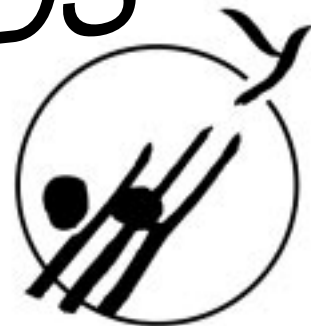


# LETTER TO FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD

Permanent Forum on Extreme Poverty in the World



International Movement ATD Fourth World  
107, avenue du Général Leclerc - 95480 Pierrelaye - France

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## *A new force stronger than extreme poverty*

Most of the time the world's media bring us news that is serious and alarming: wars, corruption, injustice, natural disasters, millions of people living below the poverty line, thousands of homeless people surviving by holding out their hand, even in the so-called "rich" countries.

Did they tell us about the great hope that has manifested itself through the "Ending extreme poverty, a road to peace" campaign? Did they tell us about the

thousands upon thousands of messages accompanying the Call to Action which revealed a tremendous sense of solidarity, a tremendous tenderness, a tremendous thirsting for justice? The diversity of the people from 152 countries who signed the Call to Action is quite staggering: massive numbers of young people, adults, senior citizens, children; and people from every walk of life: farmers, teachers, tradesmen, students, shopkeepers, the unemployed, artists, athletes, professors, people who cannot read or write, and many others.

This year the celebration of 17th October, World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty, was organised on an exceptional scale in Paris around the first Commemorative Stone in honour of victims of extreme poverty and in many other varied locations throughout the world. Whether the event was on a worldwide scale or a gathering in a district or village, the convictions and solidarity demonstrated on that day have the same capacity to bring about positive changes. On this 17th October, the thousands of signatures and associated comments were officially handed over to the



October 17, 2007, Plaza of Human Rights and Liberties, Paris.

Secretary General of the United Nations and to public figures in several countries. Young people reached out to meet other young people through the European Solidarity Caravans. Children shared their dreams with other children, showing how right a homeless man from Paris was when he told us: "It's with children that the change must begin. We won't be here tomorrow, but they will make the world what it is after us."

The next Letter to Friends will tell you as much as possible about all this. For the moment, let's just be aware of this new force which inspires and attracts so many people in so many countries. Let us continue, each of us together, to be players in this worldwide movement against extreme poverty originating from the life and commitment of Joseph Wresinski – a man who gave his life, his intelligence and his prayers to pay homage to victims of hunger, extreme poverty and violence and with them to transform our societies.

HUGUETTE REDEGELD  
VICE PRESIDENT

## • Health campaign in the Kokoro district in Central African Republic

My district called Kokoro Boeing is located south of the capital city, Bangui, near the airport. It has 32,000 inhabitants, many of whom are gardeners and farmers, and there are also some civil servants. The district has no facilities: no road for cars to take people to hospital in an emergency, no drinking water, no electricity and no drainage.

I've lived here since 1972. In November and December we are at peace because it's the dry season. But in April when the rain falls regularly the district is flooded. We have to live in the water, our children cannot even leave the house to play with their friends, and it is bad for their health. The market becomes flooded too. We don't even have anywhere to put the produce we've brought from the fields to sell. In the case of the poorest people, when it rains and they've gone to the fields, they often find when they get back that their house has collapsed. For us who are the poorest, when our houses collapse like this, where can we go, who will house us?

I became a friend of the International Movement ATD Fourth World in 2003, and since then with the permanent volunteers we have visited many people throughout the district to get to know the families, many of whom have sick

children. So this year we have launched a health campaign, starting with awareness sessions for small groups of mothers. They gathered, they thought about the problem, and it was they who had the idea of cleaning the district's canals and the Kokoro canal. These mothers wanted to do the work, but they knew they didn't have the strength. So they told their husbands and children about this work. The men agreed to arrange a meeting with the chiefs in the district. The chiefs also agreed to go from door to door asking for food to give to people who agreed to do the work.

The work was mainly done by young people. There were six groups, each with their office and managers. The work began at 7.30 or 8 in the morning and they worked until 1 pm. First of all they had to clear the brush from the banks using machetes, and then they dug holes so that the water could flow. In some places the work was hard because the water was blocked by dams built for traditional fishing. There were also water snakes, leeches, broken bottles and all kinds of rubbish to deal with.

Some groups worked on Saturdays, others for two days a week, others several days in succession.

It's the unmarried men who do most of the work, but they cannot work for very long, because when they return home, as families are extended in Africa, they have to bring something back, they have to find something to eat.

On some days there were 20 people working, on other days four or five. Several have finished the task they'd set themselves, while others are still working.

The mothers helped them in the work, and also brought water, made them coffee and brought manioc leaves to eat for the young workers.

