhere to find shelter. Some of them had clung to coconut trees to survive, but the wind was extremely strong and uprooted the trees. Others found themselves in the sea, fighting against the waves. It was under these conditions that many of the islanders died during the typhoon. When it was over, the

majority of the survivors were unable to get to the aid centres as they could not pay for the boat trip.

Some weeks earlier, a team from the Red Cross had travelled to the island to treat patients, who were then supposed to sail over to the mainland for follow-up treatment. But the majority couldn't afford it. This is why I decided to rally a team together to provide the islanders with the healthcare that they needed.

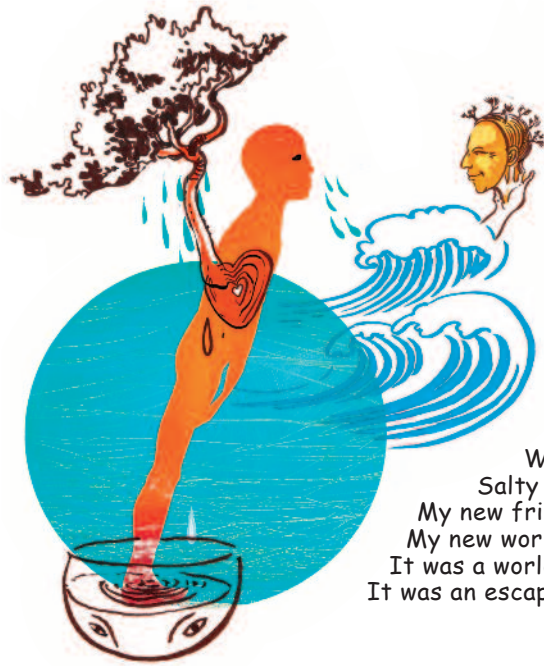


On the day we were due to sail it was raining heavily and I was not at all confident about going to sea. Two nurses who had planned to come with us backed out. It was at this moment that I felt a surge of determination to go. Some of the Philippine volunteers reassured us, explaining that when it rains there are no big waves. So we set sail. When we arrived on the island, we found about a hundred patients waiting for us, and we treated them all. When we left at the end of the day I had no doubt that "we had been right to reach out to the island's inhabitants."

ADONIS, CAMEROON

● AN ESCAPE IN THE RAINY NIGHT

Zaw MH, a student from Myanmar in South East Asia, has been writing poems since he was 15 as a way to support his country. Now 23 years old, he likes walking in the city and getting to know the people working in the streets. Then he writes about them to keep track of track of what he has learnt. This poem is about a father selling on the street at night, thinking of his children waiting for whatever he will be able to bring them.



An Escape in the Rainy Night

I saw the sun falling down
 I saw the tears touching ground
 Thunder alarms the rain
 Tiny trees stand erect on my skin
 I wished for a plate of rice
 I hoped for a breath of smoke
 My blood says, Pa Pa, we are starving
 My heart was in the deepest depth of grieving
 I went out hoping to get a meal
 I started to think my life failed
 I came to talk to my dear sea
 I saw my pleasure in the sea
 A tiny rain-drop is nothing to the sea
 Am I also a tiny drop to the world?
 Waves echoed my name
 Salty air took my soul away
 My new friends gave me warm smiles
 My new world was floating lives
 It was a world full of vivid sight
 It was an escape in the rainy night.

● SOCIAL RESTAURANT

Near to Setubal, Portugal, there is a 'Social Restaurant' where every day 115 meals are served, at prices which vary according to the means of the customer. A lot of customers pay nothing, others 10, 20, 30 or 40 pence.

About 4 years ago we started collecting unused food from restaurants, and we distributed it to people in need. But we soon realised that we needed to do something different as it was too difficult for older people, for example, to wait until midnight for us to bring them a meal – at midnight, in the middle of winter, in the rain...And we also thought that we should do something where everyone could be involved. After consulting with everybody in the neighbourhood, the 'Social Restaurant' was born to create a better solution to the need to address hunger.

Now, we start by going to see people to assess the family's economic situation and after this we can ask them for a financial contribution. This contribution is welcomed by them and one person said: 'I pay for my meal, I'm contributing, I'm taking responsibility for my life and my family.'

People have two options: to eat at the restaurant or to bring the meal back home.

We have managed to finance the project with the support of the neighbourhood, through donations and help from individuals or groups who organise fundraising events. There are also people who come to



eat at the Restaurant who pay much more for their meal than it costs...

In order to respect people's dignity and to help them take responsibility, we try to provide training. We have started various courses, in partnership with Caritas. We want everyone to gain new skills and to develop self-esteem.

One other element is social cohesion. We have done everything to ensure that people from all walks of life come as well, so that the Social Restaurant doesn't become stigmatised as the place where poor people go. We have already had elected representatives, university professors and people from all professional backgrounds. And this works well because regular customers are able to associate with people from a very different background and to eat amongst them.

P. CONSTANTINO, PORTUGAL

LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

• Dear Friends,

You kindly send us regularly the Letter to Friends Around the World, which is of interest to us; and yet we have not taken the time to thank you, nor to tell you how close we feel to you...

