

Key ideas and notes - Consultation on the proposed themes for October 17 2020

Forum on Overcoming Extreme Poverty

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1. PARTICIPATION

Theme I: "Building the world we want through inclusive dialogue"

Theme II: "Shape a world without poverty through social and environmental justice for all"

At the end of January, we launched a consultation by asking the ATD Fourth World teams, friends of the Forum, and members of the International Committee for October 17 to choose the theme between these two that is closest to their reality.

We thus received a total of 76 contributions, 27 for theme I and 46 for theme II. Three did not choose. These contributions represent 36 countries (see annex).

2. DIALOGUE IS A CROSS-CUTTING ELEMENT FOR BOTH THEMES

2.1 Dialogue, a prerequisite for justice and access to rights

Many people noted that the theme on dialogue should be a mandatory part of the theme on social and environmental justice.

"Our reflections on social and environmental justice can enter and contribute to the broad global debate that the UN@75 campaign aims to achieve. Our input will be useful because it will be concrete." (Janet Nelson, ATD representation at UN Geneva)

"With the notion of dialogue in Theme 1, issues in Theme 2 will be incorporated, such as the environment and climate change, and furthermore the Sustainable Development Goals." (Josephine Alumanah, International Committee for October 17, Nigeria)

"When justice is followed (present) and environment is improved, then poverty will be overcome." (ATD Tanzania)

"The poorest are too often excluded from the decisions that affect them. The theme of the environment is no exception. If the Movement engages in this dialogue, the voices of the poorest will reach out more forcefully to those who do not experience extreme poverty." (ATD Haiti)

2.2 What is inclusive dialogue ? What are the conditions for it ?

Many have expressed in their own words what they mean by "inclusive dialogue".

Here is a text created from words read in the contributions: *"Inclusive dialogue is about getting closer to each other, especially to people in extreme poverty, it is about exchanging, and bringing everyone around the table, without leaving anyone behind. It is a tool to mobilize, no justice can exist without it. If it is inclusive, it is frank. There is a need for a permanent mechanism to make it effective. It enables positive citizenship, brings coherence, enables joint decision-making. It broadens everyone's horizons and provides a safe space. It contributes to peace. It builds social ties. It enables us to understand together and act together, to come up with solutions to the problems we encounter in our daily lives. It is a challenge. »*

"When vulnerable people talk to each other, discuss their living conditions, they easily engage in the fight against poverty through concrete actions." (Réseau d'Action et Paix, DRC).

"It is very urgent to question the forms of consultation and exchange implemented by nations. Dialogue is a vector of practical, active democracy, encouraging the involvement of all stakeholders in the construction of development." (Association of Young Entrepreneurs of Bonassama, Cameroon).

2.3 Action is essential

"Dialogues can ever keep going, the most important task is be ready to lift our sleeves and dirty our hands. Which is seldom done, as talking never ends. Action is what is most needed." (Michael Hubert, India)

2.4 Dialogue is also a concrete action

"We have concrete examples of dialogue: For example, in the context of developing relations and the elaboration of reports with the anti-poverty service. Or that of the Agora where families dialogue with professionals within the framework of the administration of youth assistance." (ATD Belgium)

"In Bolivia, we also experience exclusion in the dialogues, poverty continues. Decisions are always made by professionals, but a more inclusive dialogue, which would take into consideration the people who are affected by the decisions, would lead to greater coherence. It is a real recognition of all to include and work with everyone. Our centre of action is the People's University, which can enable us to create spaces for dialogue and listening that can be extended to other spaces, from school to government." (ATD Bolivia)

"We are trying to give a voice to people living in extreme poverty by singing. The choir is accessible to all. They can express themselves in a non-threatening environment, and can feel like everyone else at such moments." (Anne-Mie De Bosscher, Belgium)

"Last year, we aimed with another organisation to bring professionals and policy makers in one of the slums to have a true and peaceful dialogue with its residents and we did NOT succeed. That will be our aim for this year." (Martin Kalisa, ATD Fourth World, Kenya)

Link between dialogue and current context in the countries

We have noticed that in countries where there are political, social and inter-community conflicts, people have underlined the importance of the dialogue.

