

# International Report 2020

Reinventing Our World Starting from People Living in Poverty



Leave no one behind • Reaching the furthest behind first

# The International Movement ATD Fourth World

The International Movement ATD Fourth World (All Together in Dignity) is a non-governmental organisation with no political or religious affiliation. Its primary aim is to **eradicate extreme poverty and exclusion around the world, by involving the people who are forced to live in those conditions.**

ATD Fourth World was founded in 1957 by Father Joseph Wresinski and families who lived in a camp for homeless people in the Paris region. They launched a movement that gives priority to the poorest people and brings together **Fourth World activists** with first-hand experience of poverty, members of an **international volunteer** corps who work long-term in solidarity with them, and a wide range of **friends and supporters**, who take action together to foster lasting change in society.

Present in 33 countries on five continents, ATD Fourth World runs projects that promote family life, social advocacy, and career development. It has limited financial means, but a huge human commitment.

Extreme poverty still condemns millions of human beings today to live in conditions that violate human dignity. ATD Fourth World knows that people living in extreme poverty are the first to work to overcome it; they have unique knowledge and experience that can break down the barriers separating people.

ATD Fourth World has developed programs that fully involve and take into account people experiencing poverty.

It organises **Fourth World People's University** sessions, where adults living in extreme poverty and people who choose to stand beside them engage in dialogue and mutual learning. It also uses the **Merging of Knowledge** approach, a dynamic that creates the conditions for linking knowledge from the life experience of people in poverty with the knowledge of academics and practitioners. These two methods help to build new knowledge and design new actions, valuing and taking into consideration the unique knowledge inherent in each person's experience.

ATD Fourth World also advocates with institutions and public authorities to encourage them, in all their political decisions, to take into account the many dimensions of poverty. It works **to have people living in extreme poverty recognised as partners with the right to participate in national and international institutions.** For example, it contributed to the United Nations' adoption in 2012 of the Guiding Principles on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty and to its pledge in 2015 to "Leave no one behind" as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. ATD Fourth World established **the 17 October International Day for the Eradication of Poverty**, recognised by the United Nations in 1992.

In all its undertakings, ATD Fourth World aims to promote change leading to a society based on human dignity and access to human rights for all.

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# International Report 2020

## Reinventing Our World Starting from People Living in Poverty

*“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.”*

Joseph Wresinski

International Movement ATD Fourth World





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# Message from Donald Lee, President of the International Movement ATD Fourth World

**T**he global pandemic has highlighted the appalling **health, economic, and social inequalities faced by the poorest people despite decades of international pledges to end extreme poverty.**

It quickly became clear that the strict health measures imposed around the world to fight the spread of the coronavirus often multiplied the risks faced by people living in poverty. For those families who received little or no assistance, the health crisis made it more difficult to access food, water, sanitation, health care, education, and other crucial services. As a result, people in poverty faced higher risks of infection and serious illness because of their limited access to affordable health care and protective equipment. The risks of contagion are especially high among people who are homeless or living in precarious conditions such as slums, and those with large families living in cramped housing.

When schools were closed, children in the poorest families were unable to join online classes because they lacked access to computers or the internet. Workers suffered badly when restrictions on movement and public interaction stopped them from working.

During the past year, dispossessed communities have also faced additional hardships unrelated to the pandemic, such as severe flooding, drought, acts of violence by armed groups, evictions, and demolitions of shacks, from which they have not fully recovered.

Universal free vaccination is crucial in the fight against the coronavirus, and people experiencing poverty and those most at risk should be given priority in vaccination programmes. The current global distribution of vaccines is unjust and unacceptable, leaving many less developed countries without adequate access to life-saving vaccines. ATD Fourth World activists, supporters, and volunteers have witnessed the lived experience of such deprivations, inequalities, and violence endured by people in poverty and have reacted promptly. **Emergency health measures deeply impacted our activities and led us to reinvent many of the ATD Fourth World projects.** In several regions, they were forced to suspend street libraries and Fourth World People's University sessions, and Fourth World houses were also closed temporarily. **However, ATD Fourth World teams have managed to overcome or minimise the impact of many of these restrictions through their creative and innovative actions, and by learning**



Donald Lee

**from how people in poverty in different regions have coped through their solidarity** and lived experience.

The global crisis has underscored the importance of our advocacy work to reveal the nature and extent to which people in poverty have been affected by the global health crisis and how they overcame the shock.

We have shared the concerns, experiences, and reflections of the most vulnerable populations from different continents using all means at our disposal, including our international website and social media. We have conveyed their anguish over inadequate preventive measures that have not kept them safe and burdensome restrictions that have destroyed their opportunities to work. Yet, **despite the many hardships, people struggling to overcome poverty have come together for mutual aid through their resilience and ingenuity.**

Moving forward, we must remain connected and accessible to families and individuals who are often forgotten or even rejected. We shall work together with international organisations and governments to ensure that the people with the hardest lives are not left behind and to build a better world without poverty and injustice. Although the current health crisis is urgent and needs our immediate response, it is equally important that **governments and international organisations implement the policies and actions needed to fulfill their commitments to end poverty in all its forms.**

6 May 2021

# I. Promoting Social and Environmental Justice During a Global Pandemic

The International Movement ATD Fourth World has held general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 1991, and consultative status with UNICEF and UNESCO since 1970. It has permanent delegations to the European Union and the Council of Europe. It is also recognised by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and is represented at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Its involvement with international institutions and people living in poverty has led to the recognition that extreme poverty is both the cause and the result of human rights violations. ATD Fourth World has also worked to influence the 2015–2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure that they explicitly include the requirement to “leave no one behind”.

Since 2015, our advocacy work has revolved around the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. However, the year 2020 was unlike any other.

The Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to the **increase of poverty and extreme poverty around the world**. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres called for countries to focus on people, especially on the most vulnerable.<sup>1</sup>

**People living in poverty already experience violence, and this is now compounded with the violence resulting directly or indirectly from the health crisis.** This **accumulation of violence** has been devastating for many people in situations of poverty. In a declaration released on 17 April 2020, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights noted that the pandemic itself and some of the measures taken to fight it caused **a significant increase in violations of the rights of people living in poverty**.<sup>2</sup>

The global pandemic has greatly influenced our advocacy work. To try to determine specific effects of the pandemic, international agencies have called on NGOs to share their local knowledge. ATD Fourth World reported on the experiences and reflections of the most vulnerable populations on different continents. **They are experiencing crisis after crisis.** They have spoken in anguish about situations in which pandemic prevention measures have been inadequate and have deprived them of the daily work essential for their survival.

**They have found creative ways of helping one another,**

**and some have worked together to be represented at the international level,** proving once again their **determination to resist against the violence done to them.**

Some of these initiatives were discussed **on 17 and 21 April 2020 at two virtual meetings involving ten ATD Fourth World teams in nine African countries.** These meetings **inspired a series of events** including the webinar “**Impact of COVID-19 on Child Poverty in Africa and beyond**” organised in partnership with UNICEF. The sessions were held remotely, which encouraged participation from ATD Fourth World members around the world, including people with lived experiences of poverty.<sup>3</sup>

The Covid crisis has developed while our environment and climate are under increasingly severe risks. **The issue of social and environmental justice, already a major concern, is even more critical now.**

On 8 and 9 June, we organised a seminar on this topic with researchers Mireille Delmas Marty, from Collège de France, and Emilie Gaillard. With the collaboration of the research unit of the Joseph Wresinski Centre, this work supported our contributions to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and to the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

All this advocacy work provided opportunities to **strengthen our relations with our partners, in particular with the new UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter,** appointed in March 2020.

# ADVOCACY WORK RELATED TO THE PANDEMIC

## Global Coalition to End Child Poverty Protecting children from the challenges of the pandemic

Following the discussions on **the impact of the coronavirus crisis on children in Africa** among the ten ATD Fourth World teams active on the continent, we proposed to the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty that we organise a webinar together. It took place on 14 May 2020 and was coordinated in partnership with the **African Child Policy Forum, Olivier De Schutter, and David Stewart, UNICEF's Chief of Child Poverty and Social Protection.**

In Kenya, members of ATD Fourth World highlighted pre-existing difficulties that have been exacerbated by the pandemic, such as poor access to health care: ***"If Mum gets sick with this virus, she will die because she won't be able to pay the hospital"***; and access to food: ***"Everyone is thinking about food first, because we don't know what tomorrow will bring"***. Homeless children have been at high risk. The closure of schools has been especially damaging to the most destitute children, who had no way to access any form of online education: ***"We don't have smartphones or internet access. We don't even know how to use them."*** The teams kept in touch with children by distributing educational materials, by informing them about health risks, and by giving them the role of "pandemic ambassadors".

**Olivier De Schutter urged the international community to take action to establish effective social protection for all children and their families.**



*Olivier De Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights*



*Terry Kiare and Martin Kalisa spoke at a webinar organised in partnership with the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty*



### GLOBAL WEBINAR: IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CHILD POVERTY IN AFRICA AND BEYOND

Thursday, May 14, 2020



## International Day of Families

### Highlighting the strength and solidarity shown by families in the deepest poverty

On 15 May 2020, the International Day of Families, Isabelle Pypaert Perrin, Director General of ATD Fourth World, spoke on the topic **“Learning from families living in poverty during this pandemic”** at a webinar organised by the **United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs**. She reiterated the need to guarantee the well-being of the people in the deepest poverty. She also described moments of solidarity and resistance among people in under-served communities, who are extraordinarily dynamic in dealing with the pandemic:

*“In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, **young people walk for miles to talk with people in remote neighbourhoods** and to encourage them to take appropriate protective measures. In the Central African Republic, **young people have built mobile washing places** that make clean water and soap available. **This is how people resist the crisis.**”*

*“Each time we offer them the opportunity, they are eager to share their ideas and to think about what should change.”*



Isabelle Pypaert Perrin, Director General of ATD Fourth World

## Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors

### Advocating for human-rights-based social protection systems

In July 2020, ATD Fourth World signed an appeal of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors urging the creation of a Global Fund for Social Protection.<sup>4</sup> Social development is regressing because of the pandemic, and it is essential to build social protection systems based on human rights that guarantee income security and access to health care for all.

