

Reaction to the Outcome Document Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT ATD FOURTH WORLD

The International Movement ATD Fourth World welcomes, after two and a half years of negotiations, the Outcome Document “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” that Member States will adopt this coming September. ATD Fourth World has actively contributed to the process, informed by the findings of its [participatory research](#) project on sustainable development, which reached over 2,000 people worldwide, the majority living in poverty.

Leave No One Behind

Based on its grassroots experience with the implementation of the MDGs, and the results of its participatory research, from the beginning ATD Fourth World has advocated for the inclusion of the principle to leave no one behind. From the High Level Panel on Post 2015 to the final text, this idea has made its way. Defended by most Member States during the final negotiations, it is mentioned in the second paragraph of the Preamble - *we pledge that no one will be left behind* - as well as in four other paragraphs. The principle is upheld through data disaggregation in paragraph 48 and by the commitment to reach *the furthest behind first* in paragraph 4, which is integral to reducing the disparity in outcomes between the most marginalized and those who are closer to international poverty lines.

ATD Fourth World also welcomes the fact that in the same spirit, paragraph 4 wishes to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. While ATD Fourth World would have preferred stronger language, as “commit” instead of “wishes”, and a mention of all economic and social groups, as proposed by many delegations, we will work with other actors to make sure that the poorest and most marginalized are included among the different “segments of society” in efforts to achieve the Goals and targets.

Human Rights and participation

The International Movement ATD Fourth World has historically championed a people-centered approach to development and it is pleased with the reference to the centrality of human dignity and poverty eradication in the document. Controversial until the final hours of the negotiations, human rights appear as a central component of the Preamble and the Declaration and are mentioned in the three other parts of the document.

Some of the critical victories in this area include language on human rights and the *humane treatment of refugees and of displaced persons, and of migrants regardless of migration status*¹; and references to *labour rights; the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; the labour standards of ILO and the Convention on the Rights of the Child*².

¹ Paragraph 35

² Paragraph 67

ATD Fourth World also welcomes the reaffirmation of the commitment *regarding the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation*³; that being said, there was a lack of political will to concretize human rights throughout the document and include words such as “fulfill and realize.” Almost all uses of the term “access to” could have been effectively replaced with “right to”. This language would significantly enhance the power of people to claim their rights, and its absence is one of the most significant shortcomings of the text.

In ATD Fourth World’s participatory research, people living in poverty made a direct link between participation, dignity, and more effective poverty eradication programs.

Although the conception of the 2030 Agenda has been a participatory policy-making process, the text could have gone further on language endorsing the principle of participation, especially of the furthest behind. A truly transformative agenda aiming at the eradication of poverty would have required a vision where people living in poverty and social exclusion would *enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political participation as well as equal opportunities [...]*

for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels (Paragraph 20). While this empowering language is in the document, it only refers to women. While participation of all stakeholders and all people is mentioned in the Preamble as vital to the partnership required to implement the new agenda, the poorest and most vulnerable are mentioned throughout the text only in relation to their needs and never as valuable partners and agents of change.

Equality, Non-discrimination and Inclusion

The resolve to *combat inequalities and build peaceful, just and inclusive societies* as affirmed in the Declaration is highly related to “leave no one behind”. Elsewhere in the document there are important allusions to inclusion through terms such as *non-discrimination; respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; equal opportunity; equal access; equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world*⁴. In line with these commitments, the UN [Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights](#), drafted with the participation of people living in extreme poverty, and based on the experience of governments, human rights experts, and civil society, provide solid guidance for countries seeking inclusive development.

One of the shortcomings of the document in the area of social inclusion is the failure to meaningfully address the discrimination that disproportionately affects people living in poverty.

In this sense ATD Fourth World regrets the omission in paragraph 19 of the reference to the *human rights and fundamental freedoms enjoyed by all without discrimination*

“Who wants this kind of life? We dream of a better life, including decent housing and a full education for everyone. We make an effort to move on, but we cannot do very much alone. We need support.

We also wish to contribute to development, excluding no one, leaving no one behind. We want to work together as partners. This is how everyone’s dignity and rights can be respected”

Participatory research, participant from the Philippines

“What also keeps us in poverty are the discrimination and humiliations faced by the poor. The way the poor are looked at is so harsh that poverty remains hidden: people are ashamed.”

Participatory research, participant from France

³ Paragraph 7

⁴ Paragraphs 6 and 8

on grounds of economic situation that was in a draft version of the document.

