



WEBINAR INVITATION

2nd Dialogue on Poverty and Human Rights

The Centre for Human Rights, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria cordially invites you to the the second Dialogue on Poverty and Human Rights. This webinar is the second in a series and the keynote address will be presented by **Prof Elena Carolina Diaz Galan** rapportuer on extreme poverty. The opening address will be delivered by **Honourable Mudford Zachariah Mwandenga**, Commissioner of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and Chairperson of the Working Group on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Poverty remains one of the most severe human rights issues globally, particularly in developing nations and especially in Africa. It is commonly perceived as a social, or economic concern; nevertheless, its implications and consequences transcend these categories. According to the World bank 2026 update, 847 million people worldwide were living in poverty in 2024, with Sub-Saharan Africa accounting for about 464 million in extreme poverty, making the region the most affected globally.

Date: Wednesday, 15 July 2026 | **Time:** 14:00 – 16:00 (SAST)

REGISTER ON ZOOM

In South Africa, statistics show that in 2023, about 10.8 million people were living below the food poverty line, while 66.7% of the population fell below the upper-bound poverty line. This situation is closely linked to the enduring legacy of apartheid which institutionalised racial dispossession, unequal education, labour exclusion and spatial inequalities.

Poverty manifests not merely as economic deprivation but as a lived experience that undermines human dignity, equality, freedom, and access to essential needs such as food, water, housing, healthcare, education, employment, and social protection.

Extreme poverty confines individuals and communities, particularly marginalized groups, to exclusion, insecurity, discrimination, and restricted engagement in social, economic, and political spheres. It is a manifestation of social injustice. In many African countries, poverty is exacerbated by structural inequality, unemployment, gender injustice, inadequate public services, environmental degradation, and the impacts of climate change. Consequently, it constitutes a significant infringement of human rights.

A human rights-based approach to poverty is crucial as it transitions the discourse from charity to justice, and from needs to rights and accountability. It acknowledges that individuals in poverty are right holders, whereas states and other entities are duty bearers with responsibilities to respect, preserve, and fulfil these rights. Against this backdrop, the Centre for Human Rights is commencing a series of webinars titled 'Dialogue on Poverty and Human Rights'.

Aim

This dialogue seeks to establish a space for critical examination of the connection between poverty and human rights, as well as how legal and policy frameworks might facilitate inclusive and accountable responses.

Objectives

- To analyze poverty from a human rights perspective and to foster discourse on rights-based approaches to poverty, especially within the African setting.
- To stimulate debate on how inequality and social injustice can exacerbate poverty
- To highlight states' obligations in addressing poverty as a human rights challenge
- To explore the multidimensional perspective of poverty
- To share good practices among African states regarding policy formulations and programme to address poverty.

Goals

The dialogue seeks to examine the correlation between poverty and the realization of human rights; to emphasize poverty as both a catalyst and result of human rights infringements; to underscore relevant international and African regional human rights frameworks ; and to promote contemplation on pragmatic, legal, and policy measures addressing poverty rooted in dignity, equality, and social justice.

Normative framework

While none of the international or regional human rights instruments contains explicit provisions on poverty, the various provisions of these instruments can be applied directly or indirectly to address poverty. Poverty can undermine the enjoyment of human rights such as dignity and life. Conversely, human rights violations can exacerbate poverty conditions. For instance, a denial of access to adequate housing can expose an individual to poor living conditions.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, at the international level, asserts the intrinsic dignity and equal rights of all individuals and acknowledges rights essential to combating poverty, such as the right to social security, employment, education, and an appropriate quality of living. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is notably important, as it guarantees the rights to employment, social security, sufficient nourishment, clothes, housing, health care, and education, and mandates that states undertake measures for the progressive realization of these rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women are pertinent, particularly in illustrating the disproportionate impact of poverty on children and women. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities emphasizes the necessity for inclusive strategies to tackle the specific susceptibility of individuals with disabilities to poverty and marginalization. The UN Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights emphasize that poverty is both a cause and a result of human rights breaches, asserting that anti-poverty initiatives must be formulated within a human rights framework.