This need was further underlined by a joint statement

from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, and the Director-General of the International Labour Organization.<sup>5</sup>

The coalition persuaded the ILO, as well as trade unions and employers, to put the fund on their agenda. The World Bank Group, the International Monetary Fund, and the main donors have been approached.

## Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

### Building partnerships

The Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, **Olivier De Schutter**, participated in several webinars organised by ATD Fourth World, which itself contributed to his work. For example, it responded to the questionnaire on **“Protecting human rights during and after the Covid-19”** and to the thematic report on **“The ‘just transition’ in the economic recovery: Eradicating poverty within planetary boundaries”**, presented at the seventy-fifth session of the UN General Assembly in October.<sup>6</sup>

**The Special Rapporteur is in discussions with ATD Fourth World about drawing on our experience of the Merging of Knowledge approach and conducting participatory dialogues** on the themes of his reports to help prepare them. These dialogues seek to merge the knowledge of academics, practitioners, and people with experience of poverty. In December, ATD Fourth World submitted a contribution on the intergenerational persistence of poverty.

## Forty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council

### Bringing the voices of dispossessed people to the international stage

On 13 July, in the context of the forty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council, ATD Fourth World organised an interactive webinar in collaboration with **Olivier De Schutter, Franciscans International, and the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**, on the theme: “Covid-19 and the human rights of people living in poverty”. The event was supported by the **permanent missions of France, Belgium, Costa Rica, and Peru**.

**Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona**, former UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, moderated the discussion, which focused on the disproportionate socio-economic impact of the pandemic on people living in poverty. **Maryann Broxton**, an ATD Fourth World activist in the United States, made the following points:

*“When we talk about eradicating poverty, we tend to talk a lot about a lack of political will. But that’s misleading. **Poverty exists because of deliberate political choices.**”*

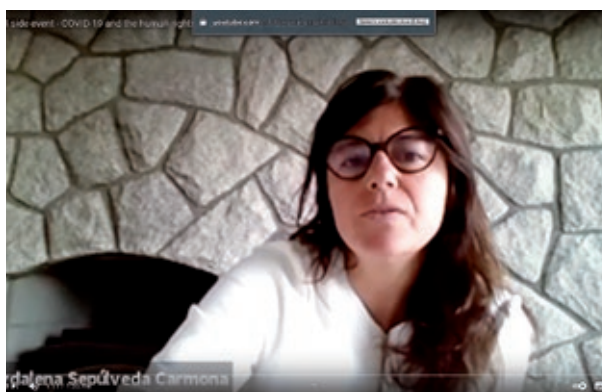


Maryann Broxton, ATD Fourth World activist in the United States

*“Covid-19 may have exposed the cracks in systems to larger society – some for the very first time – but for people living in poverty, **they have always been there, enforcing the inequality that is part of their daily experiences.**”*

*“Are we willing to share the space and power by including people with the hardest experiences of poverty? **Are we willing to consider them legitimate, equal partners in the decision-making process?**”*

*“Our well-being is tied together. **It’s about reciprocity**, believing that the person next door to you or half way around the world has just as much right to equity, dignity, and well-being as you do. That is how we make the deliberate choices needed to recover from Covid-19 and end poverty.”*



Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, former UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights

## UNESCO

### NGOs develop a network

A collective of UNESCO’s NGO partners, of which ATD Fourth World is a key member, has set up **a solidarity network to facilitate cooperation during the pandemic**. This project aims to identify the challenges faced

by families in poverty and to report on their resistance in the face of destitution and illness. The project report was published in December 2020.<sup>7</sup>

# ADVOCACY ON SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

## UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

### Fifty-eighth session of the Commission for Social Development The lived experience of being denied the right to housing

The Commission for Social Development held its fifty-eighth session in February 2020 at the United Nations headquarters in New York on the theme “Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness”. During the plenary session of the multi-stakeholder forum, James Abro, a member of ATD Fourth World, shared his experience, saying:

*“There is no such thing as ‘the homeless’. There are only individuals experiencing housing displacement. [...] By accepting [homelessness], rich countries are denying their democratic values of shared prosperity.”*

On 14 February 2020 during the side event “Finding our way home: a call for integrated solutions built on the lived experience of homelessness and poverty” organised by ATD, two activists took the floor.



James Abro, a member of ATD Fourth World, speaking at the multi-stakeholder forum of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission for Social Development

The final resolution links the scourge of homelessness to human rights.

### Twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Highlighting the existence of women in poverty

As part of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration on gender equality, France and Mexico had planned to organise a global gathering, the Generation Equality Forum. It has been postponed until 2021 due to the pandemic.

However, ATD Fourth World carried out its part of the program online in a **virtual conference entitled “The**

**Invisibility of Women in Poverty: Yesterday, Today and... Tomorrow?”** It was organised in partnership with the UN Women branch of the Sorbonne association for the United Nations. The event received the Generation Equality award from the UN Women France Committee. Michelle Perrot, a historian, and Diane Roman, a lawyer, joined Naomi Anderson, who spoke about the experience of women in extreme poverty. They highlighted the invisibility of women and their efforts to resist it. **A working group of the Fourth World People’s University** on gender equality has also obtained this award.



Virtual conference entitled “The Invisibility of Women in Poverty: Yesterday, Today and... Tomorrow?” on 28 April 2020

## High-Level Political Forum Promoting social and environmental justice

On 8 July, the **International Movement ATD Fourth World organised a side event**. Four speakers and more than 120 participants discussed the links between social justice and environmental justice, and the importance of putting people at the centre of development policies.

**Linda García, president of the board of directors of ATD in Guatemala**, spoke about the need for governments to take into account the reality experienced by people living in poverty throughout the entire process of formulating development policies. She illustrated her remarks with stories of the experiences of activists, saying:

*“Statistics don’t tell you what poverty is. I am afraid we are losing the faces, the stories, and the people behind environmental degradation and climate change, and in the middle of a pandemic. I’m also afraid of us losing our humanity.”<sup>8</sup>*

**Pedro Conceição, director of the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report Office**, added that it is important to look at poverty outside the very narrow framework of purely economic

analysis. **Shahra Razavi of the International Labour Organization** called for the establishment of universal social protection systems. **Olivier De Schutter noted four priorities for achieving real social and environmental justice**: the people who have the hardest lives must benefit from the creation of employment opportunities in ecological reconstruction, from investments that promote access to human rights, from increased consideration in the definition of socio-environmental agendas, and from tax justice reform.



Side event at the High-Level Political Forum, 8 July 2020

## UNITED NATIONS, GENEVA

### Social Forum Denouncing social and institutional maltreatment

The Social Forum of the Human Rights Council was held virtually on 8 and 9 October. This event focused on “**Good Practices, Success Stories, Lessons Learned and Current Challenges in Combating Poverty and Inequalities**.”

ATD Fourth World members based in five countries participated. Xavier Godinot spoke about the institutional and social maltreatment brought to light during the participatory research on the hidden dimensions of poverty conducted jointly by Oxford University and ATD Fourth World in six countries.

**Institutional maltreatment** is defined as “the inability of national and international institutions, through their actions or failure to act, to respond appropriately and respectfully to the needs of people in poverty, which leads to ignoring them, humiliating them, or damaging them”; whereas **social maltreatment** results from “the way in which people suffering from poverty are negatively perceived and



Xavier Godinot, director of the research “The Hidden Dimensions of Poverty”

abused by other individuals or groups around them”.

The discussions helped clarify the feedback loops that constitute the “vicious cycle of powerlessness, stigmatisation, discrimination, exclusion, and material deprivation, which all mutually reinforce one another”.

## October 17: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

### Standing up against extreme poverty by promoting social and environmental justice for all

Following a consultation with correspondents of the Forum on Overcoming Extreme Poverty, the United Nations chose **“Acting together to achieve social and environmental justice for all”** as the theme for October 17. The theme, particularly relevant during this pandemic, allowed people who have experienced poverty to insist on the fact that **there is only one justice, which is both social and environmental. Those two dimensions are fully integrated and must be addressed as such.**

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the NGO Committee on Social Development sponsored the event. Held online as a **webinar, it was broadcast on UN Web TV and on the ATD Fourth World YouTube channel.** ATD teams **in Latin America, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Belgium** contributed substantially to the videos for the webinar. Young people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is dealing with devastating floods, showed how they worked together to make mud bricks and rebuild their community. Activists in Belgium described their involvement in a participatory process by working on sustainability with an inter-federal agency, the Combat Poverty, Insecurity and Social Exclusion Service. Ambassador Yemdaogo Eric Tiare of the Permanent Mission of Burkina Faso to the United Nations and Ambassador Nicolas de Rivière of the Permanent Mission of France renewed their commitment to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Mr de Rivière said:

*“These testimonies are a source of admiration and inspiration for us all, as they demonstrate the strength, courage, and determination of people who face the worst difficulties.”*

Message from the UN Secretary-General to mark the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty:

*“The Covid-19 pandemic is a double crisis for the world’s poorest people. First, they have the highest risk of exposure to the virus, and least access to quality healthcare. Second, recent estimates show the pandemic could push up to 115 million people into poverty this year – the first increase in decades. [...] In these extraordinary times, we need extraordinary efforts to fight poverty. [...] Governments must accelerate economic transformation by investing in a green, sustainable recovery. [...] Joining together in common cause is the only way we will emerge safely from this pandemic.”*

António Guterres

Also in the context of 17 October, the **Conference of International NGOs of the Council of Europe** debated and called for access to social protection for people living in poverty and for respect of their rights as regards health services. A webinar entitled **“Access to social and medico-social services for ALL: a springboard to overcome poverty”** reflected the spirit of the European Social Charter.

Members of ATD Fourth World from Latin America, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Belgium who contributed to the webinar organised for 17 October



## UNESCO

### Futures of Education

In October, ATD Fourth World contributed to UNESCO's "Futures of Education" initiative, which aims to rethink and shape the future of education beyond the goals and targets set out in the 2030 Agenda. ATD Fourth World advocates an **inclusive education** that helps people **understand the importance of everyone's participation in current**

**debates – including that of people with a lived experience of poverty** – and that better prepares people for the issues of tomorrow. This can contribute greatly to the global common good. The initiative will be described in a published report.

