ELEMENTS FOR THE WEBINAR (n ° 4) OF JUNE 2020

"How to reduce inequality and poverty throughout the next economic and ecological transitions? "

Some INGOs from the transversal group "Poverty: inequalities and enjoyment of rights" AIC, ATD Fourth World, Caritas Europa, ESAN, Justice and Peace Europe, SOROPTIMIST, discussed in May on "the follow-up to be given to the post-health and social crisis and economical ". Here are their thoughts and proposals.

A recent drawing by CHAT, character of the humorist P. Geluck, opens our eyes:

"THE CHOICE IS SIMPLE: either we Change - or we Die"

1. An unacceptable level of poverty and insecurity, a gross violation of human rights

The serious health crisis reveals the structural weaknesses of a model of society on the European and world level. One of the most acute effects of this pandemic and of containment is the slowing down, even the collapse of whole sections of the economy with a social crisis.

This situation has hit the most vulnerable on the front line: the unemployed, the poor or precarious workers, single-parent families, the elderly, disadvantaged students, the poorest and most vulnerable people and families who are homeless or poorly housed, women or children victims of domestic violence.

The lives of migrants and undocumented migrants have been more difficult than ever and exposed: trafficking, exposure to COVID 19 because of the conditions of accommodation, work ... lack of protection for unaccompanied minors, etc.

And we cannot forget those who are stranded at the gates of Europe in inhuman and unacceptable conditions.

We would like to salute the European Committee of Social Rights which at the start of the pandemic reaffirmed certain essential guarantees of European law as they apply at the external borders of the EU, bearing in mind that the instruments of the Council of Europe relevant in this regard apply to all borders.

https://rm.coe.int/droits-fondamentaux-des-refugies-des-demandeurs-d-asile-et-des-migrant/16809e3999

2. The confinement has highlighted the violations of fundamental rights and the European Social Charter and has increased inequalities.

There are a wide variety of serious situations to which governments must respond in the most appropriate and effective way possible to ensure and guarantee access to all of their fundamental

rights for all. Despite the measures taken, they did not succeed and, on the contrary, the inequalities increased :

- the poorest, the most fragile suffered the most (eg in England there was 2 times more mortality linked to COVID-19 in lower-income neighborhoods)

- more exposure to COVID because it is more difficult to respect barrier gestures

(ex in Seine St Denis 1/3 of the accommodation is over-occupied.) ..

- more exposed workers: manual work, sometimes undeclared, poorly protected

- more fragile health: unhealthy housing, street life, too low food budget: more problems with diabetes, cardiovascular disease, etc. less access to the health system, alternative medicine, etc.

- problem of schooling: difficulty in studying (problem of digital access, parents do not always have the means to help), dropping out of school which has exploded, fear of parents to send their children back to school, in particular for fear of judgments (we failed to help our children, they will be even more in check).

- increased insecurity: more canteens for children, lower income (there is no longer access to odd jobs, often unreported, many students live in poverty due to the loss of their jobs)

3. In addition to this mobilization of NGOs, many civic commitments

Many people, who had never been involved until then, volunteered to feel useful, to create a bond, to join in the daily measures already taken by associations, social services, states ...

The mutual aid of these people, their fraternity, tried to encourage again and again all those who continued to be at the forefront to fight against the pandemic. Citizen actions, of general interest were innumerable and complementary to public actions, and demonstrated the same desire: to get personally involved by taking care of others, quite the opposite of the individualism to which we were used .

4. The need for other models, more respectful of people and nature

1) ° "Care", the basis of a new social contract, in contrast to capitalism and the globalization experienced previously ;

And this new attitude joins the notion of "care" used in the Anglo-Saxon world, which had arisen in the public square in France during a declaration by Martine Aubry:

"We have to move from an individualistic society to a care society, to take care of the other",

this notion, beyond health care and education, aims to foster relationships - "with and for others, in just institutions" to use the definition of ethics according to Ricœur.

And if the solidarity experienced at the time of COVID-19, revived by the multitude of civic actions, this collective "care" could be what will mark this world according to? We must hope and encourage it!

2) The crisis shows the need for political change for a sustainable world:

Olivier de Schutter, former UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights: "It is unacceptable and scandalous that governments rely on the voluntary sectors, on public charity, because families in great poverty do not reach not to feed themselves, the development of a food charity sector is not a substitute for the social protection system that really protects. "The charitable sector has to do what is the responsibility of the state."

There is a paradigm shift to operate to prevent the poorest from being in this insecurity and this permanent humiliation linked to inequality. The question of social minima arises, they are currently insufficient. Our consumption by all, but more particularly by the wealthiest, is causing the degradation of our planet and global warming.

The poorest often show their attachment to more sustainable ways of doing things.

With the pandemic, everyone, especially young people, has become even more aware of the need to make a commitment for more just and sustainable societies, and for a possible future for generations to come, on all continents.

A systemic approach

In the media, in conversations, in political life… the Post-Covid is a subject of reflection and concern. In our INGOs we also feel at the foot of the wall: how to think, act? what to do to change our world?

After the emergency, we must face the social and economic consequences in the environment, work, politics, social relationships.

"The fight against the pandemic will save us the battle for the climate," said a physicist.

"A new mission for the company", says a CEO of a large global group.

"Let's create a new social contract," said a union official.

"In all countries, the same evidence has emerged, the economy is only a means and what counts is priceless" say an economist

We INGOs are aware of the urgency of the responses to be provided:

Economic recovery cannot be done alone and from above by governments: it is WITH associations, organizations, citizens, territories in order to avoid sectorized and technocratic responses.

State aid is promised, but just social conditions and ecological measures are essential. The EU Green Deal should not be put aside.

We welcome the Council of Europe Declaration of 5 June 2020 "Human rights for the planet". The European Court of Human Rights has already ruled on some 300 environmental cases. The European Committee of Social Rights has led several decisions and conclusions which invite states to intervene. "We need to harness the powerful tools we have and further strengthen them to help build a better future for all."

On 5 October 2020, the Council of Europe will organize a major conference "Human rights for the planet".

Health is a "global commons" and cannot be reduced to lucrative and mercantile management. Integral ecology includes health. It is a universal need that is not satisfied for a large part of humanity in access to care, treatment and future vaccines.

Improving the living conditions of women and girls (education, training, combating violence against them, integration program)

Finance and taxation must be at the service of the common good, at the service of the real economy.

In many countries, the ideal of democracy is being undermined: what role and what actions should be taken by INGOs to revive democracy, its ideal and its rules?

The change imposed by this global pandemic is civilizational and ethical, so we believe and want to act to hold together

Social justice AND Economic development AND Ecological transition

in a fraternal and united construction.