

**CELEBRATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN THE WORLD
KL UNIVERSITY, CIVIL ENGINEERING DEPARTEMENT & INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT ATD FOURTH WORLD
VIJAYAWADA CAMPUS/ ADHRA PRADESH STATE/ INDIA
17 OCTOBER 2021**

Topic: "Suffering of the poorest due to natural disasters related to climate change, duty and contribution of science"

Webinar report

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1 AMBITION & OBJECTIVES OF THE WEBINAR

Ambition: to raise awareness in the academic world of the need to introduce people with experience of poverty as key contributors to research on different themes including the issue of climate change.

Objectives:

- To share experiences of participation of people experiencing poverty in decision-making and action processes in the context of natural disasters.
- To develop the conditions for the participation of people experiencing extreme poverty in research

2 INTRODUCTION

Dr. Hamim Sayed: Dear speakers, dear participants; on behalf of our university and in particular the Department of Civil Engineering I welcome you to this conference. It is an honour for us to celebrate for the first time this International Day for the Eradication of Poverty under the theme "Suffering of the poorest following natural disasters linked to climate change, duty and contribution of science". With these words, I would like to introduce the speakers. They are:

Eng. Christian RHUGWASANYE

Master student, Civil Engineering, KL University India
Member of the American Society of Civil Engineers,
Ally of the International Movement ATD Fourth World

M. Nicolaas Tweehuijsen

Africa Region Leadership Team
ATD Fourth World International Movement

Prof. Dr. Ivo Wallimann-Helmer

Director of the University of Fribourg
Environmental Sciences and Humanities Institute,
Switzerland

Dr. Orna Shemer

Lecturer of the practice, Social Service
Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Ally of the ATD Fourth World International Movement

3 INTERVENTION OF PANELLISTS

3.1 Eng. Christian RHUGWASANYE:

<p>Introduction: History of the October 17th celebration, Introduction of the topic and brief overview of the solidarity efforts of families involved with the ATD Fourth World Movement in the context of climate change</p>
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Dear Professors, researchers, students and members of ATD Fourth World, This World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty is celebrated every 17 October. It was initiated by Father Joseph Wresinski and several thousand people from all walks of life who gathered on the Human Rights Square in Paris in 1987, and was officially recognised by the United Nations in 1992.

The aim of this day is to make the voice of people in extreme poverty heard, to make those who are usually reduced to their difficulties, or even judged responsible for them, be heard.

The World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty gives a voice to those who live in extreme poverty, about the unworthy conditions they live in, about their daily resistance and their aspirations. Dear Friends, what is certain is that poverty can only be overcome with those who are most affected.

Even today in the world, despite the progress of science, technology and other fields, thousands of families are forced to ask for help, because they are not recognised, they are without rights. However, this is intolerable, **the misery is intolerable**, we have responsibilities and duties.

And today, from this platform, we want to celebrate this day together for two main purposes:

- To share experiences of participation of people with experience of poverty in decision-making and action processes in the context of natural disasters.
- To develop the conditions for the participation of people experiencing extreme poverty in research

Those living in extreme poverty are the first victims of natural disasters linked to climate change. They do not have the means to get back on their feet and on top of that society does not give them a voice.

Every person has the ability and the power to change history! And for this, we as scientists have a sacred duty to **consider the knowledge of the poorest** in all research that concerns them and especially in the environment.

The climate issue is high on the agenda of NGOs and governments, but what percentage of the victims are consulted? The process for a sustainable resolution of natural disasters must be inclusive, clear and with integrity. It must respect the dignity of every human being without discrimination or social exclusion.

We researchers and academics have the opportunity to influence, raise awareness and provide knowledge through our articles, theses and publications. But we have to ask ourselves a question: **What is the place of the poorest in all this?**

I say it and I insist, any research on climate change must **give voice and participation to the families who suffer the effects in an atrocious way**. Only if we do this, then we talk about climate justice.

