



## Community Contributions

### UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty

Dublin - 2014

#### A group of adults friends of All Together in Dignity Ireland (ATD)

We are 20 men and women from Dublin who worked together to write this message. Most of us know very well what it means living on a very low income, and some of us have slept in the street. We know what it is to be put down.

To leave no one behind, we have first, to put the homeless on a bigger agenda. They live extreme poverty and are isolated, especially the very young. It's easy to turn to drugs when you're homeless, because you give up. Taking drugs is an easy delusion to life.

Jackie said : « Leaving no one behind means bringing back a homeless person to my home, like some one from my family. I could lose my flat for taking this risk. But I do it because I was homeless. »

Teresa said: « Now I have my flat, but I would not walk past a homeless person. If you're my friend when I'm on the street, You're still my friend when I'm not. »

When you are in the street, it helps a lot when fathers and mothers can keep contact with their children. If you have children, it gives you the will power to say: «We don't want this for them! So, we can start to get help. »

Around town we see homeless people , young and old. Why can't all the empty buildings be used to offer them proper homes ? What can we do to leave no one behind?

We are born equal and in innocence, but our paths in life are not equal.

One father said, « I was left behind at school years ago. The class teacher hit me and I reacted. I told the teacher what I thought of him. I was then thrown out. I was just 13 and school was finished for me. There were no more chances to learn . I stopped going to school. No one ever came to my house to ask « why? ». Yes, I

was left behind. »

It is life long access to education that gives people another chance.

To leave no one behind, we have to understand each other, to take time to walk in each other's shoes, especially when we want to work together.

In everyone's life, it's important to have people who set an example.

Our communities can offer the chance not to be left behind!

For each person who faces hardship and a risk of isolation, for those who receive a prison sentence, let's not turn our backs.

An answer lies in friendship and in the people you get to know in your community; keeping contact and talking with each other; being a good neighbour is very important.

We need to have a sense of humour as well, that we share with others.

It is part of being together.

But we never should, put anyone down.

All this gives you the understanding of belonging somewhere. Everyone should have their chance to make their mark in their community.

Today we want to remember all those who have died in misery, especially those who died during the past year. Their lives were too hard.

Sometimes our lives are the same.

Whether our problems take us to hell and back , we do still have feelings

and we have the right to live with respect.

Our humanity can never be taken away from us.

#### Mariaam from the Migrants Righth Center

My name is Mariaam . I am South African and I came to Ireland in 2010 after I was offered work as an 'Au Pair'.

I would have liked to be here at this important event today but I am not able to do so as many people earning very little would agree with me that missing a day's earnings is not an option even when unwell.

Lack of decent work means many of us working for example as cleaners, restaurant workers, security guards, childminders, farm workers and many others in

unregulated sectors find ourselves working most of our lives and live a very modest life. We only spend when it is really necessary but despite this, many of us remain poor and struggling to make ends meet.

As an Au Pair

- I worked full time hours as a childminder and housekeeper.
- I worked 68-70hrs a week (starting at 7am till 9pm), 6 days a week.
- I did, cleaning, hoovering, mopping, laundry, preparing meals and school runs.
- I did deep cleaning of the full three storey house all day every Saturday without having eaten a thing.
- I was being paid €400 monthly
- I was lonely and had no knowledge of where to go to get information about my rights as a worker.
- My work was not secure as working and living in someone's home means they have the power to treat you the way they like, while you live in fear of having nowhere to go if they decided to kick you out for challenging them or their ill treatment of you.

I managed to leave my exploitative employer half a year later and today I am in college studying , which is something that I have always wished to do all my life. However that also means I have to work part time to be able to feed myself, to pay my rent, pay bills and afford transport to college. I work outside my study hours, 18 hours a week .As a migrant here without a long term residence status; I am not entitled to any access to cheaper accommodation or access to affordable primary healthcare even if my overall income is about €700 a month.

Living in poverty most of my life has had an impact on my outlook of life, I always worry about day to day costs and makes me live in fear of the unknown if I were to lose my current income.

This is a story of many other people and low wage workers like me or those who earn below the minimum wage doing work that is not valued by many yet so valuable in the society. The kind of life these people have is not quality life but just enough for us to breathe from day to day. And that is very sad it is still happening today. However living in poverty like this does not break us, I know for certain that this gives us an opportunity to come together and demand a better and fairer society where we all have a place, we are all valued, and we are all respected and have a decent living wage. It's not

enough to survive; we should all have a right to thrive. Thank you for allowing me to contribute today.

