

Knowledge from experience: Building the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda with People Living in Extreme Poverty

Through participatory action-research, people living in extreme poverty have evaluated the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in an international programme coordinated by the International Movement ATD Fourth World. The research aims for the expertise of people living in poverty to be used in developing a new global framework beyond the 2015 deadline. The project began January 2012 and will conclude June 2013 at U.N. headquarters.

CONTEXT

Ambitious Goals

"We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty" asserted the Millennium Declaration, adopted by 180 heads of State in New York in September 2000. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which it set up sought to give concrete expression to a political will, and created a wave of support from donors, united in the common aim of eradicating extreme poverty through development.

Mitigated results

In spite of remarkable mobilization around the goals, and major progress in some areas, the MDGs have proven to be extremely insufficient due to a reliance on national statistics, a lack of political will, and a fixation on quick results. Moreover as UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon stated in 2011, people living in deepest poverty have not been reached. "Progress tends to bypass those who are lowest on the economic ladder. We are failing to reach the most vulnerable".

Perceptions need to change

By collecting data alongside those who are most directly impacted by these policies, our participatory action-research aims to reverse the trend. This project will create proposals for development strategies that effectively reach all sectors of society, and will act as a model for how to include people living in poverty in the creation of development policy.

OBJECTIVES

OBJ To assess the impact of the MDGs on the people most affected by extreme poverty.

OBJ To use a participatory research methodology to provide people in extreme poverty with the means to contribute their experience and knowledge to efforts to achieve human rights and evaluate the MDGs. This capacity building will also engage partners in listening to them and supporting them.

OBJ To identify ways for people living in poverty to participate in decision making processes, and for the post-2015 goals to be centered on the eradication of extreme poverty in world governance.



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In New York City, beginning on June 25th and concluding on June 27th, the International Movement ATD Fourth World will conduct a concluding seminar to its participatory action-research project. The event will provide a space for a final exchange between research participants with a direct experience in poverty and those with professional experience in international development. Moreover, ATD will present preliminary findings from the various seminars that have been carried out around the globe.

Participating Countries

Local teams of the International Movement ATD Fourth World will send delegations to New York City from six countries: Belgium, Bolivia, France, Madagascar, Peru and the United States. Additionally, individuals closely associated with ATD Fourth World, and who are working with grassroots communities, will come from Bangladesh and the United Kingdom.

Participating Organizations

The seminar will bring together civil society organizations, U.N. agencies, and U.N. member states. Some U.N. agencies that will be participating include UNICEF and NGLS. Those civil society organizations who have confirmed their participation include: [The International Community of Baha'i](#), [Participate](#) (a coalition of grassroots NGOs), [Entraide et Fraternité](#), [Social Watch](#), and [ITUC](#)

The Exchange

The dialogue is structured through a three-pronged approach:

- People living in poverty will carry out discussion groups to pool their ideas. They will describe and analyze their living conditions with others. They will evaluate whether existing development policies are effective or not, and formulate proposals for effective policy structures that take human rights into account.
- Academics and practitioners from different disciplines will examine MDG evaluations by national governments and international institutions. They will analyze in what ways inequalities and access to vital resources have changed in the countries listed above.
- After properly building spaces that encourage equal participation, the groups will exchange ideas from their different perspectives using a dialogical framework. This process, inspired by the *Merging of Knowledge* method, will help create the space for a comfortable and productive discussion.



Summary of Events

Wednesday June 26th – Open Consultations between People Living in Poverty and U.N. Representatives

9 AM to 4:30 PM

International delegates with direct experience with poverty will dialogue with U.N. representatives of member states, U.N. agencies, and civil society organizations in small discussion workshops. Dialogue will be the first opportunity for development actors to receive direct feedback from communities affected by U.N. policies. There is limited space in the meeting room so **please RSVP by June 17th to:**

Cristina Diez
cristina.diez@atd-fourthworld.org (Subject: June MDG Seminar)
212-228-1339

Location:
Salvation Army Meeting Hall
221 East 52nd Street

Thursday June 27th – Open Panel Discussion and Participant Presentations

10AM to 1:00 PM

The findings of International Movement ATD Fourth World's participatory action research project will be presented by Xavier Godinot. Then, a mix of ATD Fourth World's grassroots members, U.N. Agency and civil society representatives, member states, and academics will discuss the relevance of these findings and how this method can be applied in the U.N.'s work.

Location:
U.N. Headquarters
Conference Building- Conference Room 1

For additional information, please refer to: <http://www.atd-fourthworld.org/Knowledge-From-Experience-Building.html>



What Do People Living in Poverty Have to Say?

Señora Luisa Mita Antonio

Life and Work

I sell *maca* from a small stand on the street in La Paz, Bolivia. My husband is a day laborer in a small company. We have five children but have lost others to illness. My children go to school and we appreciate the chance to be together as a family.

Living in Extreme Poverty

I have been discriminated against for being poor and having many children. I have experienced this in society, school, and even from my own family. My children and husband have also been victims of discrimination.



My family lives in a small plot and we have trouble making rent. I wish my children could have their own rooms but there is simply not enough money for that. My husband's company does not pay him regularly and my income only helps very little.

My business suffers as well. I have had my maca thrown out; I have been prohibited from selling in certain spaces, I have been robbed, etc. They tell me that I have to register my business and then I have to go from office to office only to end up in the same place I was before. I have been physically threatened even by other vendors.

The MDG Context

Participating in this MDG evaluation has allowed me to understand my rights and helped me realize that I am also deserving of rights to education, health, and work. It will help me educate my children as well.

