



FOURTH WORLD



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EDITORIAL

For 3 years, the International Movement ATD Fourth World has carried out a participatory action research project examining the links between poverty, violence and peace. More than 1000 people from 25 different countries around the world participated in this work. The majority are people living in conditions of extreme poverty; others are people acting in solidarity with them.

We often judge people living in chronic poverty as those who commit violent acts, against which society must protect itself, forgetting that they are the victims of ongoing daily violence. They live in extreme poverty and suffer repeated violations of their rights, being made to feel guilty for not succeeding when projects which are intended for them do not fit their situation. They are rarely associated in these projects.

The violence which people living in extreme poverty have experienced and spoken about was at the centre of this research. These people with direct experience of chronic poverty were genuine contributors to the work: they shared their experience and knowledge which was blended with that of other participants from other backgrounds (academics, researchers, professionals, etc.). This allowed for a more global reflection on the relation between the violence caused by poverty and the contribution to peace.

The international Colloquium aimed to disseminate the findings of the 3 year research.



Families living in Manila, Philippines. They are regularly evicted from their homes under the bridge.

ENOUGH! THOSE WHO SPEAK OF POVERTY ARE ALWAYS THE SAME

More than 300 people have been involved in this three year international research, based on participatory action. Most of the participants have a experience of living extreme poverty. Donna Haig Friedmann, researcher at the Centre for Social Policy of the University of Massachusetts, called ATD Fourth World's fresh approach « counter-cultural » to academia's usual approaches.

Participants spoke up on this first day with examples of the trivialisation of extreme poverty. Cases where human rights are denied, where people living in extreme poverty are excluded from active participation.

Ricarl Pierrelouis, from Mauritius, spoke of an entire village being evicted in order for the authorities to build a dam. The villagers were not consulted, and they now live further from work opportunities, with even more difficult conditions of access to schooling.

In the UK, parents writing letters to their children in care are not allowed to express their emotions – if they do, local authorities may not allow anymore letters.

In Lebanon, migrant domestic workers are not covered by national law. They do not report any violence they may be a victim of, as they know

nothing will come of it. Instead, they suffer, and often return to their country.

Speaking of the non-recognition of people living in extreme poverty, Moraene Roberts underscored how the emotions and words of people living in poverty are misinterpreted: « to complain is seen as non-cooperation; to protest as aggression, to explain as making excuses ».

Indeed, the importance of understanding one another, and the language that each and everyone uses, was a major issue in the discussions, both in plenary sessions and in the smaller groups. Diana Skelton, from the International Leadership Team of ATD Fourth World, highlighted the importance of this issue at the beginning of the day.

In this choice of language, in choosing not to label people, society has a role to play. Academics, policy-makers and institutions could and should undertake changes in this area. The afternoon plenary session further underscored how fundamental this is. As one participant said, « It is not so much the solutions reached in our dialogue that are important, as being able to reach these solutions all together ».

QUOTES

«What I have discovered in this Colloquium is that strategies to fight against poverty must be constructed with people living in poverty»

Béatrice Epaye, President Fondation Voix du Coeur, Republic of Central Africa





Families who live alongside the railway in Antananarivo, Madagascar.

PEACE AND MUTUAL RECOGNITION

« When the violence that is experienced by people living in extreme poverty is recognised, that brings a sort of peace to the soul ». It is through this recognition, as spoken of by Ronald Schexnayder, that pathways for peace can be built. Ronald is a member of ATD Fourth World Movement Task Force, in New Orleans, USA.

After yesterday's discussions and testimonies on the violence of extreme poverty, exchanges today centred on the type of peace participants wish to build in society. The ways in which to build this peace were also examined.

Participants discovered that peace was defined in different ways according to the context of those living it, or denied it. In Rwanda a youth group from Umuseke Association stated that peace was having enough to eat, proper health care, and access to education. Peace was also defined as a feeling that needs to be internal before being able to reproduce it by building with others. Christophe Géroutet, an ATD Fourth World volunteer in Bolivia, reminded us that extreme poverty destroys human beings. Indeed, it can lead to self destruction, when one is ignored as a human being, due to repeated acts of humiliation, a lack of recognition, and a lack of self-esteem. It demands enormous resources of strength and courage to lift oneself, and others, out of violence and up towards peace building. As Deirdre Mauss, also a member of ATD New Orleans Task Force, said, « Peace doesn't always happen in a big bang », and there are many pathways to peace. Showing kindness to someone who shows little, for example, but also working together to educate for peace. Hoang Thi Cong Ngoc Nguyen works at the Catalyst Foundation, in Vietnam. She underscored the importance of working in partnership with people in extreme poverty, through projects that allow all participants to learn from one another. In ATD Fourth World's Live-In Family Development project in Noisy le Grand, France, cultural and artistic projects have been set up. Through active participation in the projects, children and adults discover unimagined capabilities of which to be proud. Through sharing and recognition of the equal value of all as human beings, peace is built in the community.

