Salehe Seif  
International Day for the Eradication of Poverty  
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Hello, good afternoon everybody!

Before I came here, Asha told me: “People living in extreme poverty are often humiliated and disrespected. When my visa was refused, I felt that my rights were violated, that I do not have an equal opportunity to travel and belong to a larger world.

They told me they cannot give me a visa because of my income, and they did not believe that I would come back to my country after the event of October 17.

I was very disappointed. I believed that I would meet different people, with different experiences, and I believed I would share my knowledge and my experience and learn from others as well.”

Asha was refused a visa because her worth as a person and her human dignity did not have value. Of course she has no money, and they judged her based on that.
If an academic had wanted a visa, they would be happy to provide one, because an academic would be recognized as contributing knowledge. But Asha has knowledge to share too.

People living in poverty are not trusted, even if they tell the truth. They have no chance to express themselves.

For example, some of my friends were caught, suspected of doing something wrong. But it has been almost five years and they have not been judged yet. They have been locked up and forgotten. I just try and encourage the relatives of my friends to continue to visit them in prison. If human rights and dignity were respected, these friends of mine would have come before a judge.

Poverty forces you to make choices that you know are not what you want for yourself and your family.
Asha told me: “I was one of the good students despite poverty and struggle. However, my mother had to advise me to fail the national exam. She was worried about the cost for secondary school because she was alone — because of the loneliness of the extreme poverty we were facing.”
In my country, if a child passes the national exam and parents don’t bring him or her to secondary school, they would go to jail. And it is also a shame for parents if their child passes the exam and they don’t bring them to the secondary school. What other choice did Asha’s mother have?

Parents who work at the stone quarry also cannot make the choices they want for their children.

People who work in the **quarry** are considered the lowest. They risk their lives. They work very hard, but what they get from their work is very little.

So, to help support their parents and to increase the household income, children do not go to school regularly. But they end up getting sick because of the dust, and then the family suffers more because they have to struggle to cure them.

I think there should be a policy to support people living in extreme poverty to avoid this situation.

If the parents have enough security — for example if they are sure of having food — they would not allow their children to work at the quarry; they would send them to school.

Sometimes security is provided, but it does not involve the right people. Those who get that support already have a little bit.
People who live in poverty are not beggars. They don’t complain; they don’t come forward and say, “I need help.” Often they work hard; they do their best to hide their poverty, to make sure they wear clean clothes. It is a way of defending themselves. So how can they be reached by a protection system? It is not enough to ask: “Is your house a mud house?” It is a question of people participating in the community.

**The people in the community, they know themselves. They can say who should be helped.**

When we come together, we practice solidarity and respect for every human, by acting — by doing it, not by preaching. When we say "coming together," it often includes only people who are not in poverty. Coming together must also include those who are experiencing poverty, because they are often left behind for many reasons.

But they are the ones who live in poverty, and they have contributions to make and opinions about what works better for their lives.

When the human rights and dignity of everybody are taken into account, the world will have sustainable peace and love.