Burkina Faso: "The greatest threat facing humanity, and in Africa in particular, is inter-community conflicts, a real source of instability and a vector for the development of terrorism. Only a true inclusive dialogue can contribute to considerably reducing social conflicts. We want to build a world of peace and stability, so we must establish a permanent mechanism for inclusive dialogue." (SEEPAT, Burkina Faso)

Bolivia: "It is a subject that is absolutely related to the reality that we live in Bolivia. It is a constant concern for all the people present around the table." (ATD, Bolivia)

South-East Europe: "We wish to support the mobilization of other groups by proposing one or two simple symbolic gestures, in a complex, tense and sometimes even risky political context." (Benoît and Véronique Reboul-Salze, South-East Europe)

Haiti: "The multiple examples of failures of this tool (of dialogue) at the highest levels of global discussions justify my dubious attitude. Moreover, my country is currently experiencing a profound crisis of communication. Some propose a situational dialogue with a view to providing specific solutions to the socio-economic crisis. This dialogue is going around in circles. In three years, we have had three prime ministers. We no longer have a Parliament. Others like me, through a civil society organization, call instead for a Grand Congress of Inter-Haitian Understanding, an initiative that will have the effect of deciding in a participatory manner on the positions to be taken on the major issues of the nation such as social justice and the environment." (Florence Elie, International Committee for October 17, Haiti)

3. EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY IS TO BE IN THE LONG TERM

The word "responsibility" came up especially in relation to the theme of inclusive dialogue. But also in the contributions on social and environmental justice.

"Dialogue is essential in the life of the community, for every man is responsible for building his world (neighbourhood, surroundings...). Everyone, including the poor or the voiceless, has the right to express themselves and thus be able to take responsibility for building a desired world." (Ms. Consolate Nsabayumva, Burundi).

"Everyone is a stakeholder and shares the responsibility that would lead to the achievement of the goals (= building the world we want)." (Mr Neabei TOAH, Liberia)

"Poverty is a question of equity, because the involvement of everyone will enable us to get out of poverty together." (Arouna Gbetnkom, Cameroon)

We do not resist raising the rapport between what these people relate to and the short chapter on responsibility, a vital need for the soul, in Simone Weil's book, "The need for Roots, prelude towards a declaration of duties towards mankind", first published in 1949. Here is an excerpt from the text: *«Initiative and responsibility, to feel one is useful and even indispensable, are vital needs of the human soul. Complete privation from this point of view is the case of the unemployed person, even if he receives assistance to the extent of being able to feed, clothe and house himself. For he represents nothing at all in the economic life of his country, and the voting paper which represents his share in its political life doesn't hold any meaning for him. The manual labourer is in a scarcely better position. For this need to be satisfied it is necessary that a man should often have to take decisions in matters great or small affecting interests that are distinct from his own, but in regard to which he feels a personal concern. [...] Every social organism, of whatever kind it may be, which does not provide its members with these satisfactions, is diseased and must be restored to health.»*

4. SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

4.1 Interdependence, complementarity between the two terms

Many contributions identify and affirm the links between social and environmental justice. "But these links need to be worked on and discussed in order to reveal, demonstrate and combine them. It is important that October 17 contributes to reinforcing this global awareness."

"We experience the pressing need for an 'ecology of daily life' (Pope Francis). We express a willingness to consider the poor themselves as protagonists in decisions concerning the environment and the use of natural resources." (Jean Bosco, Concordia-Ineza Foundation, Rwanda).

"I feel like we have been missing stories that show the link. We need to show more how persons living in poverty are affected by climate change and environmental issues and show how they contribute to a healthier environment." (Susie Devins, ATD North America)

"The most disadvantaged people must not be collateral victims of measures taken to combat environmental and climate change. On the contrary, they can be a source of proposals to make this transition an opportunity to improve living conditions for all." (Collective October 17 France).

"The poorest are the first to be concerned and there is an urgent need to make it heard, particularly by all young people who are committed to the fight against global warming, that it must be directed towards the struggle to eradicate extreme poverty." (ATD Haiti)

4.2 We develop actions

"It reminds me of all those families in eastern DR Congo whose homes have been hit by landslides or floods. They often lack financial and material resources. Shaping a world without poverty also requires the solidarity of children and families who initiate solidarity actions to repair a family's house, to rebuild the makeshift retaining wall, to dig the sewer on the avenue so that rainwater does not wash away people and goods in its path. It also means acting like these families from the Isampulu village in Kinshasa (with the CADF association) who support each other to build their houses on stilts to avoid flooding and disease. This theme therefore implies solidarity not only between people in deep poverty but also towards them." Justin Byamungu (International Committee for October 17, DRC)

"I'm handicapped myself and I live in a rural area. Since 2007 I have been fighting to promote income-generating activities that can help people with disabilities to join the economic and social circuit of the country. To achieve this, I have created an artisanal soap factory, a palm oil production unit and a mill to crush cassava." (Dieudonné Mengela, Cameroon).