Because with the local population we have achieved what we set out to do for the health of the inhabitants of our district, on Saturday 14th April we organised a celebration. Our authorities were present and we showed them what we had achieved and asked them to carry out maintenance of the work. There was a football match, an exhibition of paintings and photos of the work sites. We had a meal together and then said goodbye, returning to our homes.

I would like to end my letter by throwing a bouquet of flowers towards all the young people throughout the world who come together to eradicate poverty and all the young people in my district of Kokoro. I don't think we will have flooding this year in Kokoro. When we return from the fields, we will go back to our homes and sleep, with peace in our hearts.

LOUISE, KOKORO-BOEING, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



## • History of the Tsiry Association

My name is Niriy and I am from the village of Sahamadio, 11 kilometers from Ambatolampy which is 70 km south of Antananarivo. I was lucky enough to go to the public primary school in my village, then my father sent me to the sisters in Antsirabe as a boarder in order to pursue my studies up to the final year. I am married with two children and I live in Antananarivo. My husband is a gardener and I am a house-cleaner.

One Sunday in the village church, the texts were read by some youngsters. They slowly, and with great difficulty, made out each word. I was ashamed. After the mass I asked their parents, "What can we do to get our village out of such poverty? A literacy campaign?" But the youngsters have to work in order to eat. Other parents said that we should begin with the children.

Many children live in the bush surrounding my village. Some have to walk nearly 10 km every morning and evening to attend school.

I asked the parents if they would agree to form an association, but nobody knew how to do so. I started asking for advice everywhere.

In 1987, after a year's negotiations, the association was organised and recognised by the administration. The name "Tsiry", given to it by the parents, means a "sprout" coming out of the ground, which grows and which will remove the poverty from our village.

We started to collect subscription fees from the parents, 1000 Ar per year from each. We then bought vegetables, beans, rice, and maize at the harvest time when prices are low, and sold them later to make a profit. With the profits, we bought school supplies and paid the fees (registration and general expenses) for three children who passed their

primary school exam, and we sent them to the sisters in Fianarantsoa. To-day one of these children has his baccalaureat diploma.

Thanks to one of the sisters, we learned that the parents could get a training course with "Swiss Inter-Cooperation". They learned embroidery, and how to transform local produce such as potatoes, maize and foie gras... They were taught how to rear chickens and how to make honey. We sold these products in the market and made contacts in foreign countries.

With the money from these sales, we paid scholarships for secondary school and, in 2003, we started to rent a room in the village of Ihazolava, where there is the possibility of doing secondary studies. We had two double beds, one for the boys and one for the girls. We managed to accommodate up to five or six children per bed. We paid for mid-day lunches in the secondary school cafeteria and each child would bring wood for the heating and food for cooking the meals together. Bit by bit we added beds, and the number of children increased. There was always one parent who would stay with the children. That same year the association was able to buy a plot of land on which the parents built a house for free.

For four years, we benefitted from a subsidy from the Inter-Cooperation which covered the registration fees, cafeteria, school supplies and trips for the children. These resources have now stopped and we are starting the new year with nothing but our own efforts.

To-day there are 22 children who benefit from this centre and we pay for the schooling of nine other children elsewhere.

Niriy, Madagascar

## Letters to the Editor

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• "I would like to apologize for having only been a 'consumer' of this *Letter to Friends Around the World*. However, I always read it with great interest and admiration, and I often tell myself that I too have witnessed gestures of courage, of goodness or of solidarity among the poorest people. Occasionally, I have had the newsletter read to the young people under my supervision. But I have often felt that I have no one to speak with..."

Sr. ROSE-MARIE B., BURKINA FASO

• "In our organization, we really thank you for the *Letter* we get three times per year. It gives us experience on how other people live, set up projects and run them. This benefits us to gain wide experience. Although we are still facing financial problems, we are hoping one day we will reach our destination."

ROSTER R.M., TANZANIA

• "For me, it has been a great pleasure to receive the *Letter to Friends Around the World*, which I take great care of, for the past few years. It allows us to know about

the development of the Forum, the difficulties that the others also have, the actions led by our friends to struggle against extreme poverty. Different testimonies have enlightened us. The "Pre-school of the Future" that we opened, and that welcomes 47 children who have never set foot in a classroom, is run by two volunteer workers. And the parents, who are very happy, bring them provisions."

THÉODORE M., CAMEROONIAN LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

• "...In the struggle for the eradication of poverty... I collaborated in campaigns such as 'warmth and love', during the Falkland Islands war, in Palermo's 'problem neighborhoods', during the 1985 flood, and more, and I learned that together we can do more. Once the basic necessities are fulfilled, we can face the adversities of life better and, in any case, we can each be committed to giving (to poor people) the same things that we ourselves benefit from each day, without always appreciating them.