While there are several mentions of *income inequality* in the text as well as a quick reference to *the disparities of opportunity, wealth and power*⁵ or the need to empower the vulnerable⁶, there are no proposals to address the unequal distribution of power among income and social groups both in the creation of knowledge and in the design of policies that would lead to a truly transformative agenda. Perhaps we as representatives of civil society failed to convey this message in a strong and convincing manner.

Means of Implementation

ATD Fourth World welcomes the emphasis on public finance as key to ensuring access to basic services and public goods. At the same time it is regrettable that the text does not mention the necessity of national and international tax reform and effective international tax cooperation to address the inadequacy and inequity of tax regimes. Progressive tax systems would both redress income inequalities and provide sufficient resources to finance universal access to social services and social protection floors in the majority of countries.

ATD Fourth World regrets that the text has not redressed the excessive weight the Addis Ababa Action Agenda placed on the private sector, whose approach to providing basic services carried the danger of being fee-based and therefore out of the reach of those living in extreme poverty. The text also lacks a vision for meaningful regulation, social accountability and environmental safeguards for the public sector.

While the agenda carries the potential for positive impact in the lives of many people, the big question is whether Member States will be able to collectively mobilize the resources necessary for the implementation both at national and international levels.

Follow-up and Review

The Preamble and Declaration establish a level of ambition to which all people will need to aspire in order to really transform our world. Yet, within this document, the follow-up and review mechanism is not in keeping with the ambitions. The language in this section is weak and over-emphasizes the voluntary nature of the review. The section lacks detail and a clear commitment to mechanisms and timelines, including for citizens to hold their governments accountable. Moreover, there is no emphasis on the direct participation of people living in poverty in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policies and programs that will implement the SDGs. And yet the effectiveness of policies and programs to address extreme poverty will depend upon how well they address the factors that place and maintain people in extreme poverty, and enable people living in poverty to have a sense of ownership of the programs. A strong commitment is required to building a participatory approach to governance where local communities and impoverished and marginalized people can be involved in setting priorities and implementing policies. Language on participatory monitoring and accountability based on the vast work done by the governments of Peru, Canada, and Korea on Participatory Monitoring⁷ would have strengthened the text.

⁵ Paragraph 14

⁶ Paragraph 23

⁷ Participatory Monitoring and Accountability: Critical Enablers for the Successful Implementation of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (2015)

ATD Fourth World welcomes the strong principles set out to guide the follow-up and review process, especially the particular focus on *the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind*⁸. Member States could have shown a more concrete commitment to this idea by agreeing that targets should be considered met only if they are met for the lowest quintile of any population.

While this section encourages the participation of civil society and other stakeholders, ATD Fourth World regrets that concrete mechanisms for meaningful participation such as a national stakeholder report⁹, which was recommended by the Secretary-General, have not been retained.

ATD Fourth World agrees that the *global review will be primarily based on national official data sources*¹⁰. That said, other sources, including from civil society, will be crucial to monitor the progress of those furthest behind, which often are not adequately covered in official data collection systems. In view of the work of the Inter Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators, ATD Fourth World proposes the inclusion of qualitative and perception-based indicators as a valuable tool for measuring the impact of people's own experiences and for identifying constraints to implementation, which may not be readily apparent. They can also help to promote and understand stakeholders' perspectives and thus foster their participation.

Conclusion

The 2030 agenda is an historic agreement and much more ambitious and comprehensive than the preceding Millennium Development Goals. The universality of the agenda creates the basis for a different approach to the eradication of poverty and the protection of our planet where all governments will need to commit to achieve the goals and be accountable to their citizens, especially those who have traditionally been left behind in both developed and developing countries.

Thanks to a spirit of openness and inclusion, ATD Fourth World was able to share with the negotiators many of the findings from its aforementioned participatory research project, synthesized in the report entitled [Challenge 2015: Towards Sustainable Development that Leaves No One Behind](#). The self-identified priorities of people living in extreme poverty, detailed in the report, formed the basis for all of the organization's [policy priorities and proposals](#).

The International Movement ATD Fourth World congratulates Ambassadors Macharia Kamau and David Donoghue in their expert co-facilitating of the negotiations, thanks all Member States for the far-reaching work and the ambition of the agenda, and congratulates the UN system for the unprecedented effort to ensure inclusion and participation of all stakeholders. ATD Fourth World looks forward to the opportunity to further engage in the design of indicators and in the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, rooting its contribution in the participation, knowledge and experience of people living in poverty.

⁸ Paragraph 74

⁹ *The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet*(2014) para 149

¹⁰ Paragraph 74