Last year, I witnessed the suffering of many families who lost their homes due to the floods in Burundi. Children who can't understand the situation observed many months without going to school because their whole school was flooded. I tell you; these are extremely difficult situations.

In fact, the poorest people must be consulted and considered as **co-researchers** in our work, me, you, at all times when the issue concerns them and especially in the context of climate change.

I am happy to say all this being currently in India in the land of the one who always said "if you do something for me without me you do it against me" Mahatma GANDHI.

Dear Professors, student researchers, Dear Members of ATD who listen to us all over the world, thank you for listening to me. My conclusion is that **"we are not engineers for science, but for humanity"**.

3.2 Mr. Nicolas Tweehujsen:

Guaranteeing the right to dignified rehousing for poor families affected by flooding in the central african republic, dialogues with the authorities, ngos, etc., co-responsibility, and participation in decisions

Dear friends, hello,

Unfortunately, I am not able to reach you live, because the network in the Central African Republic is too unstable to attend a Zoom meeting.

The theme of the World Day does not leave the people of Central Africa indifferent. The majority of the population, on the verge of survival, is feeling powerless to combat the deterioration of their environment as they observe it and which is impacting their lives. The Central African Republic is one of the poorest countries in the world, the population feels overwhelmed, unable to organize themselves against what they feel is falling on them like a curse.

Yet it is not the poorest who are causing the catastrophic climatic changes. For the majority the population are small peasants who live from the work of their hands. They are neither major consumers, nor those who drive polluting cars nor those who board airplanes for their work or to take vacations, and they are aware that only low range products, of questionable and non-recyclable quality are attainable for them.

The Central African Republic certainly profits from powerful states who invest in the country. On the other hand, the country is also depending on products imported from these states as it is unable to produce them on its own. It seems that foreign powers have a green light to shamelessly plunder natural resources. Hundred-year-old trees are massively leaving the country without good reforestation plans. The toxic products for the extraction of minerals pollute the land for a long time, robbing the local population of the use of their land for agricultural purposes and make rivers toxic, the water unsuitable for consumption, fishing or for the irrigation of their land.

The education system is failing to train staff on the scale necessary to cope with the changes that are ravaging natural habitats and putting the country in a state never seen before. Like Barclay in the video, millions of families are experiencing the same fate, still on the verge of survival, adapting, resisting, keeping their back straight, doing everything it takes to assure a good future for their children.

When my brother started working in a large chemical company, he knew that particularly the industry itself had the know-how to produce without damaging the earth and that some companies are also willing to do so. Now he also knows that it doesn't happen automatically. It takes a real awareness, a sense of responsibility and a commitment of industry, society and politicians to keep the earth livable.

The realities experienced by poor families, who live in flood-prone, polluted and dangerous places and their understanding and insights are only too rarely shared. People in the industry live in a certain bubble and don't live in the forefront next to those who are physically experiencing the consequences of climatic change. It seems that many are just motivated to satisfy shareholders and by personal greed, bonuses and short-term gain. The knowledge of those who suffer today from the consequences of irresponsible acting could, however, enlighten reflections and decisions on building an economy that respects the people and the earth.

Education that includes the major challenges of protecting the earth will be needed to build a future generation of experts and students; the dads and moms of tomorrow who will have to engage themselves alongside the poorest families to understand what they are going through today to avoid what may be the fate of all of us tomorrow.

