



INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR OCTOBER 17

Message for the World Day for Overcoming Poverty & the
United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

17th October 2016

The worst thing about living in extreme poverty is the contempt, that they treat you like you are worthless, that they look at you with disgust and fear and that they even treat you like an enemy. We and our children experience this every day, and it hurts us, humiliates us and makes us live in fear and shame.

These are the moving words of an activist describing the humiliation and exclusion experienced by her and many other people who live in poverty.

Her words remind us that humiliation and exclusion is pervasive among the homeless and people living in poverty. When people are treated in a derogatory or demeaning manner, they experience feelings of lowered self-worth or self-esteem or even a loss of pride.

Humiliation experienced by people living in poverty unfairly defines them as the weaker or less important party in an unequal power relationship. They feel humiliated when they feel they are forced to 'beg' for help from officials who are providing social assistance, or they have to endure rude, demeaning, condescending or judgemental behaviour on the part of others.

Often persons who feel humiliated are ashamed to appear in public and, therefore, are socially excluded and unable to freely participate in the economic, social, cultural and political life of their community.

The theme of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty this year is "*Moving from humiliation and exclusion to participation: Ending poverty in all its forms*" and it reminds us that persistent poverty is a denial of human rights and that its eradication takes more than just improving the material well-being of people living in poverty.

Of course, improving the material well-being of people should form the foundation of our efforts to end poverty and, in particular, extreme poverty everywhere.

However, we must not forget that poverty is invariably closely intertwined with humiliation and exclusion. So long as people living in poverty continue to suffer discrimination, humiliation and exclusion, their fundamental human rights will continue to be abused and their access to basic needs will be limited.

We are encouraged by the declaration in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda "to end poverty in all its forms everywhere" because it explicitly recognises that people living in poverty suffer from more than just a lack of income. When the pledge by the United Nations that "no one will be left behind" is effectively implemented it can create the conditions for building peaceful and inclusive societies.

This requires transformational change that promotes society-wide respect and appreciation for the important and valuable social, economic, cultural and political contributions of people living in poverty.

This means transformational change that will ensure the full and effective participation of people living in poverty, particularly in the decisions that affect their lives and communities.

Together we can end humiliation and exclusion. Together we can end poverty everywhere.

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