



The Future of Work Labour after *Laudato Si'*

“Care is Work, Work is Care: Building a Global Transformative Community and Contributing to the Global Development Agenda”

Roadmap for a Common Journey

Between 8 and 10 May 2024, we have gathered together in Rome for the Consultation on Promoting “Care is Work, Work is Care: Towards Building a Global Transformative Community and Contributing to the Global Development Agenda”, as key partners from the Holy See (Secretariat of State, Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and the Pontifical Commission for Latin America), the International Labour Organisation, National and Regional Conferences of Catholic Bishops, Congregations of consecrated women and men, Catholic-inspired, ecumenical and other faith-based organisations, including the World Council of Churches, academia and universities, trade unions, associations of workers and entrepreneurs, and other grassroots civil society groups, coming from five continents and many different countries. We brought with us various backgrounds, experiences, and priorities. At the same time, we discovered our richness in such diversity and the common aspirations that unite us and that complement our aim to promote social justice for all.

Our journey has spanned a ten-year period, since 2014, and later was formally structured as the “*Future of Work: Labour after Laudato Si'*” Project. The first phase of the project involved research and capacity-building efforts for and with our participant organisations and culminated in a comprehensive report that articulated the theme of “*Care is Work: Work is Care.*” The second phase involved formation of regional working groups that have shared their perspectives and lived experiences related to this theme and have served as the foundation for this consultation.

We welcomed the encouragement from Pope Francis, who received us in private audience. He invited us to engage in common social discernment to promote “*Care is Work, Work is Care*”, toward building global transformative communities and contributing to the global development agenda. He urged us to understand and take action on the “*real need to pool all our personal and institutional resources in order to attempt an adequate interpretation of the social context in which we move, seeking to grasp its potential while, at the same time, recognizing in advance those systemic ills that can become social plagues.*”¹

We recognize that “*a person flourishes in work. Work is the most common form of cooperation that humanity has generated in its history [...] Work is a form of civil love [...] it is a true, authentic love that enables us to live and moves the world forward.*”²

In that regard, let us never forget: “*if work is a relationship, then it must include the dimension of care because no relationship can survive without care. Here we are not just referring to the work of assistance [...]. Care goes further; it must be a dimension of all work.*”³

Let us also recall that the presence and action of socially compromised entrepreneurs are a reason for hope as a vehicle for change in the world of work. They are engaged in adequately balancing the individual virtue indispensable for the human growth of the individual together with the social virtue necessary for the development of a community of solidarity.

At the same time, change in the world of work requires trade unions and workers’ associations to take up courageously the challenge of being “*an expression of the*

¹ Pope Francis, *Address to the Participants in the Consultation “Care is Work, Work is Care,”* 08 May 2024, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/may/documents/20240508-consultazione-lavoro.html> .

² Pope Francis, *Address to Delegates from the Italian Confederation of Unions (CISL),* 28 June 2017, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/june/documents/papa-francesco_20170628_delegati-cisl.html .

³ Pope Francis, *Video Message on the occasion of the 109th International Labour Conference,* 17 June 2021, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2021/documents/20210617-videomessaggio-oil.html> .

*prophetic profile of society*⁴, raising their voice in defence of the weakest, within and outside the borders of the world of formal work.

During our reflections and sharing of experiences, we expressed particular concern about global, regional, national, and local efforts to install autocratic governments, to limit democracy and multilateralism, and to advance religious, racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination and persecution in many parts of the world.

Throughout our work in preparation and during the consultation, we have employed the methodology of **common social discernment** (CSD). It promotes social dialogue, through which issues are collectively diagnosed and agreements negotiated by involving various stakeholders, and facilitates the proposal of solutions, based on lived experiences that put care for both the human person and for our common home at the centre of our goals and activities. CSD has been strongly influenced by the method “*see-judge-act*”. It is also related to several Catholic spiritual traditions, including those inspired by St. Ignatius of Loyola. Finally, CSD has been employed in various processes for interreligious dialogue as well as in synodal processes, whether local, national, regional, or global.