Before in Bolivia there was no SUMI (Universal Health Insurance for Mothers and Children), so I couldn't access medical treatment. Also, when we were unemployed there was no way to get medical care; I lost 6 children for not being able to get medical care.



What Do People Living in Poverty Have to Say?

Mr. Guillain Philothée Andriamihasinoro

Early Life in Extreme Poverty

I come from a very poor family. My mother has five children and I am the second oldest. We lived in an area of Madagascar called Lalamby which was a village of small plastic huts which lined a local railroad. At one point, the nearby municipality promised us new housing and expelled us from our homes. Their promises were empty and thus, for the greater part of my childhood my family searched for a place to live. My siblings and I had to leave school and soon found ourselves living out of garbage bins.

Eventually we made our way to Ambohidratrimo where we began to live in a large quarry. This quarry also serves as a dump for nearby businesses.

Work

Now we search through the garbage dump every night to see what we can sell. We gather things like metals, bags, bones, plastic bottles, charcoal, aluminum, and copper; we also keep any edible waste. We then go out in the mornings to sell what we find.

Through the Fourth World Movement I have gained access to IT classes and have become more aware of my rights as a human being. Nevertheless, I still find myself living in a garbage site.

The MDG Context

I have learned a lot about the Millennium Development Goals. One thing that impacted me was the Minister of Population's determination to provide internships to young people. However, I have also heard a lot about the lack of adequate places for young people to learn trades, and to access social protection. Likewise, I have learned a lot about the greed of public officials and local administrators.

Today many young people work without increasing their knowledge for their trade, or they work from their homes, or they work in the streets. Also, there are a lot of social protections but if you get sick, doctors won't treat you in their hospitals. They come to your homes because they don't want you to take up space; it's only money and corruption that counts at our hospitals.

Similarly, at administrative offices, if you're poor and need a document you won't be able to get it unless you have money to give the responsible person. The poor may be human but they are nevertheless trampled in society.



What Do People Living in Poverty Have to Say?

Mr. Frederic Randrianantenaina

Life in Extreme Poverty

My parents always lived in poverty; this is why I started school late. I was seven years old when I first went; luckily ATD Fourth World had a program at my school to help students who had never attended school before. My father was a chauffeur but once he got sick he had to stop working. At that point I had to move to my grandmother's home but then had to stop going to school. My grandmother was a street vendor and she was having financial troubles too. Nowadays, my father lives in the countryside, and my mother has passed. My grandmother and I have to face our troubles together.



Work

Many of the higher paying jobs require a diploma, which I don't have. So, I ended up doing small, short-term jobs. I am also a mechanic's assistant but I still can't find stable work. At the same time, my grandmother can rarely sell enough to sustain us.

MDG Context

We must work to reach everyone so that we can change the way we treat each other in terms of respect and equality despite diversity. I have focused on informing and training parents so as to help them educate their children well. I have also been a strong supporter of including civic education in school curricula. It is important to me that we implement strategies that target the children of the extremely poor so that they do not relive the experiences of their parents.

In general, the extremely poor cannot access social protection, and often times we do not even know our rights. The extremely poor are often humiliated when trying to communicate with administrative offices, hospitals, and other public service providers.

During the last MDG seminar I was in a group that evaluated education and professional training. Without proper education and training, young people cannot take control of their futures. Without diplomas, they cannot access jobs that provide stability. Many families cannot invest in their children this way because of their difficult lifestyles. However, poor families have hope for the future. Perhaps this time of evaluation will be a good opportunity to share these wishes. It helps to be listened to.

Related Video: <http://www.unheard-voices.org/nouvelles-technologies-pour-tous-madagascar/?lang=en>



What Types of Proposals Should We Expect?

The International Movement ATD Fourth World will compose a report highlighting some prominent proposals for the Post-2015 agenda. The proposals will be compiled from all six research seminars and the materials that have been produced in preparation for them. Here is a brief introduction to four of these proposals:

Construct knowledge and programs through approaches that follow the [U.N. Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights](#).

Welcomed in December 2012 by the U.N. General Assembly, these principles recognize that populations living in extreme poverty are actors and knowledge holders.

Construct a sustainable development agenda that rejects discrimination and ensures the participation of the most excluded

We insist that sustainable development cannot occur without a refusal of discrimination based on poverty. New education, changes in laws and practices, new methods of dialogue and communication, can all work towards ending discrimination.

Establish educational programs that ensure cooperation between students, teachers, parents, and communities

All of the countries that participated in this research project emphasized that education does not respond to the needs of communities.

Establish a sustainable development agenda grounded in decent work and social protection for all

“The change we need is in the area of work,” affirm street vendors in Haiti. Without formal employment these workers find themselves without social protection, along with 50% of the world’s population.



Interview List

The following participants will be available for interviews during and after the event

International Movement ATD Fourth World Representatives

Xavier Godinot, lead author *Sustainable Development that Leaves No One Behind: The Challenge of the Post-2015 Agenda* (French and English)

Cristina Diez-Saguillo, Lead Representative to the United Nations (English and French)

Diana Skelton, Deputy Director General (English and French)

Grassroots Activists with Direct Experiences with Poverty

Mrs. Luisa Mita Antonio, Bolivia (Spanish and English with interpretation)

Mrs. Rosa María Valdez Huamaní, Peru (Spanish and English with interpretation)

Mr. Guillaín Philothée Andriamihasinoro, Madagascar (French with interpretation)

Ms. Fatimata Kafando, Burkina Faso (French and English with interpretation)

Mr. Obie Donald, United States (English)

Ms. Samantha Simpson, United States (English)

To schedule an interview contact:

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201-981-4463