## European Union

### Representation at the European level for people living in poverty

Our delegation to the European Union has been active on the **issue of climate change**. It shared its insights with Ursula von der Leyen about the European Green Deal and contributed to a public consultation on the matter. Following the European elections, **a new parliamentary Intergroup, "Fighting against poverty", was set up in January 2020**. MEPs Cindy Franssen and Pierfrancesco Majorino are the co-chairs.

On 11 June, a webinar involving MEP members of the Intergroup and representatives of NGO networks **raised awareness of the impacts of the pandemic on vulnerable people and provided lessons for recovery and**

**future reforms**. Bert Luyts, ATD Fourth World representative to the European institutions, gave a presentation on the impacts on vulnerable families.

During a European Parliament Intergroup webinar on 15 October, two members of ATD Fourth World presented a **video on the theme "sustainability and poverty"**. An activist spoke of her experience of poverty and explained why **access to electricity and gas is so difficult**.



*Screenshot from the video, "Sustainability and Poverty", presented during the webinar organised by the European Parliament Intergroup on 15 October*

## II. In the Heart of the International Centre

The headquarters of the International Movement ATD Fourth World was set up at the instigation of ATD's founder, Joseph Wresinski, who saw the need for **an international centre that would support the commitment of teams around the world.** The centre is spread over three sites near Paris:

- **Méry-sur-Oise** is home to the International Communications Team, the International Training Team, Taporì, the Forum on Overcoming Extreme Poverty, the International Advocacy team, and the

International Leadership team. This site also includes a hosting facility where participants in international sessions are accommodated.

- **Pierrelaye** is home to the Administration, Ethics, and Finance team and the Editions Quart Monde bookshop. The site also has a conference centre where international sessions can be held with translations into different languages.

- **Baillet-en-France** is home to the Joseph Wresinski Archives and Research Centre.

### INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

#### ENSURING THAT THE VOICES OF PEOPLE IN POVERTY ARE HEARD

How can we ensure that the voices of people who experience poverty are heard and valued? How do we choose words and images that highlight their positive contributions? Keeping these questions in mind, the International Communications Team oversees communications from the International Movement ATD Fourth World. It reports on the projects, events, and ideas of its members. It also manages the technical aspects of presentations and the recording, dubbing, and editing of videos. The [www.atd-fourthworld.org](http://www.atd-fourthworld.org) website has a strong impact both internally and on the public image of the International Movement ATD Fourth World.

Throughout this unprecedented year, when everyone experienced troubled moments, the communication of news from ATD Fourth World's members around the world **has allowed us all to stay connected and has given us strength to face up to difficulties.**

The International Communications Team aimed to bring an original perspective to the pandemic by allowing the people most at risk to communicate their ideas as well as their inventiveness, resistance, and courage. **It highlighted the reflections, gestures of solidarity, and initiatives that took place around the world,** and it invented new ways of being together.

The team has communicated information in a variety of forms and made it easily accessible. **A real sharing community has been created with the input of other teams.**

These initiatives have supported our members, partners, and donors in their continuing commitment.

To achieve its goal, the International Communications Team has been reorganised in order to follow more closely the news shared locally by the teams. **Experiences, projects, and advocacy work were systematically reported on the international website.** Events and webinars were broadcast, allowing viewers to be close to what was happening.





## Letter from the International Leadership Team



In 2020, the International Leadership Team sent four letters translated into six languages to encourage ATD members to take stock of their own position and to take action in the context of the pandemic. Here are a few excerpts:

### 23 March: “Leave No One Behind”

*“The richness of ATD Fourth World is our ability to connect people together, always reaching out to those left behind. We are convinced that we all share a common future. In the coming days and weeks, please stay in touch. We encourage you to tell us how you are living through this difficult time, especially what ideas you come up with to make sure that no one is left behind during this global crisis.”*

### 2 April: “Responding to Today’s Crisis, Planning for Tomorrow”

*“The families in greatest poverty can’t be cut off from sharing, made to wait for what help will come. They cannot be made to feel useless. It’s our responsibility to bring to light whatever they invent in terms of solidarity and to create opportunities for them to bring their ideas and take action.”*

### 29 April: “Focusing on the Most Vulnerable”

*“Everywhere we see the important role played by activists in their own communities. [...] They coordinated local initiatives to ensure that the support made available because of the crisis could reach those most in need. [...] We need to put energy into helping these next generations of activists emerge, and offer them training to go further in the radical choice they have made to break out of poverty with their own people.”*

### 20 May: “Rethinking Our World”

*“We suggested a movement-wide rallying time [...] dedicated to sharing what we are learning during this pandemic and what we see for tomorrow’s world. Let’s get out there and talk with people, individually or in small groups, and brainstorm with people who have no opportunities to be heard.”*

**The International Communications Team has done livestreams on social networks and published more videos on the internet.** About a hundred articles on the pandemic in French, English, Spanish, and other languages generated a lot of interest. **Translations have helped to expand our reach.** Our website traffic has grown and has allowed us to be heard in new spaces.



*The International Communications Team has sent news from around the world. Above, an awareness-raising activity with children in a street library in Madagascar*

**The World Day for Overcoming Poverty marked a highlight of our communication efforts,** with the webinar on the international commemoration organised in partnership with the United Nations in New York. This webinar, still available online, was viewed over a thousand times in the week following 17 October.<sup>9</sup>

The International Communications Team also reported on the work that the Joseph Wresinski Archives and Research Centre did to celebrate the **centenary of Geneviève de Gaulle Anthonioz**. A series of articles describing her life and her commitment was published on the different ATD Fourth World websites between June and October 2020.



*Geneviève de Gaulle Anthonioz talks to Fourth World activists at a Fourth World People's University session in Paris, June 1996*

# INTERNATIONAL TRAINING TEAM

## BUILDING CAPACITY FOR ACTION

The International Training Team supports ATD's projects around the world by offering training and capacity-building programmes. The team is in charge of organising meetings for members of the volunteer corps, preparing them for their departure abroad, and providing feedback at the end of their assignments.

In 2020, the International Training Team supported the Latin America and Caribbean Region team as it launched **its first regional training programme in the Merging of Knowledge and Practice methodology.\***

This two-year programme was made possible through the support of the French Development Agency and a partnership between ATD Fourth World and the Metropolitan Autonomous University (UAM) in Mexico, which granted official recognition for the training.

The programme aims to **encourage the most excluded people to participate** by training ATD Fourth World teams, as well as those of partner associations, in the Merging of Knowledge methodology. This helps improve collaborative approaches to projects, research, and advocacy and works more effectively to overcome poverty and social exclusion. It also promotes learning about participatory approaches in Latin America and the Caribbean, such as Paulo Freire's *educação popular* (people's education) and his critical pedagogy movement, and Orlando Fals Borda's participatory action research, all of which are rooted in the social, political, and cultural contexts of the region.

The training consists of three units: **moving from personal experience to collective knowledge, engaging in a dialogue about knowledge, and creating new knowledge together in the Merging of Knowledge approach.**



*Participants from Latin America and the Caribbean in the Merging of Knowledge and Practice methodology training*

Each unit follows a continuous “practice–theory–practice” process that includes some face-to-face work, some work through a virtual platform provided by the Metropolitan Autonomous University, and work on practical applications in the participants' home countries.

In March 2020, thirty people from six countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, and Spain) met for a week in Guatemala City for the first training unit. The delegation from each country included people with knowledge in different fields. Out of the thirty participants, eleven brought knowledge from their life experience in extreme poverty, eleven brought knowledge from their professional work or practice, and eight brought academic knowledge.

**Everyone's knowledge was recognised and considered equally.**

The second unit was initially planned for November in Lima (Peru), but the pandemic prevented it from taking place. Given this set-back, a decision was made to continue with the second unit by adapting its content to virtual modules.



*A Mayan ritual ceremony that recalls the indissoluble bond of reciprocity between human beings, and also between human beings and the Earth, marked the beginning of the training programme*

\* The Merging of Knowledge and Practice process creates the conditions for bringing together knowledge from the life experience of people in poverty and knowledge of academics and professionals.

## CHILDREN SHAPE THE WORLD OF TOMORROW

Tapori is the children's branch of ATD Fourth World. It brings together in friendship children who learn from one another because their backgrounds and daily lives are very different. They are linked through the Tapori newsletter, which gives news from children all over the world and tells true stories of courage and friendship. Above all, it tells what children are doing to overcome poverty and exclusion. The letter is written in French, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese and, since 2020, Arabic. Published three or four times a year, it is sent to about fifteen hundred individuals or organisations in about thirty countries.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Tapori team has tried to maintain strong links among the children. It came up with the **"Tapori Thought of the Day"**, which allows children to talk about their lives, their concerns, their dreams, and their hopes. Of the many messages received throughout 2020, the team featured one each day on the website. These messages highlighted once again the injustice of the inequality between the children's different situations: While some of them could stay safely at home with their parents, others had no choice but to go out and sell small items on the street in the hope of making some money to take home. In their messages, the children were particularly sensitive to others and expressed their sense of justice.

**3 June, Maia from the United Kingdom:** *"I miss my friends and my school. But I love playing badminton and football with my family. I wish every child could find something to do that they love."*

**27 July, Gentil from the Democratic Republic of the Congo:** *"In my family, it's difficult getting soap every day. We use ash to wash our hands."*

The March–April 2020 Tapori newsletter suggested activities that helped the children stay connected despite pandemic restrictions. Many of them got involved by drawing their hands and writing the answers to: "Who would you like to take by the hand?" and "For tomorrow, I dream of...". They also made "messenger birds" to **send messages of encouragement and solidarity to the children who received the letter.**



© Cécile Wintreber

**Tapori groups also made up new activities** that could be carried out remotely or outdoors. For example, groups in Réunion Island and in the United Kingdom started gardening activities and exchanged plants and seeds. This initiative was taken up in the early-summer newsletter, which **reported these ideas to other Tapori groups around the world.** Children in Spain shared seeds and seedlings in their neighbourhoods.

By becoming aware of the injustices experienced by children around the world and by sharing with others, Tapori children are shaping the world of tomorrow.



