



Letter from the International Leadership Team

Dear friends,

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is going through an unprecedented time. Yet many people — families and whole communities — have faced calamities like this before: epidemics, wars, hunger, and the daily grind and crisis of poverty. We all can learn from the experience of our members — from Port-au-Prince to Antananarivo, Bukavu to New Orleans — who have lived for years in the midst of similar restrictions and emergencies. People facing crises have always found creative ways to come together and help one another, even if it is through small acts of mutual support.

Since ATD Fourth World's origins in the muddy homeless camp at Noisy-le-Grand outside Paris, our members have always used their incredible reserves of courage and shared wisdom to handle whatever difficulties came up. These strengths will also help us face the challenges of the current crisis. We know that whatever lies before us, we will be able to overcome it together, knowing that we have left no one behind.

So, what can we do? What is each one of us prepared to take on? We are all worried, especially when we think of those in fragile health or without access to good health care. But people are already taking the initiative. Our team has been impressed as we hear the same thing from our members around the world: everyone is coming together to figure out who we are, what our movement needs to be at this difficult time.

Just a few days ago we spoke with some of our members in Bangui. These young mediators, socio-cultural outreach workers trained by ATD, have been active in their communities. They are reaching out to share information about the epidemic and how to slow its spread. This calls to mind the ATD members in Haiti from the Welcome Babies project and their work during the cholera epidemic in that country. Through education efforts, demonstrating good hygiene, and making sure everyone got products to disinfect their water, these ATD members helped stop cholera in the neighbourhoods where we work.

Today, we are faced with a similar threat. Once again, we must work together to stop this epidemic. We must empower young people to take action, not just suffer passively. We can support our governments and institutions by making them aware of people in the most fragile situations of health and economic insecurity. It is vitally important to call for equal protection for these most vulnerable people.

In Manila, as in many cities around the world, quarantines are becoming mandatory. Families are prevented from leaving their neighbourhoods. People who make a living by selling bottled water or other goods on the roadside are no longer able to earn money to support themselves. There is fear that this health emergency will become a hunger crisis for those in poverty around the world. Our members in the Philippines, as in France and other countries, wonder how we can cope together and whether people are ready to share their resources.

Of course, sharing resources requires staying in touch with one another. The ATD team in Manila is figuring out how key people who connect communities together can have a working telephone with enough minutes on it. Without this connection, people from different locations can't even give each other news and support.

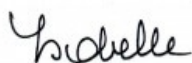
In Belgium, Switzerland, France, and Spain, ATD groups are developing communication networks to make sure that no one is left all alone. "Communicate? How would that help?" asked some ATD members in Spain. It's a way of spreading that experience of resistance that people who know poverty have in them. And it calls on us to create new ways to face these situations together.

And what about children? We must make this crisis a time when they can continue to learn and to build friendships. In Spain, [Taponi](#) has asked children to create arts and crafts projects and share them without leaving their homes. In Brazil, ATD friends made kits for children from supplies such as crayons, paper, and paint that were donated by people who had to cancel family celebrations. And in France, every day teachers and parents call children who have no computer or internet access to keep them connected to school and learning.

We are thinking about people who have nowhere to go but the street, or those separated from their families: prisoners, children in foster care and parents who cannot see them. Also in our thoughts are people who had to leave their country and who struggle to find a welcoming new home. It would be wonderful if we all started to think about sharing with these people not only our resources but also our courage and our friendship. Children often give us terrific ideas; we should make sure we listen to them now more than ever.

The richness of ATD Fourth World is our ability to connect people together, always reaching out to those left behind. We are convinced that we all share a common future. In the coming days and weeks, please stay in touch. We encourage you to tell us how you are living through this difficult time, especially what ideas you come up with to make sure that no one is left behind during this global crisis. Please do not hesitate to write to us.

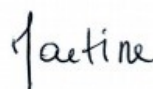
With all our friendship,



Isabelle Pypaert Perrin



Bruno Dabout



Martine Le Corre



Álvaro Iniesta Pérez