

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### CHALLENGE 2015:

#### TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THAT LEAVES NO ONE BEHIND

With the aim of contributing to the evaluation process for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) coordinated by the United Nations, ATD Fourth World conducted a participatory evaluation from early 2011 to late 2013. It involved more than 2,000 people from 22 countries, a majority of whom were people living in poverty or in extreme poverty.

Twelve of the countries in which ATD Fourth World has an active presence were deeply involved in the project: Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, France, Guatemala, Haiti, Madagascar, Mauritius, Peru, the Philippines and Poland. The inclusion of some developed countries emphasises the fact that chronic poverty exists around the world, not only in those countries targeted by the MDGs. In each of the 12 countries, ATD Fourth World teams organised meetings with people living in poverty and extreme poverty. These dialogues were grounded in mutual trust built over years of working together. The participants met and discussed development issues in weekly or monthly meetings. For six months to two years, depending on the country, the participants gained experience voicing their concerns and built collective knowledge.

In each of the 12 countries, outside partners also prepared themselves for a dialogue with people living in poverty and extreme poverty, a dialogue that required adopting a working process which ensured that each participant was able to express her or his own thoughts without having them interpreted or misunderstood by others. These partners included academics, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade unions, and policy-makers from both national ministries (education, social affairs, employment, professional training, etc.) and international bodies such as the European Union, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, OHCHR and the World Bank.

Participants and outside partners came together in regional seminars that took place in Belgium, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, France, Madagascar, Mauritius, and the Philippines, culminating in a synthesis seminar at United Nations headquarters in New York.<sup>1</sup>

Participants from ten other countries,<sup>2</sup> including members of ATD Fourth World, partners and correspondents from the Forum on Overcoming Extreme Poverty,<sup>3</sup> contributed as well by taking part in the seminars or sending in written reflections.

*This process has enabled the participants to speak out about the violence of extreme poverty -- a violation of dignity and of all human rights worsened by processes of stigmatisation, discrimination and humiliation. Top-down attempts at fighting poverty often end up fighting against low-income communities which, as a result, remain entrenched in extreme poverty because their long history of*

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1 See a description of these seminars in Appendix C.

2 Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, the People's Republic of China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Spain and Vietnam.

3 The Forum on Overcoming Extreme Poverty provides a space for grass-roots actors in more than 100 countries worldwide to exchange news, ideas and methods for fighting against poverty.

<http://overcomingpoverty.org/>

persecution and exploitation is not taken into account. Extreme poverty represents an unacceptable waste of human potential (Chapter 1 and Appendix B).

*Thinking together on an equal footing with people trapped in extreme poverty* requires overcoming many obstacles on both sides of the discussion. People living in poverty need time to build a collective understanding of their situation as well as to construct a sense of pride that counteracts their stigmatisation and isolation. For better-off people, sharing power is frequently the most daunting challenge. It requires a commitment to a dialogue among equals, rooted in a sense of justice and a desire to develop more effective policies (Chapter 2).

*The global dialogue on the post-2015 agenda needs both to connect and to distinguish between inequality, poverty and extreme poverty.* More adequate and participatory ways to measure poverty and extreme poverty are needed to dispel the illusions created by misleading global statistics. The \$1.25 a day criterion should no longer be considered as a reliable global measure of extreme poverty. Programmes based on the MDGs have not reached the most impoverished populations and have ignored the connection between inequality, poverty and climate justice. In order for the post-2015 agenda to succeed in reducing disparities and eradicating extreme poverty, development targets should be considered to have been met only when they have been met for *all* relevant groups, including the bottom 20% in every population, from the national to the local level. A new model of development should include peace-building and state-building goals to support fragile and post-conflict affected states, and to align development targets with human rights norms and standards (Chapter 3).

*The participatory research made it clear that, very often, development projects work against people living in extreme poverty, not for them.* Ill-adapted development projects harm them, and, sometimes, international aid acts to silence the most impoverished. Investments frequently fail to reach people doing low-income informal work or to provide them with quality healthcare, social protection systems, housing or sanitation. Gender equality must be enhanced through changes in mindsets and laws, and the contributions of migrants must be recognised (Chapter 4).

*The mixed results on education-related targets of the MDGs suggest that programmes need to provide equitable access to learning.* Obstacles to this include discrimination against, and stigmatisation of, disadvantaged students and their parents; the hidden costs of “free education”; students’ lack of legal identity documents and the growing trend towards privatising education to the detriment of public schools. Quality education for all requires a learning environment based on partnership and cooperation among teachers, students, parents and communities. This approach leads to learning outcomes that truly benefit students and communities (Chapter 5).

