



Extreme Poverty and World Governance

For a world governance
where decision-making is
centred on real participation of people
in extreme poverty and goals are centred
on the eradication of extreme poverty

PROPOSAL PAPERS SERIES

by Xavier Godinot
in collaboration with Thierry Viard
special thanks to Hugues de Courtivron
December 2010



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Forum for a new World Governance
December 2010

www.world-governance.org

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“Haiti has now become the land that symbolizes ‘We, the People of the United Nations’,

a land where the many efforts to conceive of new forms of coexistence that foster progress and well being

urge us to create strong bonds between solidarity and responsibility,
the two facets of all human development initiatives.

The world has been shaken, but it will not be in vain

if we work together to reveal

the extraordinary strength of a people who cannot die,

and the knowledge brought by our experience

that everyone, unified in this combat for the dignity of all, is indispensable.

Therein lies the real meaning of life,

of the ideal of coexistence given a public expression

in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

Jacqueline Plaisir and David Lockwood,
coordinators of the team of permanent
ATD Fourth World volunteers in Haiti,
Port-au-Prince, 23 February 2010

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INTRODUCTION

In September 2005, the report Kofi Annan presented to the United Nations General Assembly, *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all*, marked a significant change in the content of the goals proposed to the United Nations, sixty years on from the organization's foundation.

To justify the project to reform the UN, the main goal proposed to member states moved away from the historical goal of international peace and security, focusing instead on “research and development, security and human rights for all.” The report proposed founding the international social pact on the three elements of development, security and human rights, thus ensuring the international community's capacity to implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.¹ The women and men who live in conditions of extreme poverty are the first to be confronted,

often from one generation to the next, with a permanent absence of security, lack of development and violation of their fundamental rights.

These same people, the poorest members of society, with their extraordinary history of fighting to defend their dignity whilst some or even all their rights are violated, have a great deal of experience and knowledge to contribute to the struggle for a more harmonious, united and peaceful world.

The proposals outlined in this Paper have twin aims. **On the one hand, to place the eradication of extreme poverty at the heart of the political goals pursued by a renewed world governance. On the other hand, to recognize the participation of the poorest members of humanity in elaborating new principles for shaping future world governance as an essential condition in the success of the enterprise.**

1. «... 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»

2. Edgar Morin, *Les 7 savoirs nécessaires à l'éducation du futur* (Seven Complex Lessons in Education for the Future), Ed. du Seuil, 2001, p. 47 and 48.

3. Deepa Narayan, Robert Chambers, Meera K. Shah, Patti Petesch. *Voices of the Poor. Crying Out for Change*, World Bank 2000, p. 2 and 264.

4. Joseph Wresinski, *La pensée des plus pauvres dans une connaissance qui conduit au combat* (A Knowledge that Leads to Action), December 1980, available at <http://www.joseph-wresinski.org/A-Knowledge-That-Leads-To-Combat.html>. All the quotations below are taken from this article.

The Paper is based primarily on Xavier Godinot's observations and proposals in his book *Eradiquer la misère, démocratie, mondialisation et droits de l'homme* (Eradicating Extreme Poverty: Democracy, Globalization and Human Rights), PUF, Paris, November 2008. The book opens with monographs that trace the lives of four people living in four different continents and dealing with situations of extreme poverty. In the second part, the author examines the lessons to be learned from the people's experiences and accounts in order to set out recommendations key to the respect of human rights for all, including the most fragile members of humanity, and to ensuring that the different stakeholders in our world assume their responsibilities by putting the priority on laying the foundations of harmonious coexistence.

After an initial phrase identifying the characteristics of extreme poverty and the way in which it violates the whole range of human rights, the Paper will attempt to provide an overview by describing the difficulties encountered by the bottom poor in a globalized world that has not yet found a way to ensure that all human beings can live with dignity. The final section will be given over to concrete proposals for bringing the bottom poor out of destitution and ensuring that the inestimable value of their experience is recognized and incorporated into the goals and decision-making processes necessary to implementing a world governance that seeks to construct a more human world.

Box 1: epistemological options

The goal of reducing poverty and eradicating destitution is still an overwhelming challenge that requires mobilization of the collective intelligence, in other words, all the different aspects of human knowledge and those who carry it within. Edgar Morin highlights the pressing need to move beyond "the compartmentalization of knowledge...to replace thinking that separates and reduces with thinking that distinguishes and links together."² The World Bank undertook a special survey in around fifty developing countries, which states: "There are 2.8 billion poverty experts, the poor themselves. Yet the development discourse about poverty has been dominated by the perspectives and expertise of those who are not poor—professionals, politicians and agency officials." "The bottom poor, in all their diversity, are excluded, impotent, ignored and neglected; the bottom poor are a blind spot in development."³ What is needed is to merge three types of knowledge, in line with Wresinski's epistemological framework.⁴

The first type of knowledge is the currently dominant academic knowledge that remains "partial, indirect and purely informative." It does not act as a mobilizing force and does not give people reasons to take action for others.

The second type of knowledge to be taken into account is the life knowledge of people living in situations of extreme poverty. The founder of ATD Fourth World considered these people as the foremost experts on poverty, since they experience it and know what it means in terms of suffering and necessary change. This knowledge is usually ignored, dominated and stifled by scholarly learning.

The action-based knowledge possessed by professionals working alongside the most disadvantaged people must also be taken into account and developed.

Each of these three types of knowledge has to be built up more or less autonomously, then merged with the others to produce a body of knowledge that is more relevant and effective in the fight against poverty and destitution.



Observation: Extreme Poverty, History and Definitions

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21 Extreme poverty: an age-old story

There have always been, everywhere, men, women and children whose fellows have refused even to acknowledge them as human beings. As though each society, despite all the public declarations of good intentions, accepted the existence of an excluded group of people, whose right to existence was denied, consciously or unconsciously. This act of denial has ensured that these humans have vanished without a trace into the great black hole of poverty. A black hole generated by the systematic disregard of others, and the self-imposed isolation of the victims themselves, persuaded that they do not really have the right to exist.

Sociologist Serge Paugam underlines this phenomenon, which is “an often-confirmed anthropological reality. Each society has its share of undesirables, human beings whose humanity society ends up doubting and that must be got rid of one way or another.”⁵ The targets of revulsion are those suspected of bearing ill will, dirtiness or unshakable vices. For example, Switzerland’s *heimatlose*, heirs to a long line of beggars and vagrants, were subject to many centuries of organized hostility.⁶ In France, the practice of calling down collective curses was prevalent in the Middle Ages. In 1141, a group of rebel soldiers, the Oiseliers de Bouillon, was said to be cursed by the bishop of Liège, turned into outcasts and assigned to the most repugnant of tasks. Their descendants’ names were carefully recorded on registers of birth, deaths and marriage.

5. Serge Paugam, *Les formes élémentaires de la pauvreté pauvre* (*The Elementary Forms of Poverty*), PUF, 2005, p. 147.

6. Hélène Beyler-Von Burg, *Des Suisses sans nom. Les Heimatlose d'aujourd'hui*, (*The Swiss with no Name. The Heimatlose Today*), Pierrelaye, Ed. Science et Service, 1984.

7. Gilbert Loubès, *L'énigme des Cagots, histoire d'une exclusion (The Cagot Enigma, a History of Exclusion)*, Ed. Sud-Ouest, Bordeaux, 2006.

8. Pierre Miquel, *Les oubliés de l'histoire (History's Forgotten)*, Livre de Poche, Fernand Nathan, 1978, p. 112 to 115.

9. Jean-Pierre Liégeois, *L'accès aux droits sociaux des populations tsiganes en France (Access to Social Rights for France's Roma People)*, study report by the social services, Ed. ENSP-Rennes, 2007, p. 230.

10. Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, *Les traites négrières. Essai d'histoire globale (Slave trades. An Attempted Global History)*, Paris, Gallimard, Bibliothèques des Histoires, 2004.

11. Maurice Bazemo and Sidi Traore, *National Report on Slavery and the Slave Trade*, 2004, p. 9.

12. Jean-François Sabouret, *L'autre Japon : les burakumin (The Other Japan: the Burakumin)*, Paris,

12 La Découverte, 1983.

13. Philippe Pons, *Misère et crime au Japon du XVII^e siècle à nos jours (Poverty and Crime in Japan from the 17th Century to the Present)*, Paris, Gallimard, 1999, p. 128.

14. Bronislaw Geremek, *La potence ou la pitié, l'Europe et les pauvres du Moyen Age à nos jours (Gibbet or Mercy: Europe and the Poor from the Middle Ages to the Present)*, Gallimard, 1987, p. 317.



ges and the curse lasted six centuries. The cursed of Brittany were called the *Cacous*, in the Pyrenees they were the *Cagots*⁷ and in Poitou the *Colliberts*⁸.

The Roma constitute a vast minority who have been settled in Europe for at least seven centuries without a state, territory or power. A European Parliament resolution estimates that twelve to fifteen million Roma are living in Europe, including seven to nine million in the European Union, suffering from racial discrimination, poverty and social exclusion. Victims of the Nazi genocide, they continue to be subjected to persecution and ethnic cleansing.⁹

Africa has been marked by a long history of slave trading, lasting from the ninth to the nineteenth centuries. The North African slave trade organized by the Muslims was followed by intra-African slave trade, organized by the African kingdoms, then the Atlantic Ocean slave trade, organized by the Europeans and Americans. According to the most recent studies, the number of victims of each slave trade was seventeen million, fourteen million and eleven million respectively.¹⁰ Intra-African trading “was partially the consequence of ethnocentrism. Each ethnic group was convinced of its cultural superiority over the others. The Other was the barbarian.”¹¹

In Japan, the *Burakumin*—meaning “people from the hamlets”—are the descendents of the feudal era’s outcasts, victims of an ever-present ostracism.¹² They descend from two categories: *hinins* or “non humans”, and *eta* or “tainted beings”, seen for religious reasons as impure because of their occupations, butchers, tanners and undertakers, for instance, which brought them into contact with blood, death and sickness. According to government statistics, there were still

one and a half million *Burakumin* in 1996, over half of them living in “special” neighbourhoods.¹³

In India, the untouchables or *Dalits* were considered to be impure for the same reasons. They were outcasts from the complex system that organized Indian society into four castes, and were seen as subhuman. Although the Constituent Assembly of India abolished the status of untouchable in May 1947 and prohibited caste-based discrimination, *Dalits* continue to be subject to segregation, including in its most violent expression. Many of them are currently landless peasants.

In his history of poverty in Europe from the Middle Ages to today, Bronislaw Geremek shows that poverty has always given rise to conflicting feelings and reactions: compassion and revulsion in individuals, the creation of both aid institutions and instruments of repression by the authorities. Over the centuries, compassion and charity have led to the foundation of a great many institutions to ease the afflictions of populations suffering from poverty or destitution, from mendicant orders to a profusion of religious congregations dedicated to the poor, from general hospitals to public aid. Fear and repulsion are behind the perception of vagrants, beggars and other outsiders as having no value in the world; they have therefore been banished, hanged, condemned to hard labour, imprisoned in English or Dutch workhouses and confined to general hospitals during the great era of locking up the poor. Geremek writes that at the dawn of modern times, “few people showed any signs of revolt towards a policy which preferred the gallows and prisons to charity.”¹⁴

It therefore appears that, down through the ages and throughout the world, the fear of disorder, violence, epidemics and criminality have focused on those furthest from established norms. These people have been disqualified, demonized and degraded to the point of being designated as having no value to the world. Science and religion have been called upon to rationalize this viewpoint and make it irrefutable. The radical inferiority conferred on them meant that victims were no longer considered fully-fledged human beings, but as subhuman, the scum of the earth with no rights. This is how slavery and apartheid were justified. And this is how western societies saw vagabonds prior to the industrial revolution and the “wretched” of the nineteenth century, opening the door to a “bloody legislation”¹⁵ rooted in banishment, capital punishment, confinement, hard labour and deportation to the colonies.

In traditional societies, identity was fixed at and by birth. Recognition was linked to status which was linked to birth. This is no longer the case in today's societies, termed egalitarian, as opposed to traditional societies, described as hierarchical. Recognition nowadays depends less on what you are than what you do. The citizens of modern societies find themselves cast into a structural situation where they fight for a recognition which is never acquired automatically, and which they have to earn by demonstrating their social capacities. Sociologist Dominique Schnapper feels that consequently: “In modern societies, there is still a risk of defining those whose social destiny appears to question the two-tiered norm of citizen and worker as subhuman, with all the consequences such a definition can produce; there is still the risk of using alleged subhumanity to justify the processes of alterization common to all societies.”¹⁶ Thus, under the sway of racial purity and eugenic tendencies, democracies like Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, the UK, the USA, Australia and France adopted decades-long policies imposing sterilization on women from very poor backgrounds or promoting the cultural genocide of nomads, aborigines and other groups.¹⁷ Recently, Peru,¹⁸ India¹⁹ and doubtlessly many other countries were still organizing widespread enforced sterilization operations amongst the poorest.

Ethnologist Patrick Declerck asserts that in France “we can in no way understand the paradoxes of aid for the homeless if we fail to understand the extent to which they are, consciously or unconsciously, the objects of hatred and public condemnation. The general message is two-layered, contradictory and paradoxical; they scare people, and they are poor victims. Get rid of them, they stink. Help them, they are suffering. A dual message and dual representation (...) Exclusion and identification.”²⁰

Box 2: Fear and hatred of the destitute

What name is given to the destitute in different parts of the world at the outset of the 21st century? In Egypt, they are called *madfoun*, the buried, or buried alive; in Ghana, *ohiabrubro*, the miserably poor, with no work, sick with no one to care for them; in Brazil, *miseraveis*, the deprived; in Russia, *bombzi*, the homeless; in Bangladesh, *ghrino gorib*, the despised or hated poor. People who are excluded in Africa include the demon-possessed, witches, mentally ill and lepers. In Latin America, they are thieves, residents of the most violent neighbourhoods. In South Asia, low castes, rag pickers, landless people. And so it goes on. The people living in poverty questioned by Deepa Narayan's survey have a certain perception of the very poor: “The bottom poor, then, are seen by most participants as separate and different, and regarded with mixtures of pity, fear, disgust and even hatred.”

Philosopher Olivia Bianchi questions the mechanisms of this hatred, which she defines as ontological, felt towards those who are particularly fragile and whose very existence seems to founder, such as infirm old people, beggars and the homeless.²² “The mere sight of an old person arouses a feeling of ontological hatred in me,” she explains, “because that person prevents me from persevering with my being.” By making me conscious of my fragility and finiteness, the older person threatens my identity. In the same way, the beggar encountered each morning makes me feel uncomfortable, “and this discomfort quickly turns to indelible hatred.” The sight of this person triggers effects that disrupt my identity and my relationship to others, that lead me to consider the poor person alternately as my fellow being and as different from myself. These effects weigh down my conscience, which switches between the two. “Ontological hatred is born of this unacceptable to-ing and fro-ing that gnaws at me ceaselessly.”

Fear of the very poor seems to be an ontological reaction more common than hatred, which happily remains a minority response. This is suggested by one of the Judeo-Christian tradition's noblest passages, written around 2,800 years ago: the Old Testament's Song of the Suffering Servant, who acts as a sort of archetype for reactions triggered by the encounter between the included and excluded as well as a deciphering of these reactions. Here are a number of extracts: “Just as there were many who were appalled at him—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness... He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom

15. Robert Castel, *Les métamorphoses de la question sociale. Une chronique du salariat*, (The Metamorphoses of the Social Question: the Wage-Earners' Chronicle), Fayard, 1995, pages 90 to 108.

16. Dominique Schnapper, *La relation à l'autre. Au cœur de la pensée sociologique*, (Relations with the Other. At the Heart of Sociological Thinking), Paris Gallimard, coll. NRF-Essais, 1998, p. 495 and 496.

17. Xavier Godinot, *Exclusion, de l'aveuglement à la clairvoyance* (Exclusion, from Blindness to Clairvoyance), revue Futuribles, no. 242, May 1999, p. 5 to 18.

18. A report by the Peruvian minister of health reveals that between 1996 and 2000, during Alberto Fujimori's presidency, over 215,000 women were sterilized forcibly, almost half of them without proper anaesthetic. The women were mostly poor Indians in rural areas. *Libération* newspaper, 25 July 2002.

19. In *Development as Freedom*, op. cit. p. 224, Amartya Sen denounces the barbaric practice in northern India of rounding up women from very underprivileged backgrounds in sterilization camps.

20. Patrick Declerck, *Le sang nouveau est arrivé* (The New Blood has Arrived), Gallimard, 2007, p. 24 and 104.

21. Deepa Narayan et al, *Voices of the Poor. Can Anyone Hear Us?* Washington, World Bank, 2000, p. 135-136.

22. Olivia Bianchi, *La haine du pauvre* (Hating the Poor), L'Harmattan, Paris, 2005, p. 21 and 42.

23. Isaiah, chapter 52, verse 14 and chapter 53, verses 2 to 5, New International Version of the Bible, on the Bible Gateway website: <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+52&version=NIV>

24. Christophe Dejours, *Souffrance en France, la banalisation de l'injustice sociale* (Suffering in France, Making Social Injustice Acceptable), Éditions du Seuil, 1998, 195 pages.

people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem... yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities."²³

Christophe Dejours' analysis of the mechanisms for making social injustice acceptable²⁴ provides valuable help in understanding the passage and shows how vital is the role of the processes generated by fear: fear of contamination, loss of security and exclusion. The sight of the poor man, who no longer looks human, appals the crowds, as the verse says. Their terror-struck reaction corresponds to a great shock in the face of a terrible threat, the sort of panic reaction that either paralyzes you with fear of makes you run away. This terror is produced by seeing that a human being can fall so far as to no longer look human. You are overwhelmed by the fear that by coming into contact with the poor wretch, you will be contaminated by her/his decline. Using this existential fear as its basis, the passage in Isaiah reveals several possible reactions.

The fear that overcomes you when you come across a homeless person in the street is often hidden or denied. It is a taboo subject in a society that glorifies "winners". Denying that fear and therefore the suffering triggered by encountering extreme poverty equates to refusing to look at the defence mechanisms that everyone constructs to protect themselves. What are these reactions? Flight, ignorance and indifference are the most common, producing the mass sanction of injustice. "...he was despised, and we held him in low esteem" says Isaiah. Defence mechanisms that go further can be scorn and hatred, or their opposites, compassion and acts of solidarity. Denying the fear you feel in the name of defensive virility is the first stage in the process of making social injustice acceptable. For those who come into frequent contact with people whose lives are in ruins, such as medical staff, social workers and police officers, denying the suffering they feel in response to the suffering of others can lead to cutting off the emotions, denial and retaliation.

Denying other people's suffering is the second stage in the process of making misery acceptable. Christophe Dejours shows that individuals rationalize their

behaviour by "putting their rational minds on hold" and deliberately blinkering themselves by resorting to all sorts of stereotypes, such as "people are unemployed or living in poverty because that's what they want."



When neither your own fear nor the suffering of others are recognized, the passage from Isaiah suggests a third stage in the psycho-sociological process of making misery acceptable, a stage Dejours also mentions: disqualifying the troublesome and introducing lies. "Yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted." Again and again throughout history, people seen as inferior have been considered as cursed by God. Their disqualification may be followed by their relegation to places where they are punished or abandoned as well as different forms of exploitation and even the organization of their physical elimination, evil in its absolute form.

But the Isaiah passage offers yet another interpretation, which leads to other reactions. Recognizing your own fear in the face of extreme poverty constitutes the first step in being able to overcome it. The ability to talk about it, to reveal your vulnerability to work colleagues and friends, helps you to better deal with it and control your reactions. Having recognized this existential fear, and the suffering it makes everyone feel, how can we avoid giving way to scorn or hatred of the destitute? By learning to recognize the suffering that destroys them. Recognizing other people's suffering means allowing it to reach you, allowing yourself to become less indifferent and therefore more vulnerable—but also more human. If we accept the effort of confronting extreme poverty instead of fleeing it,

and listen to those who experience it rather than silencing them, it is quite simply impossible to deny their suffering. The preconceived idea that they are so dehumanized that they no longer suffer is overlaid by the realization that they are each of them “a man of suffering, and familiar with pain” as Isaiah says. Encountering them makes each of us question the causes of their suffering, often impossible to express, and try to find answers. Intolerance and rejection of this suffering are of use, because they can become powerful driving forces for taking action. Recognizing and analyzing the violence done to the poor leads to denouncing the lies spun by societies that turn them into scapegoats, an easy outlet for the hidden violence that lies within all groups. No, the poor man is not “punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities,” as the passage in Isaiah says.

Recent progress in social psychology confirms that a sort of “anthropological cruelty” lurks within each individual, contained by social rather than individual barriers. Studies looking at groups of students have highlighted what Professor Philip Zimbardo calls “the Lucifer effect”: any normal person subject to specific situations or conditioning can abandon her or his moral scruples and cooperate actively with violence and oppression.²⁵ The story of the Nazi regime provides ample confirmation of this assertion.

The act of rejecting the very poor is also conditioned by prejudices which have over many centuries legitimized and propagated behaviour rooted in indifference, ignorance and scorn, the prejudices that Wresinski²⁶ constantly denounced. He strongly contested the idea that all societies have a scrapheap, the inevitable dregs of society, and criticized the academic world for not having done enough to censure the idea. He also deplored the fact that history is learnt and society analyzed solely in terms of balances of power, thus excluding the totally powerless from the picture. He continued to challenge the secular distinction between “deserving” and “undeserving” poor, a distinction the progressive deputies upheld at the time of the French Revolution. While promoting, for the first time ever, poor people’s rights vis-à-vis society, a number of deputies considered that the “undeserving poor” should not be permitted these rights.²⁷ Wresinski’s retort came two centuries later: “The poorest people have always been the undeserving poor, but not for reasons of innately bad morality, as humanity keeps telling itself from one century to the next. They have always been and still are undeserving poor because below a certain threshold of poverty, it is not possible to live according to the standards of good conduct towards the surrounding community.”²⁸ He also opposed the simplism of the notion of the rich seeking profit on one side and the

poor seeking justice and fraternity on the other. Such a notion strengthens social barriers rather than helping to overcome them.