Peter from Thailand:  
*"I send you courage! I miss everybody and I hope that Covid-19 will end soon!"*

Young people from Réunion Island ready for transplanting red and blond Batavia lettuce



# FORUM ON OVERCOMING EXTREME POVERTY

## UNITED ON 17 OCTOBER TO CELEBRATE OUR COMMITMENTS

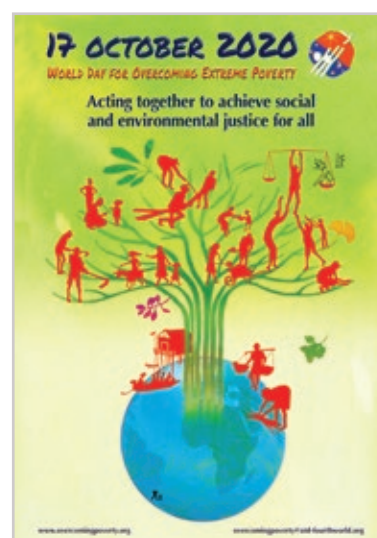
The Forum on Overcoming Extreme Poverty is a network of individuals and associations committed in their own countries to people living in extreme poverty, from whom they learn about resistance, courage, and solidarity. Based on the correspondents' experiences, the Forum writes a "Letter to Friends Around the World", which helps to create and maintain links between them. The letter is sent to around 4,000 correspondents in more than 150 countries. This network embodies the will to overcome extreme poverty in the world and to rebuild our societies from and with the poorest people by learning from one another. Each year on 17 October, it mobilises people on every continent for the World Day for Overcoming Poverty.

This year, Forum correspondents and members of the ATD Fourth World Movement were consulted to help choose the 17 October theme that would best express the concerns of people living in poverty around the world. **Seventy-six contributions from thirty-six countries were received**, most of them calling for social and environmental justice. These contributions informed discussions with the United Nations.

**Macedonia – Mrs. Maja G.:** *"People living in poverty are stigmatised and are increasingly being accused of contributing to atmospheric pollution, for example for using heating materials that are not environmentally friendly."*

**Democratic Republic of the Congo – Mr. Dieudy M.:** *"Indigenous populations rely for their survival on natural resources that provide them with a source of income, food, energy, shelter, health care, and much more. The most industrialised countries have already endangered the climate by using their own natural resources. Now, in the name of mitigating climate change, they are forcing poorer countries not to use their own forest resources."*

The theme of the day was: **"Acting together to achieve social and environmental justice for all"**. People living in poverty have been exploited for generations, just as natural resources are plundered and polluted without regard for the future. On 17 October, individuals, groups, and associations around the world reaffirmed their commitment to take action to achieve a world without poverty by caring for people and for the environment.



**Mauritius – Mrs. Bibi, 17 October:** *"I lived in a shelter after the cyclone. Me and my children know well what it is like to walk in the mud. We hear that climate change will bring drought and flooding, so our life will become even more difficult. We are told to plant, but to plant we need water."*

The World Day for Overcoming Poverty gave many people an opportunity to reflect on and engage in the global challenge to achieve social and environmental justice, which the pandemic has reminded us is so necessary.



*Celebration of the World Day for Overcoming Poverty on 17 October 2020 in Mauritius*

# JOSEPH WRESINSKI ARCHIVES AND RESEARCH CENTRE

## PRESERVING OUR LINKS AND OUR ASSIGNMENTS, AGAINST ALL ODDS

Located in Baillet-en-France, the Joseph Wresinski Archives and Research Centre (JWC) was established because the founder of the International Movement ATD Fourth World was determined to preserve traces of the suffering, courage, resistance, and intelligence of people living in poverty and of people working alongside them. The centre collects and classifies these traces to preserve them and pass them on. This heritage of rare archives, made up of more than sixty years of writings, millions of photos, sound recordings, films, and artistic creations,\* constitutes the missing sources of a history of resisting poverty and of the efforts to eradicate this injustice.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, team members of the JWC wanted to “hold on, against all odds”. They set two priorities. They wanted to keep up with day-to-day tasks and current projects. And they also wanted to maintain links within the JWC team, with other teams, and with all its partners, in the many tasks related to archives, documentation, and research projects. From the very first lockdown (March 2020), the team made sure everyone had the means to continue their activities while working remotely. Laptops were made available, and the daily work of the JWC took place through virtual meetings. To make sure the filing was kept up to date, priority was given to processing digital archives, and classification of physical archives took place on site whenever possible. The JWC also gathered information on what people in poverty were experiencing, how they were coping, and how they felt about what was happening, which they published online. *“If we don’t write down the history,”* said Bruno Tardieu, director of the JWC, *“if we don’t keep track of how people in poverty lived through this period, no one will see what happened. **The history recorded by some will make the history of others invisible.**”* The JWC reminds us of situations that are often forgotten or ignored and that the pandemic has vividly revealed.

The lockdown made the public realise that the majority of people had to go out in the morning to work or else they wouldn’t be able to eat in the evening. Or as one activist in Belgium put it:

***“For us who live in poverty, being isolated is the norm. Maybe now other people will realise what we go through every day [...] I hope that this will be a turning point, a kind of reset button.”***

During this extraordinary year, the JWC continued its usual work on archives and history, supporting ATD’s projects in France and around the world. It honoured the many requests it received for documentation and archives. For example, Julien Iragi Namunesha found in the JWC archives some photos of a meeting in Geneva in 2009 with Kang Kyung-wha, then UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights. Julien was one of the three children in the delegation from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and he told the team:

*“These photos are very important to me, because they prove that I was able to do something remarkable at least once in my life.”*

\* In total, approximately 2.2 linear kilometres of boxed archives and over 65 terabytes of digital documents



Receiving 128 boxes and digital archives  
from the Noisy-le-Grand family promotion centre

The JWC has also made progress in its current projects. These included:

- The launch of a project to purchase and implement a new computerised archive management system to replace existing tools. This will improve the organisation, classification, and description of the archives, and standardise the handling of them.
- Continued work on the implementation of a document management and distribution platform.
- The publication of four issues of the *Revue Quart Monde* and nine issues of “Dossiers de Baillet”, a collection of concept pieces for the training of ATD Fourth World members. These include reports of discussions with sociologist Alain Caillé on the approach of Marcel Mauss<sup>10</sup> and with philosopher Jean-Marc Ferry on the theme “Between love and law: Is a policy of charity possible?”
- The facilitation of a network of over a hundred researchers involved in different projects. Partners and projects include the Sorbonne University, a seminar on social philosophy, a group of young researchers, and the National Conservatory of Arts and Crafts. Also, the French National Centre for Scientific Research collaborated on research into the Merging of Knowledge approach.

The JWC welcomed more than three hundred visitors, increased its archive holdings by almost 65 linear metres and 1.5 terabytes, and continued digitising its written, photo, and audio holdings.

Young people have been particularly affected by the breakdown of social and cultural ties due to the crisis. The JWC has done all it can to continue welcoming young people in various capacities: internships, summer work camps, young members of the ATD Fourth World Volunteer Corps in training, and young researchers.

A philosophy student and a graduate student at the Paris Institute of Political Studies described their experiences:

***“The JWC is not just a place to learn skills, or offer skills, but an experience.”***

*“Quite often at university, when we’re talking about a specific topic, they’ll bring in someone who’s a professor of this or a specialist in that but they never say where they get their knowledge from. I’m becoming more attentive now and wonder: **Do they realise when they talk that there are perspectives that they don’t know about, or that are being ignored?**”*

This theme of life and meaning was, again in 2020, at the heart of the JWC.



Participants at a virtual meeting during a social philosophy seminar in August 2020

June 15, 2020 - Honorine Kouamé shows archives to Xavier Darcos and André Vauchez, members of the board of directors of the Joseph Wresinski Foundation at the Institut de France, who came to visit the JWC

# III. Projects Around the World

## RESPONDING TO TODAY'S CRISIS, PLANNING FOR TOMORROW

### DEALING WITH THE CRISIS

The Covid-19 pandemic has spread rapidly around the world. The International Movement ATD Fourth World's local activities were severely affected by emergency health measures taken by governments, including lockdowns, social distancing measures, restrictions on gatherings, and the closure of schools, public places, and "non-essential" businesses. All these affected the personal, professional, and social lives of billions of people.

These measures highlighted and exacerbated pre-existing social inequalities. **When the whole world was suddenly confronted with the same pandemic, the factors that make people in poverty vulnerable, that impede their power to take action and intensify the social and institutional violence done to them became more apparent.** While pandemic restrictions aimed to limit the spread of the virus and save lives, they have weighed most heavily on the people most at risk, who were already experiencing difficulties in accessing food, water, sanitation, health care, education, culture, and the internet. Now their rights were further curtailed. For people whose livelihood depended partly or exclusively on informal enterprises such as selling products in public spaces, their only source of income dried up.

**The Covid-19 health crisis has not necessarily been the worst difficulty that families have faced.** The real challenge is that the pandemic came on top of many other problems, such as malnutrition, chronic diseases linked to poverty, and environmental disasters including severe flooding in Uvira, Democratic Republic of the Congo; violence by armed groups in the Central African Republic; and evictions and demolition of shacks in Nairobi, which gravely affected



*"Virus", by Guillermo Diaz, Guatemala*

the poorest populations.

The sharp rise in inequality has been particularly evident in regions with poor infrastructure, especially health infrastructure. In some countries where access to health care is privatised, the people most vulnerable to the virus have been at the highest risk. **Large families living in cramped quarters, and people who are homeless or living in insecure housing such as shantytowns, have been much more exposed to the risk of infection.**

## Overcoming the shock

Living alongside people in some of the harshest conditions of poverty, ATD Fourth World's teams witnessed first-hand the devastation in their lives.

Faced with new challenges, people in contact with the teams spoke about what they had been experiencing since the beginning of the pandemic. Fourth World activists and people living in extreme poverty, who normally make sure that everyone is included in equality and dignity in ATD's projects, have managed to adapt and maintain links of solidarity despite distances. Often **they have been the first to look out for people in even more hardship than themselves.**

The pandemic forced teams in several regions to suspend street libraries and Fourth World People's University sessions. The Fourth World houses also had to close their doors temporarily. However, the teams made a point of keeping contact with isolated families by regularly phoning them or visiting them.

