



**Action For Social Rights**

**Action pour les droits sociaux**

*An organization that advocates for the protection and promotion of social rights*

*Organization de defense des droits sociaux*

**{AfSoR}**

**Report On International Day For  
The **Eradication Of Extreme  
Poverty****



**Theme:** “Human Face Of **Poverty**: *What Can We Do*”

**17<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

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AfSoR will like to acknowledge the enormous contribution of its volunteers to make this commemoration a success. AfSoR will also want to thank ENCLISS for the provision of their hall to host this year round table discussion and NMDHR for hosting our organization and the provision of their computers to do the documentation of this report. Most importantly our profound acknowledgement goes to the entire participant that honour and contributes to this year commemoration, you have done well for the worlds poor.



AfSoR= Action For Social Rights

NMDHR= Network Movement For Democracy and Human Rights

YAI= Youth Action International

DSL= Democracy Sierra Leone

SFP-SL= Service For Peace Sierra Leone

HRCSL= Human Rights Commission Sierra Leone

CCYA= Centre For Coordination Of Youth Activities

FSSG= Freetown Secondary School for Girls

IDEP= International Day for the Eradication of Extreme Poverty

WWD= World Water Day

DoTAC= Day of the African Child

*ENCISS= Enhancing the Interface and Interaction between Civil Society and the State to Improve Poor Peoples Life*

*FHRC= Freetown Human Rights Committee*

*WHRC= West Area Human Rights Committee*

*VIO= Volunteers Involving Organizations*

*UNOSIL= United Nations Integrated Office In Sierra Leone*

*UNDP= United Nations Development Program*



*This Report is dedicated to the Worlds Poor, those that have lost their lives, denied justice, trafficked, drop out of school, forcefully exicted, sexually abuse or violated because of their poverty status,*

*Those that have standard as a bridge, voice of the voiceless and sacrifice their wealth in campaigning for equality.*

*Wurie Mamadu Tamba Barrie*

*Executive Director*

*Action For Social rights {AfSoR}*

**Report On The International Day For The Eradication Of  
Extreme Poverty**

**Theme: Human Face Of Poverty: *What Can We Do?***

**Date: 17<sup>th</sup> October 2008. Venue: ENCISS Conference Hall.**

## **SELF INTRODUCTION**

The Assistant Programme Officer, asked participant to introduce themselves for better understanding and familiarity. The participants introduce themselves and the organization, institution and community they are representing.

## **WELCOME ADDRESS**

The Assistant Programme Officer, Foday Ahmed Sillah welcomes all participants. In his words he said, Good morning and welcome to you all for honoring our invitation. I will like to acknowledge the presence of all International Non-governmental Organisations, National Non-governmental Organisations, Community Base Organisations, and Institutions, distinguish ladies and gentle men. My task here this morning is to introduce the

Chairperson and make short statement on the importance of this day {International Day for the Eradication of Extreme Poverty}.

17th October 1987 was marked as the International Day for the Eradication of Extreme Poverty, which was officially acknowledged by the United Nations in 1992 in solidarity with the poor of which the foundation stone was laid in Paris France by Rev Joseph...

Today, we all gather here in commemoration of that particular day as a sense of responsibility to be in solidarity with those that are in extreme poverty, raise awareness, discussions on causes and effect, make recommendations to create a better Sierra Leone and the World.

AfSoR, as a voluntary indigenous non-governmental human rights organization that advocates for the protection and promotion of social rights through the implementation of economic social and cultural rights within Sierra Leone and Abroad. take this event as calendar activity among others such as '*Day of the African Child World Water Day, World Habitat Day, World HIV/AIDS Day*', in campaigning for the eradication of extreme poverty by raising awareness.

"We have the strong view that Extreme Poverty will only be eradicated until and unless Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are justiciable". To have a stable political platform, social rights needs should be protected, respected, protected and fulfill. Every human being has the rights to human dignity. The {rights to}: Employment/ Workers Rights; Adequate Standard of Living; Social Security; Health and Education,

In that note, AfSoR is calling all to join the Worlds Campaign against Extreme Poverty, as it is incumbent on us all. I may stop here for now, Thanks for giving me audience.

## **INTRODUCTION OF CHAIRPERSON**

The Chairperson for this year round table discussion in commemorating the International

Day for the Eradication of Extreme Poverty on the topic that fitting out national context and even beyond I strongly believed, is a dynamic young person that is well grounded on the issue of poverty and human rights, he had certificates in human rights, international peace keeping and conflict resolution and French. He is still in the world of academia and the founder and Executive Director of Action For Social Rights, Ladies and Gentlemen please join me in Welcoming Mr. Wurie Mamadu Tamba Barrie as our chairperson for this programme. The introduction was done by the Assistant Program Officer, Foday Ahmed Sillah

### **CHAIRPERSON OPENING REMARKS**



Distinguish Ladies and Gentlemen; it is but honour to chair this round table discussion on the “Human Face of Poverty: What Can We Do” Which also had sub topics that will be discussed freely, openly and precisely. Today marks another milestone in our ADVOCACY against extreme poverty. Action For Social Rights see it obligatory to join the World in the event. We are here in this room representing the Worlds population reflection of the worlds poor what ever we see here having been said by the worlds poor. . Sierra Leone agenda for development: The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Vision 2025 are all gear towards poverty reduction in theory. Unemployment, Underemployment and employment security for extreme poor are not guarantee.

The topic we are about to discuss shortly “**Human Face of Poverty: What Can We Do**”? Is so significant, if we really want to eradicate poverty, {Poverty needs an identity, it only when there is tangible identity to something you will be able to locate it }

Ladies and gentlemen, your contribution to this discussion is of great importance, please speak feely and openly to the topics.

I thank you all.

Before the discussion, whether poverty had a face or not, the chairperson asked all to defined poverty in their own practical words. *What is Poverty?*

### **WHAT IS POVERTY?**

#### **Participants Definitions Of Poverty**



**Rokel:** The representative of Government Rokel Secondary School, he said, “Poverty is a state or condition of being poor, a deficiency or lack of what is needed or deserved”. **IEARN:** The representative of International Education And Resource Network defined poverty as “Poverty is the lack of basic necessity”. **AUCAYD:** The representative of Artist United for Children and Youth Development says, “Poverty is anything that serves as hindrances, limitations for further him/her self, obstacles, challenges that hinder the achievement of individual/individuals among other definitions of poverty.

## DISCUSSIONS

### Discussion On The Topic: Human Face Of Poverty



The chairperson, throw lights on the topic and asked participants whether poverty has a human face, sleeping, walking and even lived with us?

Mr. Edward of Centre for Coordination of Youth Activities in his contribution mentioned that “Sierra Leone has been ranked 177 out of 179 countries in the World to be the poorest, the nation is actually poor and there different levels of poverty”. “The legacy of the colonial history is affecting us. 75% of the population is living under less than a dollar a day, seven out of ten children die at or before the age five years {7 out 10 Children die at or before age 5yrs}”. “ My biggest challenge is the partisanship of the Sierra Leone population {vise, visa}, when Sierra Leone Peoples party perform ed well, people like it to politic, when they perform bad people links it to politic, the same for All People Congress Party. Are we really serious, it is as if we are retrogressing” I will say the mentality of the vast population is making us to be poor”.

Mr. Aka of World Youth Federation of World Peace, started by raising concerns “Are the Natural Resources show that Sierra Leone is poor, those the potential in the country shows that we are poor, those the lack of resource shows that the country or we are poor, Is Sierra Leone a poor country, the answer is NO. then why are we poor or class as the poorest? He continued to state, “There are two issues that linked with poverty, Moral aspect of poverty and the Value aspect of poverty.



The moral aspect of poverty links with who should build our country, the natural resource by themselves cannot build Sierra Leone it needs to be managed effectively and efficiently by people”. “The value aspect of poverty links with who are teaching in schools it is the education system or people {ourselves} if our attitude to develop the country is contrary”. A participant cited that “Sierra Leone is a signatory to the youth Charter that makes provisions for intergenerational dialogue with heads of state and ministers in putting our cases that affected the well being of people but that gap is still wide open, we don’t have any value if they are these values they are not communicated”.

The chairperson asked after a serious discussion on whether poverty has a human face or not? AUCAYD Representative said poverty limit your rights because of poverty your voice cannot be heard so “Poverty does not have a human face, the face of poverty is as ugly as a beast”. Representative Freetown Secondary School for Girls said “Poverty has a human face as it only human being that subject another human being to abject poverty”.

It was agreed that human being used the face of beast to distinguish him/herself to appear as human being and as poverty is human, the minds of people needs to be change”.

### **Discussion On The Topic: Poverty And Education**

The chairperson asked the question, is poverty encroaching on education or education is encroaching on poverty. In addition, what or who is responsible for the massive failure of the West African Senior Certificate Examination?

The chairperson give the students to start the discussion, a student answer “Government is Responsible for the massive failure of the WASCE Examination, 99% of the teachers salary are pittance and it arriving late not to talk about those in the provinces, teachers are facing the difficult situation of poverty” for instance one teacher had six people to take-care off and the salary in pittance, psychologically they cannot concentrate in teaching all they do is preparing pamphlet and attach cost to it as an alternative to their salary”. “it is a great difficulty we are facing with , I came from a poor family background, the government needs to pay more emphasis on education”



Another student says, “Poverty is encroaching on education and the government is responsible. Government is the policy maker and there are ten things that is prohibited in schools, one is the selling of pamphlet, lesson in schools etc. “most of the time our teachers forcefully sold biscuit and even credit us their market, if we refused to buy or accept the credit they will flog us and if we did not buy their pamphlet we will not take their class”. IEARN Representative said a lot of children are in schools and they did not have the opportunity to have access to computer, so “we trained these children computer technology; equip these

children that came from poor background with computer knowledge. It was cited that colonial master set the barrier on education as they divided the country into two separate states:

- 1) The colonial and {*Freetown*}
- 2) The protectorate {*Provinces*}

“Bo School was meant purposely for the children of the paramount chief in the protectorate and the Grammar School for the krios and the colony master. They describes this institution as two parallel lines that will never meet,” “the system of changing the educational system in 1991 was equivocally denied in to 6-3-3-4{Six years in primary schools, three years in junior secondary school, three years in senior secondary / high school and four years in tertiary} there was no infrastructures {technical, vocational or polytechnics} putting in place to sustained this system of education”.



Mr., Edward said, teachers are satisfy but suffering from mental poverty. It cited that parents are also responsible for the declined of education on the pretext that how many parents are overseeing their work in schools, follow up their academic performance or behaviour in schools, parent are allowing their children watching movies that are prohibited to children and stay up all night watch movies. The other problem of education in our country is children raising children {Teenage Pregnancy}.

“Why do our leaders send their children to private schools rather than public or government schools which they supported and managed? Is because they did not have trust in the education system” asked and answer by a participant. “Inspectors of schools are not performing their function effectively and the government is wasting our tax money on them”. “I class the education system as no policy, no structure, and swim and survive improper monitoring methodology and bribery. I am telling you my brother the environment of learning is not conducive’.

I accept that poverty is encroaching on education looking at the cost attached to it, “a teacher or student from the far east attending or teaching in the west or central of the city paying transportation every day on congested traffic or walk on foot before arriving he/she is tired., what does he/she give out or take in as student or teacher”.

Examine the types of educational we have or practice Primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, tertiary, vocational or technical, is there any structure for an individuals to attained education to the best of his/her potential, “this to tell that the poor will remain poor, I meet a man in Moyamba and I asked him can you give your knowledge for free and he reply I cannot give my knowledge for free because I paid for it”

“Poverty in education is a cycle, we need to revolutionizing the education system” said a participant

It agreed that, because of extreme poverty on parent as they go out and fend, less supervision is placed on the welfare of their children and their social life. Because of the presence of poverty in all sector especially teachers, parent {Single parent}, and the lack of government commitment to education.

### **Discussion On The Topic: Poverty And Employment**



On the sub-topic Poverty and Employment, which is a burning issue in the country at the moment among youth and it is the thematic focus, the chairperson asked participant that people are going for job without security or social protection because of poverty or lack of understanding of the hazard in his/her health.

Access for employment is a key to fight against poverty but it has been proven otherwise in own situation, for instance, youth in this country are urging to seek for employment in Irag simply because the government is not providing internal employment for youth or secure their social protection in employment. The social needs and responsibilities are increasing as the days go by and he/she needs to secure a better position for him/herself and that of his/her family. How a youth can in Sierra Leone going for such an employment, Irag employment is not employment for youth in Sierra Leone {IRAG}.

I want to ask this deliberate question “Does youth want to be employed ?”.



In response many says Yes while he says No, for instance unskilled and uneducated youth was employed to take care of pig with a salary scale of one hundred and sixty thousand lenses per month {160,000.00} compared to my own salary of one hundred and twenty seven thousand been paid as a teacher at that time but unfortunately they relinquish the employment and stay idle how can such youth been employed. A participant also asked that what the security of that employment to the well-being of that youth ?.

The chairperson asked about the people that are in employment but with no job security or just and favourable condition in employment. Edward continued asking why a person being resigned from a job without having another is because the condition at work is not favorable, on the other hand, poverty had made people seek employment that are hazardous to their health and had made them more poor.



“Mr. Chair NASSIT is programme design to alleviate poverty in employment, but quiet honestly a good number of people in employment did not have their social security identification card to protect their employment investment. Those that in employment as laborers in shops, security agencies did not have employment contract or NASSIT I.D Card and they are suffering from arbitrary dismissal that adds on their poverty status without benefit”

“The total breakdown of the home system and the lack of basic life skills is a deterrent to employment and increase in extreme poverty”

“Participant unanimously agreed that **‘MENTALITY’** is responsible for the state of extreme poverty in our country and the World at large, until our mentality are change for the better and reframe from individualistic thought to collectivity one”.

### **WHAT CAN WE DO?**

It is strongly recommended that pro-active measure needs to be taken:-

- I. Transformed the minds of people through engagements and life skills nationwide
- II. Strong government commitment to end corruption
- III. Media sensitization of poverty and mentality
- IV. Conduct of regular research and documentations
- V. Invest in agriculture
- VI. Enhancing the concept of attitudinal change
- VII. Formal and informal sponsorship on education
- VIII. Adequate protection in employment
- IX. Increment of salary and reframe from making the class room a business place

### **FOOD FOR THOUGHT QUESTION & ANSWER IN PROGRAMME**

#### ***Questions***

1. Why does a young man opt for a menial job?
2. Where did we learn to serve seven years before becoming a doctor?
3. Where do we perceived that if we did not speak English you are not educated?,

#### ***Answers***

1. Young man opt for menial jobs because he had to sustained himself and get ride of poverty not knowing that, he is going to remain poor and die early because of no job security.
2. It all ways not to make people employ and to secure their own interest in the employment arena. The local and traditional leaders are neglected or give little attention and even discourage to study traditional medicine.
3. We perceived it from our colonial master, as it prevent us to articulate well in our local languages and become frightened to articulate in public

## **APEHNDIX**

### **Organizational Constrains:**

Action For Social Rights has identify IDEP-Day as a calendar activity for continuous advocacy and awareness raising on the Millennium Development Goal on poverty eradication and it effect to human and national development. AfSoR in commemorating this world activity faced a lot of constrains with funding in engaging key stakeholders in the campaign. This activities gas been self finance by the organization

We are recommending to donor and funding agency to come to our aid and support our organization with funds and technical expertise in making the Millennium Development Goals on poverty and other related goals achievable.

### **Press Release IDEP 2008**

## **ACTION FOR SOCIAL RIGHTS PRESS RELEASE**

DATE 22<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER 2008

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Action For Social Rights is an indigenous non-governmental human rights organization that advocates for the protection and promotion of social rights and the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights, is pleased to informed the general public and the government in particular, that in the stride of **fight against extreme poverty in Sierra Leone**

AfSoR , through a round table discussions to commemorates the *International Day fothe Eradication of Extreme Poverty* on the topic: **'Human Face Of Poverty: /what Can We Do'** had unveil the reality of poverty among others

1. That the neutral resources of Sierra Leone does not make the country poor
2. The human potential does not make the country poor
3. That poverty had a face and that face id human
4. Government is responsible for the been poor

5. That poverty is eroded on education, employment, without social protection
6. That poverty is human
7. That mentality is greatly responsible for poverty in Sierra Leone among others

In finding, *what we can do* to salvage the situation of poverty, which we belong because the face of poverty, represent human. The following recommendations are made among others:

- I. Transformed the minds of human through engagement and life skills training nationwide
- II. Strong government commitment to end corruption
- III. Media sensitization
- IV. Adequate protection in employment
- V. Enhancing the concept of attitudinal change
- VI. Monitoring capacity intensify
- VII. Invest in agriculture
- VIII. Provide sponsorship and literacy for student and drop out
- IX. Increment of salary

“Action For Social Rights in solidarity with the World Extreme Poor is calling on the International Community to pay attention to Worlds Poor and the MDGs. In addition, the government to change it mentality in utilizing the country resources and potentials”

***“Poverty cannot be eradicate without Economic, Social and Cultural Rights been justiciable”***

**Contact**

077-542-577

076-478-463

077 834-654

End of Report