According to historian Michel Mollat, in western European from the 16th to the 18th centuries: “Disapproval of poverty was unquestioned by those who, combining Biblical tradition with humanist ideals, associated unhappiness with sinning and success with divine benediction. (...) It was universally felt that the lot of the poor was an ill to be relieved, monitored, regulated and managed. Imprisoned forever in their role as minors, the poor waited many a long year before the causes of their misfortunes were sought. (...) Most poor people vegetated and benefited from a long tradition of charity. Furthermore, the ‘poor police’ were not received with unanimous approval. From Vincent de Paul in the mid 17th century to Massillon in 1705, protesting voices were raised defending ‘those reduced to having to pretend to be wretched.’ (...) Bossuet celebrated ‘the eminent dignity of the poor.’ Vauban recommended fiscal justice that would relieve the poor. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle founded schools for their children.”²⁹

In the 1790s, according to historian Gareth Stedman Jones, reformers declared for the first time that it was possible to put an end to poverty and proposed a number of appropriate measures. Inspired by scientific progress, the potential promised by increasingly international business activities and the revolutions in France and the USA, political thinkers like Paine, Condorcet and others asserted that all citizens could be protected against the uncertainties of life with state welfare systems. The notion that ending poverty was possible thus emerged with the birth of democracy in the West. Jones states that this key moment was then disqualified and made invisible by both right- and left-wing thinkers. Current debate over globalization and poverty are still largely modelled on the ideological conflicts of that time.³⁰ In France, the debate over the rights and obligations of the poor was heated during the Revolution and the declaration of human and citizen rights.

Dufourny de Villiers, an architect passionately interested in scientific progress and justice, invented the term Fourth Order. In 1789, during the convocation of the French States General attended by deputies from the three orders, the nobility, clergy and the Third Estate, he published the *Cahiers du quatrième Ordre, celui des pauvres journaliers, des infirmes, des indigents, l’Ordre sacré des infortunés* (Records of the Fourth Order, that of the labouring poor, the disabled, the destitute, the sacred order of the wretched). He observed that the poorest people were not included in the *Cahiers de Doléances* (records of grievances) and demanded that they be accorded real political representation: “I will not only ask why there are so many needy, but why this

25. Philip G. Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*, Random House Trade, (new edition) 2008.

26. Joseph Wresinski, *Refuser la misère. Une pensée politique née de l’action l’action* (A Knowledge that Leads to Action), Cerf et Ed. Quart Monde, 2007, p. 88 to 93.

27. The Duke de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, president of the committee on begging, differentiated between “the real poor ... (and) the undeserving poor, in other words, those who, known as professional beggars and vagrants, refuse all work and disturb the peace”, begging committee work plan, Imprimerie Nationale, 1790, p. 317.

28. Joseph Wresinski, *Refuser la misère. Une pensée politique née de l’action* (A Knowledge that Leads to Action), op. cit. p. 165.

29. Mollat, *Histoire sociale, Histoire des pauvres pauvres* (Social History, History of the Poor), in *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, 1998.

30. Gareth Stedman Jones, *An End to Poverty? A Historical Debate*, London, Profile Books, 2004.

31. D. G. Audollent et D. Fayard, *Combattre l'exclusion (Fighting Exclusion, Les Essentiels Milan, 1999, p. 18 and 19.*

32. La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt (F.A.E.), *Premier rapport du Comité de mendicité. Exposé des principes généraux qui ont dirigé son travail (First report by the committee on begging. Account of the general principles governing its work)*, op. cit.

33. See the World Bank *Global Economic Prospects 2010: Crisis, Finance and Growth*, 21 Jan. 2010. See also the annual ILO report, *Global Employment Trends 2010*, which indicates that the number of people working in vulnerable jobs in the world rose by over 100 million in 2009, thus exacerbating global poverty.

34. *Le Monde* newspaper, 11 July 2007.

vast class of people is rejected in this nation? Why they do not have their own representatives?"³¹ His question remained unanswered.

The Duke de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, friend of Condorcet and rapporteur for the committee for the eradication of begging set up by the Constituent Assembly in 1790, wrote: "We have always looked to providing charity to the poor, never to upholding the rights of the poor man in society...Public charity is not a compassionate virtue, but an obligation, it is justice. Where a class of men without enough to live on exists, there also exists a violation of human rights."³²

A little under two centuries later, on 17 October 1987 at Paris' Parvis des Libertés et des Droits de l'Homme, Joseph Wresinski unveiled a commemorative paving stone engraved with the message he had formulated: "Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty."

The idea of creating a society with no extreme poverty nowadays comes up against scepticism and fears fed by history. It is true that the twentieth century was marked by the triumph then failure of the major ideologies for changing the world, regardless of their political leanings. In the name of universal equality and the building of a classless society, communism created totalitarian regimes, among the most oppressive that have ever been. In the name of science, hygienist and eugenist movements have organized the enforced relegation or sterilization of millions of people, often from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. In the name of neoliberalism, policies imposed by the governments of both industrialized and developing countries have impoverished hundreds of millions of people. No matter the regime, the fight against poverty constantly risks turning into a ferocious fight against the poorest members of society.

22 World governance centred on eradicating extreme poverty?

The fact that such a situation still exists in the 21st century is a real affront to human intelligence and the basic values of our humanity.

The social compact for a peaceful planet is rooted in the eradication of extreme poverty. All thought and discussions on setting up real world governance must therefore begin by examining how to reintegrate all human beings, without exception, into the social dialogue, the foundation stones of living together. Reducing relative poverty and wiping out extreme poverty have thus become the crucial challenges that call on expertise from us all, not merely from people who have no experience of poverty.

This proposal may appear naive in the light of the following data:

- the food crisis has increased the number of people suffering from hunger in the world from 854 million to 1 billion;
- 1.1 billion people have no access to drinking water;
- according to the World Bank, the global economic and financial crisis has produced a significant rise in extreme poverty, which is set to affect 64 million more people than if the crisis had not taken place;³³
- 800 million adults are illiterate;
- 104 million children have no schooling.

Nevertheless, the most important international texts say the same thing:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948: "... 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";
- United Nations Millennium Declaration adopted by 180 heads of state and government at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2000: "We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected."

Furthermore, although this goal, constantly repeated down the centuries, has not been adopted until recently, we now know that we have the material means to achieve it. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) keeps telling us that we have the means to eradicate extreme poverty within just one generation.

The situation is urgent, since new risks are emerging and threatening the bottom poor first and foremost. Which explains Kofi Annan's words: "Over and above the innumerable problems facing the world today, the major upheavals produced by climate change or the ravages caused by infectious diseases, I am convinced that the world will never find peace unless poverty is at the heart of a deep-seated debate."³⁴

The quest for peace and security, respect for people and eradication of extreme poverty are therefore inextricably linked. So much so that any discussion of the set of rules for organizing human societies on the global level must be rooted in this three-tiered goal.

23 What is extreme poverty?

We need to start with the definitions of poverty to describe extreme poverty. The various analyses of poverty reveal the notion of relative poverty and absolute poverty. We can thus imagine a society where



the poorest members would still have access to the resources needed for them to remain integrated in the social fabric. This would equate to a relative poverty that would not be alienating. Absolute poverty, on the other hand, corresponds to human beings who have no access to the resources vital to living with dignity.

Serge Paugham takes another approach to identify three forms of poverty in relation to society:

- integrated poverty, wherein the fabric of social relationships is maintained and stigmatization relatively non-existent;
- disqualifying poverty, a category a number of people 'fall' into during a crisis, people who did not previously belong to categories classified as poor, thus switching from a situation of social integration to a situation of exclusion;
- marginal poverty, comprising all those who are stigmatized, seen to be unfit for the modern world, or simply overlooked by the rest of the population; the people, we could say, whose existence is not recorded and whose opinions are not solicited because they are not worthwhile or it is too complicated to make contact with them.

This approach can be expanded by looking at what can be called each country's "mental landscape",³⁷

which leads to a filter specific to each culture being placed between actual poverty and how it is perceived by the society concerned. The filter is made up of each country's individual history. The colonial past of many countries plays a decisive role by promoting the conviction of an innate inferiority that requires these countries to wait for answers to their problems of poverty and underdevelopment from the outside. But a colonial past does not explain everything. Geographical and climatic conditions often have a highly negative impact that explains certain countries' underdevelopment. Equally, it is sometimes too easy to offload responsibility for underdevelopment by accusing others, "*The North, the West, the East. The axis of evil or of good is not determined by a compass!*"³⁸

There is therefore a link between poverty and extreme poverty. However, extreme poverty has three key characteristics that differentiate it from poverty:

- **accumulation of several types of insecurity in several areas of life;**
- **enduring nature of a situation with a devastating effect on its victims by weakening them and reducing their capacity for autonomy;**
- **impossibility of gaining access to fundamental rights and exercising responsibilities without outside help.**

35. Forum for a new World Governance (FnWG): *Why have we opened this Forum for a new World Governance?* <http://www.world-governance.org>

36. Serge Paugham, *Les formes élémentaires de la pauvreté (Elementary Forms of Poverty)*, Paris, PUF, collection "Le lien social", 2005.

37. Xavier Godinot, *Éradiquer la misère (Eradicating Extreme Poverty)* Paris, PUF, November 2008, pages 254-255.

38. Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Conference organized for the 30th anniversary of CODESRIA, 2003, reproduced in *Repères pour l'Afrique (Paths for Africa)*, Ed. Panafrica, Silex/ Nouvelles du Sud, 2007, p.185.



24 How extreme poverty is a human rights violation

Extreme poverty, above and beyond the deprivation of the food, material and financial resources needed for physical survival, equates to the negation of social existence due to the impossibility of access to all basic human rights: civil and political rights, the right to access work, education, culture, health, housing, social protection and justice.

This definition of extreme poverty proposed by Léandro Despouy, a United Nations expert, was finally adopted in June 1996 by the UN Human Rights Commission. It stipulates that: *“This accumulation of misfortunes and deprivation in health, education, housing, participation, etc., which continually plagues the lives of those enduring extreme poverty, has a precise and clearly defined name in standard legal terminology: absolute denial of the most fundamental human rights.”*⁴⁰

Extreme poverty is thus a permanent denial of human dignity and thereby a human rights violation.

It exists in all countries regardless of their economic, social and cultural situation. It is almost always denied by public opinion and the political authorities, and receives relatively scant attention from the spiritual authorities. The very fact that it endures shows that respect of human rights is an obligation that is not applied to all human beings, since some of them are seen as hopeless cases, and thus contradicts the human aspiration to establish a united and peaceful world.

The fact that extreme poverty is first and foremost a human rights violation means that any attempt to build a new world governance based on respect for humans and the ethics of responsibility must seek its eradication.⁴¹

Father Joseph Wresinski (1917-1988), founder of the International Movement ATD Fourth World, fought unrelentingly to have extreme poverty recognized as a violation of human rights. In February 1987, the Economic and Social Council of France adopted his report *Chronic Poverty and Lack of Basic Security*. The Council defines precariousness and extreme poverty as follows:

*“A lack of basic security is the absence of one or more factors that enable individuals and families to assume basic responsibilities and to enjoy fundamental rights. Such a situation may become more extended and lead to more serious and permanent consequences. Chronic poverty results when the lack of basic security 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.”*³⁹

39. Joseph Wresinski, *Chronic Poverty and Lack of Basic Security*, Economic and Social Council Opinion and Report, Journal Officiel de la République Française, February 1987, p. 6. http://www.joseph-wresinski.org/IMG/pdf/Wres_JO87en.pdf.

40. Léandro Despouy, *Final Report on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty*, United Nations Economic and Social Council, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1996/13.

41. Cf. page 4, text engraved on the Trocadéro commemorative paving stone: “Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty.”



World Governance and Extreme Poverty: Overview

31 Fundamental bonds and fundamental rights

Box 3: Accounts from four families

To highlight the family dynamics in play in resisting extreme poverty, we have chosen to write down four accounts of people living in severe poverty in four continents: in the Philippines, Peru, Burkina Faso and France.

In Manila, the Philippines, Mercedita and her family lived under a bridge for many years. After the death of her husband, Mercedita had to place her children in an orphanage because she could no longer feed them or pay for their schooling. Then they came back home to her. She told Marilyn, who was writing down her words: *"I have been happy once in my life, it's now that I'm with my children. I see how much my efforts are worth*

in them. I was strong in spite of all my problems." She died of tuberculosis aged 41, victim to the disease of the poor, a few days after her account was presented at the Philippines University.

The account of the Rojas Paucar family in Peru reveals the same desire to remain united as a family, despite the severe poverty that forces them to disperse. Their mother recounted: *"I love my children. I want my children to have a stable job and to become someone, I'm very proud that they are students."* Their father, unemployed for many years, exclaimed to Marco, who was transcribing his words: *"Look at my hands, you can see they're the hands of a worker! Poverty is suffocating us. I'm trying to pull us out of it, but I'm not managing."* They both bled themselves dry to keep their children at school for as long as possible.

In Burkina Faso, Paul left his village at 14 to look for work and ended up spending five years living on the capital's streets. The support he received from Claude

42. Xavier Godinot, *Eradiquer la misère (Eradicating Extreme Poverty)*, Paris, PUF, November 2008

43. Axel Honneth, *La lutte pour la reconnaissance (The Fight for Recognition)*, Paris, Ed. du Cerf, "Passages" collection, 2000

44. Nancy Frazer, *Qu'est ce que la justice sociale ? Reconnaissance et redistribution (What is Social Justice? Recognition and Redistribution)*, Paris, Ed. La Découverte, 2005, p. 69.

45. Paul Bouchet, *Le rôle du droit en question (The Role of Law)*, Revue Quart Monde no. 186, May 2003, p. 49 to 53.

46. This typology is largely inspired by Serge Paugam, *Les formes élémentaires de la pauvreté (The Elementary Forms of Poverty)*, op. cit. p. 79-80.

and Bruno over several years allowed him to get back in touch with his family, find work and accommodation and no longer live in extreme poverty. "Thanks to you," his grandmother told them, "Paul did not die when he was living in the street. He was walking side by side with death. Luckily, you intercepted him. You did so much to help Paul become a man that I cannot forget you."

In France, Farid, who had spent five years living in the street, talked to Floriane, who was recording his words: "Living in the street, sleeping outdoors, is terrible. It tears you apart. It makes you tense, it makes you savage, it makes you go mad." Thanks to the efforts that he and his companion made and the support they received, particularly at the Noisy-le-Grand family housing project, it took them three years to get access to their fundamental rights, to housing, decent work, health and culture, and to bring home their little Karim, who had been placed by the court in care at his birth.

An analysis of the four monographs above⁴² shows that when fundamental social bonds are broken or severely damaged at the family or community level, at school or at work, and at the citizenship level, the individual or his/her family cannot access their fundamental rights. The rebuilding of these fundamental bonds thus appears to be a necessary condition for accessing rights and, more especially, for recognition, in the sense currently given by sociology and political philosophy.

Philosopher Axel Honneth has developed a theory of recognition based on the analysis of feelings of scorn, humiliation and loss of dignity, which are all feelings of non-recognition.⁴³ He posits that many social conflicts are not limited to conflicts of interest and can be better understood by taking into account these feelings of being valueless, which generate a fight for recognition. The self-image everyone has depends on the perception of other people, and in modern societies three principles of recognition play a vital role in three different spheres: the principle of love in the private sphere, the principle of equality in the legal sphere, and the principle of recognition of value in the collective sphere. In the private sphere, the principle of love designates all strong emotional relationships that create ties with family, partners and friends. We are well aware of the importance of the mother and father in building personal identity and autonomy, and experiencing love is how each individual achieves self-confidence. In the sphere of legal relationships, the principle of equality gives each individual the feeling of an entitlement to the same rights as everyone else, in order to develop a feeling of self-respect and dignity. In the collective sphere, the principle of solidarity gives each individual the feeling of having a value in contributing to society and thus

achieves self-esteem. For Honneth, these three principles of recognition determine each person's legitimate expectations.

This analysis has the advantage of providing a vocabulary that gives positive expression—the **fight for recognition**—to what is often expressed negatively, as the fight against disqualification and exclusion. It underlines a highly significant aspect of each individual's legitimate aspirations, too often ignored by economists. But it does not embody the whole of the fight against destitution, a synthesis of material extreme poverty and social exclusion.

Building and strengthening the social bonds that produce recognition is thus a necessary condition for fighting extreme poverty. But this condition alone is not enough. As philosopher Nancy Frazer stresses, we need to "come up with social measures that can redress both economic and cultural injustice." It is only by working to "bring together redistribution and recognition that the conditions necessary for universal justice can be met."⁴⁴

The notion of **fundamental rights** was incorporated in the French blueprint law against exclusions in July 1998, then in the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights. In the name of equal dignity for all human beings, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights grants each individual a certain number of economic, social, civil, political and cultural rights, which each nation and all international institutions must strive to make accessible to all citizens. To provide these rights with a legal basis, states have to sign international pacts committing them to take measures to apply the rights. In the context of the Cold War, states were asked to ratify two separate pacts in 1966, one concerning civil and political rights, that China did not sign, the other relating to economic, social and cultural rights, that the USA did not sign. The notion of fundamental rights seeks to find a way of moving beyond this type of opposition, guaranteeing everyone their rights in the areas of employment, housing, healthcare, justice, education, training, culture and family and child welfare.⁴⁵

Four types of fundamental social bonds link the individual to society. These bonds can be seriously altered or destroyed by social exclusion:⁴⁶

- **the filiation or family bond**, which links the individual to her/his family in the narrow sense and the broad sense and plays an important role in the construction of his/her identity from birth;
- **the bond of community membership** which characterizes socialization outside the family whereby the individual learns to manage his/her relationships with neighbours, local communities, religious, sports and cultural institutions, etc. It also enables individuals to experiment with mutual help and solidarity;

- **the bond of organic participation** which is established at school and continues into the work environment; each individual learns a social position likely to provide her/him with basic protection and the feeling of being useful;
- **the bond of citizenship** based on the principle of belonging to a nation that acknowledges the rights and duties of its members and is obliged to enable them to function as fully-fledged citizens.

The same applies to solidarity within the community, neighbourhood or village, which plays a vital role in the strategies for survival adopted by people living in extreme poverty, without however providing the resources necessary to break free of destitution. It is thus clear that community bonds help people to ward off isolation and find a place for themselves in the community, a vital step in breaking free of severe poverty and which cannot be taken with strictly individual

social action. Nevertheless, if the existence of fundamental social bonds is a necessary condition for accessing rights, it is not a sufficient condition; there also need to be opportunities to access housing, employment, education, healthcare services, etc.

We are seeing a weakening of traditional models for education and transmitting values. “*The first element that creates a strain is the decline in economic power. Nowadays, the capacity to get a child to listen to his or her parents depends on their economic power. Each child has many new needs that need to be satisfied, and when*

parents cannot satisfy the child, they are aware that they are in a state of weakness,” states Ibrahim Zougmore,⁴⁹ at Burkina Faso’s Ministry of Health.

47. Maria Maïlat, Romanian anthropologist and novelist, quoted in Maryvonne Caillaux, *Contre vents et marées. Réflexions sur la famille (Against All Odds. Reflections on the Family)*, Ed. Quart Monde, 2006, p. 63-64.

48. S.M. Miller, *The American Lower Class: A Typological Approach*, Social Research, Vol. 31, no. 1, 1964.

49. Ibrahim Zougmore, *Pourquoi les enfants quittent-ils leur famille ? (Why Do Children Leave Their Families?)*, Revue Quart Monde no. 189, Editions Quart Monde, February 2004, p. 20.



311 - The importance of family and community membership

Even though family and social bonds are constantly threatened by extreme poverty, preserving family unity is a primary aspiration for adults and children alike. “*The bond of filiation is a sacred bond: we know how to destroy it, we know how to assess and predict the worst in a poor family, but we do not know how to replace this bond, even when the father is in prison and the parents have nothing left. We are not gods. We can control many things, but we can’t act as a substitute for that which is the human being. And the bond of filiation is one of those elements. Supporting parents should be a priority when they are poor, excluded from society at every level.*”

According to S.M. Miller, family and emotional instability has a far greater influence than economic insecurity on the emergence and endurance of poverty from one generation to the next, and only those who benefit from a stable family environment have any chance of breaking free of the cycle of poverty.⁴⁸

312 - The daily fight for survival

People living in extreme poverty are engaged in a daily fight for survival that means they have to work from a very young age. On the other hand, sharing becomes a factor for security and social success. Finding the means to support your family and community is an integral part of the conception of social success. Solidarity is exercised in a wider sphere than the family and can lead very disadvantaged people to take major risks for people even more disadvantaged than themselves.

These informal strategies used to fight poverty pro-



vide support and safety nets that people can control themselves, in the absence of resources or services. When the social welfare systems do not work properly or do not exist, community solidarity is the best possible defence against extreme poverty.

The women and men living in extreme poverty are also necessarily placed in a debased and polluted environment.