The first reaction of the teams was shock and fear at the seriousness of the situations of the poorest families. The International Communications Team played an important role in making these situations known on a wider scale, by publicising them on the international ATD website.

The anguish of people's hunger was ever-present, as was their distress when they had to request financial aid or accept distributions of food. The teams often spoke of how unbearable it was for them to see families in their neighbourhoods suffering from hunger:

*"The first objective is to make sure that the families we work with do not starve to death."* (Member of the ATD volunteer corps in Madagascar)

*"Informal workers, which comprise most of [the people] in our communities, including our cemetery community, have no work. No work means no pay or income, and that means no food."* (Member of the team in the Philippines)

*"The families living in deepest poverty are less afraid of being sick than of dying of hunger."* (A young ally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo)

Intensive discussions took place among the teams around the world. After the shock came a time of consultation, listening, and sharing of knowledge on what the poorest people were experiencing, in order to consider appropriate responses with them.

**Belgium** – In Belgium, the forced isolation was difficult to live with, even if it was not strictly speaking a new experience, as Patricia C., a Belgian Fourth World activist, remarked in an interview with the *Journal du Dimanche* on 6 September 2020:

*"For people living in poverty, stay-at-home orders are not something new. Indeed, being confined to their home, with little leisure time and limited freedom, is the daily life of people who are unemployed, socially excluded, and experiencing poverty."*

For Patricia, the health crisis only exacerbated the problems of access to food, work, and visiting rights for children in care. That is why she saw the crisis as a suffocation of the voice of people in poverty:

*"We have no say. We have fewer and fewer rights, and life is getting more and more difficult."*

**Spain** – In Madrid, ATD Fourth World's Legal Office for Social Rights played an important role during this period of intensified deprivation of access to rights. Based on the knowledge of people living in extreme poverty, this team has defended human rights in Spain by providing legal advice. It has also taken part in the national public debate by advocating for people to obtain access to health care, which is inseparably linked with access to all other rights. For example, several people from the legal office are involved in the Marea Basica campaign, which brings together various associations and entities that defend people with low incomes, including unemployed people and temporary workers. Members of ATD Fourth World have participated whenever possible in organised demonstrations. In September and October, they responded when the campaign called for small groups to demonstrate in front of symbolic places.



Demonstration called by the Marea Basica campaign, in front of the social security office in Carabanchel, Madrid, Spain © MareaBasica

Juan, a Fourth World activist from Madrid, launched an appeal on 16 March 2020:

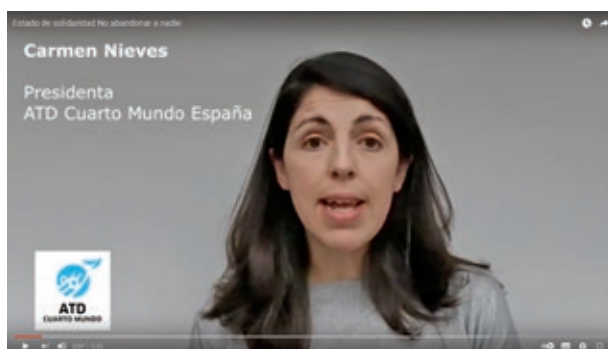
*“There are people who receive the minimum income, others who collect scrap metal, others who go to flea markets, and all these people are obviously affected because they no longer have access to the minimum necessary income, because there are already families who have difficulty making it to the end of the month in normal times. I want to pass on this message to those who are not experiencing this or who have not thought about the consequences of staying at home without the minimum necessary to survive. There has been talk of help, but everything has come to a standstill. For now, the only thing we know is that we are at home and that things are really bad. Let this message reach as many people as possible: the situation is urgent and necessary.”*

## Access to food

**Madagascar** – The team’s efforts illustrate how ATD in Madagascar responded to the emergency situation. The team temporarily suspended its group activities involving street libraries, Taporí, Fourth World University, and the vocational training workshop *Miasa Mianatra Miaraka* (MMM – Working and Learning Together). The goal was to prioritise other activities, especially raising awareness about preventive measures against the virus; making sure the families could feed themselves; and, above all, not abandoning them in this difficult time.

As an extraordinary measure, the team distributed more than three tons of rice – sometimes to the general public, sometimes focused where the need was greatest – until *tseña mora*, a subsidised rice and oil market, was set up.

Members of the Fourth World Movement immediately organised appeals.



On 17 March 2020, Carmen Nieves Colomo, president of ATD Spain, called for “this coronavirus crisis to usher in a time of national solidarity”.

With artisans from the MMM project, the team had face masks made in Antohomadinika and Ambohibao. Many inhabitants of Andramiarana made carpets but could no longer sell them, so the team bought several thousand with the financial help of friends of the Fourth World Movement, allowing the carpet makers to continue making a living. With regard to public aid, the team worked with *loharano* committees (groups of neighbourhood residents charged by the authorities with ensuring fair and corruption-free distributions) making sure no one was forgotten. However, the benefits did not always reach the most isolated families, especially when they had no identification or registration papers. In these cases, the team provided food support directly to allow the families to survive.



Artisans of the MMM (Working and Learning Together) project making face masks, Madagascar

**Peru** – The anguish of hunger and a concern for one another have prompted a surge of solidarity in Peru that echoes *Ayni* – a way of organising relationships and activities based on reciprocity, sharing, mutual aid, and hospitality in the Andean culture. Sharing what little you have with your neighbour is, in some Latin American countries, an ancestral form of solidarity, and it has become more evident and indispensable in this crisis.

Fourth World members organised food collections, which were separated into food baskets to be redistributed to neighbours. In Peru, they launched “community pots”, a food cooperative to which everyone contributed, including donors reached through social networks by Fourth World activist Julia Marcas.



Community pot, Lima, Peru

**Brazil** – Members of ATD in Brazil made and distributed health kits. Tatiane Soares, a Fourth World activist, had the idea of adding sunflower seeds to the kits so that people in the Morro dos Anjos favela in Caxambu, Petrópolis, could plant them, take care of them, and keep hope alive. She said:

*“It’s always important to be on the lookout so as not to forget to take care of one another. It’s also important to feel life growing despite all the difficulties we’re going through. And this life reminds us that wherever there’s life, there’s hope, and we have to carry on.”*

These experiences of sharing were much richer than just the distribution of food. They were moments of solidarity, ways to keep hope alive and to combat deep isolation.

**Bolivia** – From the beginning of the pandemic, members of the Fourth World Movement in Bolivia were concerned that government aid was not reaching the most isolated people. In El Alto, La Paz, they arranged practical ways for the community to show solidarity based on neighbourhood and district relationships. With residents in the area around the Fourth World House in Senkata, they gradually set up a network for sharing food from their homes. Activists organised food collections with the help of neighbours, all of whom felt a responsibility for their loved ones and for other people who shared their daily lives.

Roxana Quispe, a Fourth World activist, described some moments of sharing:

*“I wondered about the families who are vendors and who live hand to mouth. I thought about the women who have many children. I thought, How can I help them? How can I reach out to them? I thought about the many families who are going to go through hard times, families I know. I thought maybe I could help them by sharing what I had at home. I called the Friendship House of ATD Fourth World to see what we could do together. This lady makes mirrors, but she can’t sell anything right now. I brought her a bag of food that we had prepared with some of our neighbours. She was very grateful. How many families are in the same situation? How many families don’t have enough to eat? That’s what I wondered. So I left another small bag of chuños at Susi’s house in case someone needed it.”*



Roxana Quispe and her son, Bolivia

**Philippines** – In Manila, a curfew was imposed and the police and the army were put in charge of enforcing it. With no way to move around, the poorest Filipinos soon experienced food insecurity. Members of ATD responded to the emergency with the help of Fourth World activists, who coordinated the distribution of food and kept links with the poorest families in neighbourhoods with restricted access. The team launched an appeal for donations. Part of the proceeds was used to buy telephone credit cards to maintain contact with the activists. In partnership with Caritas, food and health packs were delivered to the areas of Manila where ATD Fourth World is present, that is, Manila North Cemetery, Baranguay 825 in Paco, and the Bulacan and Laguna neighbourhoods. Community activists distributed the packs from lists that had been drawn up, ensuring that the people most in need were given priority.



*ATD Fourth World members get organised where they live, here at the North Cemetery in Manila, Philippines*

**Haiti** – In Port-au-Prince the comprehensive project “Babies Welcome”, aimed at children under the age of three and their parents, benefits from a community dynamic to promote the general development of children. During the

pandemic, it was essential to maintain the programme, especially the nutritional aspect, which is already vital in normal times. To adapt to the situation, the team replaced group sessions by staggered drop-ins throughout the week.

## Access to water

In some countries, water is a luxury. Not having access to it threatens one's life and, in 2020, left people without the most basic preventive measure: washing their hands

**Peru** – In the Vizcachera district of Lima, the problem of access to water is constantly raised by children in the street library. The lockdowns and consequent loss of income have intensified water shortage: families could no longer afford to buy water. The city's water and sanitation department arranged for water to be delivered by tanker trucks, but not nearly enough was made available. Only the inhabitants of the least hilly part of the district were able to benefit from this programme.

The water sellers themselves showed solidarity with their customers. As Julia Marcas, a Fourth World activist from La Vizcachera, explained:

*“The most vulnerable people live in the highest parts [of the city]. At the top of the hill there is a grandmother who lives alone. She was a street vendor and paid her 80 soles [20 euros] for pumping, but now she has nothing, so the aguatero charges her only for the water and a small amount for pumping, just what she can pay him.”*

*La Vizcachera, Lima, Peru*

The ATD Fourth World team in Lima collected donations to provide four water tanks and a pumping system to take water to the highest areas for people even more destitute.



**Democratic Republic of the Congo** – The water problem was also critical in the DRC. As in several African countries, the government paid for people's water bills for two months; but families living in poverty, without a utility contract, did not benefit from this. Worse: in these neighbourhoods, people who sold them water raised the price. Members of ATD Fourth World got together, questioned the leaders of the neighbourhoods, and pleaded for those families also to have free access to water for two months. Their request was granted. ATD Fourth World's cultural facilitators also took soap to the neighbourhoods and spent time with the children to show them fun ways to take preventive measures.