## ***Liam from North West Inner City Trainig & Development Project NWICTDP - Dublin***

**Hello everyone**

In March this year, 2 months before the European election, we participated in a large meeting at the European Parliament in Brussels. We went there to share the experience of people like us, people who know what it means to struggle for a living.

There we said that we don't know half about what our rights are. Sometimes we don't know what is a privilege. What is a right? What is just the result of luck? When we need housing, we feel it's a right. Many people believe it's a right in law, but it isn't. How can we be better educated about our rights?

For a majority, access to basic rights is a given .Their securities they have from the start. But there is a responsibility for society to make sure that the people who have to work hard to know and access their rights, are really supported.

One of us was in the project for a year, doing well and then the project was pulled down. All the hope he had just went . For every step he went forward, he felt he was going ten back. When n you again have to go all the way back to the beginning, you can ask yourself "Why bother?" .

There are so many people homeless, and so many hostels in which many people don't feel safe. But there are too many flats which are boarded up and remain empty .These could be used to offer a home . In many places, these flats are part of some regeneration programmes which started many years ago. These programmess gave hope, but then the recession came in and it messed it all up.

Is it acceptable that for people in need, it can take 15 years to make some flats available? So many families know Bed and Breakfast which are not fit for dogs. During all this time, decisions were taken to use money available, but where are the priorities?

The people working in service are under stress. The resources and the policies are not there to give support properly and quickly. Before something finally happens you might be a long way away on the road. People do lose hope, do lose faith in the system, they are

frustrated, and they feel they are left abandoned, rejected... Homeless people wait so long for the proper help. There should be a better process. And when you see what happened to the banks... They were saved overnight with millions of Euros.

The economic crisis and austerity measures we have experienced in Ireland had a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable of our people.

It is now much more difficult to feel part of the same society, to feel a sense of being equal citizens together, when there are such inequalities.

We said all this in Brussels because we believe that we have a responsibility in building changes. We count on you to join us. Only together we can leave no one behind.

### **Isabel from the Roma Community**

Good day everybody.  
My name is Isabel Ciulin.

Sergiu, who played earlier is my husband.  
I am very proud that he is the Director of a music school for young Roma boys and girls.

There are two things I would like to speak about on the theme 'Leave nobody behind'.  
These are Tradition and Education.

Some of you who have been coming to this event for a long time may remember my Father-In-Law Severin.  
He used to play the accordion at the ATD celebration.  
Severin passed away in 2009 but he gave to our family some very important values.

These are a love of our families Roma culture and also an appreciation of education for the boys and also for the girls.

I also come from a musical family.

My father and grandfather, but also my mother and grandmother were professional accordion players.

It is important to us that music is not just for the men but that everyone's talent is given a chance.  
This is also true for education.

Several of my nieces in Ireland have gone to University.  
They also help as volunteers at our music school

Musicantia.

This is what it means to me 'Leave Nobody Behind'.  
Thank you all for your attention.

### **Paul from Focus Ireland**

My name is Paul and I participated in this event last year for the first time. **And I'm so glad that I did.**

All through my life there have been opportunities offered by people who wanted to make a difference, who worked to find ways to include people.

There has been a lot of positive change for me in the past couple of years but this year has **really** brought it all together. By getting involved and taking the opportunities that came my way, my outlook on life has improved and allowed me to discover a whole new set of skills.

Skills like public speaking which up to this time, like most people, put the fear of God in me! Joking aside being able to speak out and know that people are listening to me, and I'm being taken seriously, is of real importance to me .

Now I am taking advantage of all the opportunities presented to me which in the past I wouldn't have due to a lack of self-confidence.

When we take these opportunities, I see education for everyone as being key to eradicating poverty. I believe that education arms people to make their own opportunities. like today, to come together and act collectively.

I also see communities as being a key element in overcoming poverty. I know the solutions are there in our communities. By not creating time and space to give voice to communities to find the right solutions for themselves, we are leaving people behind.

I see early intervention on addressing poverty as also being key to a fairer future. Failure to tackle poverty today leads to our society becoming ever more unequal, storing up problems not just for the government but for individuals, families and communities. Policies based on economics alone, forget that it is people that keep our society healthy and lead to prosperous, diverse and vibrant communities.

