



SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES PROPOSED FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE 17 OCTOBER MARCH 2023

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Introduction

• Background of the consultation

"Dignity for All in Practice" is the overall theme chosen for a two-year cycle, (2022 - 2023) for the United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP). In 2022, the emphasis was placed on the importance of social justice, peace and the planet. After preliminary discussions with the UN partners and the different teams of the ATD Fourth World Movement, the International Committee October 17 (IC17) proposes, for 2023, to focus on "dignified work and social protection" and on how they are essential to put "Dignity for All in Practice". For this reason, the International Committee for October 17 and the Forum on Overcoming Extreme Poverty (Forum), launched a consultation during the month of February 2023. The Forum is an international network of solidarity among people experiencing poverty and those working closely to overcome extreme poverty, and correspondents of the Forum were asked the following three questions :

- What do you think these concepts of "dignified work and social protection" mean?
- Are they important to you and if so, why?
- What experiences do you want to share about this?

• Synthesis process

The consultation received **more than 112 contributions** in four languages (English, French, Spanish and Arabic) **from 38 countries**. The consultation brought groups of people together to think about these issues and a number of the responses were prepared collectively. This summary was prepared by the Forum team as a contribution to the work of the International Committee for October 17 in its work of argumentation and preparation of the Concept Note. The International Committee for October 17 serves as a bridge between the international forum of solidarity among people working to overcome extreme poverty and the international partners, for the strong solidarity dimension of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP) to become a reality.

The process of this summary first involves translation of each response received from the original languages into English and French. Following this, a first compilation was made in order to gather all these answers for each question and key ideas emerging from the responses were highlighted. After a careful reading of each answer, the initial order and organisation was refined. We hope this document reads as a coherent summary highlighting the key thoughts and ideas that have been put forward by the Forum correspondents. In compiling this summary, the Forum team tried, as far as possible, to put ourselves at the service of the people who took part in the consultation and do justice to the ideas put forward when, for reasons of format, the words could not be quoted directly or in full. We have endeavoured to avoid capturing the meaning of all these testimonies in erroneous or speculative interpretations and, on the contrary, to render the word accurately as possible.

Let each person who participated in this consultation, which sheds light on this issue from the experience of the most excluded, be thanked here.

**The Forum on Overcoming Extreme Poverty Team
and the International Committee October 17**

- **Human rights as a reference point**

Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Preamble

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, [...]

Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Declaration of Philadelphia

The General Conference of the International Labour Organization, meeting in its Twenty sixth Session in Philadelphia, hereby adopts, this tenth day of May in the year nineteen hundred and forty-four, the present Declaration of the aims and purposes of the International Labour Organization and of the principles which should inspire the policy of its Members.

- Labour is not a commodity.
- Freedom of expression and of association are essential to sustained progress;
- Poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere;
- All human beings, regardless of race, creed or gender, have the right to pursue their material progress and spiritual development in freedom and dignity, in economic security and with equal opportunity.

This declaration prefigures the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

1. Dignified work and social protection, what are we talking about ?

1.1. Dignified work can be defined as opposed to exploitative and discriminatory work

"Work without dignity is exploitation and discrimination."

Exploitative and discriminatory work is a matter of survival as workers, particularly people experiencing persistent poverty, are forced to take up certain types of jobs with low pay, excessive hours and often in dangerous conditions, simply because they have no other choice. Extreme poverty pushes people to take up risky jobs, often in the informal economy, or in forms of modern slavery, where lack of regulation and oversight exposes them to abuse and exploitation by others for commercial gain. Extreme poverty also drives children away from the classrooms and into the factories, fields and other people's homes to work as labourers to supplement meagre family incomes. Many of the correspondents drew attention to the situation of children and adults without birth certificates, identities or legal existence, or of migrant workers whose documents have been taken away from them, as being people who are most at risk of exploitation.

"In Burundi, minors from poor families, young girls or boys of school age are hired as domestic workers to look after children or domestic animals by dropping out of school." *Ferdinand, Burundi*

"We think of this undocumented person who, in order to survive in France, is forced to work under the table for more than 40 hours a week in a risky occupation (construction) and for a salary of 400 euros per month." *Marcel and Hugues, France*

The reality of exploitation corresponds to forced labor, to excessive hours of work, to a social insecurity that sees already fragile people exposed to debt.

"In Tanzania because of the lack of jobs several people are obliged to accept any kind of work and many have daily jobs such as selling goods in the street (these people are called *machinga*). Recently, the Tanzanian government pursued and chased them away so now they find themselves jobless, no way to return the loan they got to start the business, they face difficulties to find another job, plus the humiliation and the violence suffered." *ATD Tanzania*

People whose work does not respect their inherent dignity feel excluded and shunned by society. Exploitative and discriminatory work reinforces social exclusion of people who are already alienated from their community or society. It is a form of denial of the recognition of human rights when people are discriminated against, mistreated, humiliated, harassed and made to feel ashamed of their work. Discrimination and exploitative forms of labour are felt by different groups in different countries. One example is that of dalits in India who have been assigned jobs that are considered ritually polluting by other castes, and even when this discrimination has been abolished by law, these groups still face discrimination when seeking other forms of employment. They are unable to set themselves free from the jobs assigned to them by the caste system.

