



Franciscans International

Human Rights, Poverty and Extreme Poverty
Position Paper
March 2007
Part 2

Human Rights

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” —Article 1 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

What does Christian scripture say similar to this UN definition?



~~"For the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place; and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.'~~ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing; and he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.' And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the householder, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you, and go; I choose to give to this last as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?' So the last will be first, and the first last (Mat 20:1-16)."



“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:27).”

“... and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scyth'ian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. (Col 3:10-15).”

C. Poverty and extreme poverty: A rights-based approach

- Poverty is the result of a combination of civil, political, social, economic, cultural and relational factors of insecurity that come together as causes and consequences of human rights violation.
- There are several important causal links between poverty and:
 - Lack of security,
 - Violence,
 - Trafficking in persons,
 - Diseases such as HIV and AIDS.

D. Participation

- Franciscans do not approach their fellow humans with condescension, but rather with willingness to serve.
- Poverty must not be a problem that we simply look at from on high.
- “Political leaders only know misery through statistics. We do not cry in the face of numbers,” - Abbé Pierre.
- To truly understand poverty, we must listen to those who live it.



Identifying the most vulnerable and their needs

- Who were the most vulnerable in Jesus' time?



Identifying the most vulnerable and their needs

- Who were the most vulnerable in Francis' time?



Identifying the most vulnerable and their needs


- Who are the most vulnerable in our time?

Actions

- What actions did Jesus and the disciples take during Jesus' earthly mission?
- What actions did Francis and the Brothers take during Francis' time?
- What actions should we take in our time?

E. Poverty and discrimination

- Not only are poverty and extreme poverty the product of **discrimination**, but once poor, people may suffer from stigmatization because of their poverty and its consequences. Thus emerges a vicious cycle that must be stopped.
- Franciscans International strongly condemns the discrimination faced by poor people with regards to their right to live in a safe and healthy environment.

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- The areas where poor people live are also often the most polluted, for example where toxic waste is disposed. In addition, poor people are met with unhealthy conditions in their workplaces. These practices are discriminatory and should be punishable.

Ship Breaking in India:



Toxic Computer Recycling:



Conflict Diamonds:



Unsafe Mining:

Yellow Cake Uranium mining by hand:



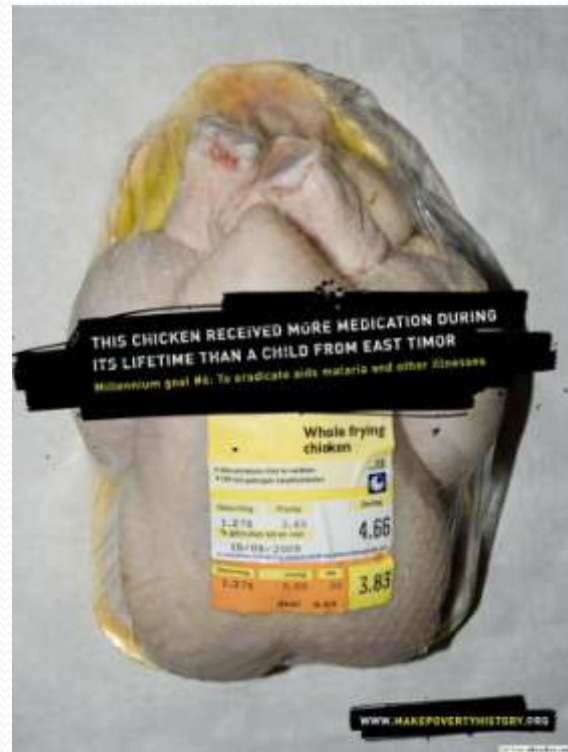
Coal Mining China:



F. Justiciability of the Rights of Persons Living in Extreme Poverty

- Poor people are in a constant state of doubt.
- FI maintains that it is essential to give HOPE
- They must be made aware that:
 - They have equal rights.
 - Their situation is neither 'normal' nor inevitable, but an injustice.
 - They must be allowed to discover their potential, by being able to live in an environment where they can develop fully.

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G. State responsibility at the national level

- The success of an economic policy is not measured in terms of growth in GDP, but rather in its capacity to fulfill, in a sustainable way, the rights of the population, particularly the rights to an adequate standard of living and to decent work.
- All too often economic growth is not to the benefit of the poorest people, but rather to their detriment.
- We underscore also that politics and programs aimed at creating working opportunities for people living in poverty and extreme poverty should take utmost priority.

H. The duty to cooperate internationally

- Rich states have committed to supporting developing and least developed countries through official development assistance.
- This aid must be given to meet the needs of the target population and not those of the donors or in-country elites.
- Within such a worldview, the need to pursue efforts in cancelling the debt of the poorest countries remains a top priority.

I. Recommendations

- It remains essential that everyone learn more about poverty and extreme poverty, facing instead of avoiding poverty, and that each and every one of us feel involved as a member of the human family.
- We can all contribute, according to our own means and abilities, to poverty eradication.