As the former UN Secretary-General stressed: “*poor people already live on the front lines of pollution, disaster and the degradation of resources and land.*”⁵⁰

Poverty can also prompt the decision to emigrate. This observation raises the much-debated questions of the relationship between migration, globalization and poverty, the complexity of determining factors in internal and international migration, the problems of managing migratory flows, the recognition of immigrants’ rights and the levels of remittances emigrants send to their families. The context underpinning these questions is marked by a steep rise in the number of migrants—people living outside their native country. The number has doubled in twenty-five years to reach 191 million people in 2005, equivalent to just under 3% of the world’s population.⁵¹

The division of traditional roles between men and women is being questioned. In the World Bank study, *Voices of the Poor*, which questioned families living in poverty in around fifty countries, Deepa Narayan points out that: “*Under increasing economic pressure, men in many parts of the world have lost their traditional occupations and jobs, and women have been forced to take on additional income earning tasks while continuing their domestic tasks... Many men react to their loss of power as breadwinner by collapsing into drugs, alcohol, depression, wife-beating or walking away.*”⁵² Families pay a high price for these changes in the roles and responsibilities traditionally assigned according to gender.

Health problems threaten the ever-fragile balance and thus play a decisive role in the process of falling into and breaking free of extreme poverty.

In the Philippines, only 1% of people living in poverty had health-care cover in 2007. They thus only used healthcare services for emergencies and had to pay for the treatment. In addition, a number of medicines cost two to seven times more in the Philippines than in other countries in the region, preventing people living in poverty benefiting from appropriate treatment for chronic illnesses like tuberculosis. Why were the

prices for medicines so expensive in the Philippines? Because of the intellectual property code, which gave pharmaceutical companies that had discovered or developed a medicine a twenty-five-year patent. The patent granted these companies, mostly multinationals, a production and sales monopoly at whatever price they wanted to apply, with no competition. Other Asian countries have amended their intellectual property code or promulgated laws that allow their own pharmaceutical companies, under certain conditions, to produce far cheaper generic medicines. In December 2007, Filipino politicians unanimously adopted a bill aiming to make medicines less expensive by implementing similar measures to neighbouring countries. If the senate adopts the same position, the price of medicines should drop significantly for the consumer.

ATD Fourth World has spent ten years working to protect young children’s health in the poor neighbourhoods of Antananarivo, Madagascar. The organization’s work has revealed material problems and strained relations between inhabitants and medical staff: the inhabitants feel they are misunderstood or humiliated at the hospital. The medical staff, often

50. The New York Times, « *Anan Faults ‘Frightening Lack of Leadership’ for Global Warming* », November 16, 2006.

51. Pierre Jacquet and Laurence Tubiana, *Regards sur la terre (Perceptions of the Planet)*, Les Presses de Sciences Po, 2010. p. 35.

52. Deepa Narayan et al, *Voices of the Poor. Can Anyone Hear Us?* op. cit. p. 175 and 203.

middle-class or rich people, are trained in western medicine, whereas the inhabitants come from the world of extreme poverty, use traditional medicine and only go to the hospital as a last resort. The initiative showed that by helping the most disadvantaged people to build up their life knowledge (see box no. 1), then organizing well-prepared meetings at carefully chosen times and places, it is possible to bring these two worlds closer together and interconnect knowledge developed from traditional medicine with that of western medicine to the advantage of both parties.⁵³

Access to housing and decent work are the real keys to breaking free of extreme poverty.

The number of homeless people in France is estimated at 100,000.⁵⁴ The President of the French Republic cited the following figures during his speech to the Economic and Social Council in October 2007. Three million French people are badly housed. 30% of people housed in emergency housing and social reintegration centres are obliged to stay there, not because they have difficulty with integration, but because they cannot find anywhere to live. The state spends a million Euros a day to provide emergency housing, in particular to house families in hotels, often in unacceptable conditions: emergency responses are more costly than long-term solutions. A million households are on the waiting lists for *Habitations à Loyer Modéré* (HLM) public housing.⁵⁵ This gap between the supply and demand for social housing is not new, as Jean-Claude Driant, professor at the Paris Institute of Urbanism, points out: “the housing crisis has been an important issue in France since the mid 19th century: housing needs have never been fully met, neither quantitatively nor qualitatively.”⁵⁶ Historians could no doubt find grounds for dating the issue back even earlier. It is clear that at the bottom of the social ladder, and not at the top, the “crisis” has been going on for at least 160 years, evidence of France’s incapacity to solve the problem, regardless of the regime in place. The fact that the French parliament adopted a law on the enforceable right to housing (*Droit au logement opposable* - DALO) in 2007 provides hope that there is a way out of this dead end, keeping in mind that 65% of applicants for social housing have incomes lower by at least a third than the lower income limits for obtaining a standard HLM.⁵⁷ The link can therefore be traced between substandard housing and the development of insecure employment and of “poor workers”, whose income does not allow them to break free of poverty.

The DALO Monitoring Committee acknowledged that in June 2009,⁵⁸ 115,000 appeals were lodged with the departmental mediation commission for housing. 35,000 applicants were classified as priority cases and over 16,000 were rehoused. Some of the press and a

number of observers consider these results to be a failure and seem to be resigned to the situation. But the figures do not reflect reality, since in many regions, the DALO has enabled local government officials to take in hand questions relating to housing access for the disadvantaged. The Collectif des associations unies pour le logement (*collective of not-for-profit organizations working together for housing*) remains very active and has proposed 100 priority and urgent measures to the government promoting accommodation and housing. The collective regularly publishes a housing barometer.

We are also seeing the rise of insecure and informal employment. The causes underlying faster growth in the informal economy than in the formal sector are primarily **demographic**, with a huge increase in people the formal job market fails to absorb and massive migration to the cities. Between 1970 and 2005, the French population grew from 50 to 62.8 million inhabitants, representing a 25% increase. During the same period, Burkina Faso and Peru have more than doubled their populations, increasing from 5.3 to 13.2 million inhabitants and 13.1 to 27.9 million respectively. The Philippines’ population has almost tripled over the same period, rising from 36.5 to 83 million inhabitants, one of the highest growth rates in the world. Furthermore, **an increasing number of women have begun working**, by choice or necessity. **The massive rural exodus** also plays a huge part in the growth of the informal sector: impoverished peasants or their children set off to the city in search of a better life and create their own survival jobs there. In 2008, for the first time in history, over half the world’s population, i.e. 3.3 billion people, were living in urban areas. But rural poverty is not the only reason behind migration to the city. The lack of or limited opportunities to put children in school in the rural world greatly influences the decision to move to the city. A study on the migratory process in the Philippines shows that **schooling is the main factor in migration to the city**, either due to the lack of schools in the rural environment or because the schools are better in the city.⁵⁹ School grants are more accessible in Manila than in the provinces; the grants pay for school fees for private schools or help with costs for transport, supplies and uniforms. Even when they live under a bridge, Manila families can hope to benefit from two types of aid, provided either by NGOs or by the schools themselves.

The rise in informal employment has occurred against a **background of increasingly indebted developing countries and trade liberalization**. Burkina Faso, Peru and the Philippines are particularly hard hit, with rising external debts that led to the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in the 1980s through to 1999 under the auspices of the

53. Chantal Laureau, Caroline Blanchard and Xavier Godinot, *Rendre les services de santé accessibles aux plus pauvres. Dix années d’action à Tananarive, Madagascar (Making Health Services Accessible to the Bottom Poor. Ten years of Action in Tananarive, Madagascar)*, Agence Française de Développement and ATD Fourth World, *Extrême Pauvreté et Développement (Extreme Poverty and Development)*, 2006, p. 36 to 65.

54. Fondation Abbé Pierre, *L’état du mal-logement en France, Rapport annuel 2007 (The State of Substandard Housing in France, 2007 Annual Report)*.

55. Speech made by Nicolas Sarkozy on the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 17 October 2007, to the Economic and Social Council.

56. Jean-Claude Driant, *Quels remèdes pour en finir avec le mal-logement? (What Remedies for Ending Substandard Housing?)*, Grand Entretien, Le Monde newspaper, 4-5 September 2006.

57. Idem.

58. See 3rd report by the DALO Monitoring Committee, October 2009 www.hclpd.gouv.fr

59. A.R. Quisumbing and S. Mc Niven, 2005, *Migration and the Rural-Urban Continuum: Evidence from the Rural Philippines*, IFPRI FCND Discussion Paper 197, available at <http://www.ifpri.org>.

60. Bruno Lautier, *L'économie informelle dans le tiers monde (The Informal Economy in the Third World)*, Ed. La Découverte, 2004, p. 112.

61. Majid Rahnama, *Quand la misère chasse la pauvreté (When Destitution Follows on the Heels of Poverty)*, op. cit. chapter VII, p. 163 to 179.

62. See http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/burkinafaso_statistics.html

63. Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Cheikh Hamidou Kane, Jo-Ann Archibald, Edouard Lizop and Majid Rahnama, "Education as an instrument of cultural defoliation: a multi-voice report", in Majid Rahnama and Victoria Bawtree, *The Post-Development Reader*, Zed Books, Fernwood Publishing, David Philip, 1997, p. 152-160.

World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. At the same time, **the major subsidies granted by rich countries to their own agricultural sector** have weakened agriculture in poor countries. In this context, development of an informal economy of survival "is first and foremost the response to multiple failures: the failure of the industrialist, development-oriented model, failure of the institutionalized law-based state and failure of widespread application of social rights."⁶⁰

313 - The difficult relationship between community education and school education

For many centuries, community cohesion in traditional societies conditioned their capacity to deal with misfortune and increase their safety nets. We can observe one of the vital elements of this cohesion in Andean traditions that the Ayni and Faena still keep alive: the organization of relations and activities whereby everyone fights poverty together. Without idealizing these traditional cultures, the ethics of sharing, hospitality, managing needs and the individual acceptance of the poverty extolled by many spiritual traditions are some of the elements underpinning this poverty that helped to resist destitution.⁶¹ This way of living implied individuals assimilating norms and references rooted in cohabitation. Does today's school contribute to this assimilation? Family and community education is now supplemented by school education. But the latter can trigger strong resistance if it conflicts with the values advocated by the former, making the application of the universal right to education problematic. Community education leaves a lasting impression on children since it is the first form of education transmitted by parents, the family and the community.

On the other hand, school education is torn between material difficulties and strained relations.

According to UNICEF figures for Burkina Faso,⁶² the percentage of primary school aged boys who actually attended lessons between 1996 and 2005 was 35%, with girls at 29%. During the period 2000-2004, the literacy rate for adult men was 29% and for adult women 15%. Schooling has to tackle resource problems such as the lack of educational material and teachers.

Why do children who have the opportunity to go to school then leave? We can offer several hypotheses. Firstly, school hours are not always compatible with the daily rhythm of very poor communities, where children have to work some of the day to earn enough to eat. Secondly, knowledge taught at school is too far removed from the reality of children living in a rural environment and, unable to grasp such knowledge, the children become discouraged. Teachers often come from provinces far from the place they are teaching, thanks to an almost totally random nomi-

nation system, and do not feel close to their students' parents. They do not always have the same traditional culture: Burkina Faso counts around twenty main ethnic groups and around forty other ethnic groups. It is thus inevitable that they do not always share the same language or life style as those practiced in the area they have been assigned to. Lastly, very limited means and the extremely unstable status of teachers make educational institutions highly fragile.

In Burkina Faso, as in many other African countries, the solution adopted to speed up the development of schooling and finance more teachers has been to reduce their qualification level and training period. This justifies their low salaries, based on a flawed logic whereby salaries are linked not to the work provided but to the length of studies undertaken to access employment. "By impoverishing teachers and the school," believes Professor Badini, "we are weakening the expectations people have of school. Few people want to build a career in teaching, and all those who have the means send their children elsewhere, to private schools or abroad." In Burkina Faso, as in other West African countries, we can also see the emergence of schools created by individuals and "satellite" schools where the national language spoken in the area is taught as a first language before French.

Resistance to education and educational aspirations

In the late 1990s, leading authors severely criticized the schooling system set up in their countries by colonizers, seeing it as "an instrument of cultural defoliation", a "school for deracination", a "process of depersonalization", an "instrument of humiliation". Whilst schools in Europe provided a means for creating an identity and national consciousness, in colonized countries it has been an instrument for imitating dominant countries' identity and culture.⁶³ More recently, Mamadou N'Doye, the former Senegalese Minister for Education and Secretary-General of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa, wrote: "School education was established in Africa to benefit colonial domination and in opposition to the continuity of societies' internal development by disqualifying, right from the outset and still today, the whole of African culture—values, practical knowledge and languages—seen as antinomial to the goals of civilisation and progress. This has resulted in a dichotomic split and consequently a sort of primary identification whereby everything African belongs necessarily to tradition, to the past and to magic, whereas everything western equates to modernity, rationality and science. The sources of the almost schizophrenic structure of the African cultural personality are to be found in this historical conflictual encounter."⁶⁴

64. Mamadou N'Doye, "Cultures africaines, défis et opportunités pour le développement" (African cultures, challenges and opportunities for development), in JE. Aubert and J. Landrieu, *Vers des civilisations mondialisées (Towards Globalized Civilisations)*, Ed. de l'Aube, 2004, p. 117.



“Our children who went to ‘the white school’ don’t want to use their education to improve their parents’ living conditions,” explained the traditional village chief of Manega, Burkina Faso in October 2000. “So they leave for the city. Once they are there, they look down on manual work and prefer office work, which they can’t find elsewhere. These situations lead to serious poverty. This is what I mean when I say that our poverty is modern.” Professor Badini adds: “The modern educational system in our country appears as the antithesis of the traditional education system. It centres on the school and the values it advocates are essentially individual, not to say individualistic. These values are based on competition and the emergence of the individual in relation to the group, and focus

more on individual success than the individual’s contribution to the group’s success. Whereas I feel that this last element really characterizes the goal of traditional education. Over the last few years, we have thus seen social resistance against the school, which has led to children dropping out of the school system. What is at issue is not the principle of schooling, but its content and purpose..”

The notion of the right to education should not be reduced to the right to academic or professional instruction. This point is confirmed by a study on assessing the right to education spread over several years in Burkina Faso. The survey questioned representatives of public institutions and local NGOs, village and neighbourhood communities, teachers, students, parents of children both in and out of the school system, in the formal and informal teaching environment.⁶⁵ The people questioned nearly all proved to be attached to the idea that children of all ages should be able to benefit from the right to education, meaning the right to be educated by your parents and family, by your community and by the state, by means of a comprehensive and suitable school system or with the support of informal education. The

key idea to emerge from the survey is that education begins within the family at a very young age with the help of a wide circle of relatives, and is continued by the community. Education in and out of school supplements and complements family and community education. There is no basic contradiction between family and community education and school education. Their core values can on the whole be the same, despite misunderstandings rooted in the adjustments required to find a positive balance between tradition and modernity.

On a broader level, access to education remains a challenge for the poorest families throughout the world. In Europe,⁶⁶ North America,⁶⁷ Asia and else-

65. Claude Dalbera, Jean-Jacques Friboulet, Valérie Liechti and Anatole Niameogo (collectif IIEDH/APENF), *La mesure du droit à l’éducation. Tableau de bord de l’éducation pour tous au Burkina Faso (Assessing the Right to Education. Indicators on Universal Education in Burkina Faso)*, Karthala, Paris, 2005.

66. J. Rosenfeld and B. Tardieu, *Artisans of Democracy*, chapter 1, University Press of America, 2000.

67. Fourth World Movement/USA, *Unleashing Hidden Potential*, Fourth World Journal, Sept. 2001, Jan. 2002, May 2002, Sept. 2002, Nov. 2003.

68. Pierre Merle, *L'élève humilié (The Humiliated Pupil)*, PUF 2005.

69. Claude Pair, *L'école devant la grande pauvreté (School in the Face of Severe Poverty)*, Revue Quart Monde, June 2000, p. 23 to 28.

where, families in highly precarious situations deplore the difficulties, if not impossibility, of their children attending a school that will really give them an education. Totally cost-free education would help, but when it comes to the problems of school-family relations, the measures taken to ensure that the school's goals correspond to the aspirations and needs specific to people living in difficult situations often seem very far from sufficient. In France, the report drawn up by the High Council of Education on primary schooling in late August 2007 denounces a teaching system that is "resigned" to early failure at school, with results that have been stagnating for the last ten years.

314 - The difficulty of representing the interests of very disadvantaged populations

The most disadvantaged people have trouble getting their voices heard and their interests taken into account, in local life, at school, within the healthcare services, in municipal urban planning, in the media and by the political class. Throughout the world, public expenditure on health, education and sewer systems benefit the non-poor far more than the poor, who only get the scraps and are singularly powerless to change the situation.⁷⁰ Evidently, candidates seeking votes during election campaigns lavish attention



The difficulties are material in nature, but their roots lie mainly in human relations and teaching methods. Sociologists point out that humiliating pupils, particularly the weakest, remains a reality,⁶⁸ and director of education Claude Pair stresses how difficult and necessary it is for teachers to see parents from the poorest backgrounds not only as problems, but as partners, with knowledge and experience to bring to the table.⁶⁹

on disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities. But this does not prevent the residents of depressed French urban neighbourhoods, to take one example, from feeling pretty much ignored by the country's policies, which favour the middle classes and thus reveal a major democratic deficit.

This situation is exacerbated by the difficulties impoverished populations have in organizing a force for protest: "Why do the poor living in the big modern urban areas seem incapable of organizing themselves to create a force for protest?" asks sociologist Paul Vercauteren in the opening of his book *Les sous-prolétaires (The Sub-Proletariats)*.⁷¹ He draws on observations and analyses of the race riots that broke out in North American black ghettos in the 1960s as well as on studies of the impoverished populations of Algiers, New York, Paris and Sao Paulo during the same period. The Ameri-

70. World Bank, *World Development Report: Making Services Work for Poor People*, World Bank, 2004

71. Paul Vercauteren, *Les sous-prolétaires. Essai sur une forme de paupérisme contemporain (The Sub-Proletariats. Essay on a Form of Contemporary Pauperism)*. Les éditions Vie Ouvrière, Brussels, 1970, 201 pages.

can race riots were unpremeditated, with no prior organization, and remained short lived. It is also worth noting that the same applies to the riots that broke out in the French inner cities in 2005. In all these places, sub-proletariats are differentiated from the working class world by the hugely irregular nature of their employment. Workers with insecure and irregular jobs and the unemployed, the sub-proletariat do not tend to be addressed or protected by the unions, and school is usually a place where their children are made to feel inferior rather than given the chance for social promotion. An insecure income places them in an economy of survival that obliges them to live from hand to mouth. This has the immediate effect of producing sociability, and then the cultural blinkering of sub-proletariats, meaning the incapacity to see and understand the situation they find themselves in. These cultural blinkers are the exact opposite of class consciousness, which Vercauteren believes explains sub-proletariats' powerlessness to organize themselves into a force for protest.

Studies carried out by the Fourth World University group research group in partnership with people who have long experience of poverty and exclusion offer a different analysis. What paralyzes these people is not so much a contested blindness to their situation, but rather deep-seated wounds, shame, lack of self-confidence and the fear of meeting others created by the experience of poverty and being on the receiving end of contempt since early childhood. Countless examples are given of the shame and humiliation experienced by the most disadvantaged members of society, one of whom says: "*Shame has become part of me, like an education.*"⁷² Although they are different, the explanations proffered by Vercauteren and the Fourth World University group support Wresinski's words: "*Beyond a certain threshold, poverty does not bring about revolution, the poor person becomes the tool of his or her own pauperization.*"⁷³

Furthermore, difficulties in promoting new forms of participative democracy can be observed. The citizenship bond is rooted in membership of a nation, expected to recognize its members' rights and duties, a nation wherein the state plays a highly variable but always decisive role. Holding legal identity papers is necessary, but not sufficient, to enjoy citizen rights. The political representation of highly disadvantaged populations remains very difficult in rich countries, where they are merely a mostly-disqualified minority, and in poor countries, where they have to deal with states that are subject to the influence of more powerful states, whose leaders are often far removed from the people, and where democracy is fragile. However, they do obtain recognition and the ability to influence certain public decisions thanks to forms of participa-

tive democracy promoted by various organizations such as NGOs, unions and religious institutions.

Rights cannot be accessed without legal registration

After a baby is born, highly disadvantaged families are mainly concerned with finding the money to get the mother out of hospital. If she gives birth at home, the concern is to find food for the baby. Everyone concentrates on these urgent needs, so that the family often has neither the time nor the means to carry out the necessary administrative procedures. The parents are sometimes simply so afraid of being rejected or humiliated that they do not go to the registration office. This situation is so frequent in developing countries that, in 2000, UNICEF estimated non-recorded births at around fifty million each year throughout the world, representing over 30% of the estimated birth figure.⁷⁴ Recording a child's birth, other than the initial legal recognition of the baby's existence that it bestows, is vital to planning for the equipment that will be needed, such as schools and health centres. In many countries, a child needs a birth certificate to be enrolled at school, receive treatment from health centres, and so on. In central and eastern Europe, the Roma, a people with around seven million members, were long denied the right to record births.

315 - Inequitable international relations and fragile democracies

The rise of the informal economy in developing countries along with the difficulties of the education, health and social welfare systems have to be placed in their international context.⁷⁵

For several decades now, more money has been flowing from the debtor states of the South to the North than financial aid flowing from North to South. In 2006, Official Development Assistance (ODA) supplied by donor countries accounted for 104 billion dollars, whereas servicing developing countries' foreign debt—payment of interest and principal—represented 540 billion dollars.⁷⁶ This situation is "*the very expression of the structural violence that inhabits the current world order,*" writes Jean Ziegler, UN former Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food.⁷⁷ But the situation varies hugely in different developing countries. In 2004, the cost of servicing the national debt of Burkina Faso represented just 9.7% of the ODA it received, whereas it was 5.6% higher than the ODA received by Peru and twenty-five higher than that of the Philippines!⁷⁸ The reason is that Burkina Faso benefited from debt relief initiatives for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries implemented in 1996 then 2005. Peru and the Philippines, seen as middle-income countries, did not benefit from these measures. In 2004, the total value of Peru's foreign debt was equal to half its Gross National Product. Debt

72. Fourth World University research group, op. cit. p. 70.

73. Joseph Wresinski, preface to Jean Labbens's book, *Le Quart Monde, étude sur la condition sous-prolétarienne (The Fourth World: Study of the Sub-Proletarian Condition)*, Pierrelaye, Ed. Science et Service, 1969, p. 16.

