

## **Contribution to the questionnaire on the recognition, access and protection of cultural heritage International Movement ATD Fourth World, 10 December 2010**

### **I. The recognition of cultural heritage**

#### **1. What are the main achievements (good practices), gaps and obstacles in:**

##### **c. Involving all stakeholders in the process of identification and classification of cultural heritage**

People living in extreme poverty are often excluded from decision-making processes which affect their daily life. Even within groups with the same cultural heritage, including those that are marginalized as a group, there are differences in terms of access to rights, recognition and cultural expression. Very often people living in extreme poverty are denied their active participation in the cultural life of their own communities. They are often labeled as being lazy, criminally minded, and incompetent. Living in the wrong area, or not having the right clothes or access to personal hygiene, as well as lacking in self-confidence, prevents them from being able to participate in the life of the broader community, take advantage of opportunities to improve their situation or bars them from accessing basic social services. People living in extreme poverty are often isolated and are so taken up with daily struggles, that they tend to hide behind closed door. Their harsh experience with public service providers and surrounding communities can further isolate them.

Exclusion from society is rarely considered as discrimination. In carrying out consultations with people living in extreme poverty on the Draft Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, ATD Fourth World found that the fact of living in extreme poverty thus only serves to aggravate all other forms of discrimination, whether they be linked to racism, ethnic background, religious discrimination, discrimination against the physically-handicapped, gender discrimination against women or discrimination against children.

In multi-cultural societies, some forms of cultural heritage are looked down upon by the dominant culture, and therefore people of the sub-culture are not involved in identifying their culture. The Andean population (in Peru), which lives for the most part in isolated mountain communities, is greatly impacted by this type of discrimination. As described by one member of the community: “When we speak a language like Quechua, we don’t speak Spanish well and as a result are the brunt of mockery. Also, because of the clothes we wear.”<sup>1</sup>»

##### **d. Granting access to cultural heritage for different groups**

Social exclusion results when a person is despised or discredited and deemed no longer capable of contributing to society as a direct result of extreme poverty. It is a vicious cycle: extreme poverty leads to social exclusion from the community, and the resulting isolation in turn increases the insecurity and vulnerability that leads to extreme poverty.<sup>2</sup>

Access to cultural heritage is particularly important as it enables people to come out of isolation, participate in community life, understand their surroundings, learn to express themselves and learn how to live with others. These bring them to the next step - that of active participation. Equally important is that participation in the life of the broader community gives others the opportunity to learn from them as well.

Most often, granting access to cultural heritage for people living in extreme poverty requires the support of others who have links to the broader community. For example, ATD Fourth World developed a pilot “doorstep library” on a housing estate in south London, UK. This estate houses a community with the reputation of being hard to reach. The doorstep library actively involved around 80 children and their families. Due to a proactive and non-threatening approach carried out over several months, a trusting relationship was developed between the doorstep library, other local services and the community – particularly its most disadvantaged members – and allowed a mutual exchange of knowledge to take place. The library team has also supported children and families in accessing services. Relevant services can now be created with the community and existing services can be shaped according to the knowledge, strengths, concerns and needs of the people who will use them.<sup>3</sup>

1 ATD Fourth World, Dignity in the Face of Extreme Poverty - Consultations with people in extreme poverty on the draft guiding principles «Extreme Poverty and Human Rights: the rights of the poor» Final Report February, 2008

2 X.Godinot, C. Heyberger, P. Heyberger, M. Ugarte, and R. Ugarte, Moving Our of Poverty Volume 1 Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Mobility, A Copublication of Palgrave Macmillan and THE WORLD BANK, 2007, Chapter 8: Resisting Extreme Poverty: Learning from Families in Burkina Faso and Peru, p.300 .

3 ATD Fourth World, *Not too hard to reach: Developing a tool to reach the most disadvantaged families*, ATD Fourth World, London, 2006. For

Traditions of community solidarity can play an important role in granting access to cultural heritage for all of its members. Great importance should be attached to the concept of belonging. Experiences of interdependence and reciprocity are deeply rooted in the *Mossi* tradition in Burkina Faso as well as the Andean tradition of *Ayni* in Peru. These traditions allow the community and the family to play strong roles in the development and education of each individual and to share in the responsibility for his or her welfare. As such, all members share in the riches of the culture and the community, giving them strength to continue to fight against poverty in their lives. The links they build with their community become a means of resisting exclusion and achieving a certain security. The reality is that when systems of social protection do not work, do not exist, or simply do not reach those trapped in chronic poverty, family and community solidarity is the best defense against privation.<sup>4</sup>

### The access to cultural heritage

#### 6. What are the achievements and challenges in implementing collaborative programmes on access to cultural heritage at the local, sub-national and national levels; regional and international levels?

One of the major challenges in implementing programmes on access to cultural heritage at the local level is the fact that it requires a long term involvement with the community in order to win its trust. Extra efforts are required to reach out to the most disadvantaged people, and to create a dialogue that can then serve to build a bridge to the rest of the community. A second major challenge is to bring the various actors in the broader society to accept the idea of dialogue with those who for so long have lived in isolation, and so are the subject of negative stereotypes.