So how will I take responsibility for some of these key

elements? I have done this by going back to education myself, by working with my community and by supporting people I know, to take the opportunities around them and to make the most of their lives. Today I am fully engaged and comfortable with people from all walks of life.

This has come about as result of me being willing to put myself out there, not afraid to fail or be judged. Learning to pick myself up from failure is a stepping stone to success. No longer do I walk around looking at my shoes, too dispirited or too ashamed to look up and be part of the world around me. **Now** I'm focused on my future and focused on making it the best future it can be – for me, for my community and for our society as a whole.

## **Volunteers and friends of All Together in Dignity Poland**

O to Jarek, Czarek, Artur, Magdalena i Beata. Wśród nas są członkowie, przyjaciele i wolontariusze ATD. Jesteśmy delegacją z Polski, z kraju, który łączy z Irlandią wiele wspólnych doświadczeń. Polacy jak i Irlandczycy są narodem migrantów, a w ciągu ostatnich lat wielu Polaków przyjechało do Irlandii i szukało lepszego losu. Polska z kolei czasami jest nazywana „drugą Irlandią”, bo jej gospodarka nie ucierpiała tak bardzo w kryzysie. Wiemy jednocześnie, że takie zdania bywają mylące, bo jest tak wielu ludzi, którzy żyją w Polsce w trudnościach.

My także mamy swoją płytę praw człowieka, która jest położona naprzeciwko dworca w Kielcach- miejsca, do którego przychodziło wiele z naszych przyjaciół osób bezdomnych.

Cieszymy się, że możemy być z Wami właśnie w tym roku, bo świętujemy w Polsce 25 lat wolności – upadku komunizmu. To czas pytań o to, co zrobiliśmy z naszą wolnością, ale i solidarnością. „Solidarność”, to nie tylko ruch związkowy, ale i zryw społeczny. Hasłem dla Solidarności było zdanie z Ewangelii „brzemiona jedni drugim noście”.

To hasło bardzo pasuje do hasła tegorocznego Dnia Walki z Ubóstwem. W naszych grupach ATD wspólnie zastanawialiśmy się, jak nie pozostawiać nikogo na uboczu. Postawiliśmy sobie trzy ważne pytania, i pragniemy się z Wami podzielić naszymi refleksjami.

Co to znaczy, że nie zostawiam nikogo na uboczu? To ważne, żeby zauważać potrzeby innych, starać się być przy nich, okazywać pomoc, a jednocześnie szanować ich wolność. Poświęćmy swój czas, żeby druga osoba poczuła się na tyle bezpiecznie, aby mógł podzielić się swoimi problemami i pragnieniami. Bądźmy łącznikami między osobami doświadczającymi ubóstwa, a resztą społeczeństwa To dla nas również oznacza, że staramy się zainteresować problemem ubóstwa i wykluczenia resztę społeczeństwa, pokazać, że dotyczy ono każdego obywatela. Każdy może być solidarny.

Zastanawialiśmy się także, dlaczego ludzie zostają na uboczu i czują się opuszczeni i niezauważeni? Mamy wielu przyjaciół, którzy czują się bezsilni wobec prawa. Bardzo żywy jest dla nas przykład osób, które dostają zasiłki, a są one bardzo niskie, muszą zobowiązać się, że nie zarobią dodatkowych pieniędzy pod groźbą sankcji karnych. Ludzie tracą zaufanie do instytucji, które mają im pomagać wychodzić z trudności. Często też nie wiadomo do kogo można zwrócić się o pomoc.

Wśród członków Ruchu ATD postawiliśmy sobie pytanie, co my możemy zrobić, aby nie zostawiać nikogo na uboczu. Chcielibyśmy, aby powstawało coraz więcej miejsc, które integrują różne środowiska, np. szkoły dla dzieci sprawnych i niepełnosprawnych. W Ruchu ATD chcemy budować atmosferę zrozumienia i zaufania. Bardzo ważny jest dla nas sposób rozmowy, abyśmy się słuchali, nie przerywali sobie. Chcemy uczyć się tego, jak żyć wspólnie, ale też wspierać nawzajem w kontaktach z administracją mieszkaniową, służbą zdrowia, szkołą.

Odważmy się wyjść na spotkanie tym, których głos nie jest słyszalny!

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Commemoration is organised by the National 17 October Committee. [www.17october.ie](http://www.17october.ie)  
Committee is an informal coalition of community, voluntary, religious and overseas organisations.

**Contact:** 17 October Committee c/o ATD Fourth World – Tel 01 855 8191

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