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights serves as a significant normative framework at the regional level for combating poverty through rights including dignity, equality, health, education, property, and development. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is pertinent in acknowledging children's rights to survival, development, health, and education, all of which are jeopardized by poverty. The Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) is significant in tackling the gendered aspects of poverty and in advancing women's rights to dignity, health, food security, and sustainable development.

African Union Agenda 2063 envisions an Africa characterized by inclusive growth, sustainable development, social justice, and enhanced quality of life, thereby serving as a valuable additional framework for this discourse. The Guidelines and Principles for the Implementation of socio-economic rights in the African Charter outline states' obligations to realise the socio-economic rights in the Charter, including addressing poverty.

The dialogue corresponds with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically SDG 1 aimed at eradicating poverty in all its manifestations globally, while also closely relating to SDG 2 concerning zero hunger, SDG 3 focused on health and well-being, SDG 4 regarding quality education, SDG 5 promoting gender equality, SDG 6 addressing clean water and sanitation, SDG 10 aimed at reducing inequalities, and SDG 16 pertaining to justice and inclusive institutions.

Anticipated results

The debate aims to enhance comprehension of poverty as a human rights concern, bolster awareness of pertinent legal and policy frameworks, and provoke discourse on rights-based approaches to poverty in Africa. The objective is to promote more participation among academics, students, practitioners, politicians, and civil society regarding the necessity for accountable and inclusive anti-poverty initiatives.

Intended audience

Academics, researchers, students, legal professionals, politicians, civil society organizations, development practitioners, and members of the public concerned with poverty, social justice, and human rights.

Structure

This will be an hour's program, including a welcome address, Expert speaker's introduction, a keynote address, a moderated discussion, audience engagement, and closing remarks.

Program

14:30 - 14:35	Moderator Introduction
14:35 - 14:45	Welcome address: Hon. Mudford Zachariah Mwandenga, Commissioner, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights; Chairperson, Working Group on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
14:45 - 15:05	Expert keynote address: Elena Carolina Diaz Galan Professor of Public International Law and International Relations at Rey Juan Carlos University in Madrid, Spain, and special Rapporteur on extreme poverty -The fight against extreme poverty: a question of human rights and, in particular, of social rights.
15:05 - 15:15	Moderated discussion
15:15 - 15:25	Audience engagement
15:25 - 15:30	Closing remarks

Speaker bios

Prof. Elena Carolina Díaz Galán was appointed as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights by the Human Rights Council at its sixty-first session, held in March 2026. She is Professor of Public International Law and International Relations at Rey Juan Carlos University, Madrid, Spain. She is an academic specializing in poverty eradication, human rights and sustainable development with extensive publications in these fields. She has led various projects related to fighting against feminization of poverty; groups in situations of vulnerability; and the European Union and Latin America and Caribbean relations. She was a member of the SDG-FUND–URJC Academic Chair on Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication, as well as the Research Chair on Sustainability, Social Inclusion, Diversity and Human Rights at Carlos III University of Madrid. She has delivered lectures in Universities of America, Asia, Europe and Africa; and she has conducted research stays in prestigious Universities abroad.

Mudford Zachariah Mwandenga, Commissioner, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Chairperson, Working Group on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is a Zambian jurist, Constitutional Court judge, and Commissioner of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. He has extensive experience in legal practice, public service, constitutional law and human rights. He founded M Z Mwandenga & Company in 1998 and served as Managing Partner until his appointment to Zambia's Constitutional Court in April 2023.

In 2020, he was elected to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, where he chairs the Working Group on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. He also serves in other Commission mechanisms relating to HIV rights and extractive industries. He has served on several legal, civic and institutional boards in Zambia and is a member of the Zambia Law Reports Editorial Board.