



ATD Fourth World Movement  
International gathering “Pamoja kwa wingine”  
Bangui – Central African Republic  
3 – 9 January 2011



## **PAMOJA KWA WINGINE**

We are young people from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, the Comoro Islands, France, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Tanzania and the Central African Republic. We have come together in Bangui, “together for others”.

The paths opened up by some of our older brothers and sisters are a source of strength for us. For Father Joseph Wresinski, founder of the ATD Movement, ‘Every man is an opportunity for the whole of humanity.’

We realize that the reconstruction of our countries is not simply the responsibility of the government. It is everybody’s responsibility. We shouldn’t always look at things through the eyes of people who decide things in society. We should decide. If I decide that I’m building the world, I am capable of convincing others to decide this for themselves.

Young people are hindered in many ways. This is true for most young people but it is especially true for the very poorest amongst them. Poverty comes to seem like their birthright, so some people believe that it’s impossible to escape from the path on which their parents found themselves.

Some of us haven’t been able to get on in school because they have to work. One of the difficulties young people from poor families face is the inability to keep up with their classmates. For example, young people from more privileged backgrounds can go and study abroad whilst students here often have to lose a number of years of studies.

Even when you go for a job, you have to have money. If you don’t have a parent to buy you a position, however intelligent you are, you will never get a job. Those who have no one to “push their case” are abandoned and left to their own fate, crushed under the weight of misery. And later on they are then considered as problems!.

We know young people who have experience and talent but if their parents are impoverished and cannot buy them the material they need for school, they do not make progress. You may want to get on in life, but if no one is there to support you, your efforts are fruitless. In spite of their efforts, parents’ words are spoken in vain and this can dash all your hopes.

For girls, it is even harder. For example, for those who come to the city to work as maids, it is unusual for them to find decent conditions. They come to earn their trousseau, a fine trousseau that the entire village will talk about. These girls want to live like the other girls they see in the city. But with a paltry salary which isn’t even regular, they often end up in the street. Wanting what other young people have can lead you to fall into a way of life that doesn’t help your family. This is how many young people end up crazy in the street.

When there is nothing in the country, despair and poverty push young people to leave. That affects the development of the country. Leaving often isn’t a solution. You have to start your life from nothing. And if you leave your country in anger, it’s not sure that you will find happiness on the other side of the border.

Not accepting the people you live alongside creates insecurity. There is also the kind of insecurity in some of our countries which prevents young people from expressing their views concerning respect for their rights. In the same way, war too destroys people's dreams and hopes.

Some young people who have not managed to progress with their studies find it difficult to approach young people who have, even those in the same neighbourhood. They are afraid that the others will feel superior. Experiences like this make them want to stay in their corner.

Someone might know something but they can't explain it because of fear. They want to explain it but they are scared people won't accept their ideas. A lot of young people believe they are not capable of anything. They are stuck on this idea. Because they don't know how to move forward, they close in on themselves. As a result they don't discover what they are capable of. They have dreams but they can't share them with others. True despair is to have no one.

Real poverty is not daring to do things; it's cutting yourself off from others. That's a killer!

Poverty stifles our humanity. Life would be better if people realised that we are not animals but human beings. Is it finished, the time when the values of justice, truth and fairness were upheld? Yet there are fundamental truths which hold societies together. Respect is the minimum value. Without respect there is only violence. In the silence of our looks is respect.

You get strength from being in a group. You realise you are not the only one facing such hardship. The new things we learn together help us get unstuck when we are blocked. If young people could meet together everywhere, new projects would be born, and everyone would have hope.

By caring for others, you discover yourself and you become yourself. Solidarity is the fact of taking other people's problems as your own.

But you have to recognize that living in solidarity with others is not easy. This is especially true when people around us are negative about what we do. Instead of praising our commitment, they criticise us or are suspicious of us. Committing ourselves to people in poverty is also considered risky.

Among us, not everybody is strong. If we turn our backs on those who are weak, how could they go forward without us? If you are strong and intelligent but don't share with others, you are not credible in the eyes of someone who has never been to school, because your life isn't witness to anything. Your unwillingness to share doesn't make sense.

We have to support each other and hold each other up. Without that nothing is possible. If we can put that into practice in our neighbourhoods, our churches and our communities then things will really change.

We can do good. We can cause harm. We are our own future.  
We young people have hands and hearts for building the world.

-----