In Bolivia, in 2008, a group of adults from Senkata, on the outskirts of the city of El Alto, began a traditional weaving workshop. These workshops took place as part of activities run by the ATD Fourth World project "*Casa de la Amistad*" (Friendship House).<sup>5</sup> The idea was to bring together the knowledge from their different rural communities of origin, with specific techniques and themes. The group was made up of approximately 20 people, mainly women from disadvantaged families who live in Senkata, as well as project volunteers from a very different social and cultural background. The main objective was to create an atmosphere of equal exchange, valuing a cultural heritage that is not being followed by the present generations, and whose bearers are often the older and most excluded people in their community. In this exchange there were no "teachers" but everyone could support others with what they knew. During the first year the group produced "*Chuspas*" (traditional handbags) out of sheep wool, going through the whole process from the raw wool to the final product. During the workshop sessions, they had the opportunity to share their ancient stories and legends, to discuss themes related to community life, the functioning of the workshop and of the Casa de la Amistad and to get to know each other better. The project aimed to encourage the participation of all community members, including those most excluded. For those who did not have time to take part in the workshop due to the demands of having to make ends meet, other moments were created for them to feel part of the group. Project participants were given the opportunity to expose their products in different places of El Alto and La Paz. This was a very positive and empowering experience .

A number of common conditions can be identified from these projects which enable people living in extreme poverty to access cultural heritage:

- Equal enjoyment of all rights, including to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family in order not to be ostracized by the rest of the community and be able to fully participate in community life
- A long term involvement with the community to win trust

---

more details: <http://www.atd-uk.org/publications/docs/final%20not%20too%20hard%20to%20reach.pdf>

4 X. Godinot, C. Heyberger, P. Heyberger, M. Ugarte, and R. Ugarte, *Moving Out of Poverty Volume 1 Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Mobility*, A Copublication of Palgrave Macmillan and THE WORLD BANK, 2007, Chapter 8: Resisting Extreme Poverty: Learning from Families in Burkina Faso and Peru, p. 301.

5 For more details on this project: <http://www.atd-fourthworld.org/-Bolivia,331-.html>, more examples of cultural activities: [http://www.atd-fourthworld.org/Extensive-Programme-of-Activities.html?var\\_recherche=culture](http://www.atd-fourthworld.org/Extensive-Programme-of-Activities.html?var_recherche=culture) [http://www.atd-fourthworld.org/A-Centre-for-Arts-and-Culture.html?var\\_recherche=culture](http://www.atd-fourthworld.org/A-Centre-for-Arts-and-Culture.html?var_recherche=culture)

- Extra efforts to reach out to the most disadvantaged people
- Creation of a dialogue with others
- Acceptance by others to be included in the dialogue

#### **IV. The way forward**

##### **9. In your view, what concrete measures should be adopted and implemented to ensure access to cultural heritage including through the use of new technologies at the regional and/or international levels?**

Given the interdependence and interrelatedness of human rights, access to cultural heritage for people living in extreme poverty cannot be considered in isolation from the enjoyment of other human rights. The fulfillment of access to cultural heritage can act as a leverage to the fulfillment of other rights.

It is possible to outline certain conditions or principles for equal access to cultural heritage for all people:

###### 1) Principle of leaving no one behind :

If the aim is to achieve equal access to rights for all, rather than counting how many people a particular strategy managed to reach, it is of greater importance to identify who has not been reached and why.

An understanding is necessary of the differences in access to cultural heritage and the mechanisms of exclusion within the same social group or community in order to promote the equal participation of the poorest community members.

2) Empowering communities: It is important to develop strategies which encourage and build on efforts undertaken by communities to organize themselves, and to support their efforts to improve a community based on community solidarity and mutual assistance. ATD Fourth World's experience is that this encourages a sense of cultural belonging, even among the poorest and most excluded people and families and contributes to a common identity and sense of human dignity. In turn, this can reinforce people's and families' resilience to extreme poverty.

###### 3) Strategies must be appropriate to the situation of each population:

New technologies such as internet enable people to be connected with the outside world, to share and receive information but they are still a luxury for many. Rather than satisfying already-well-equipped populations in terms of access to cultural heritage, measures need to be taken to reach out to the most marginalized populations with accessible/affordable/practical means.

For example, mobile phones and radio might be more accessible than internet and computers for certain populations.

More specifically, in order to ensure effective access to cultural rights, States should:

- Provide adequate public funding, ensuring that people living in poverty do not pay more to access cultural heritage
- Ensure that good quality services are available and are economically, physically, administratively and culturally accessible to those living in poverty
- Ensure that all services respect the culture of all individuals and groups including minorities and indigenous peoples amongst others, and are gender sensitive
- Remove legislative, procedural, practical, cultural, physical and communication barriers that would stop people being able to access cultural heritage.
- Eliminate user fees for those living in poverty or introduce non-discretionary, equitable and non-stigmatizing interventions for people living in extreme poverty(e.g. exemptions schemes, direct cash subsidies and vouchers);
- Ensure that persons living in poverty are treated with equality and respect by all service providers (private or public)
- Ensure that resource allocation favours the remote geographical regions and urban slums.