74. UNICEF, *Birth Registration. Right from the Start*, June 2002.

75. A more detailed account of the history of this context is available in: Serge Michailof, *À quoi sert d'aider le Sud? (The Purpose of Aid for the South)*, Economica, 2006, p. 1 to 36.

76. The ODA figure was published by the OECD's Development Aid Committee in April 2007, and the debt service figure by the World Bank in the *Global Development Finance 2007* report.

77. Jean Ziegler, *L'empire de la honte (The Empire of Shame)*, Fayard, 2005.

78. Figures from the International Debt Observatory, www.oid-ido.org

79. Figures from the International Debt Observatory for 2002, www.oid-ido.org

80. Social Watch, Philippines, *Looking to 2015*, March 2006, available at: <http://www.socialwatch.org>

81. Joseph Stiglitz, *La grande désillusion (The Great Disillusion)*, Fayard, 2002.

82. The World Bank Independent Evaluation Group, *Assessing World Bank Support for Trade, 1987-2004, An IEG Evaluation*, 2006. The report recognized that the countries that did not follow the Bank's advice often did better than those that did, the best examples being China and India.

83. International Development Association and International Monetary Fund, *Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) – Status of Implementation*, August 28, 2007, p. 47, available at: www.worldbank.org.

84. International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends Brief, January 2007*, available on the ILO website: http://www.ilo.org/empelm/what/pubs/lang-en/docName--WCMS_114295/index.htm.

servicing was twice as high as public expenditure on education and 2.8 times higher than public health expenditure.⁷⁹ In the Philippines, the state's foreign debt has been exceeding the country's Gross National Product since 2001. The rise in this debt has increased the share represented by interest to be paid, which reached 33.2% of state budgetary expenditure in 2005, and caused a corresponding drop in the share spent on education and health.⁸⁰

This debt and the policies adopted to reduce it already have a long history. The rise of third world debt led the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to define a new policy. Together they set up new concessional loans for developing countries in the early 1980s, granted in return for keeping to the conditions negotiated and incorporated into the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). The recommended formula consisted of reducing state expenditure so the countries could reimburse their debts, encouraging export agriculture, liberalizing trade by reducing import taxes, and privatizing companies and public services. The cost of operating states' central services as well as spending on education and health were then reduced, leading to massive redundancies in a number of countries. In many cases, loans have been granted to dictators or corrupt governments, helping them stay in power and enrich themselves. The implementation of SAPs triggered strong resistance. Many NGOs in the North and South called for the cancellation of these "appalling" debts that had impoverished contracting countries. Protests arose within the very institutions that had set them up, as expressed publicly by Joseph Stiglitz, former World Bank chief economist, who denounced the inefficiency and ideological character of the recommended method.⁸¹ In most cases, they failed to produce either growth or the promised development, whereas the country's debt mounted up. A few years later, the World Bank acknowledged the failure of these policies.⁸² The SAPs were abandoned in 1999. The same Bretton Woods institutions, proclaiming the desire to "put southern governments back in the driving seat" and reduce the number of conditions, set up new concessional loans, named the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF), hand in hand with required Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). The importance of educational and health expenditure was recognized, and governments encouraged to define their poverty reduction strategy via dialogue with civil society.

According to the assessment drawn up by World Bank staff in August 2007, Burkina Faso, having adopted a third poverty reduction strategy from 2006 to 2009, had accomplished significant progress between 1998 and 2005: the number of people suffering from monetary poverty dropped by 12%, the rate of children

enrolling at primary school rose noticeably, etc. However, the report acknowledged that the drop in the price of cotton, the country's main export product, represented a major economic challenge.⁸³

The difficulties faced by Burkina Faso's cotton industry highlight the inconsistency of the approach adopted by rich countries, which provide money and development aid whilst simultaneously heavily subsidizing their domestic agriculture and forbidding southern countries from doing the same thing. The USA, the world's leading exporter, spends over three billion dollars a year to support its cotton producers. What chance have the so-called less advanced countries in the face of such economic power? The International Labour Organization states that the added value per worker is thirteen times lower in sub-Saharan Africa than for a worker in the developed world.⁸⁴ The potential dangers of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with Africa, whereby the European Union wants to force seventy-five African, Caribbean and Pacific countries to open up their markets further to European agricultural and industrial products, are therefore clear. Large-scale demonstrations against the EPAs took place in January 2008 in Senegal and Burkina Faso.

Over the last few years, China's rise to power has radically changed the international context: trade between China and Africa quadrupled between 2001 and 2005. By declaring its intention not to impose conditions, the Chinese government has encouraged countries to look to China rather than the Bretton Woods institutions. The Washington Consensus may well be succeeded by the Beijing Consensus. There is no guarantee, however, that it will be more favourable to the universal exercise of human rights.

32 Globalization opportunities and threats regarding fairer redistribution and implementation of human rights for all

In such a context, does globalization represent an opportunity or an obstacle at a time when "poverty eradication" has become a target for national and international policies?

Globalization is part of human history. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted on 10 December 1948 was a major act of globalization, whereby the UN General Assembly recognized that all human beings, wherever they may be, have universally defined concrete rights. The last paragraph in the declaration's preamble clearly says: "The General Assembly proclaims this universal declaration of human rights

as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations.” At the core of this mission lies the law, which must protect human rights so that all human beings can enjoy “freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want”. Spokespeople for authoritarian governments have recently claimed that the values endorsed by the declaration are specifically western, and that traditional Asian values are hostile to political rights and democracy. Amartya Sen has shown that this interpretation does not stand up to real analysis. He pointed out the intellectual error in seeing democracy essentially in terms of voting and elections, rather than in a broader perspective of public debate, and deplored the fact that the vast springs of Asian, African and Middle Eastern intellectual heritage in this field have been almost entirely overlooked in analysis of the concept of democracy. The concept is indeed a universal value, but he feels this is not because it is universally approved—no value has that privilege—but because all humans in all places have good reason to consider it as such.⁸⁵

The 1970s opened the door to a new phase in the globalization process, marked by the development of new information and communication technologies and the expansion of commercial and financial trade generated by an increasing number of multinational companies.

321 - Confrontation between two approaches: economic liberalism and human rights

A confrontation between two approaches to globalization then took place in the international arena: the human rights approach, and the market economy approach, endowed with almost metaphysical force by theorists such as Friedman and Hayek. F. Hayek wrote: “It is a fundamental illusion to believe that human reason can define structured rules for a predetermined purpose. Man is not the master of his destiny and never will be.”⁸⁶ The Declaration of Human Rights, on the

other hand, defines a world where humans work in harmony to draw up a plan for the sort of society they want to create.

The market economy is highly effective in meeting the needs of solvent individuals by enabling businesses to make profits. But it tends to endlessly create



new needs to feed itself. Without the intervention of states and not-for-profit organizations, it cannot meet the needs of the poorest populations, who do not represent a short-term source of profit.

The neoliberal ideology that dominated the 1990s can be characterized by what economist John Williamson termed the Washington Consensus.⁸⁷ He used it to designate the policies adopted by the Washington-based institutions providing aid to developing countries: the World Bank and IMF, Inter-American Development Bank and US Treasury Department. The Washington Consensus comprised a set of ten reforms, initially formulated for use in Latin America, but quickly becoming a model for the entire developing world. It gave priority to monetary and financial criteria for managing governmental policies over social criteria: they included fiscal policy discipline, the redirection of public spending, liberalization of trade, interest rates and investments, and the privatization of state companies and services. Governments of OECD member states that espoused this ideological trend did not seek to give a legal framework to multinationals' business activities but simply issued them

85. Amartya Sen, *La démocratie des autres (The Democracy of Others)*, Ed. Payot et Rivages poche, 2006. **29**

86. Quoted by Jacques Ribs, *Droits de l'homme et mondialisation (Human Rights and Globalization)*, Revue Quart Monde no. 175, sept. 2000, p. 12.

87. John Williamson, *From Reform Agenda to Damaged Brand Name. A Short History of the Washington Consensus*, Finance and Development review, IMF, Washington, September 2003.

88. Mireille Delmas-Marty, *Universalisme des droits de l'homme et globalisation économique* (*Universalism of Human Rights and Economic Globalization*), in *Agir pour le Sud, maintenant ! (Act for the South, Now!)* coordinated by Martine Aubry, Editions de l'Aube, 2005, p. 115 to 131.

89. Nyamu-Mu-sembe Celestine and Cornwall Andréa, *What is the "rights-based approach" all about? Perspectives from international development agencies*, Institute of Development Studies, November 2004. www.ids.ac.uk/ids/bookshop

90. In March 2005, UNESCO led a programme of smallscale grants for research seeking to "support projects guided by a concept of poverty as a violation of human rights." (UNESCO



with non-binding recommendations. What happened was that this ideology often led to a reduction, or even enduring weakening, of the state's role. Distrust of all binding regulation led the US government, as the number one contributor of funds to international institutions, to promote the role of the Bretton Woods institutions, which were not legally subject to the obligations of human rights pacts, and to weaken the role played by UN agencies. In the 1990s, funds for the former were never lacking, in contrast to funding for the latter. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTD), traditionally committed to defending the interests of the poorest countries, was gradually deprived of its authority. But the consensus survived and today's debate focuses on the future role of international financial organizations, with trade unions and many NGOs accusing them of organizing the destruction of public power. From an ethical standpoint, it is clear that human rights should be given priority over market values. In reality, as legal expert Mireille Delmas-Marty says, we are living in a world without a compass, where the

processes of internationalization seems to systematically opt for market values, rather than managing to define and impose a world order that remains unobtainable.⁸⁸

Nevertheless, the globalization of human rights has also made progress. A study shows that NGOs have played a decisive role in getting governmental international institutions to adopt an integrated approach to human rights and development issues.⁸⁹ The study defines the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development in 1995 as a turning point in this process, driven by a coalition of small and large NGOs that has been increasing in size ever since. In 1997, then on the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1998, the UN Secretary-General called for a reorientation of the UN's mission and restated the implementation of human rights as its ultimate goal.

The 1999 demonstrations against the World Trade Organization in Seattle and the global campaign for cancelling third world debt in 2000

underlined the need to seek a compromise between these two approaches, which are not necessarily antagonistic. The UN Secretary-General tried to do precisely that with the launch of the global compact, inviting major businesses, NGOs and public authorities to move from conflict to cooperation in order to work together to implement human rights. The Millennium Declaration, adopted in September 2000, shared the same goal. Since then, many UN agencies have adopted an approach that considers poverty as a denial of human rights and recommended a development model rooted in human rights, particularly the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNESCO,⁹⁰ UNICEF, UNDP, etc.

322 – Dramatic rise in inequalities

In an attempt to identify globalization winners and losers, the Atlas du Monde diplomatique denounced "the dramatic rise in inequalities" and provided a number of striking examples. For instance, the number of dol-

30 poverty small grants programme, accessible on its website).

lar billionaires in the world listed by Forbes magazine rose from 476 in 2003 to 691 in 2005, with new members to the club arriving from the Ukraine, Poland, India and China to join the Americans and Europeans who remain in a clear majority. Their net accumulated fortune rocketed from 1,400 to 2,200 billion dollars in two years.

In 2004, the UNDP report observed rapid progress by some countries in reducing poverty, but also “an unprecedented number of countries losing ground (...) people are poorer now in forty-six countries. In twenty-five countries, people are hungrier now than ten years ago.”⁹¹

It is one thing to observe increasing inequalities, another to know whether they are due to globalization or other causes. In a 2007 article, François Bourguignon, former chief economist at the World Bank and director of the Paris School of Economics, offered a partial answer concerning intra-national wage inequalities.⁹² He began by acknowledging the rise in inequalities over the last twenty years, both in developed and developing countries. In both cases, the increase in wage inequalities cannot be explained by the decoupling of modest salaries from the median salary, but by the surge in high or even very high salaries. Increasing lack of job security that primarily affects low-wage jobs is another factor in inequalities and the emergence of “poor workers”. Three reasons could explain the increase of wage inequalities from the top. The first is **increased demand for highly qualified labour** triggered by technological progress, and the increasing scarcity in the world of such labour, leading to higher remuneration. The second is **a modification of social norms in terms of remuneration**, linked to the trade unions’ loss of influence discernible just about everywhere in the world. The model consisting of employees forming a united front in the face of employers or shareholders has been succeeded by a model dominated by individualism, where wage disparities are openly acknowledged. It is important to stress that this is not only a “natural” change. Certain multinationals, such as Wal-Mart, which employs over 1% of American workers, engage in a constant battle against trade unions. Furthermore, a particularly high number of trade unionists are assassinated, ill treated and imprisoned in the emerging countries of the Americas, Asia and Oceania.⁹³ The third reason is **the increasing international mobility of highly qualified labour, which tends to gradually standardize remunerations and employment social models**.

Nonetheless, François Bourguignon adds, despite the rise in wage disparities, the inequality of available revenue has recently been reduced in countries like Brazil and Mexico, and remained fairly stable in France, Germany and Canada, thanks to ambitious redistributive policies. Such policies have thus

helped to limit the fostering of inequalities caused by globalization. Other methods could also help, such as faster and more effective responses from the educational world to the demand for highly qualified labour. Without at least one of these solutions, social tensions could well obstruct the globalization process and cause a return to protectionism in certain countries, to take one example.

In December 1999, a thousand union organizations and NGOs declared “Our world is not for sale” and turned the WTO meeting in Seattle into a fiasco. Many people view this event as the birth of the alternative globalization movement. In 2000, organizers of the Jubilee 2000 campaign for third world debt cancellation handed over a petition with twenty-two million signatures to the G8 members. **The time was ripe to attempt a synthesis between the market forces approach to development and fighting poverty and the human rights approach.**

323 - Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): strengths and weakness

Adopted in the presence of representatives from 189 states, the Millennium Declaration marked a change of direction. The declaration states that “*the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world’s people. For while globalization offers great opportunities, at present its benefits are very unevenly shared.*” It resolves “*To strive for the full protection and promotion in all our countries of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for all*” with the goal of “*freeing the entire human race from want.*” The UN General Assembly, for the first time, enabled a great number and diversity of stakeholders to come together in an attempt to achieve global goals for reducing poverty and eliminating extreme poverty, with deadlines and monitoring indicators. However, the declaration contains some ambiguities. For instance, confusion arises between poverty and extreme poverty with the resolution both to “*free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty*” and to “*create an environment (...) which is conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty*”. The eight Millennium Development Goals to be met by 2015 (2020 for MDG 7) were defined based on the declaration, along with eighteen intermediate targets. Goal 1 is to end poverty and hunger. The two linked targets are to halve, between 1990 and 2015, both the number of people living on less than a dollar a day and the number of people suffering from hunger. The other goals are: 2) universal education; 3) gender equality, 4) child health; 5) maternal health; 6) combat HIV/AIDS; 7) environmental sustainability and 8) global partnership.⁹⁴

91. Monde diplomatique, *L’Atlas*, Armand Colin, Paris, 2006, p. 125 to 127.

92. François Bourguignon, *Mondialisation et inégalités (Globalization and Inequalities)*, Le Monde newspaper, 12 December 2007.

93. Monde diplomatique, *L’Atlas*, op. cit. p. 64, 65, 146, 147.

94. See <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>.

95. According to a former UN official in a paper on *International Institutions' Policies on Poverty Reduction*, presented on 24 August 2004 at the ATD Fourth World international centre in France.

96. See, for example, the position adopted by French civil society organizations: "For an international tax: an equitable and lasting solution to the global crisis." March 2010.

97. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Millennium Development Goals Report 2007*, back cover.

The adoption of the declaration marks a change on several levels. Firstly, because it sets global goals with deadlines and monitoring indicators. The Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development did not mention global goals, but suggested that all countries adopt policies to reduce poverty by defining specific goals themselves. The idea of global goals for 2015 came from the OECD, subsequently to be adopted by the World Bank and IMF before arriving at the UN. The Millennium Declaration did not result from discussions between countries, as is usual in the UN context. It was not negotiated, but presented to member states for an initial discussion in the plenary assembly, presented again then adopted.⁹⁵ There are those who feel that this is the only effective way of proceeding. Others believe that it proves that the most powerful countries did not want the declaration debated by everyone.

The MDGs' main strength is that, for the first time in a very long while, they enabled a significant number of widely varying stakeholders to unite behind the same goals instead of engaging in trench warfare. They have been circulated widely, and thus triggered broad public debate that has breathed new life into ODA, in danger of being stifled, and boosted the mobilization of necessary resources. Despite certain reservations, a great many NGOs formed national and international coalitions that continue to campaign for governments to respect their commitment to goal 8: creating a global partnership to reduce third world debt, increase the quantity and quality of ODA and establish fairer international trading regulations.

The most critical concern relates to the actual wording of certain goals, giving reason to fear policies aimed at raising the stakes too high for the most disadvantaged milieus. Such policies would allow the most forceful elements to cope, while leaving the others even more destitute. Some of the MDGs are not problematic, since they are universal, such as universal education (goal 2), gender equality (goal 3) and combating HIV/AIDS (goal 6). But others are partial, such as goal 1, which aims to halve the number of people living in extreme poverty between 1990 and 2015. From the decision-makers standpoint, this wording seems legitimate, since it is not possible to achieve everything all at once. There is nonetheless a risk that *reducing the extent of extreme poverty comes at the cost of increasing its severity*, thus making no impact on the problem of eradicating extreme poverty. From the standpoint of the people suffering from severe poverty and hunger, such a goal is not at all likely to garner their support; it can only create division and the fear of exclusion, whereas the solidarity experienced in disadvantaged milieus, crucial to security and survival,

must be encouraged and strengthened. Experience shows that top-down policies never reach the hard core of extreme poverty experienced by families who accumulate enduring factors of deprivation in every area of their lives.

The globally-reaching MDGs are rooted in the expectation that the richest countries will respect their commitments to complement the most disadvantaged countries' financial capacities in order to set in place a vast social welfare net for the poorest populations. MDG critics say that this choice will give donor countries long-lasting power over beneficiary countries' social sectors by making them dependent on these donors over the long term. But are not the so-called less advanced countries already in the power of the Bretton Woods institutions and bilateral donors? The truth is that we need to switch from aid as an optional form of support to aid rooted in law, from relations marked by dependency and clientelism between states to relations based on equality and partnership. Existing ODA must be supplemented with a funding mechanism based on an international tax system. The airline ticket tax embodies a very hesitant beginning to this process.

An equitable and lasting solution to the global crisis is impossible without a change of scale in terms of international taxation, so as to reduce inequalities and achieve the MDGs. An international process on the question of taxing financial transactions was launched at the plenary session of the Leading Group on Innovative Financing for Development on 28 and 29 May 2009 in Paris. Recent declarations by ministers and state heads on this subject have led to three international initiatives being set up in parallel: creation of a Taskforce on International Financial Transactions for Development; preparation of an IMF report following the G20's request to "*propose mechanisms enabling the financial sector to help lessen the impacts of the crisis*" and formation of a high-level panel in the wake of the Copenhagen climate change conference. The emergence of debate on the role of morality within the global economy has opened the door to new tools for international redistribution, such as a tax on currency trading.⁹⁶

The UN Secretary-General recently declared: "*In the Millennium Declaration of 2000, world leaders set forth a new vision for humanity... Leaders committed themselves 'to spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty.'* We must recognize the nature of the global trust at stake and the danger that many developing countries' hopes could be irredeemably pierced if even the greatest anti-poverty movement in history is insufficient to break from 'business as usual'."⁹⁷

In 2009, the United Nations produced a very comprehensive report on the MDGs and their execution. The report shows that some countries and geographic areas had made significant progress, for example, in increasing the rate of children in primary schooling and reducing the infant mortality rate for the under-fives and the number of new HIV infections. However, it also shows that geographical inequalities persist. The economic crisis only amplified these inequalities:



- progress has been made in eradicating hunger since the early 1990s, with the percentage of people suffering from hunger dropping from 20% in 1990-92 to 16% in 2004-2006, but the figures were reversed in 2008, mainly due to the hike in foodstuff prices;
- during the period 1990 to 2005, the number of people living on under 1.25 dollars a day dropped from 1.8 to 1.4 billion (before the economic crisis and sudden rise in food prices). The indicators reveal that the major progress made in the fight against extreme poverty may be checked, even if not all the data illustrating the full impact of the recent economic slowdown are available yet. The estimate for 2009 was that another 55 to 90 million people living in extreme poverty would have to be added to the pre-crisis figure.

The report also suggests that many global advances were due to the spectacular drop in the poverty rate

in eastern Asia. On the other hand, in 2005 sub-Saharan Africa counted 100 million more people living in extreme poverty than in 1990, and the poverty rate remained above 50%.

324 – The contested yardstick of the “universal” poor person living on under a dollar day

Monetary poverty indicators are both the most used and most contested of yardsticks. When the focus is

exclusively on monetary poverty and extreme poverty and this criterion is seen as correctly reflecting the development of poverty overall, the approach becomes highly questionable, for at least three reasons.