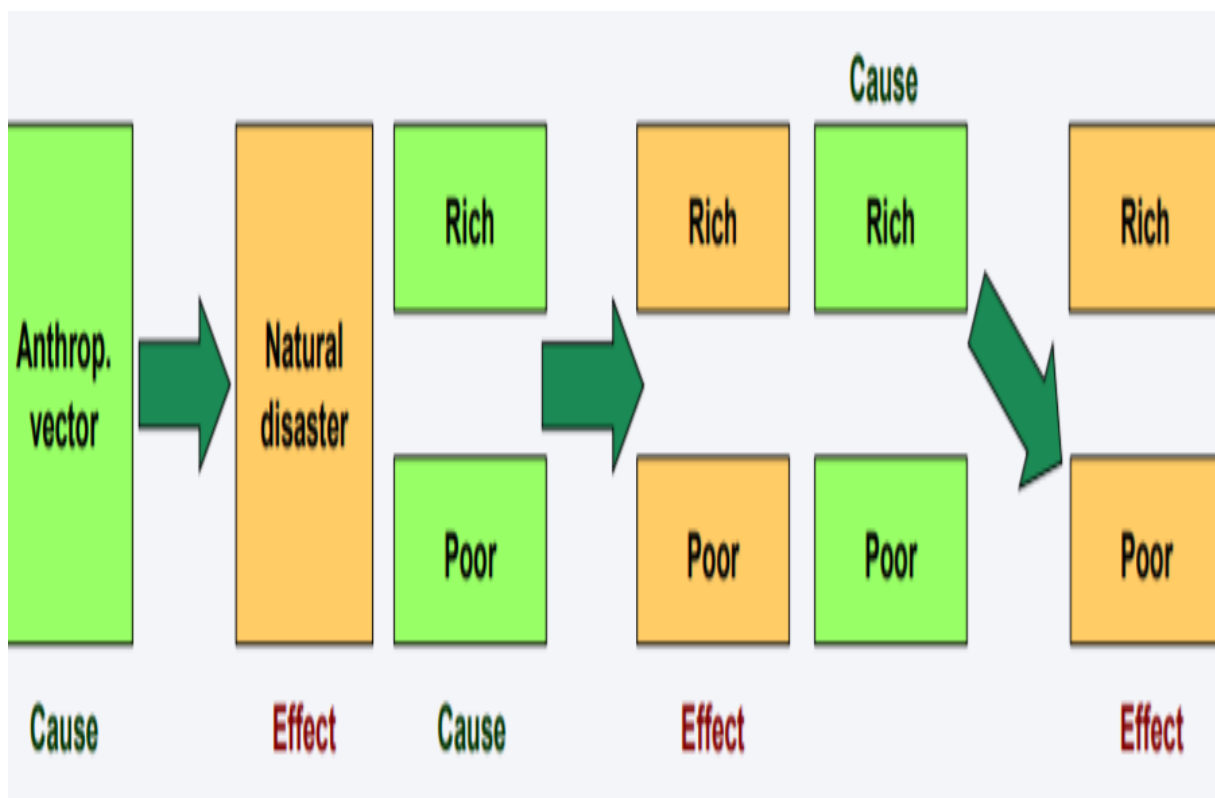
Niek's intervention was accompanied by BARCLEY's video which highlights the situation in Central Africa with the aim of Guaranteeing the rights to dignified rehousing to poor families' victims of floods, dialogues with the authorities, ngos, etc., co-responsibility, and participation in decisions

