

This is the conclusion to the [meeting that the Swiss group had at the UN on October 18, 2010](#) to celebrate the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

The ATD Fourth World Movement as well as other members of the October 17 Team (Amnesty International, Codap and Mesemrom) are present in over thirty countries throughout the world. This international presence has allowed us to measure the similarity of poverty and exclusion in all four corners of the world.

In Madagascar just like in Switzerland, young people leave the school system without any practical training.

In Madagascar just like in Switzerland, young people are unable to find a decent job allowing them to live, not just survive.

In Madagascar just like in Switzerland, young people are isolated from the society in which they would like to participate but from which access is refused.

In Madagascar just like in Switzerland, young people are stigmatized if they come from a bad neighborhood.

In Madagascar just like in Switzerland, young people struggle for these rights, that we call Human Rights, be available to all: the right to a free education, the right to work in a job that ensures an existence in compliance with human dignity and an acceptable standard of living, the right to take part in public affairs in his or her country, and all of this without any distinction of social origin.

If we had to highlight just one of these rights, it would certainly be the right to education, because all the other rights depend on it. Families living in poverty understand the importance of training and education to escape from this condition; let's help them access this right. If we don't do everything possible for them to use this right, we are not helping them escape poverty. Access to a correct and high quality education must be an integral part of the struggle to eradicate poverty.

The school system in quite a few countries does not allow all students to get a correct education or proper training so that they will be able to find their place in today's society. Many of them are not helped when they do not understand, or even left behind so that they do not slow down the others in class. I'll give you the example of a young Swiss boy that his grade school teacher left behind because he didn't do his homework. He did not take the time to find out why his homework wasn't done, and thus this young boy found himself left behind without being able to follow the same courses as his classmates. Today he is a 20 year old young man without any training, who barely knows how to read and write, and who is completely traumatized by school. For him, school is a synonym of humiliation, and he refuses to go back. How will a young adult like him be able to succeed in today's society where competition is key?

What we need is a spirit of solidarity at school, where classmates help one another, like we saw in the Madagascar project movie; those who understand or who are older help the others. Those who are more gifted should help others. Classmates should support their friends who have difficult working conditions at home. This is a part of citizen education, and also a role of the school.

Many young people drop out of school because they become discouraged with what they are learning. Young people are tired of being forced to do training that won't lead to anything, or training that employers feel is not sufficient to be able to hire them. We need an educational system leading to training that is good enough to get a job, and that is recognized as such by employers. Manual training should no longer be seen as training that is given to young people who have a hard time following and who teachers don't know how to cope with. This type of training should be recognized and valued just as intellectual training is.

Another hurdle for young people when they start to work is the sudden change when they leave school and start working in a company. In order to facilitate the integration into the working world, we would like to see a type of sponsorship in all companies, based on volunteers who are experienced and willing to help a young person when he begins his or her professional career. Something like this should be a part of the intergenerational solidarity we are striving for. All young people would be in this program, to avoid stigmatization.

But there is still one big problem, equality in schools. All young people are not equal when it comes to learning. Those who come from poor families are not able to concentrate the same way on their studies. The way their family lives interferes with their attention. Their domestic problems do not cease as soon as they pass through the school gates. The life that these young people live should be taken into account in school; they should be given more time and attention. We should take a fresh look at education so that individuals will be allowed to progress at their own rhythm. To reform the educational system, first of all we have to start with a dialog between stakeholders, meaning of course young people, but also their families and friends. The example that we were able to see in the movie about young people in Madagascar who started their training again, because they were no longer obliged to look for food, thanks to ATD Fourth World financial assistance. We have got a different problem: young people are discouraged by all of the red tape that has to be done when they decide to start up again on training that has been interrupted. Let us challenge ourselves to start up a dialog with these young people to find a solution together.

To conclude, I would like to quote Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the UN, in his introductory speech for the International Year of Youth that began on August 12 this year. *"We must recognize and celebrate what youth can bring to the beginning of a safer and fairer world. Let us endeavor to find a place for young people in the decision-making processes, policies and programs that prepare their future as well as ours."*

Damien