

## Reaction to the Outcome Document of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals

### INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT ATD FOURTH WORLD

After a year and a half of vast consultation and intensive negotiation, the United Nations' Open Working Group on Sustainable Development has adopted a set of 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) that capture the world's sustainable development priorities for the next 15 years.

Informed by the findings of a recent [participatory research project](#) on sustainable development, which reached over 2,000 people worldwide, the majority living in poverty, the International Movement ATD Fourth World has been an active stakeholder in the processes. While ATD Fourth World welcomes the final set of sustainable development goals (SDGs), it finds that the goals could better emphasize reaching the poorest and most marginalized people.

#### Poverty

The highest priority for the International Movement ATD Fourth World was to help craft an enhanced set of targets under Goal 1, *End poverty in all its forms everywhere*. While the goal title is ambitious, target 1.—*By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty according to national definitions*— falls short. With no clear reference to prioritising those living in the greatest poverty, it could lead governments to target only those easiest to reach. This would contradict the principle of *leave no one behind*, which can now be found in the document's chapeau.

Findings from the international research project indicate that it is critical to move towards multidimensional and more participatory measures of poverty. Unfortunately, the income-based measure for extreme poverty (\$1.25 per day) has been further entrenched under **target 1.1**. Yet, language like *in all its forms* (in the goal title) and *in all its dimensions* (**target 1.2**) points towards measures that go beyond income.

The inclusion of social protection, and particularly, social protection floors under this goal (and also under goals 5 and 10) is an important improvement.

Although decent work, a strong aspiration for people living in poverty, can be found under goal 8 on economic growth, it is unfortunate that is missing from this goal and does not have a stand-alone goal.

#### Leave No One Behind

The International Movement ATD Fourth World was very happy to see “leave no one behind” reflected in yet another critical document on the post-2015 agenda. Its spirit is further reflected in two important mentions to data disaggregation, which is integral to reducing the disparity in outcomes between the most marginalized and those who are closer to international poverty lines. Related to the topic of data, **target 17.19** pushes governments to move towards new measures of progress that go beyond GDP. These initiatives could open the door for the use of innovative indicators that could better grasp the experience of poverty. The Open Working Group could have gone further in the area of monitoring progress by agreeing that targets should be considered met only if they are met for the lowest quintile of any population, as was proposed by some delegations during the negotiations.

Further, the Open Working Group's document **refers to the most vulnerable in nine targets**, demonstrating the group's recognition that the most marginalized were overlooked during the Millennium Development Goals.

It is also important to note that language like *for all* and *universal* should be interpreted as attempts to ensure that a particular target reaches even the most excluded populations.

## Human Rights and Participation

The International Movement ATD Fourth World has historically championed a people-centered view of development and it is pleased with the reference to the centrality of people in the document's chapeau. The text's chapeau further refers to **rights instruments and internationally agreed human rights**. International human rights instruments, like the Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, written with the participation of people living in extreme poverty, provide solid guidance for countries seeking inclusive development. Some other critical victories in this area include **labor rights (including for workers in precarious employment)** and human rights education.

That being said, there was a lacking political will to mainstream human rights throughout the document and strengthen public services. Almost all uses of the term 'access to' could be effectively replaced with 'right to'. This language would significantly enhance the power of people to *claim their rights*, and its absence is perhaps the most significant shortcoming of the Open Working Group's document.

In the participatory research people living in poverty make a direct link between participation, dignity, and more effective poverty eradication programs. Although the conception of the SDGs has been a participatory policy-making process, the text could have gone further on language for participation. **There are references to cultivating the participation of local communities in water management, participatory city planning, and participatory decision-making at all levels in goals 6, 11, and 16, respectively.** Yet, there is no emphasis on the direct participation of people living in poverty in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policies and programs that will implement the SDGs. Instilling ownership of the agenda in people living in poverty will require a strong commitment to building a participatory approach to governance where local communities and marginalized and excluded people can be involved in setting priorities and designing, monitoring and implementing policies.

## Equality, Non-discrimination and Inclusion

Highly related to "leave no one behind", is the primacy of achieving equality and inclusion as a way of combating poverty. The International Movement ATD Fourth World was a key defender of **Goal 10 on Reducing Inequalities**. Within it, the international community took significant political strides to address economic inequality, social inclusion, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices, and fiscal, wage, and social protection.

Elsewhere in the report there are important allusions to inclusion through terms like inclusive institutions, birth registration, universal health coverage, empowerment and participation.

ATD Fourth World regrets that the **free birth registration** was included in the final document.

## Education

Education is one of the most important tools for combating poverty and, in recognition of that fact, people living in poverty have long desired to become active participants in the education of their communities. Through the text, governments establish their desire to ensure *inclusive quality* education, which goes far beyond increasing access. Further there is a commitment to ensuring *access to pre-primary education and care for all*, which research partners emphasized in international participatory research. ATD Fourth World regrets that the group did not agree to include the right to education, a right that the international community just ratified at the 2014 Global Education for All meeting in Oman.

Some shortcomings in the area of education include a failure to address indirect cost to education, which people living in poverty highlight as one of the most significant barriers to quality education. Parents living in poverty also highlighted the need to build cooperative forms of education in partnership with communities recognizing that parents, regardless of their economic or social status, are partners in children's educational success.

## Civil Society Participation

The Open Working Group made civil society engagement a real priority in their work. Taking advantage of new technologies, the UN system was able to hold constant consultation and through certain initiatives

was able to reach a significant number of people living in poverty. These participatory initiatives should be further developed so that, eventually, the most marginalized will be permanently engaged in policy-making processes at all levels. This possibility is reflected in the emphasis on Civil Society engagement in the Open Working Group's 'chapeau' and under **Goal 17 on Means of Implementation**.

## Conclusion

Thanks to this spirit of openness, the International Movement ATD Fourth World was able to share with the Open Working Group many of the findings from its aforementioned participatory research project, synthesised in the report entitled [Challenge 2015: Towards Sustainable Development that Leaves No One Behind](#). The self-identified priorities of people living in extreme poverty, detailed in the report, formed the basis for all of the organization's [policy priorities and proposals](#). The positive attitude of Member States and the Co-Chairs in engaging with civil society allowed ATD Fourth World to introduce some of these priorities into the work of the Open Working Group.

The sustainable development goals are a historic agreement and are much more ambitious and comprehensive than the preceding Millennium Development Goals. The International Movement ATD Fourth World congratulates Ambassadors Macharia Kamau and Csaba Kőrösi in their expert co-chairing of this group and looks forward to the opportunity to further engage in the design and implementation of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.