



**INTERNATIONAL
DAY for the
ERADICATION
of **POVERTY****
17 OCTOBER



Commemorative Event to mark the 30th anniversary of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 2022

“Dignity for all in practice: the commitments we make together for social justice, peace and the planet”

Monday, 17th of October 2022

Statement by Andrew Holohan

Can you imagine a world where the dignity of everyone is respected in practice, as is the international theme for 17 October this year?

Can you just imagine living in poverty for 35 years or longer, like I wasn't even born, my mother lived in poverty, struggled against it with all her courage but stood alone and so we also grew up in poverty, so it's way longer to overcome it.

That is the reason I am here; to try and show you that even though I have gone through this that I still have a voice and I intend to use it so my kids don't have to go through what I have gone through.

I live by this quote by Joseph Wresinski and I have made it my mantra: “Wherever men and women 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.”

Wherever we are in the world, if we are to improve access to rights, we need to take account of the hidden dimensions of poverty. The institutional maltreatment, the poverty based discrimination, the shame and stigma of being poor are all obstacles for accessing rights.

In Ireland we are currently engaged in a campaign to include poverty-based discrimination as the tenth ground of discrimination in Irish equality legislation, so that people experiencing socio-economic discrimination,

unequal access to jobs, housing... have a right to legal redress and protection in the law.

To discriminate against someone because of their socio- economic status is to disrespect the inherent dignity that we all hold within us.

Also, we have to remember that Non take up of rights, when people don't access social benefits they are entitled to is neither a lack of interest nor a personal failure of the rights holders but the lack of information about their existence or excessive administrative barriers in accessing these rights. It is important that if this law is introduced in Ireland it also must be fully implemented, as passing a law itself is not enough.

Can you imagine a world where people don't have to worry about poverty or worry about getting a job because you are from a run-down area? Imagine all the lives you could save, because personally speaking when a man can't provide for his family it starts to worry him and in today's society... Men are told and believe that they can't be weak: they can't show emotion. That is why the male suicide rate is so high, because they don't open and talk about the stresses of life, they hold it all in.

Imagine having a law in place where socio economic discrimination isn't allowed, I bet the count for male suicide rates would go down, I can almost guarantee that it would.

When I started with ATD I was really nervous and shy because I felt my voice wasn't important. I thought that my poverty was just the normal, until I saw the unjust system that we live in ... I used to stutter a lot when I spoke.

Then I became a father and that gave me confidence to speak out about the things that matter in life and I was blessed to be given so many chances to make a difference.

You see: once I have breath in my body I will continue to fight for a better future not just for my kids but for all kids.

So if anyone sees me speaking and you feel you don't have a voice, let me tell you this: everyone has a voice, especially those who have gone through poverty. I feel the only way out of poverty is to consult with the experts on poverty, the experts on poverty are the ones that are living in poverty.

The only way I feel we can eradicate poverty is by including them at the tables of power such as this one, so on behalf of everyone that is going through poverty, I would just like to thank you for this opportunity to speak on such a high platform.

Thank you very much.