



United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 2025

Ending Social and Institutional Maltreatment

Ensuring Respect and Effective Support for Families

October 17, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, is a day for understanding and togetherness, a day to put the furthest behind first and a day to recommit ourselves to ending poverty in all its forms everywhere. People experiencing poverty are at the heart of every October 17 commemoration and the drivers in choosing the global theme. The 2025 commemoration will focus on ensuring respect and effective support for families. We need to better understand why poverty persists and why despite all the efforts made by parents, their children continue to experience the same deprivation. We need to better understand the reality of poverty as experienced by the people affected, so that appropriate support can be actioned. By focusing on families, we continue to highlight the hidden dimensions of poverty — in particular the social and institutional maltreatment they suffer in their daily lives, including situations of family separation due to poverty, and the pressing need to end it.

***“Children from poor neighborhoods are rejected, stigmatized, and marginalized instead of being given more support.”
(Mauritius)***

***“We continue to experience institutional maltreatment. It is part of everyday life in educational institutions and in health centers. Above all, children, single mothers, the elderly, and pregnant women suffer. Nobody says anything or does anything, as if it were normal. We must unite ourselves to the suffering of our neighbors. We must make these realities heard and carry our voices to the world.”
(collective contribution, Peru)***

***“Social and institutional maltreatment is one of the greatest forms of injustice that we currently experience in our communities. Because those who belong to the higher social classes underestimate people from the lower social classes.”
(collective contribution, Democratic Republic of the Congo)***

Living in poverty means facing difficult and constrained choices; being ignored, excluded, and exploited; and feeling insecure, desperate and disempowered. The reality of life in poverty also means, in some situations, not being able to register the birth of one's child, or being afraid or unable to access the support needed from the very institutions mandated to assist people in the most difficult circumstances. Daily experiences of injustice and dehumanization undermines self-esteem, destroys personal agency and denies people of their dignity and the chance to escape poverty.

Poverty is not neglect. Yet, the socio-economic disadvantages disproportionately affecting families in extreme poverty, including indigenous or other historically discriminated groups, are often misunderstood as neglect leading society and authorities to condemn parents facing difficult choices. A mother may have to leave her children unsupervised while she works long hours so that she can feed her family. In other contexts, extreme poverty may force parents to entrust their children to orphanages or to work in domestic service. Hunger and deprivation may drive children onto the streets, making them easy targets for gangs, abuse or other forms of exploitation. Poverty is the collective failure of policies and practices that perpetuate discrimination and economic disadvantages of people furthest behind.



***“For institutional maltreatment, we want to emphasise the maltreatment that particularly harms families separated by poverty.”
(Jean V., France)***

Highlighting social and institutional maltreatment is not about apportioning blame, but about calling for a better understanding of poverty and evidence-based supportive action. Many hard-working and well-intentioned professionals find themselves having to conform with regulations that are counterproductive, and the interactions of people in poverty with institutions are often characterized by judgment, subjugation, compliance, and control. Particularly for welfare rights claimants, the web of surveillance mechanisms infringes on their privacy and human rights. In some countries, parents in poverty face intrusive and destabilizing investigations (home inspections, school visits) that exacerbate the challenges they face. These investigations sometimes lead to the unnecessary removal of children from their home, not due to physical abuse or parental wrongdoing, but because of financial hardship and deprivation. Family separation can have traumatic and life-long consequences if priority is not given to the children's wishes in terms of contact with their family. Moreover, policies and practices that allocate more resources to family separation and surveillance services than to actually supporting families' needs to be able to stay together must be reviewed and ended. Even though contexts vary, experience has shown that the majority of parents and children would prefer to stay together and support one another in the face of destitution, despite all the forces separating them.

*"Society can maintain this situation or help these children to be able to contribute to building tomorrow's society. It depends on how we act today which decides their future."
(collective contribution, Tanzania)*

Working together to support families. We owe it to the children, the parents, and everyone to find better solutions together. Families and family policies are crucial in achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially those related to poverty eradication, health, education, gender equality, social inclusion, decent work/social protection and SDG 16 on just and peaceful institutions. These policies must aim at coherence — they must interact and complement each other across different policy sectors and levels (local, national, international). Our policies and actions must be guided by the realities of people's lives, and formulated with the active, informed and meaningful participation of families living in poverty. It is the only way we can create a respectful and supportive environment that lifts families out of poverty, empowers children, and creates a more just and equitable society.

*"Parents are the first to stand up to prevent their children from living in poverty..."
(collective contribution, Netherlands)*

Moving forward in ensuring respect and effective support, we must:

- shape institutions that put people first — move away from a culture of distrust, intrusive surveillance and control towards one of trust, respect, and collaboration;
- acknowledge the efforts that parents living in poverty already make and support them appropriately to provide a better future for themselves and their children;
- transform child protection institutions into a system of support for the whole family, strengthening parents' capacities to care for their own children and to lift themselves out of persistent poverty.

*"Parents, civil society, public institutions, and international organisations must join forces to build an environment in which children can flourish."
(Omar M., Senegal)*

Despite the cascade of crises and multiple challenges before us, October 17 is about hope. By reaching out, putting the furthest behind first, fostering understanding and finding solutions together, we can end poverty in all its forms, everywhere.

Commemorated since 1987 as the World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty and recognized by the United Nations in 1992, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty promotes dialogue and understanding between people living in poverty 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 make their concerns heard, and a moment to recognize that poor people are in the forefront in the fight against poverty." (United Nations, Report of the Secretary General, A/61/308, para. 58)

This concept paper, prepared by the International Committee for October 17, draws inspiration from the global consultation on the October 17th theme with people experiencing poverty and organisations working closely with them, conducted by the Forum for Overcoming Extreme Poverty and the participatory research on the Hidden Dimensions of Poverty, carried out by the ATD Fourth World and the University of Oxford. The views in this document do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations or its Member States

More information about initiatives, events and activities to mark October 17 around the world can be found at: [UNDESA](#) and [Forum for Overcoming Extreme Poverty](#) websites.

International Committee October 17, 12 rue Pasteur F-95480 Pierrelaye, France – international.committee@oct17.org