3.3 Prof. Dr. Wallimann-Helmer:

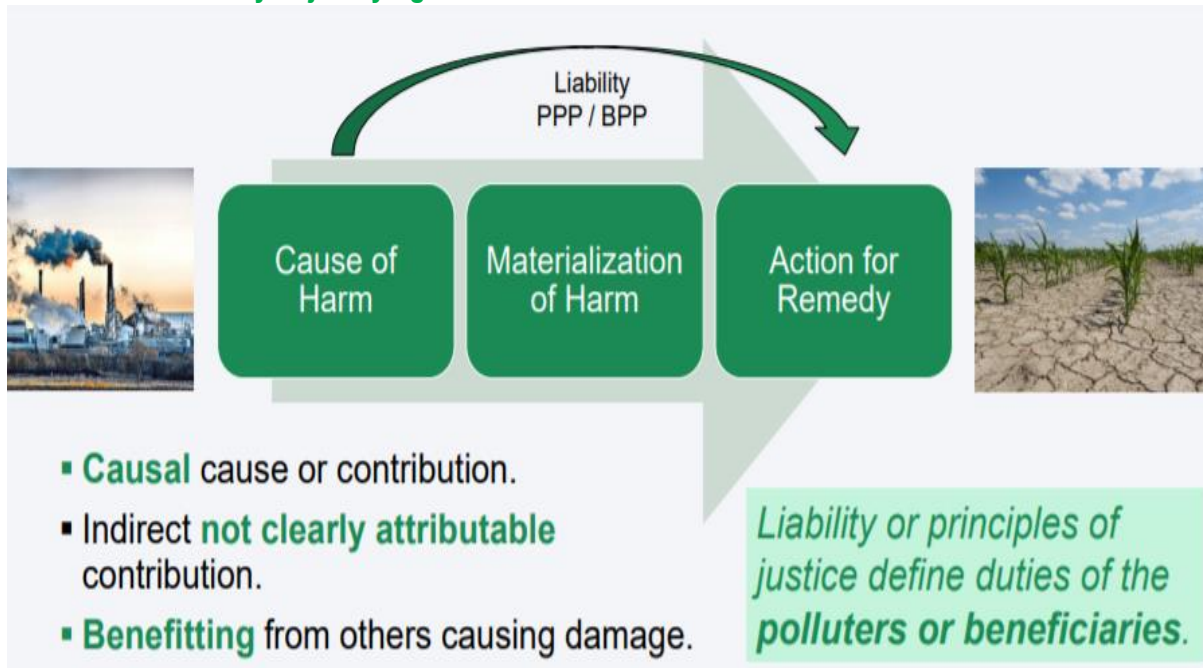
Fair decision-making in governing the risks of natural disasters and climate change

3.3.1 double injustice of natural disasters and climate change

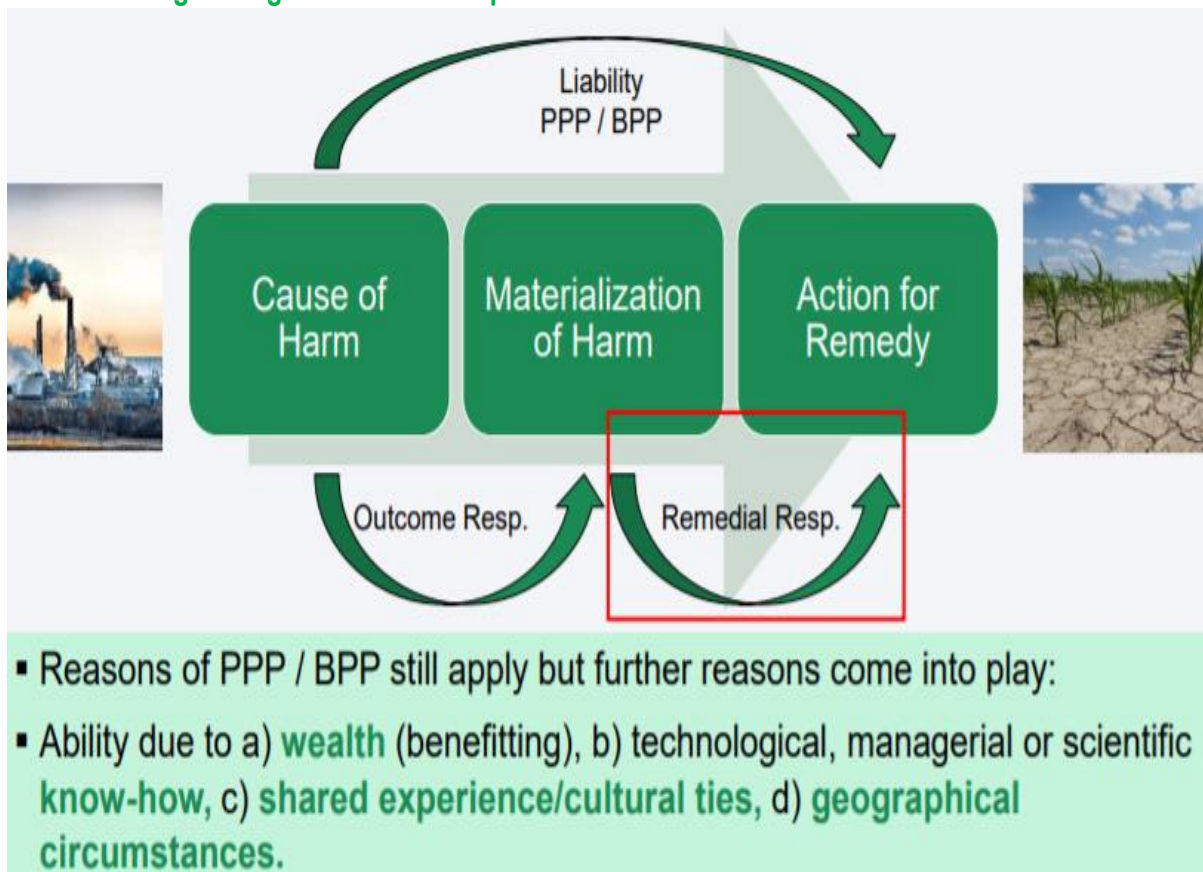
- Natural disasters are manifold but they are **always more disastrous for the more vulnerable** members of societies and poorer regions of the world.
- More vulnerable members of society and poorer regions of the world most often **do and have contributed less** to their cause.



