

Concept Note

Theme - *“Ending the Violence of Extreme Poverty:
Promoting empowerment and building peace”*

“When you get up in the morning and don’t know where to go, with nothing to feed your children, that is violence. When you have to fight others to defend the little you own, that is violence.”

A mother from Haiti

Extreme poverty destroys the lives and spirit of people; it kills more children, young persons, and adults than any war. Every day, people living in extreme poverty are challenged and threatened by lack of food, shelter and access to essential services. They endure hazardous working conditions and live in precarious, degraded, and insecure living environments.

These living conditions and daily deprivations are violations of Human Rights which provoke, promote and perpetuate emotional, psychological and physical violence. Poor people and their communities regularly experience the pain and shame of humiliation and social exclusion, and are punished by their deprivations and living conditions.

Faced with such violence, people living in extreme poverty are forced to lead lives where

their dignity and rights are seldom respected – they often feel that they are not recognized nor treated as human beings with equal rights. The irony is that society often perceive poor people as the source of violence and as a threat to society, rather than as the victims of violence and crime .

How then can we build a just and peaceful society out of such violence? The first step is to guarantee, protect and respect the dignity and fundamental human rights of individuals and communities in all societies.

First celebrated 25 years ago, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is meant to promote this first critical step by promoting better dialogue and understanding between poor people and their communities, and society at large. It represents an opportunity to acknowledge the efforts and struggles of people living in poverty, a chance for them to speak up and make their concerns heard, and a moment to recognize that poor people are in the

forefront of the fight against poverty (UN Secretary General Report A/61/308).

The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is a call to everyone to gather with people living in extreme poverty to share and exchange information, as equal partners, on initiatives that focus on the most vulnerable and excluded populations, and their active participation in poverty eradication. This day is also a call to strengthen the ways in which we communicate with one another so that we can better share our thoughts, lessons learned, experiences, and act in solidarity against poverty and social injustice.

Only by listening to people living in extreme poverty, can we learn from their courage, experience and knowledge on how to achieve a peaceful world for all. Ultimately, the social transformation that is needed to achieve a peaceful society can only be achieved through the active contribution of everyone, regardless of where they live, or their social and cultural background.

It begins with the recognition that poverty is indeed violence. A man with first-hand experience of poverty in New Orleans shared this personal view:

"When the violence that is experienced by people living in extreme poverty is recognised, that brings a sort of peace to the soul".

Such recognition empowers people in living in poverty and their communities. It informs and

creates awareness in society at large of the relentless violence of extreme poverty and empowers them as well to stand in solidarity with poor people in their daily struggle against deprivations, discrimination, social exclusion, and loss of dignity and human rights. Such empowerment creates the foundation upon which we can build a path to peace and social harmony.

Thus, it is fitting that the 2012 Commemoration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP) will focus on the theme "Ending the violence of Extreme Poverty: Promoting empowerment and building peace". It is our hope that this theme will launch a continuing dialogue among people everywhere about this issue.

The commemoration in New York will be held on Wednesday, 17 October at United Nations Headquarters in New York. In addition to the Commemoration in New York, other events are also being organized worldwide and can be viewed at <http://www.overcomingpoverty.org>.

Through resolution [A/RES/47/196](#) adopted on 22 December 1992, the General Assembly declared 17 October as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and invited all States to devote the Day to presenting and promoting, as appropriate in the national context, concrete activities with regard to the eradication of poverty and destitution.