The first is that we now know that the different factors of deprivation do not overlap, either in Europe or in developing countries. A study looking at the accumulation of the different aspects of poverty was carried out among the inhabitants of Antananarivo in Madagascar, a country with one of the lowest Human Development Index

ratings. The study shows that different factors of deprivation barely overlap for inhabitants. Only 2.4% of them accumulate seven forms of deprivation, whilst 78% are affected by at least one of them. A similar observation was made in European countries.⁹⁸ Focusing only on the monetary aspect of poverty highlights a specific sub-group that could not be said to represent the poor population, which accumulates longstanding factors of insecurity in different areas of life. This observation points to the vital importance of a multi-dimensional approach to household poverty.

A second reason for contesting the universal approach is the arbitrary character of the definition of monetary poverty thresholds. The World Bank has adopted a widely-used measure for absolute poverty. It considers people in developing countries living on less than two dollars a day as poor, and those living on less than a dollar a day as extremely poor. It believes

98. See the entire report: no. 383-384-385 Economie et Statistique, INSEE, 2005, in particular the article by Mireille Razafindrakoto and François Roubaud, *Les multiples facettes de la pauvreté dans un pays en développement. Le cas de la capitale malgache (Multiple Facets of Poverty in a Developing Country. The Case of the Madagascan Capital)*.

99. Deepa Narayan, Patti Petesh, *Moving Out of Poverty. Cross-disciplinary Perspective on Mobility*, Palgrave Macmillan and the World Bank, p. 1.

100. United Nations, *Millennium Development Goals Report 2007*, p. 7.

98. Deepa Narayan, Patti Petesh, *Moving Out of Poverty. Cross-disciplinary Perspective on Mobility*, Palgrave Macmillan and the World Bank, p. 1.

101. Daniel Verger, *Bas revenus, consommation restreinte ou faible bien-être: les approches statistiques de la pauvreté à l'épreuve des comparaisons internationales (Low Income, Restricted Consumption or Inadequate Well Being: Statistical Approaches to Poverty in the Light of International Comparisons)*,

that no one is living on less than a dollar a day in industrialized countries. According to these criteria, extreme poverty dropped between 1981 and 2004, since the number of people living on less than a dollar a day dropped from 1.5 billion to 980 million. But during the same period, the number of people living on less than two dollars a day rose from 2.5 to 2.6 billion.⁹⁹ In view of the essentially arbitrary character of the threshold of one or two dollars a day, it is difficult to say whether monetary poverty has risen or dropped over the period in question. Furthermore, the international poverty threshold is subject to complex calculations experts themselves are obliged to revise. In June 2007, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on MDG indicators announced that new estimates of the relative cost of living within different

tor for those entering and leaving poverty. Experts at official European statistics bodies are questioning the very reliability of the monetary indicator when they acknowledge that it is “*in total opposition to the practices adopted by international authorities.*”¹⁰¹

In addition, the implementation of partial goals, such as halving the number of people living in extreme poverty between 1990 and 2015, risks focusing efforts on the strata most likely to cope, leaving the others even more destitute.

For all these reasons, many people refuse the one-dimensional perception of poverty and extreme poverty that reduces it to a question of money. “*A new language has taken shape on the global level: the language of the ‘universal’ poor person defined by an income of*



countries required the threshold to be revised, which could modify assessment of the scope and distribution of poverty around the world.¹⁰⁰

French and European statistical research demonstrates that the annual income declared by households shows proof of disconcerting instability over the short term, thus ruling out its validity as a relevant indica-

less than a dollar a day. Dispossessed of everything that makes up his or her uniqueness as a human being, the poor person is now reduced to statistical data alone (...) and condemned to the full range of manipulations such data are capable of,” deplores Rahnama. “*The poor person has become nothing more than a fiction (...) because in reality that poor person has never existed, and [is] the*

justification for the experts' wholly invented definition (...) This new social construction of poverty equally leads to the glorification of wealth as reduced to its material aspects only."¹⁰² From Bangladesh, Anisur Rahman opposes "the conventional economic, 'dollar-a-day' kind of view of poverty that reduces downtrodden people to the category of livestock useful to others in the society mainly for their cheap labour."¹⁰³ Most experts now recognize that poverty indicators are far from neutral, but reflect the given definition of poverty, the value judgment applied to poverty and poor people, and the philosophical and ideological framework of the approach.¹⁰⁴ In this context, it is hardly surprising that a Washington-based bank defines poverty in terms of dollars, or that citizens of other countries angrily refuse to have this definition imposed on them, even if the dollar remains the most widely used accounting currency internationally.

325 – Too poor to figure in poverty statistics

The yardstick for monetary poverty used in the European Union is no better. According to the 1984 European Commission definition, the poor are defined as "persons, families and groups of persons whose resources (material, cultural and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the Member State in which they live." This is a definition of a "socio-historical absolute poverty", recognizing the need for a bare minimum in a given country and time. But the monetary poverty threshold used by Eurostat is closer to a relative measure, since the poor are defined as people whose income is under 60% of the median income. Here again we see a technocratic indicator defined by specialists, who have had no discussion with populations living in poverty and the organizations that represent them. This indicator has three major drawbacks. It establishes an arbitrary monetary poverty threshold, whereas what is needed is a detailed understanding of the different degrees of hardship, from being at risk of poverty to extreme poverty. It is a hybrid indicator for measuring relative poverty, neither a real poverty indicator nor an indicator for assessing inequalities, as the statisticians themselves acknowledge. Over twenty years ago, Amartya Sen was already pointing out that this type of indicator has the curious trait of remaining the same whether general incomes double during a period of prosperity or halve during a recession. He observed that it was simply impossible to wipe out poverty with indicators of this kind, and that programmes to fight poverty could never really succeed.¹⁰⁵ He also criticized the fact that this type of indicator does not measure absolute poverty, although anyone can see it has not disappeared simply by walking the streets or taking underground trains in European cities. The third serious flaw is that this type of indicator is based

on statistical surveys that do not really take into account the most marginalized populations, since they only question families living in ordinary housing, thus excluding not only homeless people, but also people living in collective accommodation, hostels, prison, psychiatric hospitals, retirement homes, etc., not to mention illegal immigrants. The people who live and die in the street every year are thus too poor to be included in statistical surveys of poverty in Europe.¹⁰⁶ This reality is ethically and scientifically unacceptable. In France, the National Observatory of Poverty and Social Exclusion (ONPES) estimates in its 2005 report that those excluded from ordinary household statistics represent 2% of the population, and that most of them are highly likely to be among the poorest members of society.¹⁰⁷

This look at the statistical measurement of poverty is important in allowing us to assess the contribution of three English-speaking economists to the global fight against extreme poverty. All three have taken part in studies led by international institutions.

326 - Inadequate approaches to finding solutions

Jeffrey Sachs, professor at Columbia University in the USA and former special advisor to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the implementation of MDGs, declares that extreme poverty could be eliminated in twenty years by pursuing two linked objectives: focus actions on the billion people who earn less than a dollar a day to allow them to break free of extreme poverty, and push the 1.6 billion people earning between one and two dollars a day up the development scale. He believes that it is vital to apply differentiated diagnostics, adapting solutions to each country in question, to adopt strategies for investing hugely in six major areas—human capital, business capital, infrastructure, environment, public institutions and scientific and technological expertise—and to regularly assess the results obtained. He feels that the United Nations should play a more important role in global economic and social regulation, and calls for greater legal supervision of multinationals. He criticizes the anti-globalization movement for refusing to recognize the benefits of globalization, which has helped to considerably reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty in India and China. He states that the poorest countries' debts should be cancelled and that their development requires increased business activity and aid. He stresses the urgency of the need to drastically reduce pollution, particularly greenhouse gas emissions, since global warming particularly affects the least advanced countries. He also declares that all the expenditure he recommends could be funded by the ODA already promised by donors.

102. Majid Rahnama, *Quand la misère chasse la pauvreté (When Destitution Follows on the Heels of Poverty)*, op. cit. p. 127 to 132.

103. Anisur Rahman, foreword to the book *Development as Conscientization. The Case of Nijera Kori in Bangladesh*, by Abul Barkat, Avijit Poddar et al, Ed. Pathak Samabesh, Dhaka, February 2008.

104. Blandine Destremau and Pierre Salama, *Mesures et démesure de la pauvreté (Weighing and Outweighing of Poverty)*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2002, p. 110.

105. Amartya Sen, *Poor, relatively speaking*, Oxford Economic Papers 35, 1983, p. 153 to 169.

106. An eminent sociologist, expert in poverty at the OECD, when asked in the late 1990s to include these populations in his statistical databases, told us that it would be too expensive and too complicated!

107. National Observatory of Poverty and Social Exclusion (ONPES), Report 2005-6, p. 43.

William Easterly, economics professor at New York University after a stint as a World Bank economist, says that the West has spent billions upon billions of dollars in ODA over the last five decades—with disastrous consequences. He states that the efforts of northern countries to help the rest of the world have been more harmful than beneficial. The main reason he gives for this failure is the behaviour of the West, which sees itself as the keeper of all knowledge and thus does the thinking and planning for developing countries. International financial institutions and UN agencies therefore seek to impose their solutions, paying no heed to cultural, political and bureaucratic obstacles that preclude reaching the poorest people and providing them with real aid. He asserts that none of the plans imposed from the outside work, in either the economic or political sphere. It is no accident that the resounding economic success stories of recent decades occurred in countries without a colonial past, and which did not follow the IMF and World Bank's advice. He also asserts that "*the right plan is to have no plan.*" He remarks that, despite meeting with failure, no one was held responsible and that "planners" remain very popular in the West. Observing that only stakeholders that adopt an in-the-field approach adapted to the country's life and culture obtain positive results, he concludes that poverty can only be eliminated with endogenous development, founded on the activity of individuals and businesses in a market economy. ODA from northern countries must support this type of development, controlled by the populations of poor countries. This implies a total overhaul of ODA, in terms both of the goals and methods used and of its stakeholders' attitudes.

Paul Collier, professor of economics at Oxford University and former research department director at the World Bank, has studied the billion inhabitants of the fifty-seven countries that were poorer at the turn of the millennium than in 1970. Seventy percent of them are from sub-Saharan African countries. He feels that these countries are caught in four types of trap: civil war, the lack of natural resources, being landlocked, and bad governance. These traps mean that the countries missed the globalization train in the 1980s and now have trouble getting on board. He believes that, to support these countries, the West should not only maintain ODA, but also use other instruments: military intervention under UN mandate, when needed to put an end to reigns of terror and warlords, and a legal arsenal made up of laws and charters to foster the emergence of new norms for viewpoints and behaviours. In particular, western laws should allow the most impoverished countries to retrieve the money embezzled by dictators and elites and fraudulently placed in banks located in rich

countries. Five international charters could be drawn up and made available to those who fight for more justice in the most impoverished countries. The five areas covered would be: redistribution of income generated by natural resources; the exercise of democracy (transparent elections and permanent existence of an opposition force); budgetary transparency; donor country behaviour towards countries in a post-conflict situation, and investment security (government guarantee of non-confiscation of private, domestic or overseas investments). He also advocates establishing new regulations within the WTO giving a more important role to developing country negotiators. Industrialized countries should stop providing excessive subsidies to their agricultural sectors, thus weakening the very countries they are trying to help. He urges supporting poor countries' economic growth as well as increasing aid alongside the other forms of action he has described, dosed to reflect each individual situation. This support implies a change in attitude on the part of rich countries' citizens, both those who favour aid and see growth as suspect, and those who support growth and see aid as suspect.

The contributions made by these three economists are very valuable, but also very much open to criticism, when analyzed in the light of surveys targeting the poorest people. The tens of million people imprisoned by poverty in rich countries are thus excluded from Jeffrey Sachs' plans, when he asserts that extreme poverty no longer exists in these countries. The very poor populations designated by Sachs are not the same as those designated by Paul Collier. The latter only includes fifty-seven countries in his analyses, immediately excluding the poorest inhabitants of other countries such as the Philippines and Peru. The same applies to the hundreds of millions of impoverished people living in countries that have recently experienced some economic growth. To fight extreme poverty, the three authors stress the need to adapt solutions to the societies in question and the world's complexity. But two of them greatly simplify the reality by excluding many groups of people faced with extreme poverty from their field of research and political recommendations. Sachs presents the western development model as though it had already put an end to severe poverty and should be copied by developing countries. He does not see that, everywhere in the world, destitution is a matter of social exclusion and not only extreme poverty. He does not address the issue of **social recognition**, which requires a deep-reaching change in the relationship between included and excluded, between helper and helpee. Easterly severely criticizes the West's arrogance. But however interesting and well argued his assessment of ODA may be, his proposal to abandon all plans appears derisory to those active

in the fight against poverty. Although it is true that plans imposed from the outside do not work, there are other ways of organizing coordination between different stakeholders and implementing mutually defined goals. Collier feels that Sachs overestimates the importance of public development aid, whereas Easterly exaggerates the negative effects. He asserts that priority should be given to countries with no economic growth. His implicit reasoning is that oth-

ed riots in areas devastated by failure and segregation, such as American and British ghettos, French inner cities and places elsewhere. These are vast areas of deprivation whose inhabitants suffer from under-investment of every kind, insecurity and lack of democracy. The least worst-off flee the neighbourhoods as soon as they can for other places with more to offer, just as some of the elite in the most impoverished countries emigrate to the North.



er countries' economic growth has enabled them to eliminate poverty, something which has never been established.

The systemic risk to the world conjured up by Sachs and Collier if nothing is done for the most impoverished populations and countries has already been observed for the last forty years in rich countries. It takes the form of explosions of violence and repeat-

Economist Eric Maurin concludes his analysis of the "French ghetto" by stating that *"the mechanisms of segregation are present throughout society, not simply on the fringes (...)* We need to question our model of society as a whole." He stresses that most policies adopted in France over the last fifteen or twenty years that tried to curb the phenomenon by targeting areas have failed. *"Our policies need to address individuals (...)* All our public policies relating to health, housing

107. Eric Maurin, *Le ghetto français, Enquête sur le séparatisme social (The French Ghetto. Study on Social Separatism)* Ed. Seuil et République des Idées, 2004, p. 85 to 87.

and education could be reoriented so as to really focus on the most disadvantaged young people and avoid being overstretched by covering an overly large number of beneficiaries or areas (...) All available assessments underline the fact that public investments for improving development conditions for the most disadvantaged young people are not only fair, but also among the most profitable of investments.”¹⁰⁸





Proposals: Extreme Poverty Eradication as a Transformative Initiative

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41 The shock of encountering extreme poverty

Box 4: Geneviève de Gaulle Anthonioz

Encountering poverty is always a shock. Geneviève de Gaulle Anthonioz's personal account is particularly arresting since she links it to her experience of Nazi extermination camps.¹⁰⁹ In 1958, she visited the

homeless camp at Noisy-le-Grand, near Paris, at the request of Father Joseph Wresinski, who tried to bring together people with different social origins and religious beliefs to support the inhabitants of this place of poverty. Over 260 families waiting to be housed had been living for several years in fibrocement shelters with rounded roofs that looked like igloos. "When I entered this huge shanty town at the end of a muddy lane for the first time, my thoughts turned to that other camp, Ravensbrück...The landscape of low, corrugated

109. Geneviève de Gaulle-Anthonioz, *La Traversée de la nuit, Seuil, 1998*, (*The Dawn of Hope: a memoir of Ravensbrück*, Arcade Publishing 1999). She was sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp for choosing to resist the Nazi occupiers and their totalitarian ideology.



109. Geneviève de Gaulle-Anthonioz, *Le secret de l'espérance (The Secret of Hope)*, Fayard, Editions Quart Monde, 2001, p. 13, 15 and 16.

110. idem, p. 19 and 20.

111. Amartya Sen, *L'Économie est une science morale (The Economy is a Moral Science)*, Editions La Découverte, 1999, p. 44 and 45.

roofs with their wisps of grey smoke was a place apart, separated from life. And its inhabitants bore on their faces the mark of distress I knew well and no doubt used to bear myself. A family opened the door to their 'igloo' at Father Joseph's request, and he introduced me. In the half-light, I met the sad and weary eyes of the father, who pulled up two boxes for us to sit on. The mother appeared at the back of the room, holding a tiny baby in her arms. She was young and beautiful, despite her stringy hair... It was really very cold, colder than outside, and I was amazed to hear Father Joseph asking if we could have coffee. How could it be possible in such destitution? The children had run off then reappeared fairly quickly, one of them carrying two glasses, the other coffee and sugar, while the water heated up. We drunk our coffee in the light of a candle stuck in a bottle... We thanked them for the coffee as we left, and I could not help thinking of that tiny ration of bread we used to share at Ravensbrück. The worst of it is, not being able to give anything, Father Joseph said, and that they no longer ask you for anything."¹¹⁰

Two years later, she was in the camp's chapel for the funeral of two children burnt alive in their 'igloo'. "It was dark and cold... Before the altar lay the two little coffins covered in white material... The smell that rose from our wet clothes, our bodies pressed up against each other, was the same as ours in our overcrowded huts, a stench we could not get rid of as it was impossible to wash and get dry. The humiliation of being disgusting to yourself. In this chapel, I realized that I would be united in solidarity with these families until the injustice ended, for as long as their poverty deprived them of their rights."¹¹¹



Box 5: Amartya Sen

While Geneviève de Gaulle was enduring the inhumanity of concentration camps, the young Amartya Sen, an Indian citizen, was discovering the "concrete horror" of poverty on the other side of the world. Winner of the Nobel Prize for economics in 1998, he described the events of his childhood that led him to take a lasting interest in poverty and famine.

"One of the most upsetting events of my childhood was seeing the 1943 famine in Bengal, when around three million people died according to current estimates. It was an unbelievably violent ordeal, which happened with an abruptness I could in no way comprehend. I was nine and went to a school in rural Bengal. The people I knew at school and their families showed no sign of distress and, as I discovered over thirty years later when I studied the famine, most people in Bengal experienced few privations during the entire time the famine lasted. A very thin man appeared one morning at our school; he was behaving strangely, something which—as I later learned—is a customary sign of prolonged food deprivation. He had come from a far off village to look for something to eat and he was travelling around in the hope of getting help. In the days that followed, tens, then thousands, then an endless stream of people passed through our village, emaciated people with hollow cheeks, wild eyes, often carrying children in their arms who were only skin and bones... Subsequent studies showed that the total amount of food stocks then available in Bengal was not particularly low. The nature of this social failure should therefore be considered as nothing less than intolerable. Those who died did not have the means to obtain the food that was, however, there."¹¹² They did not have the capability to access means of subsistence. This observation was the springboard for Sen's introduction of the innovative concept, "basic capability."¹¹³ "Poverty," he says "must be seen as a deprivation of basic capabilities" which prevents those suffering from it achieving self-fulfilment with their own means.

112. Sen first introduced and defined the concept of "basic capability" in a text written for the conference *Equality of what?* held at Stanford University, 22 May 1979, available for downloading on www.tannerlectures.utah.edu/lectures/sen80.pdf. He underlines the inadequacy of the utilitarian, libertarian and Rawlsian approaches to equality.

Box 6: Joseph Wresinski

Born of a Polish father and Spanish mother on 12 February 1917, the young Joseph Wresinski grew up in a very poor household in Angers (France). On 14 July 1956, he joined the 252 families living in the emergency housing camp near Paris. He experienced a real feeling of shock when he arrived. *“That was the day that I entered the world of misfortune”* he wrote later.

He bore witness to the lives of the poorest members of society in his article *The Very Poor, Living Proof of the Indivisibility of Human Rights*.¹¹⁴

“From the very earliest time in my childhood to the present day, the poorest have always seemed to me to be families—a whole people—who were forbidden to inhabit the world of others, to inhabit cities, countries, the whole earth. For could we really use the term “inhabit” to describe the way they were obliged to huddle together, to dig themselves in, to find whatever shelter they could in a slum on the edge of which my own family lived in a hovel?”

“The poorer people are, the more they are deprived of the right to inhabit the earth, and the more they need to join forces across continents. Yet, unfortunately, the poorer they are, the fewer rights they have, the less free they are to unite in common struggle. Without identity, they are deprived of a history of their own and excluded from the history of their people. They are prohibited from belonging to any group which, in the name of its past and present history, would have a common goal to pursue in the future.”

“These are the facts; but what is most important is the suffering that lurks behind these facts.

Extreme poverty, since it cuts out all human rights, is an unbearable waste of human intelligence, inventiveness, hope and love. It means throwing away an incalculable capital of men, women and children who are banned from all justice, all administration, all communities and all democracy. And above all, behind the silence of our records and our statistics lie children mutilated in their heart and spirit, young people condemned to despair, adults driven to doubt their very humanity and human dignity.”

“For the very poor tell us over and over again that man’s greatest misfortune is not to be hungry or unable to read, nor even to be without work. The greatest misfortune of all is to know that you count for nothing, to the point where even your suffering is ignored. The worst blow of all is the contempt on the part of your fellow citizens. For it is that contempt which stands between a human being and his rights. It makes the world disdain what you are going through and prevents you from being recognized as worthy and capable of taking on responsibility. The greatest misfortune of extreme poverty is that for your entire existence you are like someone already dead.”

114. Joseph Wresinski’s contribution to the deep-reaching study organized by the Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l’Homme (French Human Rights Commission), published in Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l’Homme, Paris – la Documentation Française - 1989 - pages 221-237 (translated by Kathleen Fingleton and Charles Courtney).



According to historians, the very idea of eradicating poverty dates from the birth of democracy in the West, when the economy became internationalized and sciences were making great advances. The era's reformers declared that it was possible to put an end to poverty and that poor populations have rights in society. A century and a half later, the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 considered a

social pact that allows people to live together, it must be destroyed. This goal must be at the heart of any attempt to construct world governance of a human race that is aware of its responsibilities and determined to respect human rights.