**Central African Republic** – How can you wash your hands when there is no running water or when the price of a bucket of clean water has doubled? This question led young people to take action together with people who lived in deep poverty. These young people had been carrying out socio-cultural projects in underprivileged neighbourhoods and villages. In the ATD Fourth World courtyard, they built mobile washing facilities to provide access to soap and clean water. Equipped with information leaflets and these mobile water points, they launched a collective preventive project and went to meet the most isolated families. Cédric, a socio-cultural mediator trained as part of an ATD Fourth World project, visited families who had suffered from flooding a few months earlier. Some families had lost everything, and some had regrouped and were living under tarpaulins or tents donated by NGOs. But at the back, behind the others, Cédric also met people without tarpaulins who sheltered under pieces of plastic or cardboard. He suggested that they be the custodians of soap and buckets of water for all the families living there:

*"This way they won't just be people receiving help; they'll also be the ones helping others."*



*Young people from ATD Fourth World in Bangui constructing mobile washing facilities, Central African Republic*

## Access to social rights via digital technology

In 2020, with administrative offices closed, more and more social rights were accessible only on the internet. **Digital exclusion has severely affected the daily lives of people experiencing poverty.** Our teams have tried to overcome these obstacles and prevent people from losing resources they need to survive. These include jobseekers and people in insecure situations, such as depending on minimum social benefits and applying for government aid.



*At right and on next page, © Dan Healey's artworks on digital exclusion, United Kingdom*

**United Kingdom** – ATD Fourth World UK is a founding and active member of the Addressing Poverty by Lived Experience (APLE) collective, an association of people experiencing extreme poverty which sought to understand the consequences of the “digital divide”. Some shops and service establishments operated only through the internet, and it was difficult to get access to public computers or telephones that connected to the internet. In 2020, more than ever, financial and digital exclusion went hand in hand. Gloria, a Fourth World activist in Scotland, remarked:

*“It’s really significant to have internet access because everything these days is done electronically. Not having wifi is like being locked out of the world. I used to use wifi on the bus to see the news. At the beginning of the lockdown, I felt locked out because I didn’t know what was going on.”*

Vitalis Mbah, a member of the Fourth World Movement in Manchester, also described the consequences of the lack of internet access:

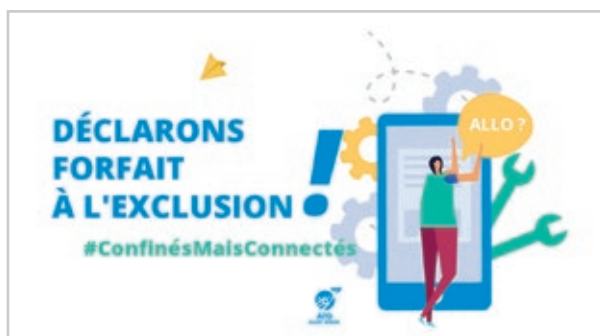
*“Given the fact that I do not have wifi at home, even before the lockdown I was unable to download important documents while researching with my phone.”*

The collective advocated for free wifi for people on low incomes.

**France** – Homeless people and parents living in poverty could no longer visit the French public employment service or the family benefits office, so they could not update files on their situation. Without access to public computers that would allow them to check their situation online, they risked losing their unemployment or social benefit entitlements, their only resource. People whose administrative situation changed or who became eligible for a new entitlement were especially affected.

ATD teams have offered internet access in Fourth World houses and have made phone cards available.

ATD Fourth World France also launched a national campaign #ConfinésMaisConnectés (staying connected during quarantine) with telephone service providers, which was shared on many social networks. Some providers increased the time and data available in their subscribers’ telephone packages or offered phone credits to workers involved with the people concerned.



*“Don’t cut us off!” #ConfinésMaisConnectés (staying connected during quarantine), an ATD initiative launched on 25 March 2020 in France*



*“Visits to my children in care have been suspended. I’d like to see them but my phone can’t handle video calls”*



*“With limited credit, how do I handle administrative procedures?”*



## Access to distance learning

The closure of schools and training programs during the pandemic has profoundly affected the education of the vast majority of children and young people linked to our teams around the world. Families and children who had no access to communication tools (no computer, smartphone, television, or internet connection) were **isolated and deprived of the right to education**. Members of the Fourth World Movement stood by them.



Children's contributions to the Tapori campaign "Tomorrow, Children Celebrate Together" during quarantine. New Mexico, USA

**United States** – Fourth World activists in New York City spoke of the challenges of homeschooling and supporting their children's school learning:

*"Remote learning is really time consuming. You pull your hair out. We feel a lot of emotional distress. How are we supposed to support ourselves and our children? Who comes first? I don't want to put it like that – it's very harsh. Trying to be that perfect parent is not realistic."*

*"We don't like remote learning. We realize that whatever we say, parents will be blamed – blamed for not having made their child successful at remote learning, and blamed for asking a break for their children."*

**Spain** – In Spain, just like in other countries, Tapori has been a support for many children living in extreme poverty. Through Tapori letters, children could talk about their lives. They also shared drawings, wrote testimonies, and suggested other activities. For example, during the lockdown, Paula and her sister Marta, from the Ventilla group, had received a pumpkin as a sign of friendship. They germinated the seeds then shared the seedlings with their friends so that they could have something on their balcony too.

**Bulgaria** – ATD Fourth World in Bulgaria joined with the Children's Architecture Workshops, Discovered Spaces, and the Stolipinovo Mobile School to initiate a project that addressed the challenge of distance learning for children in the district of Plovdiv, many of whom had difficulties in accessing digital tools and the internet. The team, like those in other places, launched an appeal for donations. Within a few days, around ten people delivered second-hand tablets. Educational software was installed on the donated equipment. The teachers prepared lessons online and gave each student a tablet. Also, teacher Rosie Zlateva telephoned parents daily to listen to their concerns. As she gained the parents' trust, Zlateva invited the children one by one into her car to explain how the equipment worked. This allowed the children to use tablets in their learning process for the very first time.



The Stolipinovo Mobile School, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, 2019 © Magdalina Rajeva



**Réunion Island (France)** – Lucette Palas, a Fourth World activist, raised the alarm on the situation of residents of the Hauts de l'île area. As they live far from the city centre and have sparse internet access, they were extremely isolated and the children had no access to distance learning until classes were given by telephone. Like many other activists around the world, Lucette Palas, concerned about these families – her neighbours – kept in touch with them by phone. She also created a group on Facebook to collect food.

*Drawing by François Jomini illustrating the isolation of a family during lockdown, Peru*

## Access to rights for families with children in care

Social workers, parents, and children involved with child welfare services, as well as people working alongside them, were put to the test by lockdown measures. In several countries, **parental visits or weekend home visits were abruptly suspended** for thousands of children and adolescents in care.

**France** – During the first lockdown (from 17 March to 10 May 2020), the team of the family promotion centre in Noisy-le-Grand, as in other regions, worked with several families supported by child welfare services. This period was marked by many instances of families being denied their fundamental rights, such as placement measures being renewed without a hearing. In the placement homes or foster families, everyone had a different response, but the result was the same: the children and their parents could not see each other, even through video links, and even though the Ministry of Health recommended that they be able to do so in place of in-person visits. Sophie Maréchal, a team member, wrote:

*“We were told that the hostel was not equipped with a computer for video conferencing, although the children had school lessons via the internet. Also, host families did not want to show their homes or use their personal phones, so it was not possible to set up a direct video call between children and their parents.”*

The team supported the parents of a family whose children were scattered among different foster families and care homes, and organised telephone conferences with an educator and a psychologist. Even so, the youngest child, aged two, did not recognise his brother when he saw him again

in September.

At the end of the lockdown restrictions, professionals from child welfare services wanted to meet with the ATD Fourth World team to make an assessment and work together to find more consistency in their responses.

Elsewhere in France, real “chains of trust” were set up between members of the Fourth World Movement and parents whose children were already in foster care or were at risk of being taken into care. The bonds of trust, built up over many years, have helped them to hold on:

*“We trust each other, we talk to each other and we support each other. Working together helps us to think.”*

ATD reported breaches of fundamental rights to the Human Rights Defender (a nation-wide independent authority). Common law was re-established and, during the second lockdown in October, child welfare services reacted quite differently: visiting rights and links between parents and children were maintained.



*The ATD Fourth World house in Treyvaux, Switzerland, provided a safe haven in July and August for families hurt by the quarantine of their children in foster care without visiting rights for two months*

**United Kingdom** – Parents of children in foster care in the United Kingdom have paid a heavy price, as most family court hearings have been conducted by video conference or telephone. As a member of the Parents, Families and Allies Network (PFAN), ATD Fourth World contributed to a consultation launched by the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory to determine how families had been affected. Interviews were conducted with around twenty parents. Some of them were forced to attend their court hearing by telephone, without video, and others experienced technical problems or background noise that made it difficult for them to participate and to understand who else attended

the hearing or what was happening. One parent said:

*“My neighbour gave evidence. She only had a phone. She struggled, and I could see how nervous she was. She was asked about the papers but couldn’t look at them on her phone.”*

During these virtual hearings, parents felt neither respected nor in a position to understand the decisions taken. Their rights were violated. The Observatory’s report was mentioned on the BBC, giving hope that these practices will change.

## REIMAGINING LINKS AND CREATING NETWORKS OF SOLIDARITY

The teams had to change their community approach in order to overcome people’s isolation and to reinvent ways of sharing, being together, and showing solidarity. Despite pandemic restrictions, links were maintained. Extraordinary solidarity networks were set up at local, regional, and national levels. All these initiatives formed **growing chains of solidarity, and Fourth World activists held them together**. It was they who guaranteed the continuity and closeness of the links, not only with their most isolated neighbours but also with people outside the neighbourhood, including local authorities.



*“Everyone is essential”, illustration by Luciano Olazabal, Peru*

### New ways of connecting and supporting one another

Members of the Fourth World Movement regularly visited their neighbours to check on them and to make sure they were not alone. **This wave of solidarity built on pre-existing neighbourhood relationships.**

**Democratic Republic of the Congo** – The DRC team travelled in small groups to the most remote neighbourhoods to visit the most isolated households. Carrying the message *“Protect others by protecting yourself”*, they checked in with families and informed them about how the virus is transmitted.