People living in extreme poverty, academics and development workers shared and blended their life experiences and knowledge, one day two of the Colloquium, as they did on day one. Coming together to share these experiences, with the aim of sharing them further, outside of the circle of participants, is most definitely a large step towards building peace together.

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Understanding the violence faced by people in chronic poverty and the pathways towards peace

« The violence of contempt and indifference causes chronic poverty, since it inevitably leads to exclusion, to the rejection of one human being by other human beings ». This statement, by Fr. Joseph Wresinski, founder of ATD Fourth World, needs to be heard and understood by more than the participants to this international Colloquium at UNESCO House, by the whole of society in order to truly build the pathways to peace.

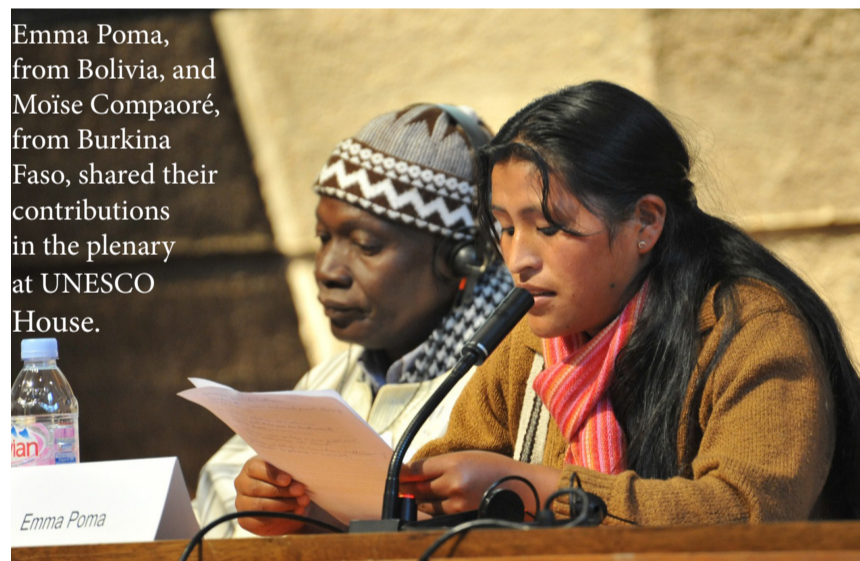
The public event held on 26th January 2012 at UNESCO House, Paris, France, brought together participants from the past two days and over 250 outside guests. Present amongst the guests were Magdalena Sepulveda, UN Special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier de Schutter, UN Special rapporteur on the right to food, and Federico Mayor Zaragoza, ex director-general of UNESCO and founder of the Fundacion por la Paz, in Spain.

The day was devoted to outputs from the three year participatory research project, and from the two days spent at ATD Fourth World's international centre. « This has been a lesson in humility », said Cécile Molinier, director of UNDP in Geneva, referring to ATD Fourth World's core functioning of participation, and the blending of life experiences and knowledge of those who have experienced extreme poverty.

Further highlighting the importance of participation, the example of ill-adapted projects to the needs of people living in chronic poverty were discussed. Moïse Compaoré, from Burkina Faso, explained how a project thought out without the participation of those most concerned, is doomed to fail. Amanda Button, in the United Kingdom, spoke out on the violence of having her children taken away from her and put in foster care. Social services did not seek for her involvement, her opinion, her participation in this project.

Martine Le Corre's inspiring speech again emphasized the core need for participation in order to build pathways to peace. « Peace cannot be imposed. It is something we build and live, in our daily experiences ». The knowledge of those who live with the violence of poverty needs to be recognised. Once society recognises the value of this knowledge, then pathways towards peace will take on true substance.

The Colloquium ended with the opening of the art exhibition created by members of ATD Fourth World. The photos and artwork are the expression of the lived experiences of people living in extreme poverty, of the violence of poverty, and of their commitment to building peace.



Emma Poma, from Bolivia, and Moïse Compaoré, from Burkina Faso, shared their contributions in the plenary at UNESCO House.

QUOTES

«We need to bring the life experiences and expertise of people living in extreme poverty into policy and decision making»

Thomas Mayes, activist Fourth World, UK

«I want to tell the authorities that they need to see us as they see themselves, as human beings»

Julián Quispe, activist Fourth World, Peru

«You remind us that poverty is a terrible form of violence. Thank you for what you do»

Federico Mayor Zaragoza, former director general of UNESCO



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Videos: <http://www.atd-quartmonde.org/Colloquium-Videos-2012-Breaking,2793.html>