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## TED 2013: 'Factivist' Bono projects poverty rate of zero by 2030

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Bono said during his talk Tuesday at the TED conference in Long Beach that he was asked by TED organizer Chris Anderson to give an overview of the last 10 years of anti-poverty efforts. But the U2 lead singer and international activist was more interested in looking at where these efforts could go in the next two decades with the help of technology and social media.

"I thought, forget the rock opera, forget the bombast, the only thing I would be singing today is the facts," Bono said. "For I have truly embraced my inner nerd.

"So, exit the rock star. Enter the evidence activist. The 'factivist.' "

This wasn't Bono's first turn at TED. Back in 2005, he was one of the winners of the first TED Prizes, which awarded \$100,000 to the winners. Bono's prize went to helping his One.org project get off the ground. The goal: "Engage millions around the world to take action in the fight against the absurdity of extreme poverty. Because where you live shouldn't determine whether you live."

Bono proceeded to run through some stats to make the point that anti-poverty campaigns (not just his) were making significant progress:

Stat 1: Global mortality rates for kids under 5 had fallen enough that 7,256 fewer children were dying per day.

"Have you read anything, anywhere that's as remotely as important as that number," Bono said. "It drives me nuts that people don't seem to know that."

Stat 2: The number of people living in extreme poverty (defined as making \$1.25 per day or less), or what Bono called "soul crushing poverty," has fallen from 43% in 1990 to 21% in 2010.

"The rate is still too high," Bono said. "There's still work to do. But it's mind-blowing stuff."

If this trajectory continues, Bono said, if the poverty rate continues to decline at the same pace, it would reach zero by 2030.

"That's the zero zone," Bono said. "For numbers crunchers like us, that's the erogenous zone. It's fair to say I'm sexually aroused by the collating of data."

Later, Bono clarified that he was talking about the most extreme types of poverty, not all poverty. Still, he said the declining poverty rate represented significant progress in improving people's lives. And that target date is not that far off, he said.

"2030 is just around the corner," Bono said. "It's about three Rolling Stones farewell concerts away."

But hitting that target will get more difficult as that number shrinks. Bono said there were three keys to making sure the number continues to fall. And here's where he wanted the help of TED attendees.

The first is fighting attempts by governments to cut budgets for programs that combat poverty. The second is to continue to invest in technology and research that improves the lives of the poorest people, such as the advance of HIV medicine that reduced the number of pills a patient needs to take.

And third, to help fight corruption using "open data" tools and social networking services that connect people and help spread information about governments. In the digital age, Bono said, thousands of grassroots organizers have an unprecedented opportunity to fight corruption.

"There's a vaccine for that, too," he said. "It's called transparency. And technology is really turbo-charging this. It's getting harder to hide if you're really corrupt."

[See the topic on aegis.org](http://aegis.org)