We commit ourselves to address five priority issues that we already identified from our previous common social discernment and sharing of lived experiences in both global and regional conversations leading up to this important consultation.

We acknowledge their crucial importance and their interrelatedness: they all affect the poorest among us and our sister and mother earth. Each one invites us to renew our understanding of work: *all work is care, all care is work*. We have been called upon to promote this perspective and have begun to formulate practical and effective responses. In this same regard, we fully acknowledge that the road ahead of us is long and complex. It often confronts us with such challenges as the erosion of democracy, social economic inequality, and climate change.

⁴ *Ibid.*

We also must face inequity in access, for all persons on the planet, to modern technological developments, including digital tools, and the urgent need to prevent distortion and exploitation of our common home and of our human family by unjust use of technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). *“We need to be aware of the rapid transformations now taking place and to manage them in ways that safeguard fundamental human rights and respect the institutions and laws that promote integral human development. Artificial intelligence ought to serve our best human potential and our highest aspirations, not compete with them.”*⁵

Thus, we fully accept the challenge to journey together as we seek to deepen our understanding, to explore pathways to transformation, and to strengthen our advocacy with workers for greater justice, equality, equity, and inclusion in the workplace and in the society-at-large, as we address the five priority issues.

Promotion of social justice and human dignity

Social justice means rights for all, with specific emphasis on engaging the voice, lived experience, and resilience of workers and those who are marginalized as essential pillars, while simultaneously reinforcing current protection standards and monitoring mechanisms and creating new forms of solidarity. This includes a fair redistribution of wealth and power.

Particular attention and adherence are urged for the fundamental human rights of workers as enshrined in the International Labour Standards recognized by the International Labour Organization and both international human rights and humanitarian legislation and policies that have been established on the global level and should be respected and implemented on the nation and local levels.

The principles of distributive and restorative justice serve as important beacons of light and hope in actions leading to promotion of justice for all. They require: respect for human dignity and for equality of women and men; support for the

⁵ Pope Francis, *Message for the 57th World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2024, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/20231208-messaggio-57giornatamondiale-pace2024.html> .

rule of law; combating exclusion and violation of workers' fundamental rights, including freedom of association and collective bargaining; and addressing structural and systemic inequalities in the workplace and within society, especially those affecting all marginalised and excluded persons and those arising from persistent conflicts and societal instabilities, with special consideration for gender-based forms of discrimination and violence. We need to develop, adopt, and implement strong measures to ensure Universal Social Protection for all.

Decent work, food production and supply chain

A reform of the food production and supply chain to feed the planet, while protecting workers, is essential. Forty percent of agricultural workers are living in poverty; many workers, and 112 million children among them, often work in dangerous conditions. Many vulnerable migrants work within the food production and commerce sectors and food, access is a key factor issue for migration. Natural disasters are intensifying. It is crucial to move out of crisis situations and build a more resilient exchange system that cares for farmers and other workers in the food supply chain. A more just food sector, which includes protecting and promoting traditional and sustainable practices, plays a key role in caring, both for our planet and for the common good.

Protection and care of migrants and their families

Migrants and their families are among those who are confronted with the most difficult obstacles to satisfy basic needs. Promoting access to basic rights, such as education, decent work with just and fair salaries and protections, physical and mental health care, shelter, and healthy nutrition, is essential. Migration cannot be reduced to an “emergency”. Whether forced or the result of a choice, it is profoundly interrelated with the dynamics of globalization, demography, human rights and development. In many contexts, work can greatly contribute to the integration of migrants and their families, as well as to their active participation to the common good of the community. Migrants do contribute heavily to societies that welcome them.

Significant changes in vision, perspective, attitude, narrative, and behaviour toward refugees, migrants, displaced persons, and survivors of human trafficking, as well as in policy and practice in their regard, are urgently needed. False myths about “people on the move” must be overturned and their active engagement in the workforce must be recognised and appreciated, particularly that of

migrant women, if we wish to achieve promotion of “work as care” by, with, and for such sisters and brothers in the human family.

