



All Together in Dignity: ATD Fourth World's Common Ambitions for 2013-2017¹

Gaps in living conditions between people struggling against extreme poverty and others continue to grow. In recent years, major ongoing crises—environmental, economic, political, and others—have hit populations in extreme poverty the hardest, reinforcing the human rights violations families in poverty already suffer. The violence of extreme poverty, ignorance, deprivation and contempt isolates people and locks them in silence to the point where they doubt that they are part of the human community. But families in poverty have experiences and knowledge that are important to share and which our society desperately needs.

And yet, too often society's attempts to respond to extreme poverty, whether by running emergency shelters or through large-scale international aid, are planned with almost no consultation with the people this aid is intended to benefit. Our work evaluating the Millennium Development Goals showed that if the poorest are not consulted in every step of a planning process, these initiatives won't reach them.

Our Central Focus: Reaching Out to Those Whose Contribution is Missing

Acting all together in dignity means acting such that all people will be taken into account wherever decisions are made that affect humanity. It means creating an opportunity for the world: when no one is left behind, projects and policies can bring people together instead of dividing them, we can stem the tide of inequality, and we can draw closer to the ideals of justice, freedom and peace.

This central focus is a compass for everything we undertake, be it on our own, with partners, or wherever else each of us may be involved, whether in our communities, places of worship, political parties, labor unions, or elsewhere.

We Must Ask Ourselves:

- Does our team or group work together and support one another to reach out to those who are still missing, welcoming new participants even when we lack the capacity to include a greater number of people?
- How can these people find their place and the freedom to express themselves and to contribute alongside others to our programs and projects?
- How can we link to and learn from other organizations who are also working alongside people struggling against extreme poverty, and how will people in poverty be able to enter into dialogue on the future of our world on the local, national, or international level?

Our First Priority: Building Knowledge and Accessing Education – Every Mind Counts

Education for people of all ages remains a priority around the world because it is far from being achieved. Because people in situations of extreme poverty are prevented from expressing their own experience, they cannot contribute to projects that affect them. Wasting the intelligence of men, women, youth and children living in poverty is a serious form of discrimination and a tremendous waste for society. Their intelligence could contribute to renew our knowledge base so that the struggle to overcome poverty can be truly efficient in building a more just world.

We will work to:

- Identify and recognize existing life skills and how they complement the knowledge taught in schools or training institutions, and to explore how this knowledge can help young people and children to grow within their families and communities to become citizens of the world. For this, we will develop further

¹ *The Common Ambitions for 2013–2017 were chosen based on internal evaluations of our work, on exchanges among 78 groups of our members in 30 different countries around the world, and on two participatory research projects. It builds on our 2008-2012 program. This document is only a summary. To learn more about any of the topics discussed here, including a summary of accomplishments under the previous Common Ambitions period, you can consult the full document at: www.atd-fourthworld.org.*

and promote the Merging Knowledge approach.

- Intensify our contribution to education and ongoing learning for all, based on partnership and cooperation.
- Stimulate the joy of learning together, unleashing hidden potential and creativity to bolster confidence that everyone can learn in all our work (street libraries, people's universities, creative workshops, etc.).
- Support families as the first place of education, learning to notice and support initiatives parents take for the education of their children and the barriers that impede their success, partnering with other organizations, and promoting cooperation, not competition, among learners.
- Develop our ongoing learning programs to prepare ourselves for an ambitious implementation of these commitments. Increase our potential to learn from one another's work through increased internal communication among our teams and members.

Our Second Priority: Shaping a People-Centered and Earth-Friendly Economic Vision

Increasingly, today's economic systems create a permanent state of crisis for people in extreme poverty, driving them to a forced inactivity. Yet, day after day, these people struggle and toil to provide for their families, taking in hand the degraded environment in which they are forced to live and creating their own informal employment and building their own networks of solidarity. Many people around the world, individually or in networks, are engaged in important explorations of alternative economic models whose aim is fostering the well-being of people and communities, especially the most disadvantaged ones.

We will work to:

- Deepen our knowledge of people's efforts to make ends meet and to connect with their community through wage labor, informal or undeclared work, volunteer work, care for sick or disabled family members, etc.
- Continue "Working and Learning Together" projects as part of an international network where access to decent work or to various income-generating activities is linked to community building.
- Explore and experiment with initiatives for the public good or fair trade, support people in their efforts to benefit from labor unions, decent working conditions and social protection. We will bear in mind that projects involving money risk dividing communities instead of strengthening solidarity.
- Participate in dialogues (with universities, think tanks, business leaders, etc.) about the economy and its regulation, both nationally and internationally.
- Develop our partnerships with labor unions and all

stakeholders to obtain full employment and decent work for all, and to implement social protection floors in every country in reference to human rights obligations and the recommendations of the International Labour Office.

- Participate in networks aiming to humanize the economy and alternative networks that contribute to a people-centered economy.

Our Third Priority: Organizing for Human Rights and Peace

It is no longer possible to speak of peace without recognizing the violence of poverty, and the contributions of the poorest towards fighting violence and building peace. Ending extreme poverty depends on public organizing and civic engagement in society. We want all our members to be able to take advantage of the possibilities offered by modern means of communication, while remaining linked to those without access to them, and while continuing to stress the importance of people meeting face to face. By organizing in this way, we can also have greater freedom in the work we choose to develop by expanding our network of friends and donors to broaden our grassroots funding base.

We will work to:

- Engage and organize by learning to integrate communication into the work of all our teams, exploring organizing by using the strength of social networks and other modern means of communication.
- Run public organizing campaigns on issues relating to ending extreme poverty, and make known the life, the work and the writings of our founder, Fr. Joseph Wresinski, particularly around the centenary of his birth, 2017.
- Encourage civic involvement and stimulate dialogue by making known and supporting the involvement of each person or organization that is part of the movement for overcoming poverty, and inviting the general public to act in solidarity with people in extreme poverty.
- Invite people to support us and join in our actions. Make a significant effort to increase the number of friends involved with us, and develop the means to stay in touch with all the people who come into contact with ATD Fourth World.
- Make time for ongoing learning to sustain our will to continue to fight poverty by making sure that no one is alone and that everyone has the chance to talk about key issues coming from his or her involvement in ATD Fourth World. We will work towards a regular rhythm of Movement-wide General Assemblies, and improving our internal communication locally, regionally, and worldwide.