We continue to fight for Primary Education for All, whatever their age, along with vocational training and, for those with learning disabilities, enrichment activities... Quality primary education with 'enthusiastic' teachers!

*Sister Marguerite,
for the Special Education School
of Brazzaville,
Republic of the Congo*

• We are thinking of those of us who are burdened with grief, the trials of illness, separation from loved ones, or the daily struggle to fulfil the basic needs of our families. We hold in our thoughts the Filipino communities hit by Typhoon Haiyan who are rebuilding shelters with salvaged materials on the same sites where their homes were destroyed.

We are thinking of friends on Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean who just endured a massive cyclone. Also in our thoughts are the young people and families in the Central African Republic. In the midst of violent conflict, they are working together to find safety, to cope

with shortages, to stay connected, and to encourage one another not to give in to fear and hatred. In these places, as everywhere in the world, the courage and solidarity that people show in coping with misfortune and reinventing their lives every day, incites us to continue standing together to create a better world.

*Extract from the International Movement
ATD Fourth World Leadership
Team's New Year's letter to its members.*

• "I want to confirm my desire to cooperate and my wish to join this Forum – this Forum which cares for all members of society."
Sara M.H.A., Sudan

SEEN ON THE WEBSITE

17 October 2013

To our knowledge, **220 events took place in 42 countries** to mark the World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty. Here is the map of these events.

CAMEROON : In an area severely affected by poverty, the young people of **Ngaoundéré have taken action** to fight against this scourge, in an initiative launched by the FAD'ART group. Initially an awareness-raising campaign took place, using posters, phone communication (calls or texts), and radio press releases. The celebration of the day took place with the orphans at the Yves Plumey de Marza Centre, through cultural exchanges and donations. It ended with a radio broadcast dedicated "to all people who are marginalised and living in poverty" on the *Sawtu Linjiila* radio station as part of its pro-gramme entitled "Plateau-Culture".

BOLIVIA : With the support of Fundecyd and the Mamani Mamani cultural centre we organised an oil-painting workshop, to promote the narrative culture of families participating in activities at the *Casa de la Amistad*. The exhibition of paintings took place on 17 October at the Joseph Wresinski



library, located in the *25 de julio* neighbourhood of the town called El Alto. This exhibition enabled us to admire the creativity, perseverance and dignity of the families. It stimulated our imagination by giving us a

child's soul, but above all it enabled us to learn invaluable lessons about life, handed down to them by their ancestors.

UNITED STATES : "When you live in a shelter, you face discrimination every day – from the food you eat to the way people treat you in the street, you face discrimination," began Jose. A homeless shelter resident, Jose spoke at the **commemoration** of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty at the **United Nations in New York**, on behalf of homeless people and people living in homeless shelters.

INDIA : After receiving your circular for 17 October, I met our school children who are

aged between 5 - 16 years at our "Childrens Home" that's situated in a remote village in Southern India. I told them that they should be concerned about people still living in extreme poverty and that they must work

towards a world without any discrimination, either in their own small villages but also around the world. Let us foster social justice and help many others to overcome extreme poverty and discrimination among both girls and boys on this day of 17 October. *Felix S., Association for the Rural Poor.*

BELGIUM : The Day has been celebrated by the town of Huy for more than 10 years. Huy is a member of the World Alliance of towns against poverty, an international network of cities created by the UNDP in Geneva. Françoise Kunsch-Lardinois, deputy mayor of Huy, first restated the town's commitment to celebrating the 17 October every year. She then read the complete text of the Commemorative Stone and **commented upon the International Charter of 17 October**. She underlined that on this day in particular, people suffering from social exclusion and extreme poverty must play an active and predominant role in expressing their rejection of poverty and the need to unite to fight against it. Their words are therefore at the heart of this day.

You can also share your observations and your experiences on the website: www.overcomingpoverty.org or by email: overcomingpoverty@atd-fourthworld.org

The "Forum on Overcoming Extreme Poverty" is a network of committed people who want to develop friendship and exchange knowledge about what poor and very poor people teach us, i.e. people who suffer from multiple disadvantages in the areas of education, housing, employment, health and culture; those who are criticised and rejected the most. This forum invites people to join a worldwide movement to overcome extreme poverty, to rebuild communities with people living in extreme poverty, inspired by their lives. This movement expresses itself in the Letter to Friends Around the World, which publishes the texts written by its correspondents three times a year, in French, English, Spanish and Portuguese. The Forum on Overcoming Extreme Poverty is run by the International Movement ATD Fourth World, an international NGO whose headquarters are in Pierrelaye, France. Those who join the Forum do so in their own right, and do not have to become members of ATD Fourth World. Our e-mail address is: overcomingpoverty@atd-fourthworld.org Internet: www.overcomingpoverty.org Subscription \$8/8€ per annum - Support subscription: \$10/10€ per annum. © International Movement ATD Fourth World - Printed by ATD Fourth World - Méry-sur-Oise - No 86 - March 2014

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM
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SUPPORTER OF THE
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