

Draft Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights

“ The lack of basic security leads to extreme poverty when it simultaneously affects several aspects of people's lives, when it is prolonged and when it severely compromises people's chances of regaining their rights and of reassuming their responsibilities in the foreseeable future. ”

Definition of extreme poverty included in the report to the Human Rights Council of the Independent Expert on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, September 2010

What are the draft guiding principles?

The Human Rights Council is currently developing a set of guiding principles that will constitute the first international document to set out clearly the implications of existing international law in relation to the human rights of people living in extreme poverty.

The work in progress recognizes that people living in extreme poverty suffer from multiple violations of their human rights and that they themselves are the first to act to change their situation and that of their families.

Based on internationally agreed human rights principles and standards, the Draft Guiding Principles (DGPs) aim to provide practical guidance on how to operationalize the obligations of States to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of persons living in extreme poverty.

They also aim to assist and harmonize action undertaken by actors at all levels involved in poverty eradication.

Why are the guiding principles necessary?

The guiding principles will set out the actions to be taken by all relevant actors – governments, the private sector, civil society and the international community – in order to ensure that people living in extreme poverty are able to enjoy all of their rights. They will be founded on the indivisibility and effectiveness of human rights and on the participation of those most affected by extreme poverty and exclusion in the decisions affecting their lives.

Their adoption would be a great step forward in the fight to eradicate extreme poverty in that they will.

- Recognize that extreme poverty and exclusion from society constitute a violation of human dignity
- Recognize the principle that priority attention should be given to the poorest and most excluded
- Provide the basis for long-term solutions to extreme poverty
- Clearly define the responsibilities of national governments, non-state actors and the international community
- Facilitate a coordinated approach between all stakeholders, grounded in the realities of the lives of people living in extreme poverty

What is the process for developing the guiding principles?

In 2001, an ad hoc group of experts were entrusted by the former UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights with the task of preparing the DGPs. Inspired by the experiences of people living in extreme poverty, a first version was presented to the Human Rights Council (HRC) in 2007.

At the request of the HRC, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) carried out consultations to obtain the views of all stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations, especially those in which people living in extreme poverty express their views.

In October 2009, the HRC requested the Independent Expert on human rights and extreme poverty to submit a progress report presenting her recommendations on how to improve the DGPs to the Council.

This progress report was submitted (A/HRC/15/41) to the HRC in September 2010. The HRC subsequently adopted a resolution which invites the OHCHR to hold before June 2011 a broad consultation on the DGPs on the basis of the annotated outline included within the progress report. This will lead the Independent Expert to submit a final draft of the DGPs in September 2012 with a view to their adoption by the HRC.

What can you do to support their adoption?

- Lobby your government to give priority to the DGPs, and contribute to their finalization and adoption by encouraging them to contribute to the OHCHR's consultation process (early 2011).
- Follow the development of the DGPs by regularly checking the websites of the OHCHR, and encourage organizations working with people living in extreme poverty to participate in the consultations on each successive draft.
- Use the DGPs to encourage UN human rights bodies and States to continue their work on the eradication of extreme poverty, including by supporting the work of the Independent Expert on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty.
- Post articles about the DGPs on your website, or publish them in your newsletters.

“ Wherever human beings 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, Commemorative Stone in Honour of Victims of Extreme Poverty laid on the Liberties and Human Rights Plaza in Paris, 1987

For more information on the Draft Guiding Principles:
www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/poverty/consultation/index.htm
www.atd-fourthworld.org/-Human-rights-and-extreme-poverty-.html

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