"Most of the projects we support are related to environmental issues. We seek to ensure that the most affected and vulnerable are the protagonists of change. In one of our latest projects, we worked with Caritas and the women recyclers of a cooperative in Cordoba on plastic recycling. A project led by a professor at the Technological University, who specializes in chemistry and plastics recycling." (Cecilia Losano, Argentina).

"In the context of the struggle against poverty and in particular energy poverty, we are working to develop and promote circular economy." (Habitat for Humanity, Poland).

4.3 The poorest experience injustice and stigma

We think it is important that the concept note mentions the stigma that people living in poverty experience.

"There is public stigmatization around people living in poverty who, due to the use of environmentally unfriendly heating materials, accuse them of contributing more and more to air pollution." (Maja Gerovska Mitev, Macedonia).

"The protection of our environment is a human right, which also goes hand in hand with social justice because families living in poverty are not taken into account in the development and dialogue around climate change." (ATD FW Mauritius)

"Climate change means that some remain poor and others are growing at cruising speed. Promoting issues related to gender justice would be part of an unprecedented development effort to achieve social justice." (Arsène BASSOBE, Monde des Vulnérables Actifs, DRC)

"Among the peasant populations of Katanda, no one is unaware of the extreme poverty. Due to the lack of drinking water this February we lost a young woman and a young man, killed by crocodiles while they were fetching water from the Lubilanji River." (Jean Mulowayi Mambula, CDT, DRC).

"I see the smoke in the neighbourhoods that children are forced to breathe, the unfavourable environment where the poorest people are forced to live." (ATD Haiti).

4.4 Influence of the economic and financial world

Several contributions show the interdependence of the environment and social issues with the globalized economy, control by big business and investor interests (e.g. over-exploitation of natural resources), consumerism, industry and technology.

"Technological and industrial inventions must not continue to destroy the environment and further impoverish the population. Let us make technology a use for the environment and the good of all, not a sick use." (Christian Rhugwasanye, ATD Burundi)

"Indigenous peoples derive the bulk of their survival from natural resources, sources of income, food, energy, housing, health care, etc. The most advanced countries that have already taken advantage of their natural resources by endangering the climate are forcing poor countries to refrain from exploiting their natural forest resources in order to combat climate change." (Dieudy Makano, CADF, DRC)

"The past decades have seen fundamental attacks on democracy and human rights. Governments are elected "democratically" in name but are increasingly controlled by business entities and investor interests. Those living in poverty and exclusion have been further pushed out in the margins. We need to recapture the political space." (Aye Aye Win, International Committee for October 17, Myanmar)

"The world has undergone an unprecedented development process in recent decades, resulting in technological progress, yet a quarter of the world's population remains poor, mainly in low-income countries, particularly in Africa." (Manal LADRAA and Azzedine DAID, Algeria).

4.5 Links with the Sustainable Development Goals

In their contributions, 10 people noted a link with the SDGs and the 2030 agenda

"The issue of fundamental rights must be tied to the SDGs as they make the perfect link between human development and the environment. Between SDG 1 (eradicating poverty) and SDG 17 (partnership with the poorest and global partnership), the latter proposes a methodology... that of cooperation! " (Lise Schaffauser, UNAPP, Collective October 17 France)

5. TITLE – THEME FORMULATION

5.1 Some proposals for reformulation

"No environmental nor social justice without inclusive dialogue" (Crispin Nkonzi, DRC)

"Respect the environment while respecting everyone's rights" (Hugues de Courtivron, France)

"Building a world of social and environmental justice for all" (Janet Nelson, USA)

“Environmental protection and fight against poverty go hand in hand for a sustainable future” (Manal Ladraa and Azzedine Daid, Algeria)

5.2 Further remarks on the topics

Poverty: The formulation of theme 1 was questioned. And many of us are confused, first of all because no reference was made to extreme poverty”.

Inclusion in what ?: "I don't like the term inclusion, it's like some people do things well and others have to include themselves, for me it's better to "think and reflect together".

Building: "The word 'Building' is commonly used in everyday life by people we meet. »

Environmental justice: the concept note should explain what "environmental justice" is. Is it fair behaviour that is owed to the environment and is necessary to preserve a liveable environment? Is it just a question of balance, a threat of pollution?

Have a short and clear theme: "I think the thematic message should be short and to the point". "Both proposals are too long".