In mid-April, heavy rains fell on the town of Uvira for two days, destroying nearly 15,000 homes where about 80,000 people lived. Taporu facilitators, along with other young people who were themselves badly affected by the floods, did everything they could to save lives and help the most afflicted families recover. They feared starvation, as bridges linking Uvira to other towns were washed away and traffic was banned to prevent the spread of the virus. They feared



*Children living in the same yard, quarantining together, Bukavu, DRC*

that cholera would return because of the lack of clean water. The group of young facilitators talked to the local authorities and enlisted six other associations to join them. As a result, over a hundred people spent two days making more than 6,000 bricks to rebuild houses for a dozen of the



One hundred people gather to make 6,000 bricks after floods in Uvira, Democratic Republic of the Congo

most vulnerable families.

During the 17 October celebration, held in Uvira as a sign of solidarity, Denise Prisca Makito, a cultural facilitator of ATD Fourth World, summed up their experience:

*“These people were of all ages; some of them were flood victims themselves, others came from over a hundred kilometres away. Without knowing each other beforehand, they got together to show their solidarity with the residents of Uvira, conscious and confident that acting together provokes change, [...] a different vision of those living in poverty. We discover their courage, the experience of children, young people and adults, their intelligence. All this is a source of innovation and action to transform our societies.”*

**Philippines** – Faced with strict lockdown in the neighbourhoods, members rang families and individuals every day and encouraged them to talk about their experiences, feelings, and hardships. Fourth World activists played an essential role as they gave news of their neighbourhoods and looked after their neighbours, alerting the team when families appeared to be in particular difficulty.

In Manila’s North Cemetery, where families benefited from *Sulong*, a savings programme run by ATD Fourth World, many people withdrew their savings at the beginning of the pandemic to meet their basic needs.

For families outside Manila, when traffic was banned, the team tried to use e-transfer systems to get emergency financial donations to people in exceptional hardship. But they had to make sure it worked. The small shops that received money in these neighbourhoods had to have enough cash on hand. Fourth World activists in these communities acted as intermediaries for receiving the money and redistributing it to about thirty families in each location. This greatly exposed the activists in their communities, and subjected them to a lot of pressure.

**Central African Republic** – In Bangui, the team came up with ways to continue “being a movement together”. It set up news exchanges between the residents of a camp that regrouped families who had survived the major floods of 2019. One organisation distributed a dozen radios, and the inhabitants gathered to listen to the news together and pass on messages to one another.

**Guatemala** – As elsewhere, lockdown restrictions in Guatemala led to loss of income for millions of people. Members of the Fourth World Movement promoted solidarity in the neighbourhoods and visited people in the most isolated situations. Vivi Luis, a Fourth World activist in Guatemala, spoke about visits she made to older neighbours who were alone and explained why the visits were important:

*“We got together and took action because we all had the same questions. I think that solidarity is something we already have as human beings; sometimes we just need a push to get it going again. Very quickly, people said, ‘I can give! What account should I deposit it in?’ [...] But at the same time, we learn a lot about caring for the other person, we learn to care about the person next to us and not to get stuck on appearances. It allows us to discover the other, to create links. This is the most important thing we learn as human beings. This pandemic has limited the time of the encounter, but not its deeper meaning. Later we will say, ‘We were not alone.’”*



The team checks on neighbours in Guatemala

## Using communications tools to maintain links

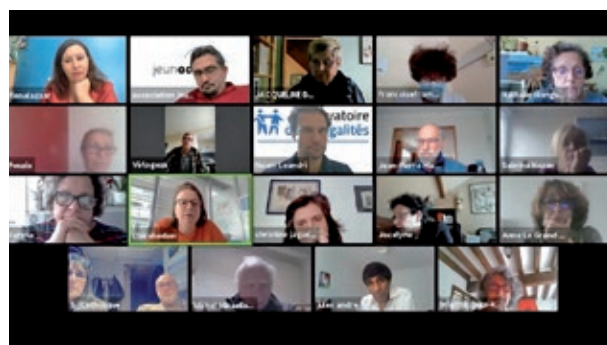
To maintain links in a context of social distancing, Fourth World Movement members of all ages have shown a great capacity to **adapt to various communications tools**. Initially, contact by telephone increased almost everywhere. When possible, in-person visits were given priority. On other occasions – for group meetings or campaigns, for example – members used video conferences and social networks, including WhatsApp, Messenger, Facebook, Zoom, Jitsi, and Signal.

Teams and regional delegations set up webinars to **bring together members of ATD from different parts of the world to discuss the impacts of the pandemic**. Video conferences with families in poverty were far less common, as the families did not always have access to a computer, a camera, or an internet connection.

**Africa** – At the very beginning of the crisis, two webinars were held between teams from nine African countries to update one another on the situation of children and to share initiatives to address it. It was a learning experience for everyone involved. Their exchanges led to a webinar at the United Nations with UNICEF, during which two ATD Fourth World facilitators in Africa spoke on behalf of all the participants at the previous webinars.



*Latin America webinar on 21 July 2020, on “Solidarity, mutual care, and resilience”*



*Online workshop organised on 30 April 2020 by Claire Hédon, president of ATD Fourth World France, to discuss the current pandemic and reforms needed to build the post-pandemic world*



*“Connected lockdown”, drawing by Yves Petit, France*

**France** – In several regions, such as the Brest and Lyon areas, online “lockdown diaries” have been launched. People were encouraged to talk about their moods and the signs of solidarity they saw. Members of the Fourth World Movement sometimes visited families to equip them with computers, phones, or internet connections, thanks to a partnership with Emmaüs Connect, which provided a lot of the equipment. When people were not online, they could dictate their text over the phone, and the person they were speaking to could at the same time share messages written by other people.



*The writing workshop organised by ATD Fourth World in Brest – pictured here before lockdown – has been reimagined to allow everyone to continue to write and describe their thoughts during the pandemic, France*

**Latin America** – The regional delegates of Latin America and the Caribbean, together with members of ATD in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, and Peru, organised, among other things, the online seminar “Solidarity, mutual attention, and resilience” on 21 July 2020. Participants at the seminar shared news, held discussions, and learned from the initiatives of ATD’s members on this continent. They spoke of their experiences and described the links of solidarity that have been set up or expanded during this period.

**United States** – During the first three months of the pandemic, when everyone was isolated, the national team invited all ATD Fourth World members in the United States to participate in eleven group phone calls. Through the calls, members checked in on and supported one another, and shared stories of solidarity, courage, and struggle during the pandemic. ATD Fourth World members have also spoken up in

webinars involving other institutions. For example, a webinar on increased inequalities in New York due to distance learning was organised on 10 June 2020 in partnership with Equity for Children and the Center for New York City Affairs. One of many Fourth World activists to speak was Tina Lindsey, who said:

*“Children with learning disabilities need hands-on instruction with the teachers. It’s impossible for children with special needs to learn remotely [...] It’s important to make sure that teachers won’t give up on the students who struggle the most.”*

Also, during the Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity’s online programme on 1 April 2020, Maryann Broxton, a Fourth World activist, together with Guillaume Charvon, a member of the ATD volunteer corps, explained how the impact of the Covid-19 crisis is dramatically intensified for people experiencing poverty who already undergo multiple, interrelated hardships.

## The reinvention of ATD Fourth World projects

Street libraries, Fourth World People’s University sessions, and Festivals of Learning have maintained **links with members**, even after face-to-face meetings had to be suspended. Many teams have adapted their projects to take health requirements into account.

**United States** – Members of the ATD Fourth World team in Gallup, New Mexico, have built and nurtured relationships with families through the Story Garden, a street library project that has been running since 2012 in the heart of the city’s flea market.

During the pandemic, the team initially kept in touch with people by telephone. They also mailed out family activity packages. Later, team members visited the families individually in their remote locations and carried out mobile street library activities while respecting social distancing measures.



*Reorganisation of the Story Garden into a mobile form taking reading and activities to families, New Mexico, USA*

**Latin America** – For six months in countries in Latin America, stories were told by phone and through videos posted on Facebook or shared on WhatsApp. Fun kits with books and creative activities were sent to children, and books were lent out through collection points in the neighbourhoods.



*A Street Library facilitator narrating a story from Escuintla, Guatemala*



*Lending books at a street library*

**Switzerland** – In June, different groups in Switzerland held Fourth World People's University sessions unlike any previous ones after preparations were done remotely. The Yverdon group discussed online through videos via WhatsApp, and the youth group via Skype. In Fribourg, they met in a garden, while a group was formed in a campsite in Yverne around an activist living year-round in a caravan. Two mothers had spontaneously prepared for the session together because the theme coincided with what they were going through: having to struggle for the right to see their children in foster care by video conference. With the theme of "Poverty–Identity–Society", the People's University was a reflection of life itself. The plenary session took place over Zoom. Some had never participated in this kind of virtual meeting and were impressed:

*"Seeing us all together on the same screen gives a sense of unity, encourages us, gives us strength."*



*A rather different Fourth World University session, Switzerland*



**Canada** – After weeks of thinking and discussions, the team agreed to change the Festival of Learning to conform to pandemic restrictions. Rather than being organised over a single weekend, it was spread over two weeks at the end of August, at Montreal's Edmond-Hamelin Park. Three different activities were offered each evening for two hours. People volunteered to facilitate the activities, supported by members of ATD and other organisations in the neighbourhood. Participants were happy dipping their hands in paint, dancing to the rhythm of the drums, and trying out zany accessories in front of a camera.

*A reimagined Festival of Learning, with the exhibition of the collective work "Giant", which was rediscovered by neighbourhood residents, Canada*

## Experiences around art to help people stay together

ATD has always used art and creative activities to create **an environment conducive to expression and speaking out**. In 2020, the teams developed this approach by using technology and adapting it to the new situation.

