

PRESS RELEASE: AN INTERNATIONAL STUDY TO BETTER UNDERSTAND POVERTY



**ATD
FOURTH WORLD**

Press Release

An international study, designed and led by ATD Fourth World and Oxford University, aims to better understand poverty and to identify its dimensions. The [three-year project](#) brought together an international team of co-researchers comprising people living in poverty, practitioners and academics who used innovative participatory methods. Study findings presented on 10 May, 2019 at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) [can be found in the report](#).

[View the program \(pdf\)](#)

In order to overcome poverty we need first to understand it

Although widely accepted that poverty is multi-dimensional, we still tend to measure it financially. For example the World Bank sets the international poverty line at \$1.90 per person per day. However, the way we understand and measure poverty has never been

more important given the international commitment to the new [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). The first of which aims to eradicate poverty everywhere and in all its forms.

To address this challenge, ATD Fourth World and Oxford University with the support of numerous partners, conducted international participatory research on the hidden dimensions of poverty. The research was in six countries—three in the northern hemisphere and three in the southern hemisphere. Over three years, research teams comprising university researchers, professionals and people living in poverty in the United Kingdom, France, the United States, Bangladesh, Tanzania and Bolivia worked together to determine the dimensions of poverty. The “hidden dimensions of poverty” highlighted by this study are more informed by the experience and knowledge of those suffering directly from poverty. The research advances the global thinking about the true nature of poverty. With the long-term goal of contributing to more effective action on the ground. Plus better national and international poverty reduction policies informed by better measurement.

Defining poverty: 9 dimensions, 5 modifying factors

The co-researchers identified nine dimensions of poverty that are common to all six countries. In addition to the well-recognized deprivations faced by people living in poverty (lack of decent work; insufficient and insecure income; material and social deprivation), the research points to dimensions previously unrecognized or made invisible. These include both core dimensions (suffering in body, mind and heart; struggle and resistance; disempowerment) and relational dimensions: institutional maltreatment, social maltreatment and unrecognised contributions.

The study also points to five modifying factors that can help alleviate or aggravate the experience of poverty. They are, identity (gender, ethnicity, etc.), timing and duration, location, environment and environmental policy and cultural beliefs.

The research also highlights the interaction between dimensions. Thus illustrating that “everything is linked, nothing is fixed”. “Poverty means being part of a system that leaves you indefinitely in a state of fear and uncertainty. Poverty kills dreams and cages the dreamers”, explains one participant in the study.

An innovative methodology: the involvement of those living in poverty as co-researchers

A total of 1,091 people participated in the study. This included people living in poverty, professionals and academics. By implementing the [Merging Knowledge© methodology](#) developed by ATD Fourth World over twenty years, this participatory research enabled people in precarious situations to participate as co-researchers on a par with academics

and other professionals. People the focus of poverty reduction programs developed by others. Have now become experts and sources of essential knowledge to effectively fight poverty.

[More at the OECD website.](#)

[← Previous](#)

[Next →](#)