Chapter 6 suggests *three main ways to fight against stigmatisation and discrimination.* It underlines that people experiencing poverty would like to be able to participate more widely in the development process itself. There are many barriers to participation in development programmes at both local and national levels, as well as in international development institutions. Yet, the participation of people living in poverty is a learning and regenerating process for people and institutions that commit to it.

The conclusion presents **five recommendations for the post-2015 development agenda:**

### **1. Leave no one behind**

*“It’s difficult to access rights. Some people end up renouncing their rights. What also keeps us in poverty are the discrimination and humiliations faced by the poor. The way the poor are looked at is so harsh that poverty remains hidden: people are ashamed.”* (Participant from France)

Leaving no one behind requires eliminating discrimination based on poverty, social origin, ethnic origin, gender, or economic status, and actively reaching out to the most impoverished population groups. It also requires aligning development targets and their implementation with human rights norms and standards, in keeping with the United Nations (UN) Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights.

### **2. Introduce people living in poverty as new partners in building knowledge about more sustainable forms of development**

*“There’s plenty of aid here. But they give it out without knowing who are the worst off, so the poorest are often not aided at all. This aid creates jealousy, divides our community, and ends up isolating the poorest even more and worsening their situation.”* (Participant from Senegal)

*“Even in extreme poverty, a person has ideas. If these ideas aren’t recognised, people fall even deeper into poverty.”* (Participant from Burkina Faso)

Shaping a world where all people can live decently and have a place in their community requires putting at the heart of development projects a genuine partnership with people living in extreme poverty. A revised UN Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) should replace the \$1.25 a day measure of extreme poverty. The MPI measures the deprivation experienced by households by looking at health, education and living standards. It needs to be improved and complemented with a measurement of the discrimination and social exclusion that people endure. The *Merging of Knowledge* methodology developed by ATD Fourth World could help define and quantify such additional measures (see further information in the report, page 20).

### **3. Promote an economy that respects people and the environment**

*“Lack of clothing, fear, exclusion, feelings of rejection, shame and shyness are obstacles for young people to attend vocational training and to look for jobs. Fundamental human rights are not respected: right to food, housing, health, birth certificates.... The human side is neglected.”* (Participants from Madagascar)

In a world with limited natural resources and rapidly growing inequalities, a profound economic transformation is needed, particularly in production and consumption models, to reduce inequality, to eradicate extreme poverty and stop plundering natural resources. Full employment and decent work for all should be supported by new investments for the transition to a more environmentally-friendly economic model, including the implementation of social safety nets at national levels in all countries. An international mechanism is needed to fund and support the establishment of such social protection floors where sufficient resources do not exist. The design, monitoring and implementation mechanisms should include the participation of trade unions, civil society and those living in extreme poverty, as underlined in the common statement issued by ATD Fourth World, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Social Watch (Appendix A).

#### **4. Achieve education and training for all based on cooperation, not on competition, among students, teachers, parents and communities**

*“When I was in school in the provinces, my mother couldn't find money to buy school materials. I was sent home every time I didn't have the required book. In the end, I left school without learning anything. When we arrived in Port-au-Prince, I was enrolled again, but I couldn't attend for the same reasons as before.”* (Participant from Haiti)

Most participants in the evaluation process stated that school is the best way for children to overcome poverty—provided that the teaching process and course contents are adapted to the needs of the entire community, not just of the better-off families. They requested programmes that remove hidden barriers to quality education (like discrimination or additional costs), build cooperative forms of education in partnership with communities, and ensure high quality education with improved results for people in poverty.

#### **5. Promote peace through participatory good governance**

*“Who wants this kind of life? We dream of a better life, including decent housing and a full education for everyone. We make an effort to move on, but we cannot do very much alone. We need support. We also wish to contribute to development, excluding no one, leaving no one behind. We want to work together as partners. This is how everyone's dignity and rights can be respected.”* (Participants from the Philippines)

Working as partners requires helping communities to strengthen their own support organisations and to make sure that national and international institutions create genuine participatory mechanisms at all levels. In all development projects, project directors should appoint individuals who have experience building connections with people living in poverty. Conveying their expectations to project leaders and funders is a key element of implementing participation on the ground. Accountability and grievance mechanisms should be created at local, national and international levels.

#### **For further information, see:**

- Working Paper: *“Towards Sustainable Development that Leaves No One Behind The Challenge of the Post-2015 Agenda”*, ATD Fourth World, June 2013  
<http://www.atd-fourthworld.org/Towards-Sustainable-Development.html>
- Video: *“Our Daily Fight Against Extreme Poverty”* Intro 8' MDG seminar NY  
<http://vimeo.com/70123833>
- Webdoc *“Unheard Voices”*: *From extreme poverty to social change*, <http://www.unheard-voices.org/>

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