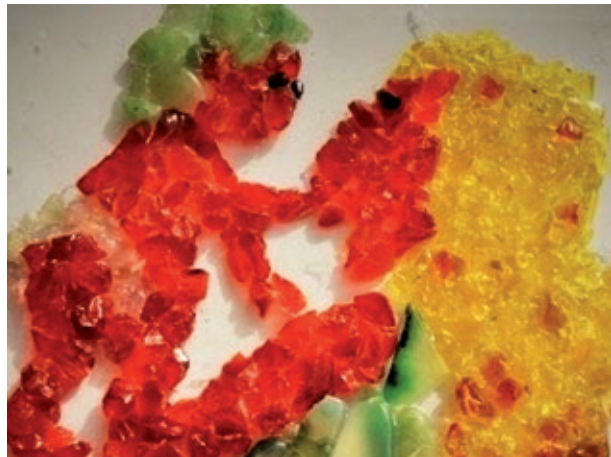
**Luxembourg** – The ATD Fourth World Luxembourg team took different steps to stay in touch with the most isolated families during lockdown, including daily exchanges by telephone, email, and mail. As one member of the Fourth World Movement explained:

*“For us, it was important to keep in touch, especially with the most isolated people, to allow them to express not only their fears, but also the positive side of commitment, and to leave a record of what people have experienced.”*

For example, the team supported parents who could no longer see their children in foster care during the lockdown. After the parents' visiting rights had been suspended, the families could not see each other for several months. The team made every effort to stay in touch with these families. Electronic devices were brought to their homes, and workshops were resumed in small groups when that became possible. This resulted in a series of articles entitled “Reflections and Creativity” published on the ATD Luxembourg website, as well as a local newsletter sharing the many testimonies and photos of artistic creations. These showed that many people were experiencing the same difficulties and described how they were trying to keep hope alive.

For example, Sandra Schloesser, a young mother, created a particularly eloquent glass mosaic to describe the pain of separation. The workshop allowed her to find the strength to express what she was going through:

*“I feel that I am wasting my time far from my daughter, that I am not living. After two months of lockdown, I was finally able to see my daughter, Selina [...], but my mask prevented her from recognising me. I managed to find the courage to ask if I could take my mask off, so that my daughter could recognise me. Once my daughter and I gained confidence, we played together.”*



*Design by Sandra Schloesser, Fourth World activist, Luxembourg*

**Philippines** – The team invited children in contact with ATD to make illustrations that would tell the story of their lives since the beginning of the pandemic. Almost a hundred drawings were received from adults and children who live in Manila's North Cemetery and edited into a short film. This video was then used to launch a campaign to raise funds via ATD's Facebook page and the hashtag #COVID19Solidarity.



*Messages and children's drawings were dedicated to the donors who responded, Philippines*

## IV. Perspectives



*International Leadership Team, ATD Fourth World:  
Isabelle Pypaert Perrin, Martine Le Corre, Bruno Dabout, and Álvaro Iniesta Pérez*

### People in poverty step in when government programs don't reach the most vulnerable

Alicia is an ATD Fourth World activist and young mother in Latin America who has been through difficult times. She lives in a shantytown with other family members. She told us about a decisive moment during the pandemic when, one night, she and her mother could not sleep. Both women were worried. They were thinking about Veronica, who could no longer sell her doughnuts after school because of the lockdown. They also worried about Felipe, who couldn't go out to collect the plastic bottles that he resells for a living.

In normal times, people in extreme poverty do not have access to decent jobs. The work they find is unstable, dangerous, and poorly paid. During lockdown, they can't even hope to find this kind of work, which is their only source of income.

That night, Alicia and her mother saw clearly that if nothing were done, neighbours would be dead in two weeks' time. Not from the coronavirus, but from hunger.

So Alicia, who now has a stable job, got together with her neighbours. They reached out to others who have a bit more security. Together they got a solidarity project off the ground that involves sharing what they have. Alicia told us:

*"We will stand together. And when the crisis is over, we'll be able to say that we have not abandoned anyone."*

Alicia knew that state aid would arrive at some point but that it would not reach some of her neighbours. Because they don't have identity papers, they wouldn't be able to register for state aid. Not having identity papers also means not getting into school, not receiving social assistance, and not fully being citizens. It's a challenge for the authorities and civil society organisations to reach the families who have the most difficult lives. Having few connections or networks, they very often remain invisible.

So, as Alicia knows from experience, sharing is a big part of community survival. In times of crisis, whether it is a pandemic, floods, or the repeated crises of daily hardship, families in the greatest poverty count first on the solidarity of people around them.

This solidarity, which is fragile and constantly threatened, is not enough to end extreme poverty, but it is vital. Anti-poverty programs and policies should recognise and strengthen these family and community ties of solidarity rather than ignore them, or even undermine them.

In 2021, we aim to focus on the following perspectives:

- Rely on local strength and family and community solidarity to develop projects that provide access to social and health protection, as called for in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Build our projects on the principle of leaving no one behind and advocate for it with relevant institutions;
- Support people working to promote universal social protection and develop this core issue in our advocacy based on experiences in our projects;
- Make sure that all children have access to a recognised identity, one of the most basic human rights;

... /...

## Covid measures weakened family and social relationships

Around the world, the pandemic and the lockdowns have made education more challenging, even though educating their children is a priority for families living in poverty.

Schools were closed, and many have not reopened one year later, depriving a whole young generation of an essential means of access to knowledge and culture.

Distance learning has put families living in poverty in impossible situations: How do you choose between feeding your children or paying for an internet connection so they can attend classes? How do you get equipment? How do you make space for the children to concentrate in cramped and overcrowded housing? How do you support them when you haven't learned to read and write yourself?

Lockdown measures were particularly difficult for families with bad housing conditions and families confined in hotel rooms or in cramped or unhealthy dwellings.

What is less known is how service shutdowns have damaged relationships between children in foster care and their

parents. Visits and meetings became impossible.

In some countries, families facing threats of placement or adoption of their children had to deal with family court hearings online. Without a good wifi connection or a computer, most of them had only a mobile phone to participate in these hearings.

Why is it that measures intended to support parents often turn into control over families with the hardest lives?

Because of this, many of the families we know are reluctant to ask for help. Based on their experience, they fear that family support services will interfere in their lives, put their family under the microscope and shatter it. The families are often blamed for their situation, seen as responsible for their poverty, and not trusted. Their hopes are unacknowledged, their efforts to improve their lives are unrecognised, and solutions designed *for* them but not *with* them are imposed on them. This is why policies and programs often backfire on families living in poverty.

... /...

- Strengthen our sharing of knowledge projects, giving priority to children who have not been able to return to school;
- Join forces with people who advocate for a school where all children, not just the greatest number of children, can learn; a school based on cooperation rather than competition;
- Develop our projects with the families in the greatest hardship by building on their hopes and empowering them;
- At the international level, develop an action-research project already under way in thirteen countries in the global North and global South on the essential role of family and social cohesion in ending extreme poverty;

... /...

## Recognising families in poverty as equal partners

Lack of participation in decision making and in civic, social, and cultural life is recognised by the international community and the UN Human Rights Council as a crucial feature and cause of poverty, rather than simply a consequence of poverty.

What families facing poverty ask is that we recognise them as people who take action and as partners. They take action with their suffering, their resistance, and their strength, which is too often stifled by deprivation and social exclusion, but never reduced to nothing. Alicia and her family live in insecurity but they invested energy and creativity in organising a project to share with neighbours what little they had. Like so many others, they take action based on their intelligence and ask only to be considered equal partners in finding and implementing solutions.

But just consulting with people in poverty is not enough. They must be fully involved in developing policies from start to finish. This requires the time and energy to create safe spaces where people experiencing poverty and other stakeholders can share their experience, merge their

knowledge, and build new understanding. Together, they can then design and implement programs and policies that really tackle the most extreme situations of poverty.

The pandemic is fracturing family and social ties; it is exposing and compounding inequality and lack of security that existed long before the virus spread. But it can also make us ask ourselves questions. It gives us the chance to choose, like Alicia and her family, to make sure we do not abandon anyone.

We can choose to recognise Alicia and all those who resist like her day after day as guides to new ways of working together. And we can choose to offer parents something other than the destruction of their family, something other than the placement of their children and a life in the street. Will we make this choice? Will we design programs and policies that support families in poverty by acknowledging their power to take action and joining them in their efforts to overcome poverty? Will we inspire younger generations to carry out this goal?

... /...

- Continue to spread the results of the research on the hidden dimensions of poverty. Develop a framework of analysis and evaluation to measure the impact of programs and public policies and to ensure that they include all dimensions of poverty;
- Create projects and spaces for dialogue that strengthen the participation of people living in poverty and recognise them as leading contributors and partners in the pursuit of justice and peace;
- Encourage young people to join the cause of people and families in extreme poverty and to build with them a world fit for everyone to live in.

**Isabelle Pypaert Perrin, Director General**

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As of 31 May 2021

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## Notes

- 1 *This is, above all, a human crisis that calls for solidarity.* António Guterres, 19 March 2020: <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/above-all-human-crisis-calls-solidarity>
- 2 *Statement on the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic and economic, social and cultural rights* (E/C.12/2020/1), Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 17 April 2020: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2fC.12%2f2020%2f1&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2fC.12%2f2020%2f1&Lang=en)
- 3 *ATD Fourth World Regional Gatherings on the Impact of Covid-19 on African Children*, April 2020: <https://nextcloud.atd-quartmonde.org/index.php/s/cf9dRfQ5JMrbPcL>
- 4 <http://www.socialprotectionfloorscoalition.org/civil-society-call/>
- 5 <http://gsj.globalsocialprotectioncharter.eu/2020/10/15/universal-social-protection-floors-our-joint-responsibility/>
- 6 <http://www.undocs.org/A/75/181/REV.1>
- 7 *NGOs' solidarity in response to the pandemic*, Jeanne Lebaudy, published in December 2020: <https://en.reseausolidariteong.com>
- 8 Summary report of the 2020 High-Level Political Forum webinar "Human development through social and environmental justice for all": <https://4thworldmovement.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2020-HLPF-Human-Development-through-Social-and-Environmental-Justice-for-All-Report.pdf>
- 9 <https://www.atd-fourthworld.org/international-day-for-the-eradication-of-poverty-2020/>
- 10 Marcel Mauss is a French anthropologist, ethnologist, and sociologist, author of *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, and known for his theory of reciprocity and gift exchange.



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