It is true that how the most disadvantaged members of the human race see themselves and see society is difficult

to access, today just as much as in the past. Formulated by experts from every field who look at society from the top down, contemporary discourse on poverty and development often stifles the voices of those living in extreme poverty who have acquired a unique knowledge of life by looking at society from the bottom. This is why the four personal accounts¹¹⁵ used to draw up the proposals in this Paper were written using an approach whereby practitioners who had been working with some of these people for at least eight years collaborated with them to produce the texts, with advice from university pro-



world offering “*freedom from fear and want*” as one of the most elevated of human aspirations. The Millennium Declaration in 2000 was adopted by 180 heads of state and government who committed to “*spare no effort*” to put an end to extreme poverty. But how can poverty, which has to be reduced, be differentiated from extreme poverty, which must be wiped out? Amartya Sen believes that poverty should be understood as the deprivation of a certain absolute level of basic capabilities. Joseph Wresinski defines extreme poverty as an enduring accumulation of misfortunes in all areas of life, and sees it as a violation of human rights. He agrees with Sen in asserting that it deprives its victims of their capacity to access their fundamental rights and exercise their responsibilities without external support. Destitution, a combination of extreme poverty and social exclusion, undermines human beings’ identity and dignity. Since it harms the very foundations of the

profession, many of them hailing from the countries in question. The personal accounts were thus the result of a long process of knowledge gathering closely linked to action, enabling participants to follow people’s social paths and understand how they interpreted them, with their continuities and breaks. **Highly participative methods were used** so as not to reduce the people living in the situations described to the role of simply providing information, but to give them an outlet for their own interpretations of the facts. A number of proposals emerge from this process, proposals seeking to answer the four following questions:

- What forces are needed to overcome the obstacles encountered by people living in extreme poverty?
- What social movements are necessary to conquer extreme poverty?
- What personal changes need to accompany social changes?

115. See box no. 3: Accounts from four families.

- What opportunities do globalization and democracy offer in terms of a fairer redistribution?

A preliminary remark is required. The idea that freedom and universal rights are counterbalanced by responsibilities towards our neighbours, our country, all of humanity and the living world seems to be an ethical principle recognized by all civilisations.

But as Joseph Wresinski explains, people living in extreme poverty are also deprived of the ability to exercise their rights and responsibilities: *“The people and families living in extreme poverty show us the interdependence that exists between rights and responsibilities. Since they do not have economic, social and cultural rights, they cannot assume their professional, family and social responsibilities. Without the power to exercise their responsibilities, they are considered as second-class citizens who can be deprived of the economic, social and cultural rights enjoyed by all other citizens. And they can indeed be deprived in this way, since they have no economic, social or cultural assets that would allow them to make use of their freedom and their right to protest.”*¹¹⁶

If we want to understand extreme poverty and draw up strategies to eliminate it, we need to take into account each country’s specific characteristics, particularly countries’ “mental landscape”, i.e. their specific social relationship with poverty that links into their history, institutions and economic context. For instance, the mental landscape in France, where people defined as poor constitute a disqualified minority, is characterized by an extraordinary level of anxiety that has built up over the last twenty years. Almost half the French population think that they may one day become homeless, in a society that is fragmented and haunted by the spectre of losing status. In the Philippines and Peru, known as middle-income countries, people defined as poor make up a large group. They are in the majority in Burkina Faso, one of the so-called “least developed” countries. These three countries have been deeply marked by a long history of colonial domination that has had the lasting effect of undermining people’s confidence in their own capabilities. Historical, political and geographical factors now explain the specific situation of each person.

42 Supporting processes for resisting extreme poverty

Field studies show that for individuals or families to break free of extreme poverty, they have to be able to mobilize the basic bonds providing them with access to fundamental rights: family and community bonds, organic bonds of participation in the world of work, bonds created in the school system and through access to basic services, and the bonds of citizenship.

421 – Strengthening family and community bonds

Upholding the unity of the family, with its variable culturally-specific boundaries, and the fulfilment of its members emerge as widely shared values. The importance of community bonds in contending with adversity is clearly demonstrated. But the bond of the couple, married or not, is constantly threatened by insecurity and poverty, while the bond between parents and children is threatened by extreme poverty. Furthermore, these bonds are essentially created with people of the same social group, which appears to be both a refuge for its members and a foil for more prosperous groups. These bonds certainly help people to cope with the daily reality of extreme poverty, but they offer few possibilities for breaking free. Strengthening these bonds may not be sufficient, but remains crucial. People who have benefited from parental affection and family stability in their childhood are more likely to break free of the cycle of extreme poverty than others. But, paradoxically, poverty-fighting programmes have paid little attention to the force represented by the stable family, so often reconstructed and damaged by extreme poverty.

Box 7: Strengthening family and community bonds

Even when its members do not live together, the family, in whatever form it takes, fulfils the essential functions of affiliation, identification, education, protection and assumption of responsibility. Depending on whether it does or does not have the capabilities and means necessary to fulfil its functions, the family in both the narrow and broad sense plays a part in the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of its members. More often than not, the most disadvantaged families cannot take on their responsibilities because they have no access to their basic rights. Nonetheless, the director of the UN Division for Social Policy and Development believes that *“families all over the world remain the most vital force in the battle to eradicate poverty. ... The irony is that, often, the centrality of family has escaped the attention of policymakers... (They) are only beginning to realize that programmes to eradicate poverty and to provide basic services must recognize and support the ongoing efforts that families already make.”*¹¹⁷

> **Proposal: Make maintaining family bonds a priority target for all social policies**

116. *La grande pauvreté, défi posé aux droits de l’homme* (Extreme Poverty, the Challenge Facing Human Rights), speech made to the UN Commission on Human Rights, Geneva, 20 February 1987.

117. Johan Schölvinck *Foreword, How Extreme Poverty Separates Parents and Children*, ATD Fourth World, March 2004.

118. Magdalena Sepulveda, independent expert on human rights and extreme poverty working with the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, takes a particular interest in this theme.

119. United Nations, Human Rights Council, Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, *Resolution 2006/9: Implementation of existing human rights norms and standards in the context of the fight against extreme poverty*. A/HRC/Sub.1/58/36, 11 September 2006.

120. UNICEF, *Indicators for Global Reporting, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Manual*, 2006.

422 – Access to rights and strengthening fundamental bonds go hand in hand

Recognizing extreme poverty as the cause and consequence of human rights violation is now well established.¹¹⁸ Paul Collier rightly suggests making more use of legal instruments, such as laws and charters, to foster the emergence of new norms for viewpoints and behaviours. He thereby confirms the relevance of the initiative to promote the draft guiding principles “Extreme poverty and human rights”,¹¹⁹ adopted in August 2006 by the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Geneva. The initiative was put together in consultation with people living in extreme poverty during regional seminars on different continents. It reaffirms that “extreme poverty persists in all countries of the world, regardless of their economic, social and cultural situation.” It observes that “extreme poverty and exclusion from society constitute a violation of human dignity and that urgent national and international action is therefore required to eliminate them.” It emphasizes the need for people living in extreme poverty to participate in developing programmes seeking to eradicate it. “The implementation of such policies and programmes without the participation of the persons concerned and their associations and organizations constitutes a violation of the right to participate in public affairs.” It underlines that “Public and private bodies working to reduce extreme poverty (whether in industrialized or in developing countries), (...) are duty-bound to make their programmes public, disclose their working methods and objectives as well as their funding, and account for their activities.” It states that “The international community (...) must encourage poor people’s organizations and social movements seeking to eradicate poverty with a view to the attainment of human rights.”

The policies for providing access to rights as part of the fight against poverty that we will look at in this section must be formulated, implemented and assessed in reference to these guiding principles.

> **Proposal: Obtain formal recognition of the Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights through their adoption by the UN General Assembly**

4221 - Registration at birth

Analysis of the ties of citizenship has highlighted the need to develop participative democracy in order to offset the failures of representative democracy. As a first step, ties of this nature demand that the least fortunate have **properly registered papers** so they can exist as citizens with rights. Following a campaign run by UNICEF and supported by the relevant national governments, rates of birth registration between the

ages 0 to 59 months increased during the period 1999-2005. The rates reached 83% in the Philippines and 93% in Peru, but just 32% in the so-called least developed countries. The percentage of births registered is always higher in urban zones than in the countryside.¹²⁰ Significant progress has been made in Burkina Faso via a reduction in registration costs and extensive work by local not-for-profit organizations, especially women’s groups. In the Philippines, a law was adopted that entitled all children to use their father’s name as well as suspending registration costs and fines for retroactive registrations. In Peru, ordinances were passed in three districts to provide for no-cost birth certificates.

> **Proposal: Systematize campaigns to register children at birth and to issue papers to as yet unregistered adults**

4222 – Access to an income, employment, housing and social welfare

Opportunities for participating in the world of work are initially founded in family and community bonds. The struggle to survive means that children have to work from a very early age, making it difficult for them to attend school. In terms of work most lacking in security, we can observe in both North and South the increasing poverty of low wage earners and independent workers during the course of their working lives, due to the progressive effect of age and infirmity on their bodies and health. Access to housing, decent employment and the benefits of good health would seem to be the key drivers if people are to rise from extreme poverty. This is eloquent proof of the indivisible nature of basic rights: loss of one often leads to the loss of others, whilst access to one often leads to access to others. In October 2007, 100,000 people in France had no fixed abode, another three million lived in inadequate conditions, and the rate of unemployment amongst young people living in what are termed disadvantaged neighbourhoods was running at rates of 30 to 50%. In developing countries, informal employment is rising not falling, testament to the failure of current policies. The rapid population growth in these countries, increased presence of women in the labour market and mass exodus from the countryside driven by increasing poverty of smallholders are the primary causes for this phenomenon. The increasing poverty of smallholders in many third world countries, especially sub-Saharan Africa, is caused primarily by the lack of support for agriculture, especially the food production sector, itself the product of a development ideology rooted in industrialization that has held sway for several decades. Climatic and environmental catastrophes as well as the trade policies of the developed world are also to blame for this situation.

> **Proposal: Include protection for food-producing agriculture, a factor in national food sovereignty, as**



well as clauses to safeguard human rights in the raft of measures accepted as part of trade agreements, as suggested in a Human Rights Council report.¹²¹

The World Confederation of Labour rightly criticized the fact that the promotion of decent work was almost wholly absent from the goals set by the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers negotiated by the World Bank and the IMF with the governments of 60 to 80 developing countries.¹²² The ILO takes the position that decent work must lie at the heart of global, national and local strategies for economic and social progress, as it is a means of attaining lasting development based on equity and inclusion. Promotion of decent work comprises four components: *the right to employment*, productive work being the primary lever for breaking free of poverty; *rights* and, more precisely, the application of basic standards that appear in international labour conventions (freedom to join a trade union, protection of the right to organize and negotiate collectively, prohibition on forced labour and the worst forms of child labour, etc.); *social welfare*, to ward off poverty, and *social dialogue*, because it is vital that employers, trade unions and associations participate in discussions about poverty reduction strategies. The Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto, who has studied the informal sector for a number of decades, states that in order for it to rejoin the formal sector, national legislation needs to incorporate many of the unwritten rules of the informal sector. The law must be grounded

in a social contract that takes account of the practices and interests of the poor, something that occurs all too infrequently.¹²³ Important progress has been made in recent years concerning the recognition of decent work as a key tool in the fight against poverty, and the objective of decent productive work for all was added to the Millennium Development Goals in 2007. However, in a hard-hitting analysis of the repercussions of the global recession, the ILO's Global Employment Trends report for 2009 states: "unless adequate measures are adopted and in some cases continued, more than 40 million people could drop out of the labour market."

> **Proposal: Include promotion of decent work into development strategies, as an objective often lacking from the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers financed by Bretton Woods institutions.**

Microcredit resources must be mobilized to this end, although alternative programmes are also required. For more than thirty years, microcredit, invented in Bangladesh by Muhammad Yunus, has been developed in many countries in order to improve employment prospects for those operating in the informal sector, especially women. Muhammad Yunus played a major role in recognition of the fact that, once their economic capabilities are strengthened, the poor are the most determined of fighters in the struggle against poverty. He is convinced that we will make far swifter progress

121. Human Rights Council, United Nations, *Report of the independent expert on the effect of economic reform policies and foreign debt on full enjoyment of all human rights*, Bernard Mudho, A/HRC/4/10, 3 January 2007.

122. Social Alert, *Informal Economy*, p. 31.

123. Hernando de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital. Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*, Basic Books, 1st edition, September 5, 2000, 276 pages.

124. Muhammad Yunus, *Vers un monde sans pauvreté (Towards a World Without Poverty)*, Ed. JC Lattès, 1997.

125. UN General Assembly, 53rd Session. *Report by the Secretary-General on the role of micro-credit in the eradication of poverty.* (A/53/523) 10 August, 1998. "Some studies show that there are limits to the use of credit as an instrument for poverty eradication, including difficulties in identifying the poor, and targeting credit to reach the poorest of the poor."

126. See online information on the programme set up by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC): *Challenging The Frontiers of Poverty Reduction, Targeting the Ultra Poor (CFPR-TUP)*.

127. World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, *A Fair Globalization, Creating Opportunities For All*,

46 International Labour Organization, 2004, p. XIII.

128. Wouter Van Ginneken, *Social Security and the Global Socio-Economic Floor: Towards a Human Rights-Based Approach*, yet to be published.

129. Blandine Destremau and Bruno Lautier, *Social Protection and Social Rights Regimes in Developing Countries: Towards the Construction of a Typology*, August 2007, available from destremau@club-internet.fr

once the decision-makers realize that the poor are their partners, not spectators or enemies.¹²⁴ Although his desire to reach the poorest cannot be questioned, not all of his followers are equally disinterested and some charge usurious rates of interest. As it has expanded, microcredit has proved to be not always suited to populations in situations of extreme poverty.¹²⁵ In Bangladesh, alternative large-scale programmes have been in place since 2002, targeting populations classified as ultra-poor, comprising day labourers, domestic servants, street beggars, people unable to afford two meals a day, landless peasants, etc. These programmes are based on three components: the provision at no-cost to very poor households of a small capital capable of flourishing, for example, a few animals or a piece of land; a few weeks' training to learn how to make the capital flourish, and the provision of a sum to cover the period when the capital gift has yet to bear fruit.¹²⁶ These are thus microgrants rather than microcredits, targeting several hundred thousand families.

> Proposal: Supplement microcredit programmes by developing other programmes, capable of reaching the very poorest and working with them to create training and income-generating activities

The development of social welfare systems must also be encouraged and supported in many developing countries where they are now lacking. They could serve as key elements in the fight against poverty and want. In 2004, the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization stated that a minimum level of social protection for individuals and families needs to be accepted and undisputed as part of the socio-economic "floor" of the global economy.¹²⁷ According to the ILO's research, funding such a programme would cost between 2 and 6% of GNP, depending on the amount of protection desired, and the bulk of the funding should come from the countries themselves.¹²⁸ It would be affordable to low-income countries provided that they received international assistance during a changeover period. In practical terms, the incor-

poration into a social welfare system of workers from the casual and informal sectors, smallholders, fishermen and livestock farmers poses serious technical and economic problems. In addition, the (often sizeable) proportion of children in the population is a financial drain on the system. Research into patterns of change and obstruction within social security systems in the developing world is still at a very early stage: it has identified several types of changes, which need to be examined in further detail.¹²⁹ Community systems such as micro-insurance, tontines, etc. have been on



the rise in sub-Saharan Africa since the 1990s, and healthcare mutual benefit companies are growing strongly in India and Bangladesh. Bilateral aid agencies are funding innovative experiments. For example, the Dutch development cooperation ministry is funding the setting up of basic medical cover for a few thousand workers from the Nigerian formal and informal sectors. The idea is to involve the private sector and progressively increase the insurance premium so that the programme gradually becomes self-funding. The German cooperation agency (GTZ) is funding a pilot income support project for very poor families with or without children in an area of Zambia.

> Proposal: Set in a place a universal social protection floor, to include healthcare cover, payments to families to allow children to go to school, a minimum income system to protect those able to work from extreme poverty, pensions for old age, disability, invalidity and loss of a spouse.

> **Prioritize public spending to target improvements to development conditions for the young and the most disadvantaged.**

4223 – International solidarity

Generalizing use of this type of programme amongst the poorest countries and populations poses the **question of the sustainability and reliability of Official Development Assistance (ODA)** from rich countries—a question the governments of these countries avoid answering. And recent history shows that they fail to keep their promises. From 1969 to 2003, only 5 of the 22 major donor countries met the UN recommendations they had agreed to.¹³⁰ None of them were members of the G7, the group of the seven most powerful industrialized nations whose influence is decisive at the international level (G8 as of 1997 when Russia was included). The report on the progress of the Millennium Development Goals reminds us that the G8 countries promised to double aid to Africa by 2010, and that the EU countries promised to allocate 0.7% of gross national income to ODA. Despite these commitments, ODA fell during the period 2005-2007.¹³¹ MDGs thus depend on the hope that rich countries will respect their commitments to provide financial support to developing nations. The mid-process evaluation in June 2007 of progress towards the MDGs showed mixed results: improvements have occurred but much remains to do.

According to the OECD,¹³² aid to developing countries in 2010 will be lower than the amount promised five years ago by the world's main donors during the 2005 G8 summit at Gleneagles and at the UN in New York. "Africa, in particular, is likely to get only about USD 12 billion of the USD 25 billion increase envisaged at Gleneagles, due in large part to the under-performance of some European donors who give large shares of ODA to Africa. (...) Overall, these figures result in additional aid of USD 27 billion from 2004 to 2010, but a USD 21 billion shortfall between what donors promised in 2005 and the OECD estimates for the 2010 outcome."

> **Proposal: Develop a citizens movement to force rich countries to keep their promise to provide ODA funding equivalent to 0.7% of their GNP, and to develop innovative new sources of funding for ODA.**

4224 – Striking a balance between community education and school education

The challenge is to improve relations between schools and populations living in extreme poverty. The first form of education is received from parents, family and community. The influence of such education echoes strongly throughout all accounts, but at times it comes into conflict with the values promoted by educational

establishments. The school system established in Africa by colonizing countries may, for example, be perceived as a humiliation by local populations. It is no surprise to find signs of resistance, mainly in the form of pupils ceasing to attend school. In Burkina Faso, 35% of primary school age boys attended classes during the period 1996-2005, and just 29% of girls. Yet, if schools were to cease denigrating traditional forms of education, they could play a pivotal role in easing the tension between tradition and modernity. The situation is markedly different in Peru and the Philippines where, in 2001, 96.5% and 92% respectively of primary school age children attended class. However, the quality of the education provided is often very low. In Peru, state schools in rural areas provided an average of one day's schooling per week during the early 2000s. In order to accelerate the growth of schooling and drive down costs, teacher training and salaries are also often very poor. Yet the goal of education for all was enshrined for the first time in the Jomtien Conference held in Thailand in March 1990; it was reaffirmed during the Dakar Conference (Senegal, April 2000) as well as being included in the Millennium Development Goals adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2000. A key aim of this MDG is halving adult illiteracy by 2015. The second MDG aims to ensure primary education for all by giving every child, boys and girls, the means to complete a full cycle of primary education. Genuinely free primary and secondary school provision would be of great assistance to parents who sacrifice everything to ensure that their children can attend school.

> **Proposal: Promote genuinely free school for all, which also means keeping necessary books and supplies as cheap as possible and providing well-balanced meals and affordable transport to school.**

It is also important to **give the concept of "an education for all" a context suited to each country.** "What we seek is not so much to speed up the education train, but instead to move the tracks in a new direction," says Joseph Ki Zerbo.¹³³ The challenge is not to deliver a standard volume of educational instruction to the greatest number of pupils, but to extend the education provided from within the community and encourage a more open attitude to school education. **Increased school enrolment rates will not be the sole indicator; detailed assessments must also be made of the progress of relations between populations and stakeholders in the educational system.** This will require a policy of intensive discussions between educational institutions, teachers and populations, in order to agree to adjustments to curriculum content and timing. The hardest task remains improving ties between stakeholders in the educational system and the most disadvantaged population groups. In France, a recent

130. Oxfam International, *Paying the Price*, 2005, cited in the *Atlas du Monde Diplomatique*, p. 108.

131. United Nations, *Millennium Development Goals*, 2007 report, p. 5.

132. See Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD-CAD) at the OECD: *Donor's mixed aid performance sparks concern*, 17/02/2010.

133. Joseph Ki Zerbo, *À quand l'Afrique (When will Africa's Time Come?)*, Ed. de l'Aube, 2003, p. 177

official report criticized the primary school system for being resigned to failure at an early age, with results that have failed to improve over the past decade. The problems are partly to do with resourcing, but their roots lie mainly in relationships and teaching content. In order to successfully bring knowledge to the most disadvantaged groups, stakeholders in the education system need to enhance their dialogue with them and recognize parents as vital partners in their children's success. Teachers' attitudes are therefore critical. They need to learn about the world of extreme poverty as part of their training, so they understand that if a child

423 – Giving voice to disadvantaged populations and encouraging their participation

The tales that people tell of their lives show that, whether or not they are registered and have proper papers, the most disadvantaged struggle to make their voices heard and to have their interests taken into account in local matters, at school, within the healthcare system, in the media and by members of the political classes. The violence that shook France's inner cities in 2005 bears witness to the refusal of some of their young residents to be excluded from opportunities for economic, social and cultural development. Similarly, France's housing crisis, especially for the least advantaged, speaks volumes about the way that representative democracy fails to reflect their needs and expectations.

