

# Latin America and the Caribbean



**ATD Fourth World** is present in this region through teams of full-time volunteers working in **Bolivia, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, and Peru** and affiliated groups working in **Brazil, El Salvador and Honduras.**

Our presence in the area is aimed at building **innovative partnerships** that will help strengthen the fight against extreme poverty.

Activities that promote **access to knowledge, culture, and education** are being carried out in areas surrounding landfills or along railways in Guatemala, in the heart of shantytowns in Honduras, or in remote villages of Bolivia. The goal of these activities is not to replace the role of school but rather to show

extremely poor children and parents that any child can learn and to create dialogue between schools and parents.

In Haiti, the “Babies Welcome” project for **promoting children’s health** is being used as a springboard for urban development in the poorest areas.

*Fourth World Committees* in Haiti, meetings with Tapori children in Bolivia, the *Uyarinakusunchis* People’s Universities in Peru, or the festivities of the World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty on *October 17* have given people living in poverty an arena for **discussion and expression.** These initiatives reinforce the idea that everyone has experience and knowledge to share.

These activities prepare us for participating in events and for **meeting with citizens, teachers, professionals, and representatives of national and international institutions** with whom we are building a critical dialogue about defending human rights and ensuring peace.

In Bolivia, Haiti, Mexico and Peru, numerous **young people have expressed their willingness** to work towards a better world. This attests to their desire to make positive contributions to society. Fifteen young people have joined our teams since 2006 and are being offered the possibility of becoming full-time members of our volunteer corps.

## In Guatemala: offering quality education to the poorest children

Since the 1970s, ATD Fourth World in Guatemala has been researching ways to support the poorest people. One of the goals is to build relationships that will help break the vicious cycles of isolation, shame, and indifference. Access to knowledge, education, and culture – as a fundamental right – paves the way for building relationships. This is at the heart of our work.

One mother stressed the importance of this, stating: “*We have nothing. Education is the only inheritance we can leave our children.*” A father explained that: “*Sometimes we have to choose between paying for photocopies for school or buying a day’s worth of food.*”

This struggle led to creating the project on facilitating access to education currently underway in

Guatemala City and Escuintla. The project includes tutoring and follow-up for students, help adjusting to school entry and staying in school, promoting dialogue between teachers and school directors, granting scholarships, and organizing Street Libraries and Knowledge Festivals.

In 2007, the Ministry of Education called on organizations, institutions, and

people to contribute to discussions about the quality of education and which policy decisions to make. We contributed three main ideas to the discussions: the need for free education, the need to train teachers so they have a better understanding of students' living conditions, and the need to set

up programs that encourage parents to take an active role in their children's education.

Thanks to our contribution and work by the cooperative "Quality Education for All" (of which ATD Fourth World is a member), legislation was passed in 2008 ensuring free public schooling

starting in the 2009 school year. It also did away with the requirement to wear school uniforms.

This legislative measure – in compliance with Article 74 of the Guatemalan Constitution stating that public education is free – has given great hope to over three million children, their families, and the entire Guatemalan society.



## Regional colloquium in Haiti, "Extreme Poverty as a Challenges to Democracy: the current thinking on the writings of Joseph Wresinski."

The colloquium "Extreme Poverty as a Challenges to Democracy: the current thinking on the writings of Joseph Wresinski," was held on February 27, 28, and 29 in Port-au-Prince. It was organized by the *Fondation Connaissance et Liberté* (FoKal) and ATD Fourth World with support from the European Commission and the Institut Français de Haiti.

The colloquium brought together academics, people living in poverty and representatives of associations and international

organizations to discuss the following topics: the relationship between human rights and extreme poverty; extreme poverty and violence; and science and knowledge through the prism of extreme poverty.

In the opening session, Michèle Pierre, then Director of FoKal and former Prime Minister of Haiti, cited the year 1804 when slaves cast down their chains and created the first black republic: "How can one still think that by maintaining the status quo we are going to create prosperity for

*Haitian citizens? ... 200 years ago, we dared to imagine freedom. Today, will we dare to imagine equality?*

The colloquium:

- addressed the **conceptual differences between poverty and extreme poverty** by examining realities that deny people access to their rights and prevent them from assuming responsibilities.
- stressed the importance of exchanges and meetings **between the poorest people**

**and other members of society** which spark new ways of interacting, vital in order to create a society without exclusion and violence.