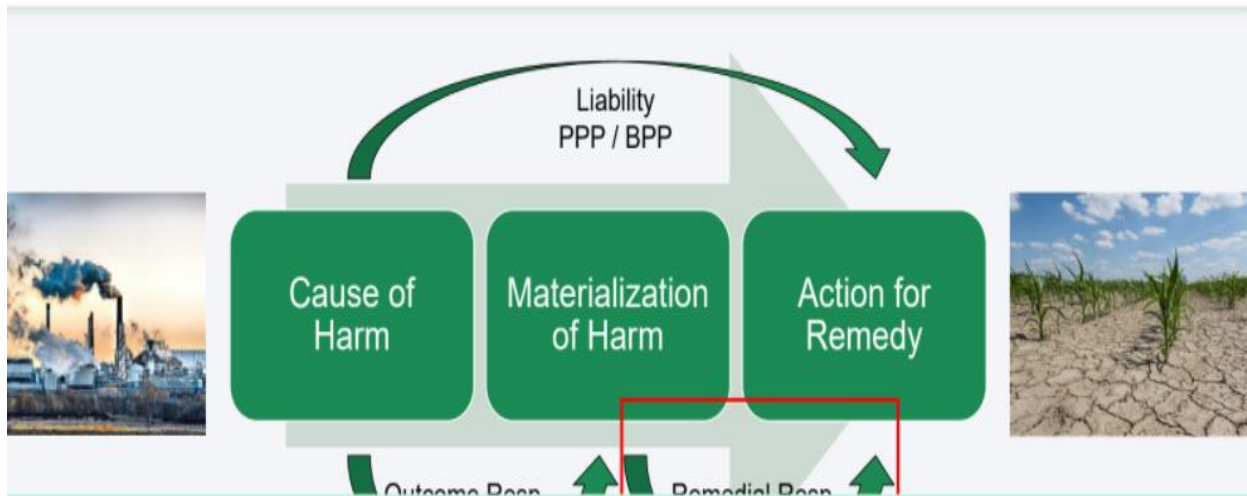
3.3.2 classical way of justifying remedial duties



3.3.3 distinguishing two kinds of responsibilities



3.3.4 distinguishing two kinds of responsibilities



- In case of climate adaptation it has been shown that **action is more effective and efficient** if those most directly concerned are involved in taking action.
- Deciding what **risks** are acceptable and what **compensation** is appropriate demands involving those concerned.
- The **most vulnerable and directly affected should be involved in deciding, implementing, maintaining** measures to be taken and **compensation** to be provided.

