



**GLOBAL COOPERATION NEWSLETTER**  
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**In focus: "Extreme poverty is not inevitable"**

The final draft of the Guiding Principles on extreme poverty and human rights was submitted on 12 September 2012 to the Human Rights Council in fulfillment of its resolution 15/19 by the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Magdalena Sepulveda Carmona. The process of elaboration of these principles took more than a decade. Underscoring the importance of the efforts realized by the Council and its determination to act in a decisive manner, the Special Rapporteur stressed in her introductory statement that "the decision of the Council to confront the serious situation of those who live in extreme poverty, through the preparation and eventual adoption of the Guiding Principles on poverty and human rights—in a historic moment in which direct and decisive actions in favour of the most disadvantaged are vital—demonstrates a courage and determination which deserves to be celebrated". In her view, through these Guiding Principles, the Council is getting "the opportunity to convert the words of many political commitments into concrete actions". A link to the full statement is attached here:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/>

The comprehensive document containing the Guiding Principles, which are global in scope, has been prepared by the Special Rapporteur on the basis of consultations with States and other stakeholders. It is premised on the understanding that eradicating extreme poverty is not only a moral duty but also a legal obligation under existing international human rights law. In this sense, public policies conceived to tackle poverty should be implemented with the norms and principles of human rights law in mind; the key goal of the Guiding Principles is to provide guidance on how to apply human rights standards in efforts to combat poverty. With due regard to national circumstances and specifics, the Principles are intended for all countries and regions at all stages of economic development.

Poverty is understood in the document not solely in income terms, but rather as a multidimensional phenomenon "that encompasses a lack of both income and the basic capabilities to live in dignity". Extreme poverty is defined as "the combination of income poverty, human development poverty and social exclusion", where a prolonged insecurity simultaneously affects several aspects of people's lives, undermining realization of their human rights. In the words of the document, "persons experiencing extreme poverty live in a vicious circle of powerlessness, stigmatization, discrimination, exclusion and material deprivation, which all mutually reinforce one another". That

is why poverty represents an urgent human rights concern in itself, being both a cause and a consequence of human rights violations and providing enabling conditions for other violations.

The corollary that extreme poverty is not inevitable stems in the document from a critical look at public policies, including the lack of such policies or its failures; the role of other economic actors apart from the State should not be overlooked either. As a result of misguided or incoherent policies “structural and systemic inequalities—social, political, economic and cultural—often remain unaddressed and further entrench poverty”. But, in the words of the document, the fact “that extreme poverty is not inevitable means that the tools for ending it are within reach. A human rights approach provides a framework for the long-term eradication of extreme poverty based on the recognition of persons living in extreme poverty as rights holders and agents of change”.

The report discusses at length foundational principles essential to an approach based on human rights, including design and implementation of all public policies. It also spells out implementation requirements and pays attention to some specific rights whose enjoyment by persons living in poverty is particularly difficult or obstructed. The role of non-State actors, including business enterprises, is also highlighted. The section of the report addressing ways and means of implementation and monitoring makes a recommendation to the States to entrust an independent national body with the task of monitoring the qualitative and quantitative aspects of poverty from a human rights perspective and ensuring effective collection and processing of disaggregated data that is necessary for the successful implementation. The full text of the document is available at [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/21/39&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/21/39&Lang=E)

**Empowerment matters.** *Experts discuss complexities of enhancing human capacity in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and employment promotion*

The Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) of the UN’s Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) organized an expert group meeting at the UN Headquarters in New York on 10-12 September 2012 on “Promoting people’s empowerment in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all”. The meeting was part of preparations for the 51st session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD), scheduled to take place in February 2013. Overall, expert group meetings convened on a regular basis in preparation for intergovernmental meetings represent an important element in the work of the United Nations Secretariat, including various departments such as DESA. They allow tapping into the additional experience of outside experts and other stakeholders, helping the staff of DSPD with the preparation of the Report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme to be submitted to the CSocD.

The purpose of the expert group meeting on promoting people’s empowerment was to seek experts’ opinion on the priority theme of the Commission, getting important inputs to its work and contributing to elaboration of specific policies that will have a major impact on promoting empowerment. (A link to the Aide-Memoire of the meeting can be found here <http://social.un.org/index/CommissionforSocialDevelopment/Sessions/2013/EGMempowerment.aspx>). The ICSW representative took part in the expert meeting and contributed to the discussion.