Personally, I have projects and ideas that can easily be put into place but I cannot do it alone. There are simple things that can easily be set up and with which people can collaborate without it requiring too much effort and individual contribution, but instead efforts undertaken jointly.

It's not a question of devaluing a person who possesses things or who is 'rich', because there are sensitive people in all social backgrounds, people who act in solidarity with others. Sometimes they simply do not know what to do and how to contribute. Our task is to be propagators of the idea that 'we can all contribute'."

MARIA TERESA L.V., ARGENTINA

• "We would like to receive this type of *Letter*. We as Sierra Leoneans will start a movement to talk about poor people in Sierra Leone to be included, instead of being excluded from society. It gives us great joy to see that people out there are bent on eradicating not only poverty, but that which goes to the extreme."

MUSA F.K., ARUNA T., SIERRA LEONE

## SOME THOUGHTS ON MODERN MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

### HOW CAN WE MAKE MODERN MEANS OF COMMUNICATION OUR OWN?

For a long time, communication was a tool for making contact between people. It remains a very efficient means at their disposal for understanding each other, evaluating their degree of poverty, and consoling each other. A situation or a problem can only be brought to other's attention through speech, which constitutes a basic element of communication. Concerning modern means of communication, they have remained, up to the 21st century, a luxury in poor countries, a modern convenience to which the poor masses do not readily adhere. Communication calms hearts that have been wounded by war and famine, and softens spirits. Through communication, we are able to create an atmosphere of love, peace and understanding. Modern means can play the same role if everyone could be in a position to make them their own.

ESTHER A., FROM THE NGO "JEUNESSE EPANOUÏE", TOGO

### OVER 5,000 "INTERNET CAFÉ REFUGEES"

Japan estimates that there are over 5,000 "Internet café refugees", the majority of which are young people who are often too poor to rent an apartment, and who take up residence in Internet cafés open 24 hours a day, according to a government study made public yesterday. For several months, the Japanese media has been attracting attention to this problem, which mostly affects young workers with precarious employment who don't earn enough money to find housing... Some Internet cafés have meals and even showers, and sell undergarments... The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs plans to send counselors to these "refugees" to help them find better-paying jobs and to manage their budget to include housing. This phenomenon illustrates the increasing social gap in Japan since the economic recession of the 1990's. (...)

NEWSPAPER "LA PRESSE", QUEBEC, AUGUST 29, 2007

### CONFERENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERNET IN AFRICA, HELD IN KIGALI

An international conference on the development of the Internet in Africa, which suffers from a significant delay in this area, opened its meeting in Kigali on Monday. "The objective of this summit will be to talk about the application of strategies that will allow the African continent to place information technology in the service of development," explained Hamadou Toure, the General Secretary of the International Telecommunication Union, a partner in the organization of this meeting.

In addition to the Rwandan president Paul Kagame, six heads of state of African countries - Amadou Toure (Mali), Bingu Wa Mutharika (Malawi), Blaise Compaoré (Burkina Faso), Abdoulaye Wade (Senegal), Ismael Omar Guelleh (Djibouti) and Pierre Nkurunziza (Burundi) - participated in the conference "Connect Africa" which concludes on Tuesday.

"At least 300 million dollars will be invested in projects aimed at the promotion of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) on the entire African continent between now and 2012," explained Mr. Toure, emphasizing that an initiative like this needs the active involvement of the private sector.

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, OCTOBER 29, 2007

*The dialogue on communication and modern means of communication was started in the Letter to Friends Around the World no. 61 and continued in the Letter no. 65.*

*Send us your experiences and thoughts by e-mail to: [forum.permanent@atd-quartmonde.org](mailto:forum.permanent@atd-quartmonde.org) or by post.*

DRAWING BY JACQUELINE PAGE – PAGE SETUP: LYDIE ROUFFET

The "Permanent Forum on Extreme Poverty in the World." is a network of committed people who want to develop friendship and exchange knowledge about what the poor and very poor teach us, i.e. people who suffer from multiple disadvantages in the areas of education, housing, employment, health and culture; those who are criticised and rejected the most. This forum invites people who want to be part of a movement rejecting extreme poverty worldwide to join it, to rebuild communities with the poorest, inspired by their lives. This movement expresses itself in the Letter to Friends around the World, which publishes the texts written by its correspondents three times a year, in French, English and Spanish. The Permanent Forum is run by the International Movement ATD Fourth World, an international NGO whose headquarters are at Pierrelaye, France. Those who join the forum do so in their own right, and are not obliged to become members of the ATD Fourth World. Our e-mail address is: [forum.permanent@atd-quartmonde.org](mailto:forum.permanent@atd-quartmonde.org)  
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