In the Philippines, Burkina Faso and Peru, citizens have to deal with struggling states and fragile democracies. Flows of money from indebted southern states to the North—servicing the third world external debt—have for many years been many times higher than the amounts these same countries receive from the North in the form of ODA. This situation reflects the structural violence of the present world order, the blame for which is shared by self-interested northern lenders and corrupt southern regimes. Structural adjustment programmes set up and administered by the Bretton Woods institutions aiming to absorb developing nations' debts have aggravated the situation, whilst the industrialized



arrives for class dressed in a manner they deem unsatisfactory, perhaps it is because s/he has no water at home. If a child's homework has not been done, perhaps it is because of a lack of electricity at home, or the need to work to help the family. A child may miss a day's school as a result of not having eaten properly for a number of days, or if a family member has fallen sick. Without such concrete insights into extreme poverty, teachers will struggle to keep the doors of the classroom open to children from families in need, and to provide them with the support and encouragement needed to succeed at school.

> Proposal: Use improved dialogue to establish trust-based relationships between teachers and the poorest families, making greater use of populations' skills and knowledge to incorporate them into education and training teachers to be more aware of the world of extreme poverty.

nations' trade policies remain all too often skewed against the South. The testimonies received, however, show that participative democracy can be developed amongst the least favoured populations, and that leaders can thereby emerge from their ranks.

Furthermore, it is only by combining recognition with redistribution that the conditions for justice for all will be met. As Amartya Sen has shown in his work on famines, representative democracy is more than just an end in itself, a desirable option for many citizens keen to become involved with decisions that affect them. It also has a manifest role as an instrument for combating want, for in the modern era there are no longer famines in democratic states, no matter how poor they might be. For the past 50 years, all famines have occurred in countries undergoing a crisis or at the mercy of dictators, where the media are muzzled or simply absent and are thus not able to recount the needs and suffering of the starving. In a dictatorship, the distance separating the governing

class from the starving is such that the death of the latter leaves the former unmoved. In democratic states, the occurrence of serious food shortages leads to immediate economic, social and political reactions to check the phenomenon.

Many initiatives around the world, often very modest, are undertaken with the aim of supporting the very poorest in their efforts. Their profile needs to be raised so they can gain mutual strength and inspire changes in social and economic policies. *“For as long as the poorest and those who work with them cannot participate as equals wherever other citizens meet to debate and form the society of tomorrow, the fight against poverty will never be more than a struggle waged on the margins, a fruitless attempt to catch up, to make reparation that will never achieve its goal, precisely because it is not at the core of the challenges society has determined for its present and future. Participative democracy is therefore not merely one tool amongst others for a more equal sharing of citizenship, it is a pre-requisite for the creation of a social life jointly constructed by all the disparate members of society.”*¹³⁴

The effective participation in the decision-making process of the poorest is indispensable, yet in every democratic state the presence of the poorest in associations, unions and politics remains extremely patchy. New approaches to participative democracy must therefore be developed.

For example, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is an opportunity that could be exploited more widely by forging or amplifying dialogue between varied sections of society. The day is one of those rare moments during the year when people in extreme poverty become visible and dare to speak freely to government and other powers that be. The presence and attentiveness of invited guest personalities boosts the morale of those living very difficult lives, who go home with renewed energy for the fight against poverty. Personalities who make themselves available to meet with others who are less fortunate in turn acquire new insights that will help them to better target their actions and programmes devoted to the fight against poverty. In December 2001, the EU’s Council of Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs approved a report from the Social Protection Committee looking at indicators of poverty and exclusion that concluded: *“the Social Protection Committee recognizes the importance of increasing the participation of excluded populations in developing indicators and the need to explore more effective ways of giving voice to the excluded.”* The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), ATD Fourth World and other NGOs followed up on this recommendation with research into this issue.¹³⁵ The task now is to create dialogue, as yet almost inexistent, between social sciences specialists, populations living in extreme poverty and grassroots actors to ensure that each party is able to gain insight from the other in a mutually beneficial process of merging knowledge.

> Proposals:

Raise the profile of International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

Establish dialogue between researchers, decision-makers, grassroots actors and populations living in extreme poverty in order to create links between academic knowledge, life knowledge of people enduring extreme poverty and the knowledge of grassroots actors so as to design new strategies.

Develop a participative and qualitative approach to develop a better understanding of extreme poverty in all its facets and create a set of meaningful indicators.

Under a reformed system of world governance, the participation of the poorest is vital not only to prepare for the key decisions that need to result in the eradication of extreme poverty, but equally because, thanks to their experience of life, the poorest have their own proposals to put forward with the aim of creating a world that is more just and more respectful of people.

> Proposal: Seek new forms of participative democracy that include the very poorest

134. Taken from a typed note written by Gérard Bureau, permanent volunteer at ATD Fourth World, 5 March 2008.

135. G. Hacourt, *European Project on Poverty Indicators Starting from the Experience of People Living in Poverty*, final report, EAPN, September 2003; Service for the fight against poverty, insecurity, and social exclusion, *An Alternative Approach to Poverty Indicators*, Brussels, March 2004. Available on <http://www.luttepauvrete.be>

136. International Movement ATD Fourth World, *Amplifier la dynamique du 17 octobre (Expanding the 17 October Process)*, report on the seminar organized following resolution A/RES/60/209 para. 55 adopted by the UN General Assembly in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 22-26 May 2006.

Box 8: An example of participative democracy

ATD Fourth World is an NGO structured as a social movement engaged in the fight against poverty, i.e. a group of citizens engaged together of their own volition in a common cause, one of the explicit aims being to give voice to the poorest within the public space. Families living in extreme poverty are encouraged to become fully-fledged members, the idea being to strive for equal participation with other members but to prioritize the poorest, an approach that makes certain demands on the way the movement operates. **Equal participation means proscribing all relationships based on domination, condescension, assistance or dependency.** The idea is to build relationships based on mutual respect where the focus is on giving voice to the most disadvantaged, and to provide enhanced freedom to all and to install a sense of reciprocity and greater mutual solidarity. This aim is especially hard to bring about when addressing individuals and families who are struggling to survive, who are endlessly seeking the resources that they lack and who have extremely limited freedoms. Supporting and sharing the lives of people in this position must therefore take place over the long term, over a timespan that will allow trust to be established and enable them to talk more freely of their experiences, consolations and hopes.

The movement's aim is not so much to provide resources that are forever lacking, something that ad hoc assistance can never do, but instead to create a lasting relationship that is as open as possible with those it seeks to reach. The aim is to create the conditions needed to tackle together the structural causes of extreme poverty, demanding rights and designing actions that will create rights and that help people to gain greater freedom and responsibility. Within communities living in extreme poverty, being overly ready to meet cash needs simply generates greater demands and turns the grassroots team into a funding provider, which is not what the movement is about. However, it is often the case that a refusal to provide cash aid will endanger the relationship with the person seeking it, who may feel misunderstood and abandoned to her/his fate. In certain extreme cases, failure to meet a request may endanger the life of the requester or her/his family. The response is therefore almost always the offer of a tiny sum, one that will provide a temporary solution to the problem but without creating a relationship of dependency between donor and recipient.

Different types of meetings, events, seminars and forums are held with the aim of enabling the most disadvantaged to organize their thoughts and make their voices heard.

17 October, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

Following a UN General Assembly resolution in 2005 concerning the eradication of poverty, and its comments on ways to extend the reach of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, an international civil society consultation was launched in order to draw some lessons from the celebration of this day worldwide. The consultation revealed that: *"the most important feature of 17 October is the visibility that it grants to those who are usually invisible and ignored by the rest of society; it reaffirms their status as fully-fledged citizens (...) whose contribution is often overlooked. Their testimonies reveal the ways in which poverty and extreme poverty continually sap people's abilities to meet their obligations and to enjoy their human rights (...) By drawing together participants from highly diverse populations, the International Day fosters a dialogue that results in enhanced understanding of the responsibilities of each participant in creating a society founded on respect for the dignity of every one of its members."* Case studies show the power to transform that the event offers, both for people living in extreme poverty who gain self-esteem and the respect of others, and for people from other backgrounds, who lose some of their prejudices and may thus be motivated to commit to further actions.¹³⁶

43 Ideas for actions to fight poverty

431 - Rethinking the role of social movement stakeholders as a tool for social change

One of the points that emerges from most of the studies on ways to eradicate extreme poverty, such as the analyses and proposals proffered by Sachs, Easterly and Collier, is the vital importance they place on voluntary gatherings of citizens in favour of a

growing role of *Membership Based Organisations of the Poor*, organizations whose members are made up of people living in poverty, and which naturally must be distinguished from traditional charity and humanitarian organizations.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, the wealth of experience underpinning notions of social exclusion and the “Fourth World”, adopted all around the world, seem to be overlooked.

4311 - Joseph Wresinski's innovations: ATD Fourth World

Joseph Wresinski worked in this field to develop a wholly original theory and practice, rooted in his childhood experience as the son of immigrants, born into poverty, the ten years of his adult life spent immersed in the life of the shanty town camp at Noisy-le-Grand, and then his role as the spokesman of the poorest, recognized nationally and internationally. The movement he worked with others to build is not a model for imitation, but a rich legacy of questions and answers situated in specific contexts, providing every individual and every organization seeking justice with elements to enrich their thinking and their practices.¹³⁸

While it seemed utterly impossible for these impoverished and despised families to organize themselves collectively into a force for protest, Wresinski worked with them to found an organization and they became its first members. To support these families, he brought together a volunteer corps, a group of women and men desiring to link their lives to those of the most disadvantaged, and “allies”, seeking to ally themselves with the most vulnerable by defending their cause. In 1969, he created a new collective identity by forging the notion of the “fourth world”, linked to the sociology of action and, in just two words, conjuring up two centuries of lack of political representation for Europe’s poorest citizens, ever since the French revolution’s Fourth Order. The Fourth World, “people on the move”, is neither a social class, nor a grouping together of social classes, but the collective actor bringing about change, switching from the shame of poverty to

the pride of a collective fight. This switch requires the most disadvantaged and those supporting them to undergo a turnaround, in other words, a profound change in the way they see their own and others’ lives. ATD Fourth World thus appears as a social movement that provides an identity based on resistance and construction, open to everyone seeking to actively express their solidarity with the most excluded. This identity is rooted in resistance to extreme poverty, but also to prevailing paradigms where money and the market reign supreme. And it is rooted in construction, since the desire to eradicate extreme

137. Martha Chen, Renana Jhabvala, Ravi Kanbur and Carol Richards, MBOP: *Membership Based Organizations of the Poor*, Routledge Press, 2007.

138. This legacy has been gathered together and can be consulted at the Centre International Joseph Wresinski, 2 rue de la Gare, 95 560 Baillet-en-France. Website in several languages: www.joseph-wresinski.org.



cause and on social movements as a tool for social change. Under what conditions can these organizations represent the most impoverished populations within the public space? What role can they play in fighting poverty? Easterly favours organizations that work in the field with the most disadvantaged populations in developing countries. Sachs and Collier recognize the strength of campaigns that recently obtained successive cancellations of third world debt, reorientation of the G8 agenda, etc. They both call on all individuals to listen to their civic conscience and do more. Other stakeholders have focused on the

139. Alwine de Vos vans Steenwijk, *Il fera beau, le jour où le sous-prolétariat sera entendu* (*The Weather Will be Lovely the Day the Sub-Proletariat is Heard*), Ed. Science et Service, 1977.

140. François-Paul Debionne, *La santé passe par la dignité* (*Health Depends on Dignity*), Ed. de l'Atelier et Ed. Quart Monde, 2000.

141. Xavier Godinot, *On voudrait connaître le secret du travail. Dialogue insolite entre militants du quart monde, chercheurs et acteurs de l'économie* (*We would like to know the secret of work. An unusual dialogue between Fourth World militants, researchers and economic stakeholders*), Ed. de l'Atelier et Ed. Quart Monde, 1995.

poverty is constantly reaffirmed and is accompanied by the need to work with the most disadvantaged as partners in the fight.

Wresinski was haunted by the fear that the movement he founded would grow away from the most disadvantaged or would instrumentalize them. He sought to counteract this tendency, common to all human institutions, with the frame of mind and type of organization he fostered, making ATD Fourth World a place for a never-ending collective quest. Full-time volunteers are recruited not on the basis of job profiles or enticing salaries, but on a lifestyle choice reflecting a human and militant engagement embodied by proximity with the most disadvantaged worlds, and the search for justice, solidarity and a simple life. There is an ongoing search for practical antidotes against the risk of full-time volunteers seizing power. An equal distribution of participation between very varying

members is developed in specific public spaces, the subject of permanent discussions. The political representation promoted does not apply to a category or people, but to a fight against extreme poverty and exclusion that concerns each person and each institution.

> Proposal: Foster a permanent exploration within civil society on the internal democratic operation of NGOs to monitor the place given to people from disadvantaged backgrounds

432 - Pilot projects for providing access to fundamental rights

Proposing a project for changing society also implies being present in different economic, social and political arenas. The idea is to try out new paths to make rights a reality, without, however, replacing over the long term the public or private institutions in charge of implementing them for all. The enemy is not a social category or specific institution, but a violent social order rooted in attitudes of indifference, ignorance and scorn held by people of every origin. If consen-

suses work to produce the exclusion of impoverished populations, fighting extreme poverty requires new consensuses to be created in professional, unionist, cultural, political and spiritual arenas, wherein the rules of the game will have changed profoundly.

This observation led to the creation of pilot projects, designed in a specific place for a given duration, generally two to five years. The projects work with volunteer partners to set up the means for providing people



living in extreme poverty access to their fundamental rights. In general, pilot projects combine research with action in order to further knowledge, learn lessons from the experience and be able to recreate it in other places, or even to give it a widespread application.

ATD Fourth World has been continually running projects of this kind since the late 1960s, in fields such as early childhood development,¹³⁹ access to knowledge and culture, health and social welfare,¹⁴⁰ work and professional training¹⁴¹ and public speaking.¹⁴² They have gradually evolved towards increasing the involvement of external partners. A constant risk is that these projects, financed by the authorities or private foundations, lead to the NGOs being instrumentalized and to giving them responsibility for populations abandoned by everyone without other partners ever having to take on more responsibility or access to rights becoming more widespread. The antidote is to involve public and private partners in implementing these projects, in both human and financial terms. Starting in 1995, new pilot projects were set up in the fields of constructing knowledge and training professionals. Tackling the question of knowledge

142. ATD Fourth World, *Participation Works*, London, 1998.

in information societies takes us to the heart of processes of domination and exploitation that operate everywhere that knowledge is produced, transmitted and applied, in other words, in the cultural arena. At the bottom of the social ladder are those who are excluded, since they neither produce nor appropriate knowledge. To fight against this exclusion, it is therefore vital that the most disadvantaged not only benefit from the knowledge disseminated by communities, school and university, but also get involved in the production of knowledge, so that their life knowledge can be combined with action-based knowledge and academic knowledge, resulting in a more fruitful body of knowledge for everyone. This is the idea behind the process of merging knowledge and practical experience.¹⁴³

More recently, economist Esther Duflo¹⁴⁴ used an academic-style theoretical approach as the starting point for setting up J-PAL, an academic centre, enabling her to rigorously test the real impact of implemented policies in the field. She used real “clinical trials”¹⁴⁵ based on the systematic use of randomized evaluations comparing the effect of a measure applied to a human group compared to another group living in similar conditions but without the benefit of the measure.

> Proposals:

Systemize the use of pilot projects to find the best solutions to combat extreme poverty and encourage development

Wherever possible, involve representatives of public institutions and businesses in the pilot projects to make them easier to reproduce

433 – What action is needed at the political level?

A social movement is defined by identifying a mission and an opponent. The opponent in this case, as we have seen, is extreme poverty, along with the processes of exclusion that lead to it. But who is responsible for extreme poverty and the processes of exclusion? How can this opponent be fought?

ATD Fourth World offered an initial answer to these questions in the context of 1960s France, at a time when stable economic growth blinded people to the persisting presence of extreme poverty. In a 1968 text, written during the often violent process of shanty town absorption in the Paris region and elsewhere, Wresinski denounced the condition of the poverty-stricken man, “*who is crushed beneath the weight and violence of his fellow beings (...) The violence of scorn and indifference creates extreme poverty, since it leads inexorably to exclusion, it imprisons the poor man in a spiral of poverty that crushes and destroys him (...) Neither sub-proletariats nor the rich are necessarily conscious of this violence (...) often hidden behind the*

facade of order, reason, and even justice. A violent order generates disorder and violence.”¹⁴⁶ In this text and all those that followed, he does not point to a specific social order or institution as responsible for extreme poverty, but rather a violent social order rooted in attitudes of indifference, ignorance and scorn held by people of every origin. “*Our society finds it normal to lay the maximum amount of collective insecurity on the shoulders of those members with the least power to cope with it. This de facto agreement is at the root of the persistence of great poverty,*” he wrote in 1983 in a report commissioned by the French Minister of Planning.¹⁴⁷

Twenty years on, psychoanalyst and ethnologist Patrick Declerck’s long experience of homeless people in Paris resulted in a very similar analysis. In a pamphlet railing against “*the idiocy and sadism*” of the French system of aiding the homeless, he criticized “*the incredible violence inflicted on those forced to become wanderers, to become homeless, those who are thrust into the streets every day, throughout France (...) A shameful crime committed with and by general indifference. A recurring sacrificial and barbaric crime for the edification of all.*”¹⁴⁸

In his research on the causes of extreme poverty in the modern world, Majid Rahnema also asks “*how can we identify who or what is really guilty of this systematic destruction of entire populations and their life styles? (...) The system, now in its globalized form, is constantly fed by the combined action of people and entities from dominating powers as well as dominated classes. There is no tyrant to be overcome. The enemy is nowhere and everywhere (...) In spite of the theories of alleged plots, North against South, whites against coloured people, Christianity against Islam, most stakeholders involved in this vast economic machine would like nothing more than to offer their support to solving these problems.*”¹⁴⁹ His message is echoed by philosopher Miguel Benasayag, “*Neoliberalism is in us,*” including when we are its victims. For it is our civilisation, the cloth each of us is cut from. Consciously or not, we order our existence according to its principles, and it draws its strength from the power granted it by many people. It is always tempting to demonize people, institutions or social classes by feeling assured that you yourself, and the institution you belong to, are on the side of the goodies against the badies, on the side of liberators struggling against the oppressors. All “*revolutionary vanguards*” proceeded in this way, and we have seen the results.¹⁵⁰ It is more useful to question your own responsibilities towards the most vulnerable, responsibilities in proportion to each person’s capability. “*The real liberation will give the excluded the means to be free, without becoming oppressors in their turn,*” states Wresinski. “*If we teach the poor to despise the rich, we are changing masters by creating new slaves.*”¹⁵¹ The fight against extreme poverty and exclusion is

143. *The Merging of Knowledge: People in Poverty and Academics Thinking Together*, 502 pages, University Press of America, 2007.

144. Esther Duflo is Abdul Latif Jameel Professor of Poverty Alleviation and Development Economics in the Department of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and a founder and director of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL).

145. Interview with Esther Duflo, *Télérama*, 13 January 2010, p. 16.

146. Joseph Wresinski, *Refuser la misère. Une pensée politique née de l'action (A Knowledge that Leads to Action)*. Cerf et Ed. Quart Monde, Paris, 2007, p. 113.

147. Joseph Wresinski, *ibid.* p. 265.

148. Patrick Declerck, *Le sang nouveau est arrivé (The New Blood has Arrived)*, Folio, 2007, p. 111 and 112.

149. Majid Rahnema, *Quand la misère chasse la pauvreté (When Destitution Follows on the Heels of Poverty)*, op. cit. p. 205.

150. Florence Aubenas and Miguel Benasayag, *Résister, c'est créer (Resisting Means Creating)*, Paris: La Découverte, 2002.

151. Wresinski, *The Poor are the Church*, 2002, Twenty Third Publications, 288 pages.

152. Wresinski, idem, p. 164.

153. Jacques Dermagne, Economic and Social Council president, *Ouverture du Séminaire*, proceedings of the seminar “Extreme poverty and Decent Work” held at Palais d’Iéna, Paris, on 11 December 2006, Action Mondiale Contre la Pauvreté – France (AMCP) duplicated lecture notes.

154. The enforceable right to housing is a right that can be asserted against third parties. It is designed to enable homeless people to apply to the authorities to enforce it, initially by mutual agreement, then through the courts.

155. ATD Fourth World, *What we say should change our lives. Extreme poverty, participation and access to fundamental rights for all*, March 2006, 112 pages.

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156. NGO committee with consultative status to the UN ECOSOC.

157. James Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest. Culture, Biography and Creativity in Social Movements*, 1997.

158. Quoted by Fanchette Clément-Fanelli, *Taking a Country at its Word*, Joseph Wresinski Confronts the Reality and Ideals of the United States, Fourth World Publications, Landover, USA, 2006, p. 255.

not about reversing roles and positions, but about a change of approach.

If consensus work to produce the exclusion of impoverished populations, fighting extreme poverty requires new consensus to be created, wherein the rules of the game will have changed profoundly. This implies creating alliances with a variety of individuals and partners based on specific goals. If the enemy is everywhere and nowhere, so are potential allies. Each person encountered, including within institutions implementing disastrous policies, can prove to be an ally—or an opponent. The movement to refuse extreme poverty has to be built up one person at a time, as Wresinski constantly repeated, by considering each new contact as a potential friend.¹⁵² As he said, “*To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty*”, and he devoted much of his energy to trying to create acceptance of this new vision in his country, but also among bodies such as the European Union, Council of Europe and United Nations.

> Proposal:

Incorporate the goal of eradicating extreme poverty in international laws and agreements.

Involve the most disadvantaged populations in thinking and actions geared towards formulating, implementing and assessing policies promoting universal access to fundamental rights.