The meeting was addressed by recently appointed the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Wu Hongbo, who made an opening statement. For further details see: <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/usg/statements/expert-group-meeting-on-promoting-empowerment-of-people.html>

The deliberations, including how to achieve or measure something as complex as empowerment, revealed substantial variations among the experts in their approaches and recommendations. In the words of one of the invited experts, Professor Norman Uphoff of Cornell University, “the concept/objective of ‘empowerment’ is one of the most abstract and contingent phenomena that

development agencies ever deal with... The inherent ambiguity and elusiveness of 'power' makes devising operational strategies for 'empowerment' extremely difficult... Effective solutions need to be grounded in and reflective of real-world relationships, constraints and motivations—not just in words, however lofty and inspiring theses may be". (For further details see: <http://social.un.org/index/CommissionforSocialDevelopment/Sessions/2013/EGMempowerment/PapersandPresentations.aspx>.)

Recognizing that empowerment is a long-term dynamic process affected by and resulting in changes in norms, values, rules, institutions and social relations, the participants analyzed key dimensions of the process. Presentations were centered around such issues as what had been achieved so far in promoting social, economic, political and legal empowerment of people, including various social groups; and what were the key challenges, barriers and the lessons learned. Originally, the notion of empowerment figured most prominently in normative UN documents devoted to gender issues and the quest for gender equality. In parallel, this concept has been commonly used in the discussions and normative documents related to persons with disabilities. The decision of the CSocD to broaden the space of the empowerment discourse embracing three core themes of the World Social Summit—poverty eradication, employment promotion and social integration -- signifies an important step aimed at better use of the concept in public policies and at establishing legal frameworks.

The role of the family in the social and economic empowerment of individuals was also discussed during the expert meeting. Specific presentations were made on how empowerment is promoted through employment, social protection, land ownership and land rights, as well as through information and communication technologies.

One of the innovations of the expert meeting was the creation of a social media Q & A clip, in which participants were asked to respond to some online questions received from the public. The link is attached: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=bGifAxG5J54](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=bGifAxG5J54)

### **Accelerating Progress toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women**

The new global programme Accelerating Progress Toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women was officially launched on 27 September at a side event of the United Nations General Assembly session in New York. The programme is led by the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the three Rome-based UN agencies working on food and agriculture: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the World Food Programme (WFP). The pilot projects will be implemented in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda.

Women's contributions to the economy and development of rural areas are paramount. In many developing countries women farmers represent the backbone of rural communities, working longer hours than men and combining their agricultural work with numerous other responsibilities, particularly in the area of caregiving. Yet they quite often face barriers in getting access to financial services and other resources. In undertaking the new programme, the partner agencies join forces to address four main objectives: improving food and nutrition security in rural areas; increasing incomes; empowering rural women to become more engaged in economic and political terms, promoting their active participation in rural institutions; and creating a policy environment that is more responsive to their needs and aspirations.

For further details see..

<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/158377/icode/>

### **Useful links**

The 2012 MDG Gap Task Force report, entitled "The Global Partnership for Development: Making Rhetoric a Reality", contains a warning that, despite several important global targets having been met ahead of the 2015 deadline, for the first time in many years aid shows signs of backsliding,

which risks slowing the momentum of significant development gains. The full text of the report is available at:  
<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/news/policy/mdg-gains-risk-slowng.html>

**The Guide to the Rule of Law** was released in September 2012. The Guide was initiated and supervised by the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law at Lund University, Sweden, and the Hague Institute for the Internationalisation of Law (HIIL), the Netherlands. The purpose of this Guide is to provide an orientation for politicians and other decision-makers as well as to journalists regarding the basic elements of the rule of law. For further information:

<http://rwi.lu.se/what-we-do/academic-activities/pub/rule-of-law-a-guide-for-politicians/>

### **Letter to the Editor**

As a former World President of ICSW, and on behalf of many activists in our organization, I am writing to express our very sincere thanks to Denys Correll, the former Executive Director of ICSW who served for 10 years. The ICSW owes him a great deal.

He came on board at difficult times, when ICSW was facing the inability of our then President to exercise his mandate, and Denys gradually restored the normal functioning of our organization. He became a linchpin in a small but highly motivated team and helped the ICSW to regain its momentum and implement a reform of our Constitution, which has now enabled the ICSW to function with greater effectiveness. He became the prime mover for management rigour and transparency.

Denys was a tireless worker and traveler and deepened contacts with all members of the ICSW, taking into account their suggestions and boosting their energy. He was particularly attentive to challenges encountered in their activities by member countries representing the global "South". He successfully combined a global approach to social problems with encouragement for local action.

His good work and his personal commitment merit our sincere gratitude. ***Christian Rollet***

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