



United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 2022

"DIGNITY FOR ALL IN PRACTICE:

The commitments we make together for social justice, peace, and the planet"

Concept Note

Dignity for all in practice is the umbrella theme of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty for 2022-2023. The dignity of the human being is not only a fundamental right in itself but constitutes the basis of all other fundamental rights. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrined human dignity in its preamble:

'Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.'

"Dignity" is not an abstract concept: it belongs to each and every one. Today, many people living in persistent poverty experience their dignity being denied and disrespected. The ways in which the poorest people are treated are a measure of the respect in which human dignity is held in our societies. Personal agency helps define a life in dignity, in which individuals have the freedom to make informed choices and to participate meaningfully in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

With the commitment to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure all people everywhere enjoy peace and prosperity, the 2030 Agenda again gestured toward the same promise established under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yet, the current reality shows that, in a world where we produce enough to feed everyone, 811 million people do not have enough food and 44 million are at risk of sliding into famine (source: WFP), 2 billion people still live without safe drinking water and 3.6 billion without safely managed sanitation (source: WHO and UNICEF). 1.3 billion people still live in multidimensional poverty (source: UNDP) with almost half of them children and youth. Inequality of opportunities including access to key services, and gender inequality persist whilst income inequality is sharply on the rise and, each year, the gap between the rich and poor gets even wider. In the past year, as

millions struggle through the erosion of workers' rights and job quality to make it to another day, corporate power and the wealth of the billionaire class have recorded an unprecedented rise.

Poverty and inequality are not inevitable. They are the result of deliberate decisions or inaction that disempower the poorest and marginalized in our societies and violate their fundamental rights. The silent and sustained violence of poverty - social exclusion, structural discrimination and disempowerment - makes it harder for people trapped in extreme poverty to escape and denies their humanity.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted this dynamic, exposing social protection system gaps and failures as well as structural inequalities and diverse forms of discrimination that deepen and perpetuate poverty. This is not the last shock we will face. We live in an increasingly insecure world and inequality and insecurity are reinforcing each other.

In addition to this, the climate emergency constitutes new violence against people living in poverty, as these communities are unduly burdened by more frequent occurrences of natural disasters and environmental degradation, leading to the destruction of their homes, crops and livelihoods.

"The destruction of the environment, ecosystem and biodiversity makes families living in poverty suffer more than anyone else." (Christian, Activist for social and environmental justice, DRC).

This year marks the 35th anniversary of the World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty and the 30th anniversary of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. This Day honors the millions of people suffering from poverty and their daily courage and recognizes the essential global solidarity and shared responsibility we

hold to eradicate poverty and combat all forms of discrimination.

On October 17, people living in poverty and those standing in solidarity with them gather at commemorative sites around the world reading the following call to action:

“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.”

The Day represents a safe space of meaningful participation for people whose voices are unheard and whose life stories, when told by others, are reduced to their hardships – without showing all the courage it takes to fight poverty–. It is a space to share not only the struggles they face in their lives but also their aspirations for the future.

The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty holds space for a joint reflection on the commitment to end poverty by 2030, strengthening the continued partnerships and dialogue between civil society, Member States, communities and other stakeholders.

“Our Common Agenda” of the UN Secretary-General calls for a “renewed social contract anchored in human rights” emphasizing trust, inclusion, protection and participation, and valuing what matters to people and the planet. To achieve this, a dignity-focused lens can guide the international community away from purely monetary measures of poverty and toward multidimensional ones. A dignity lens doesn’t blame individuals for their poverty but instead sheds light on unjust systems and deliberate laws, policies, and actions that fail to respect, protect and fulfill our rights, denying the poorest of their dignity.

To practice dignity for all, we urge governments to renew their commitments to respect, protect and fulfill their human rights obligations in accordance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other relevant international human rights instruments. We also urge them to make direct links between their implementation and the progress made towards the global goals.

The 2023 mid-term review of the SDGs presents an opportunity for governments to end the violence being wrought on the planet and the poorest, and correct structural inequalities and discrimination that perpetuate poverty and oppression and hinder progress. The *UN Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights* provide guidelines and practical tools to ensure that public policies reach those furthest behind first. In striving to have “everyone included,” we call for the establishment of a UN system-wide process that ensures and operationalizes the effective and meaningful participation of people living in poverty in the SDG process.

The promise of human rights and dignity for all in practice is possible and must be achieved. In the words of Bertine, an activist living in poverty from Burkina Faso:

«We have to fight for dignity together because my dignity is nothing if my neighbor has none.»

Celebrated since 1987 as the World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty and recognized by the United Nations in 1992, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty promotes dialogue and understanding between people living in poverty and their communities, and society at large. “It represents an opportunity to acknowledge the efforts and struggles of people living in poverty, a chance for them to make their concerns heard, and a moment to recognize that poor people are in the forefront in the fight against poverty.” (United Nations, Report of the Secretary General, A/61/308, para. 58) More information about initiatives, events and activities to mark October 17 around the world can be found at: UNDESA website, and overcomingpoverty.org.

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— Note: The views in this document do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations or its Member States.