3.3.5 how to differentiate responsibilities according to app

	Subsidize	Implement	Maintain
Rich	Provide knowledge, technology and finance.	Foster programs to... A) ... strengthen decision structures B) ... build competences needed for efficient and effective implementation.	Foster programs to... C) ... strengthen decision structures D) ... build competences needed for sustainable maintenance.
Poor	Exchange knowledge, technology and finance (shared exp. / geographical proximity).	Given A.) & B.): implement measures	Given C.) & D.): maintain measures

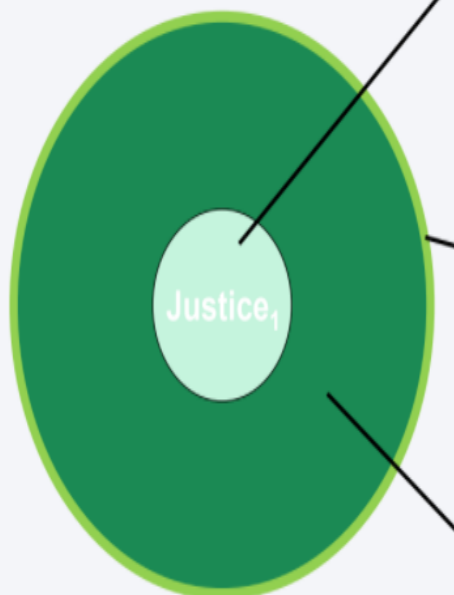
3.3.6 challenges with recognition

Fair conditions of participation

- Procedural involvement is **more than just formally involving** all those concerned.
- **Substantial equality** at least to a minimal extent must be given.
 - Education
 - Information
 - Economic Resources



3.3.7 challenges with recognition



Substantial equality to be secured for all affected because it is **constitutive** of a fair process.

Procedural involvement as a means to bring about **justice₂** as much as possible.

Legitimate but not necessarily **fully just** decisions (as would be **justice₂**).

3.3.8 conclusions

- The most vulnerable, the global poor, face a double injustice, because **they contributed the least to natural disasters** but are the most vulnerable.
- To fight their vulnerability, it would be most efficient and effective that **they can take action themselves**.
- **The rich should support institutions** of decision-making and assist in implementation and maintenance if needed.
- Fair decision-making demands providing **appropriate assistance in education**, information and economic resources by the rich.

3.3.9 references

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3.4 Dr. Orna Shemer

The need for inclusion of people living in poverty in climate change issues

Every year on this date, October 17, members of the movement mark this day in different ways and always the issue of the involvement of people living in poverty is a central theme. It is always amazing to see how valuable, humanistic and extremely important the messages that are said on this day, and yet the gap between them and what is done in the field is big, too big.

The same is true for the climate crisis - although in principle there is agreement on the importance of public participation, in practice it is hardly done. In recent years, awareness of the social and subjective aspects of the climate crisis has been growing. For years it seems that the main discourse on the climate crisis has been physical-environmental, while in recent years there has been a marked increase in attention to its social implications. Civic awareness of this has also risen among the public and concern about its consequences is troubling civil groups. Despite this trend, I do not think that we, within the field of social work, have yet internalized and translated the environmental implications to social responsibility. Nor did we succeed to influence social policy, develop appropriate community services, or educate students to deal with this new reality.

There are three main stages in the context of public participation and the climate crisis:

3.4.1 Prevention

Preventing climate change and reducing future consequences of the crisis through influencing policies, calling for the mobilization of government and ministries to increase awareness, for example to avoid polluting that endanger the planet and invest in sustainability education processes in families, schools, private and public businesses. Practices that are used are for example protest and resistance on the one hand, and intelligent, scientific discourse on the other hand that appear in reports, studies, lobbying and other declarations.

Prevention can also be done in the processes of participation in knowledge development and decision making. For example, in Israel, regional climate summits led by environmental organizations were held in the past year. These processes allowed the public to raise issues and organize for change. In addition, an initiative is currently being promoted in accordance with the model of a citizens' assembly, according to which the public will choose a topic relevant to the climate crisis, study it and work to express a public position on the issue.

This methodologically of planned processes has the ability to include people living in poverty, by early locating representatives, making the process accessible to them and providing space for clarifying their concerns. However - the question arises whether the awareness of the need for inclusion exists?

3.4.2 Dealing with disaster situations

The second stage in which participation in issues of the climate crisis can be seen is during the acute, traumatic, crisis phase. This is a phase of immediate emergency treatment in areas affected for example by floods, storms, earthquakes and fires. Local emergency teams usually arrive immediately, followed by teams from other regions or countries. At this point local knowledge is essential. The local networks must find out who is injured, who can help, who takes care of the injured, who takes the lead, what the traditional help infrastructure and more. It is not possible at this stage to act without the local knowledge and community forces that can function. This is usually a short stage, fast and very stressful.

3.4.3 Rehabilitation process

It is a prolonged phase of the revitalization of personal and community resilience in dealing with the disaster and its consequences. Sometimes at this point the communities are left alone and sometimes with local or international aid. Along with the undisputed goodwill, often the problem with these interventions is that they take on a colonialist character. They are not adapted to the local culture and do not patiently help rebuilding of the community. In such situations the ability of the rescue teams from outside the community to be patrons and decision makers is big. While they come from a financial, mental and physical strength, the community is still grieving, it mourns and struggles to survive and its people are in post-trauma - so the ability to take control of them under the guise of participation is easy.

I want to end my remarks with an unconventional and perhaps inappropriate statement for this webinar - but I actually want to express empathy to those whom we criticize. I think it's no less important than talking about the importance of participation, it's important to talk about what those who are expected to include and reach out to the public are going through - and out of that understanding - work with them for a change. I will address a number of challenges, not all of them:

A major barrier is related to the fact that there is no education and no training for participative processes. Policymakers, professionals and officials do not reinforce appropriate worldviews nor do they have appropriate methods for doing so.

In addition, the need to provide fast results does not allow for the prolonged pace and ability to deal with the complexity of participation processes.

Another point has to do with the fact that public participation is a threat. Participation brings new opinions, expectations, criticisms to the agenda - and these require a lot of confrontation. It is much easier to come up with a pre-planned plan.

We must understand that complex problems require complex solutions. These solutions cannot rely on just one or two types of knowledge - academic knowledge or professional knowledge. Without merging with local knowledge, and with the knowledge of those who suffer most from the problem - we will be with unsatisfactory solutions.

This challenge faces us all!

4 COMMENTS

After the presentations, some participants asked questions, such as Mr. Francky NISHIMWE who asked "how to end poverty? Especially in Africa.

One of the speakers (Christian RHUGWASANYE) replied: "We can only end poverty if the poorest are also **actors of change**, if they have a place and a voice in projects and activities like every other person.

5 CONCLUSION

Dear friends, it was an honour to spend this moment together, we would all like to have other similar moments to learn more about the participation of people living in poverty in research and participatory methodologies. We hope that with this friendship with the ATD Fourth-World movement, we will be able to be inform and train more on participatory methodologies such as the Merging of Knowledge and Practices developed by ATD Fourth World in partnership with universities. I would also like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to Christian RHUGWASANYE for his courage and for putting us on this journey,

concluded **Dr. Hamim Syed**.

6 PARTICIPANTS

116 people from 8 different countries and 10 different universities registered for this virtual meeting to celebrate the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Among them: 32 professors, 64 students and 20 members of the International Movement ATD Fourth World.

Profession:

● Student	64
● Faculty	32
● ATD member	20

