



Addressing the Hidden Dimensions of Poverty

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OECD Conference Center



Concept note

"Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere" – the overarching goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – reflects the growing consensus on the need to consider dimensions other than monetary ones when thinking about poverty. To improve global understanding of multidimensional poverty, the International Movement ATD Fourth World, together with researchers from Oxford University, launched an international research project in six countries to identify the key dimensions of poverty and the relationships between them. The research, funded by the French Department of International Development (AFD) and others, uses a participative approach that mobilizes the knowledge of people experiencing poverty. Active research began in 2016, with the project due for completion in June 2019.

The project is based on a "Merging Knowledge" methodology, in which practitioners, academics, and people facing poverty are co-researchers. In this methodology, the different types of knowledge resulting from action, academic research, and life experiences are built first in an independent way through meetings with peer groups, then merged to enrich one another, resulting in new insights about the reality of poverty.

National Research Teams (NRT) were established in six countries: Bangladesh, Bolivia, France, Tanzania, the United Kingdom and the United States. The six NRTs comprise between 9 and 15 members, with 4 to 6 people with direct experience of poverty and an experienced person supporting them, academics, and practitioners providing services or advocacy for people in poverty. NRTs are facilitated by two coordinators and one research assistant.

Each NRT has set up between 12 and 35 peer groups of people in urban and rural areas, practitioners and academics, analysed the outcomes of their deliberations and produced a list of dimensions of poverty and their characteristics. NRTs in Bangladesh and Tanzania also set up peer groups of children or elderly people. In September 2018, 32 delegates from the six NRTs gathered with the international coordination team and interpreters in Villarceaux, where they worked together for one week. The six NRTs had identified a total of about 70 dimensions of poverty. Project participants first worked in two groups, comprising delegates from, respectively, the global North and the global South, to see whether there were common elements in the list of dimensions identified by each national team. The two groups then convened in plenary to compare their lists: one conclusion was that, although the daily lives of poor people in the North and in the South differ in many ways, the dimensions they had identified were very similar. At the end of a seven-day session, project participants came up with a list of nine dimensions of poverty that are common to all participating countries, and several modifying factors.



All NRTs refined their findings, complementing them with a written account of the new insights about poverty that had emerged from their research. The international coordination team wrote an international synthesis. Both national and international outcomes will be presented at the OECD conference, and the insights and questions they raise will be shared with participants. The aim of the conference will be to establish a dialogue among the NRTs and participants in order to discuss how to move forward in the areas of measurement, policy and action.