Decent work and extractive industry

Extractive industry is crucial for environmental protection and transitioning towards decarbonized economies. This is why we need to avoid a new era of colonialism rooted in mining and to move away from an attitude of “*extractivism*”. While mining offers opportunity for employment and generates income for the workers involved, the local impact of mining expansion can be disastrous; local economies may become dependent on mining profits which are transient and can lead to the displacement of communities. Environmental impact assessments should be linked to studies on work conditions and potential effects on the physical and mental health of affected communities, the local economy, and public safety.⁶ Standards should be developed to address sustainability issues in mining and ensure the protection of the rights of workers and affected communities.

Just transition and care for our common home

The interdependence among labour, technology and the environment forces us to address pressing issues, such as the pollution caused by the fossil fuel industry and the elimination or modification of jobs created by new technologies. If we want to take care of our sister and mother earth, without which there is no future for the human family, it is imperative to transition from a model of energy production based on fossil fuels to a more renewable one, and more fundamentally from our current model of progress to a more sustainable and inclusive one.⁷ This will affect industries, workers and countries very differently. At the same time, the introduction of new technologies into the world of work, such as AI, also has a differentiated impact on different groups of workers. Planning, developing and implementing measures and actions to ensure that these transitions are just is a call to transform the world of work into one capable of caring for our common home and of the entire human family. This requires new avenues of common social discernment, with special attention to the voices of those impacted by the transitions, to identify insights and breakthroughs for

⁶ This topic will receive further attention through the Regional Working Group process.

⁷ Cfr. Pope Francis, *Message to the Participants in the 108th Session of the International Labour Conference*, 10-21 June 2019, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20190610_messaggio-labourconference.html .

change at the workplace and at local, national, and regional levels. Finance too plays a key role and therefore has a key responsibility in facilitating these transitions.

While engaging on each priority issue, we will aim to enrich and advance:

Understanding, through focused reflection and research, the results of will be shared, via technical briefs or reports, while

- identifying the proper and most effective avenues to promote the “care is work, work is care” approach;
- connecting the lived experience of families, communities, academic institutions and social centres, movements and other organisations;
- engaging the religious sector, local communities, grassroots groups, trade unions and other organisations from the world of work, as well as the general public;
- embedding our response to global challenges in the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and the ILO Constitution and Declarations, including the Decent Work Agenda;
- proposing and implementing public policies and practices, as well as ethical guidelines and directions that conform with the ILO Conventions and Guidelines, the SDGs and other multilateral agreements.

Transforming our own organisations, communities, institutions in order to better serve the people by:

- provide capacity-building and training materials to better promote the *care is work, work is care* approach among our members and partners, while prioritising care for and with persons with vulnerabilities;
- increase our capacity to engage in common social discernment within our organisations, in partnerships and dialogue with other organisations in the Church and in the world of work;
- place specific emphasis on development of longstanding alliances with other Church-, faith- and value-based organisations, and especially organisations of workers and employers;
- set up a platform for promotion, replication and interchange of lived experiences.

Advocating in local, national, and international fora for the care and work approach to promote social justice and decent work through:

- active engagement in existing multilateral processes, in particular, the ILO Global Social Justice Coalition, the Summit of the Future, the UN Social summit, UN Human Rights Council and others focusing on achievement of the SDGs (Agenda 2030) and the COPs processes;
- advancing and amplifying the voice of those presently excluded or marginalized from policy decision-making processes at local, national, regional and global levels by building broad alliances and coalitions of all stakeholders with the view of building global transformative communities;
- actively seeking collaboration with civil society organizations, faith-based groups and other stakeholders involved in social change, to engage structured powers;
- promoting freedom of association and collective bargaining and models of social justice and decent work, with a special consideration for workplaces in which the Catholic Church and other religious organisations employ people directly and indirectly;
- targeting the 2025 Jubilee as an opportunity to reflect on the need to reverse the structures of injustice within our society and open our doors to allow people to meet.

NOTE: *The present document is a roadmap that takes stock of the present stage of our journey, as an overall framework to orient our future follow-up efforts.*