In France, the adoption of the Wresinski report *Chronic Poverty and Lack of Basic Security* by the Economic and Social Council in February 1987 was the prelude to a series of legislative developments. The Council’s president recently stressed that “*Father Wresinski’s report was the founding stone for historical measures*. The Revenu Minimum d’Insertion (guaranteed minimum income), *systems for access to healthcare, training, culture and return to work and the major blueprint law on the fight against poverty and exclusion of July 1998 all originated with the Economic and Social Council*.”¹⁵³ The 2003 creation of an inter-association platform for the right to housing, the work undertaken by the high committee for housing disadvantaged people, and various media operations resulted in the 5 March 2007 law establishing the enforceable right to housing.¹⁵⁴

It was also important to include the most disadvantaged populations in the debate on the European Union’s aims, particularly in terms of the treaty establishing the EU’s constitution. ATD Fourth World and various other partners campaigned for the EU to consider the most disadvantaged populations as key partners, but also to include in all future treaties the goal of eradicating extreme poverty and social exclusion from Europe and the rest of the world.¹⁵⁵

ATD Fourth World has worked within the UN system in partnership with the NGO Committee for

Social Development¹⁵⁶ and the International Trade Union Confederation to strengthen the impact of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, boost general mobilization and actively support the elaboration of the draft guiding principles “Extreme poverty and human rights” adopted in August 2006 by the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Geneva.

> Proposal: Systematically seek to build new consensus on the fight against poverty and social exclusion in the political, economic and social arenas, regardless of political or social affiliations

434 Personal transformation as a springboard for social change

As recent political science studies rightly underline, taking part in a social movement fighting extreme poverty is not confined to protest motivated by self-interest, or to promoting a vision of a fair society. It also entails a lifestyle choice, experiencing your involvement as a way of working on yourself, facing up to moral issues, expressing untapped creativity, seeking to give the very best of yourself. It is a personal and collective quest and journey as much as an attempt to find a solution to a social problem.¹⁵⁷

During a speech he gave in New York in December 1983, Joseph Wresinski said: “*Eradicating extreme poverty is not simply about handing out dollars or planning development programmes in offices (...) Eliminating extreme poverty requires us to meet men and women face to face. It requires us to look for them in the places they inhabit, not to educate them, but for them to teach us how valid our convictions are, to learn from them who they are and what they expect from us*.”¹⁵⁸ Wresinski emphasized the need to counter the approach based on planning with an approach based on researching, on the conviction that destitution is not just a problem stemming from material extreme poverty, but also from social exclusion and contempt. The opposite of social exclusion and contempt is social recognition, which requires a deep-reaching change in the relationship between included and excluded, helper and helpee. Jeffrey Sachs does not examine or engage in this question of social recognition. William Easterly showed that it does not only concern relations between individuals, but also between the West and developing countries. If the West were to acknowledge that it does not hold the solutions that developing countries should adopt, but that they should look for them together, the relations between the two would change drastically. “*We should have the humility to recognize that in terms of human rights and democracy, there are no masters; we are all novices who have much to learn and understand (...) The global approach to human rights that takes the lowpoint of extreme poverty as its starting point puts us all*

on the same level.”¹⁵⁹ Christopher Winship, sociology professor at Harvard University, defines Wresinski’s innovative ideas thus: “He calls us to understand poverty not just as destitution or oppression but as social isolation. This isolation is created by us all to the degree that we live apart from the poor and fail to understand that their fate is ours.”¹⁶⁰

If destitution is not simply a problem rooted in material extreme poverty but also in rejection, scorn and social exclusion, then economic, scientific and

of human beings whose humanity is questioned, for a variety of reasons. Everyone has within them a share of “anthropological cruelty” contained by barriers that are social rather than individual. The fear of disorder, insecurity, impurity, contamination and being cursed focuses on the populations the furthest from established norms, with the consequent attempt to get rid of them in one way or another, including by physical elimination.



technical progress is useful but not enough to eradicate it. The fight against extreme poverty does have scientific, economic and political aspects, but it also has cultural and spiritual dimensions, as clearly demonstrated by the anti-slavery fight, non-violent liberation movements led by Mahatma Ghandi and Reverend Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela’s anti-apartheid movement. René Cassin, author of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, stated that it is “a document that aims to turn us towards helping others. Each person should feel indebted and the guarantor of the rights of other individuals” as part of a process of a “spirituality of human rights” and responsibilities.¹⁶¹

Current sociological and anthropological knowledge shows us that exclusion arises throughout the centuries and in all civilisations. Every society has its share

Fear is at the root of the processes operating to make evil and social injustice acceptable. This means that the violence, sometimes in its extreme form, imposed on certain categories of people ends up being seen as normal. When neither the fear you feel yourself when confronted with people disfigured by extreme poverty nor their suffering are acknowledged, the conditions are right for these people to be disqualified and forced to play the role of scapegoat, responsible for the ills society cannot resolve. Long-standing prejudices distinguishing the “deserving poor”, who have to be helped, from the “undeserving poor”, who have to be punished, and encouraging the belief that all societies have a scrapheap help to legitimize the violence meted out to the groups of people disqualified in this way.

159. Joseph Wresinski, foreword to the 1984 ATD Quart Monde report, Revue Quart Monde 2003/2 no. 186, p. 31.

160. Christopher Winship, preface to *The Poor are the Church*, Twenty-third Publications, 2002, p. xii and xiii. “Wresinski’s argument ... suggests that as long as we see the poor as people ‘out there’ - either as a result of some form of deficiency or as the result of structural oppression by others - we can never truly deal with those in extreme poverty. He calls us to understand poverty not just as destitution or oppression but as social isolation. This isolation is created by us all to the degree that we live apart from the poor and fail to understand that their fate is ours.”

161. This quote and the one that follows are extracted from Daniel Fayard’s article, *Quand le plus pauvre donne l’intelligence du combat* (*When the Poorest Bring Intelligence to the Fight*), revue Quart Monde no. 168, December 1998, p. 23.

On the other hand, an inner recognition of the suffering, fragility and hopes of the people who endure extreme poverty often underpins an alliance with those people, a commitment to take action on their behalf.

In order to eradicate extreme poverty, Wresinski suggests seeing people living in poverty not only as our equals, but also as a benchmark for our own progress. “*The message we bear is universal. What really counts is man. The more he is abandoned, scorned, crushed, the more value he has. This message (...) is inscribed in the history of humanity by all the men and women who have illustrated it down through the centuries, by all the peoples who have waited and still wait for the primacy of man in the world to be fulfilled.*”¹⁶⁴ This proposition and its understanding of relations between humans constitutes a real Copernican revolution that overturns the usual vision of such relations.¹⁶⁵ Wresinski thus tells us that the poorest themselves, if we accept them as partners and guides, hold the keys to our personal liberation and progress of our societies. It posits a radical change of perception, transforming the basis of our relationship with the poorest from charity to mutual exchange.

> Proposal: Centre all political programmes on the social recognition of each human being, especially in the cultural, social and economic fields



162. Joseph Wresinski, *Revue Igloo* no. 87-88, winter 1975, spring 1976, p. 23.

Meeting and acknowledging the people who are most disfigured by extreme poverty as our equals, in dignity and in law, requires a difficult and ongoing process of soul-searching, made easier if supported by a collective process. This is vital work in ensuring that the rejected receive the recognition they urgently need, because it will give them the strength to forge ahead. Wresinski confirms the urgent need to meet their deep-seated aspirations: “*The thing that the most disadvantaged constantly seek is consideration. Anyone who has always received it cannot imagine what it is like to be without it. More important than bread, the way in which others react to you, treat you, respect you is what really counts.*”¹⁶² Fabrice Matsima, who has first-hand experience of exclusion in France, illustrates this point with his beautiful and evocative words: “*There are looks which make us wither, which kill us. The look that categorizes us, gives us a label, and it’s hard to peel off. But a positive look keeps us alive, as though we were drinking water from a stream. It irrigates our brain and our whole body. It gives us the strength to forge ahead.*”¹⁶³ Getting close to the poorest in order to recognize them as your equal entails making a commitment and difficult personal choices.

163. *Revue Quart Monde*, 2003/2, no. 186, p. 7.

164. Joseph Wresinski, *Dossiers de Pierrelaye*, September – October 1985.

165. Eugène Notermans, *Une révolution copernicienne (A Copernican Revolution)*, *revue Quart Monde* 2007/4, no. 204, p. 34 to 36.

Box 9: Stories of personal transformations in the face of extreme poverty

Social justice cannot persist without the voluntary or enforced cooperation of populations. It is therefore vital to convince the greatest possible number of people to refuse to cooperate with a social order that perpetuates extreme poverty, convince citizens to replace cooperation or resignation by resistance. How can such a radical change be effected, how can it be promoted then consolidated? The book *Artisans of Democracy*¹⁶⁶ is entirely given over to these questions. Its approach consists of analyzing twelve stories of partnerships between people with very diverse responsibilities and impoverished people in order to learn from them and examine the “stages in their journey”. The inner recognition of the suffering and fragility of the people who endure extreme poverty often underpins an alliance with those people, a commitment to take action on their behalf. New prospects open up when we come face to face with extreme poverty and discover that, beyond the extreme conditions that disfigure them, the human beings enduring it retain unwavering dignity and are worthy of respect and friendship. This discovery enables us to dare to look at the most fragile parts of ourselves and accept our helplessness without fear of being destroyed. Reclaiming these hidden parts, usually kept hidden, seems to be what allows individuals and institutions to get back in touch with their humanity, to liberate the stifled aspirations that lay dormant within: to become more civilized, help make the world a more human and less violent place. “By creating ties with the most destitute families in order to liberate them, they can become the sort of person they always wanted but never managed to be. Herein lies the mutual exchange that creates the depth and enduring nature of bonds between excluded and included.”

435 Giving the indivisibility of human rights priority over economic growth

The challenges posed by the modern world now make it impossible to envisage the fight against poverty and extreme poverty without redefining wealth; in other words, to what do we attach value? The implicit goal underpinning the western development model is unlimited material abundance for everyone. The premise is that by developing and stimulating non-essentials, everyone obtains access to the essentials. In this approach, the difference between essential and non-essential disappears. We are slowly realizing that this premise leads to a dead end.

Widespread adoption of the western lifestyle all across the world raises very significant ecological problems. In a world with limited natural resources under se-

rious threat, we need to move towards “sustainable development” as termed by the Brundtland Report.¹⁶⁷ This move entails radical major change in the production and consumption patterns promulgated by the West. This transformation could be achieved with a simultaneous movement of technical changes, regeneration of values abandoned by the West and greater dialogue between cultures.

Jean-Baptiste de Foucauld observes that “*Abundance cannot be material, human and spiritual all at the same time. There are always conflicts between the three dimensions*”¹⁶⁸ and proposes the concept of “*frugal abundance rooted in solidarity*.”¹⁶⁹

Mahatma Ghandi told us to “*Live simply so others can simply live*.” Majid Rahnema suggests that the revolution of efficiency be followed by a revolution of sufficiency, and reminds us that “*just like the family, simplicity is constantly considered to be in decline, but it never goes away*.”¹⁷⁰ He points out that the quest for simplicity is strongly embedded in vernacular societies, but also has solid roots in the West, from the Greeks to the Americans. Amartya Sen worked extensively on the idea that development should aim to increase not material riches, but rather an individual’s freedom—a wholly different thing. Sociologist Edgar Morin feels that greater dialogue between cultures would greatly help the move towards a form of globalization that benefits the human race: a globalization based on understanding. “*Cultures have to learn from each other and arrogant western culture, which has positioned itself as a teaching culture, must also become a learning culture... The West must incorporate the virtues of other cultures in order to correct the activism, pragmatism, quantitativism and rampant consumptionism it has unloosed both internally and externally. But it must also protect, regenerate and propagate the best of its culture, which has produced democracy, human rights and protection of the citizen’s private sphere*.”¹⁷¹

Today’s globalization is marked by an enduring conflict between the principles of economic liberalism and the notion of human rights, with the former usually gaining the upper hand. Jeffrey Sachs and the economists who have discussed and expanded his ideas underline the vast opportunities offered by the market economy, but also the need to correct its flaws by means of a huge aid programme for developing countries based on completely revised mechanisms. They also highlight the need to improve the economic legal framework for ethical and political reasons. Joseph Wresinski observes that human rights point to the path to be taken to humanize globalization, and advocates taking the victims of extreme poverty as a benchmark demonstrating the efficacy of universal rights. As legal expert Mireille Delmas-Marty suggests, real progress could be made using human rights “to strike a balance between conflicting values by

166. Jona Rosenfeld and Bruno Tardieu, *Artisans of Democracy*, Editions de l’Atelier and Editions Quart Monde, 2000, 248 pages.

167. The Brundtland Report: published in 1987 by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) with the title *Our Common Future*, the report defines sustainable development and the policies needed to achieve it.

168. Jean-Baptiste de Foucauld, *Quel nouveau regard sur l’exclusion? (A New Look at Exclusion?)*, Revue Quart Monde, August 2007, p. 30.

169. Jean-Baptiste de Foucauld, *Les trois cultures du développement humain: résistance, régulation, utopie (The Three Cultures of Human Development: Resistance, Regulation and Utopia)* Odile Jacob, 2002.

170. Majid Rahnema, *The Post Development Reader*, op. cit. p. XVII.

171. Edgar Morin, *Les sept savoirs nécessaires à l’éducation du futur (Seven Complex Lessons in Education for the Future)*, Seuil, 2001, p. 114 and 116.

172. Mireille Delmas-Marty, *Universalisme des Droits de l'homme et globalisation économique* (*Universalism of Human Rights and Economic Globalization*), article quoted, p. 131.

173. Paul Bouchet, honorary president of ATD Fourth World France, at the First World Forum on Human Rights, Nantes (France), 19 May 2004.

174. Amartya Sen, *Environment and Poverty: One World or Two*, address given at the International Conference on Energy, Environment and Development, organized by Veolia Environment Institute and The Energy and Resource Institute, 16 December 2006 in Bangalore, India.

upholding the indivisibility of all fundamental rights, and to rebalance powers, ensuring that they can be enforced against businesses as well as states¹⁷² and, evidently, against Bretton Woods institutions. This opens up a vast arena for civic action to all human rights champions who are determined to assert that applying human rights has more value than reducing the world to a commodity.

> Proposal: “Ethical primacy requires that the international legal order be subordinate to the supreme right, which is the respect of equal dignity for all human beings”¹⁷³

Structural changes are key to this idea. The impact of the crisis on developing countries and the poor of every country in the world must be taken into account. The economy must thus incorporate the goals of decent work, corporate social responsibility, the fight against extreme poverty and an environmentally-friendly economy. An important step would be to put a stop to the world’s legal disorder and give powerful organizations like the World Bank, IMF and WTO a real role within the United Nations system and make them subject to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Questions relating to fiscality, redistribution systems and access to basic services must be tackled. For example, the ILO should use its agreements and norms to counterbalance the prestige, power and funding enjoyed by the IMF and WTO.

We cannot tackle all these questions in this Paper on extreme poverty, but they are examined in other Proposal Papers in the Forum for a new World Governance series.

436 Defining a development model combining economic development, environmental improvement and social cohesion

As part of this quest for an alternative development model focused on different forms of wealth, it is essential to accurately define the goals of economic development, environmental improvement and social cohesion. Here we come to the very meaning of the notion of sustainable development. Amartya Sen stresses that one of the central problems is “*the need for an integrated approach (...) Eliminating poverty and consolidating and improving the environment could be considered as part of an integrated task.*”¹⁷⁴ In concrete terms, this means that environmental protection programmes could be used to procure decent work and training for the most disadvantaged populations while maintaining respect for local cultures. These approaches are currently usually separate or even conflicting, as Pan Yue, Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the People’s

Republic of China recently pointed out: “*The quest for material gain seems to have become the sole objective of society, and the result has been the decline in our moral standards. Our traditional culture, which emphasizes harmony between humankind and nature, has been seen as a straitjacket curbing economic growth.*”¹⁷⁵

Inventing a sustainable development model entails calling on the best of age-old values that many different peoples have lived by, and that have been stifled by the western development model. The personal accounts have demonstrated the importance of human values in Africa and Asia, and of the values based on mutual aid espoused in Latin America. These values are part of the heritage of humankind, and we need to draw on them to reinvent wealth in today’s world. Instead of pushing for clear-cut conformity with the dominant model, development programmes promoted by international institutions and governments could also encourage the affirmation and promotion of cultures on the one hand, and the merging of knowledge and cultures on the other. The World Bank recently published a set of sixty accounts describing how African communities strengthen their capacity to lead their own development in the context of globalization. These accounts show that the communities are keen to combine their own knowledge with modern knowledge and technologies to obtain improved results. In his introduction to the progress report, the President of the Republic of Tanzania recommends that development experts, researchers and politicians “*humbly learn from these case studies... They do not seek to paint a romantic picture of native knowledge and traditions or to suggest that global knowledge is not pertinent. They demonstrate that merging native knowledge with global knowledge in a democratic and self-determined manner is the best possible combination for promoting sustainable development.*”¹⁷⁶

> Proposal: Redefine a new governance programme with goals linked to economic development, environmental improvement and social cohesion

This programme cannot be defined without the participation of those whose voices are not heard and the NGOs they have chosen to use to express themselves freely. The idea is to introduce into public representation bodies a new partner consisting of those whose voice has been taken away by extreme poverty, considering them as the real touchstone for the proposed reform system.

175. Le Monde newspaper, 23-24 July 2006.

176. The World Bank, *Indigenous Knowledge, Local Pathways to Global Development*, 2004, p. 3.





CONCLUSION

Placing the Eradication of Extreme Poverty at the Heart of World Governance

The eradication of extreme poverty is a highly demanding objective. It calls for global action that traverses the economic, social, cultural, scientific, political, ethical and spiritual spheres and involves every component of society.

But effective world governance cannot exist without an alliance among all people, especially the very poorest, for a plural, united and responsible world.

Exclusion has of course been a feature of every civilisation, but it is something that our age is capable of consigning to history. Extreme poverty can be vanquished by allying with those for whom it is a reality of life. People living in situations of extreme poverty

have succeeded in extricating themselves thanks to meeting with people who have decided to make the eradication of poverty one of their priorities in life. Although necessary, this alliance is not itself sufficient to conquer extreme want; many other changes must also come about. But if destitution is a combination of extreme poverty and social exclusion, everyone, no matter how powerless, can play a part in fighting it simply by affording recognition to those whom it afflicts. Every act by which a person trapped in destitution is recognized as equal to others in terms of dignity and rights is an act that combats destitution by overcoming social exclusion.

There are those who wish to impose technocratic programmes that are destined to fail, those who believe themselves powerless and that destitution is inevitable; a counterbalance to such attitudes is the humble endeavour of those determined to build a more just society step-by-step, allying themselves with the least fortunate and struggling to bring about the change that is needed, one person at a time. Are not societies judged by the manner in which they treat their least-favoured members? In the words of the philosopher Miguel Benasayag, we must no longer act “*for the promise of better things, for a radiant future (...) but because every just act is an act of uncompromising justice.*”¹⁷⁷

Since the eradication of extreme poverty is possible, it is an ethical, civic and political duty, a “solemn duty” in the words of Joseph Wresinski; the duty to allow all humans beings to live in dignity and with their basic rights respected, exercising their responsibilities as they contribute to the well being of their family, community and humanity. It embodies the values of freedom, justice and fraternity around which our lives must be organized, values that remain out of reach but that are the unique source of all our possible futures, values that humanity must never renounce. The eradication of extreme poverty is a regulating and transformative idea that humanity cannot do without, for it obliges every citizen to become more human, more aligned with her/his personal ideals. Its radicality reflects the violation of human rights that produces extreme poverty and the expectations of those who endure it

On 17 October 2005, a 15-strong delegation led by ATD Fourth World met with the UN Secretary-General in New York. Tita Vilarosa, who had been living with her family in a cemetery in Philippines capital Manila for the past fifteen years, declared: “*Mister Secretary-General, make us your partners as you move forward on the agenda of peace, development and human rights for all. Let us pool our knowledge, yours and ours. Let us act now, no longer separately, but together.*”

177. Florence Aubenas and Miguel Benasayag, *Résister, c'est créer (Resisting Means Creating)*, Paris, La Découverte, 2002, p. 49.

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It therefore appears that, down through the ages and throughout the world, the fear of disorder, violence, epidemics and criminality have focused on those furthest from established norms. These people have been disqualified, demonized and degraded to the point of being designated as having no value to the world. The radical inferiority conferred on them meant that victims were no longer considered fully-fledged human beings, but as subhuman, the scum of the earth with no rights. This is how slavery and apartheid were justified.

A lack of basic security is the absence of one or more factors that enable individuals and families to assume basic responsibilities and to enjoy fundamental rights. Such a situation may become more extended and lead to more serious and permanent consequences. Chronic poverty results when the lack of basic security 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.

The persistence of extreme poverty in the 21st century is an affront to human intelligence and to the fundamental values of humanity. The basis for a social compact for a peaceful planet can only be established via the eradication of extreme poverty. All deliberation surrounding the establishment of a genuine world governance system must therefore begin by examining how to reintegrate all human beings, without exception, into the social dialogue, the very foundation of living together. Reducing relative poverty and destroying extreme poverty are twin imperatives that call on expertise from all of us, starting with the very poorest.

“The message we bear is universal. What really counts is man. The more he is abandoned, scorned, crushed, the more value he has. This message (...) is inscribed in the history of humanity by all the men and women who have illustrated it down through the centuries, by all the peoples who have waited and still wait for the primacy of man in the world to be fulfilled.” Joseph Wresinski, ATD Fourth World founder.



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This Proposal Paper is published with the support of the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation.