



End poverty – reduce inequality

The last 15 years have seen some progress in reducing poverty in the world. Yet 10% of the world's population still live in extreme poverty. The causes of poverty are manifold: wide spread corruption, tax evasion by multinational companies, the effects of climate change, the discrimination of minority groups. Every year some two trillion dollars' flow from the developing countries to the industrialised countries. At the same time the number of millionaires and billionaires are increasing continually. The gap between rich and poor is increasing at an alarming rate. 62 of the richest persons own more property than the poorer half of the world population. Scientific research shows that extreme inequality is one of the causes of social tensions and violent conflicts. It is appropriate that the first Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) demands as a priority to put an end to poverty.

What do the SDGs call for?

The SDGs ask for special efforts to support vulnerable groups, such as women and children and indigenous peoples.

- They need access to educational facilities, to social and financial services and social protection systems, to ownership and control over land and other property and inheritance rights.
- Vulnerable groups who are exposed to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks need special attention.
- Policies should ensure inclusion and equal opportunity for all, promote participation in decision-making and eliminate discrimination.
- The problem of highly indebted countries has to be addressed. (SGD 17.4)



Not mentioned, but important would be effective measures against tax evasion and tax havens.

What can we do?

From the beginning religious working in Africa were engaged in the struggle against poverty in various ways. They helped poor people in their various needs and initiated educational programmes. Through the Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) they were involved in actions for debt relief of the highly indebted poor countries, against land grabbing and unfair trade agreements like EPAs and the TTIP negotiations because they disadvantage developing countries. Today we must ask ourselves what we can do against new forms of poverty and exclusion.

Words to challenge us

- Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? (Is 58:6-7)
- If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (Jak. 2:16-17)
- We have a sort of 'super development' of a wasteful and consumerist kind. This forms an unacceptable situations of dehumanizing deprivation. We are all too slow in developing economic institutions to undertake social initiatives which can give the poor regular access to basic resources. (LS 109)
- Helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work. (LS 128)
- Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. This demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and come to their aid.

(Evangelii Gaudium 187)