- discussed the conditions necessary for ensuring that the poorest people have the **right to free expression without manipulation**.

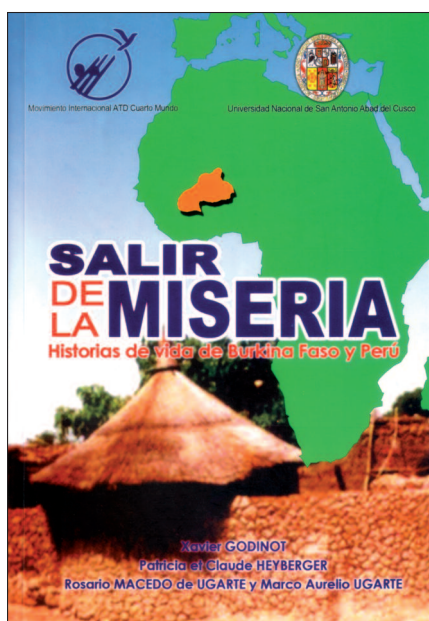
- explored possibilities for building partnerships between people living in poverty (seen as holders of certain knowledge) and the academic world.

*Performance by AWOZAM, a group comprised of rural citizens that survived the massacre of Jean Rabel. The performance was given at the close of colloquium in Haiti.*



## ATD Fourth World is now present in Mexico

In October 2007, ATD Fourth World began working in Mexico with the arrival of Rosario Macedo (Mexican) and Marco Aurelio Ugarte (Peruvian). Their presence has a dual goal in this country: to learn from families suffering from poverty and the history of Mexican efforts to combat extreme poverty; and to adapt and diffuse the work of Joseph Wresinski, founder of ATD Fourth World, especially within the academic world.



San Antonio Abad de Cusco University and the Peruvian ATD Fourth World Association have published the Spanish translation of the book “*Sortir de la misère: Histoires de vie au Burkina Faso et au Pérou*” (Overcoming Poverty: Stories about Life in Burkina Faso and Peru), 2008.

## Discussions in Peru about the Draft Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights

In 2007, the United Nations Human Rights Council opened discussions about the Guiding Principles on “**Extreme Poverty and Human Rights: The Rights of the Poor.**”

In Cusco, ATD Fourth World Peru held discussions in June 2007 in collaboration with *In Defense of the People*. These talks are the result of the trust we have earned from people living in poverty during fifteen years of work in Cusco and the Cuyo Grande rural community.

The meeting was attended by José Bengoa, the then coordinator of the United Nations’ group of experts on extreme poverty and human rights, and forty people living in poverty and extreme

poverty from the various communities and associations in Cusco. Also present were Ana Peña, social affairs advisor to the Ministry of External Relations, Silvio Campana, representative of *In Defense of the People*, both members of ATD Fourth World.

Participants worked on questions of human rights by examining concrete instances of humiliation or exclusion and comparing them to situations where respect is shown. The rich discussions and exchanges, as well as the methodology used for the discussions have been published by ATD Fourth World Peru in the book *Discussions regarding the Guiding Principles on “Human Rights and Extreme Poverty: The Rights of the Poor.”*

*“People who have a little money receive better services than the poor do. Sometimes we get sick and need blood transfusions (...) and they don’t give it to us. I ask you to please respect equal rights to healthcare, because the health of poor people also matters. In healthcare centres, we want equal treatment. We need doctors who listen to us and understand us.”* Agripino Huamani, discussion on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty.

## ATD Fourth World in Bolivia assumes the Spanish-language Tapori Secretariat

Tapori is a movement based on friendship bringing together children of all social backgrounds from around the world. It is committed to ensuring that all children have the same opportunities.

In August 2008, our team in Bolivia began coordinating the Spanish-language Tapori Secretariat. The secretariat is in charge of writing the *Tapori Letter*, communicating with children, supporting working with children in different settings on the ground, building ties with international organizations focused on childhood, and searching for funding.

*“Tapori helps children say important things. It is a bridge between all children, boys and girls.”*

If you would like to know more about us or to offer financial support to our activities in this region, don’t hesitate to contact the regional team.



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