"In India we still live in the reality of the 'Caste System' which is abhorrent and should be declared totally inhuman. Certain jobs like the cleaning of public toilets,

scavenging and even removing the carcasses of dead animals are specific to certain groups of people now referred to as dalits. These kinds of work are looked down upon and the people who engage in such work are not given the needed human dignity." *Cédric, India*

Exploitative and discriminatory work injures the physical and mental wellbeing of the individual as well as harms the social fabric due to the severe marginalisation felt and the widening gap between the different social strata, between those who hold many resources and those who lack them. The inequities harm social cohesion.

"Many generations have worked in terrible conditions to survive, without the possibility of leaving savings or wealth to their descendants. On the other hand, other generations have been enriched by the work of others, a chain that has distinguished itself since slavery or the conquest of territories." *Sandra, Columbia/France*

1.2. Work that respects dignity

Dignified work is key to ending poverty and should be understood in the context of a life in dignity where the work we do benefits ourselves and our families as well as contribute to society. Dignified work appeals to all the dimensions of a human being, the head, the body and the heart as the worker is respected and the work performed appreciated. It is a work that makes it possible to be oneself, to be fulfilled and to flourish, which enriches not only on a material and financial level but also relational, emotional and intellectual levels. A dignified job respects the knowledge, skills, experiences and desires of the person who exercises it . allowing for fair treatment and mutual respect between people. A dignified job empowers the individuals, providing opportunity for every worker to access decent work, enabling control over income earned and together with social protection, they allow self confidence and agency for people to plan their future. These are indispensable prerequisites for building a climate of peace at work and, beyond that, in society.

"If you can work with love and use your talents...If you feel appreciated, you love working and are willing to do more if necessary." *Marion, Netherlands*

For work to be dignified, it is essential that it be protected (by the State, by companies, by trade unions where they exist), that is, that it protect the dignity, physical integrity, health and well-being of those who work. Opportunities for decent work must be open and available to everyone, especially the most excluded. Respondents drew attention to lack of decent work and protection in all parts of the world. They also drew attention to Europe and in North America in particular, where work has become a commodity, becoming scarce and leaving out entire sections of society with opportunities to lift themselves out of poverty.

"Work-sharing for the dignity of persons in general and, as a priority, for those in vulnerable situations who live from self-employment and a few dependants, must be a concern of the State." *Teodoro, Peru*

Dignified work allows for the respect of the human being and their dignity where the individual can exercise freedom of choice to work. Dignified work allows for personal development as well as social and economic inclusion. Dignified work is one for which we feel recognized and respected. The gaze of others and social recognition are decisive factors for a work to be respectful of the dignity of each person. There is dignity in work and

people should be recognised and respected for doing the work needed by society. Societal recognition and respect strengthens self esteem and self confidence forming important factors in building a peaceful and cohesive society.

"A decent work is a space where we feel recognised and treated as equals. Where feeling useful and included." *ATD Youth Dynamic, Europe*

The right to just and favourable conditions of work is a fundamental human right recognised in several international human rights treaties. The right to work also includes the right not to be unfairly deprived of work. The right to work is essential for realising other human rights and forms an inseparable and inherent part of human dignity. Every state has a legal obligation to respect, protect and progressively fulfil the right to work and undertake legal and administrative measures to end discrimination and promote equal access and opportunities to work. Every state also has a legal obligation to protect workers from forced labour or their rights being undermined by employers. States are also required to progressively fulfil the right to work including recognising the right to work in the national legal systems and a comprehensive policy framework for the realisation of the right to just and favourable conditions of work.

"The dignity of the worker resides in the full right to work, wherever he is, in order to obtain a fair wage for men and women. In the case of extreme situations, they are often not allowed to work, they do not have the consideration, especially when their documents have expired or there has been a loss, etc. Otherwise, they are living in desperate situations of humiliation, of discrimination because of which they cannot work. Everyone has the right to work." *Gladys, Peru*

For work to be dignified, it must also be accessible to all without discrimination, and equal access to work must be enshrined in law and guaranteed in practice. According to article 2 of the ILO convention No. 111, states are required to introduce and implement national policies that allow for equality of opportunity and treatment as well as end discrimination. Where the State is weak or non-existent, it means acknowledging the efforts of all and especially of the most marginalised who are struggling to provide for themselves and their families, most often by doing hard work in the informal economy. Special attention must be paid to most disadvantaged and marginalised groups.

"In disadvantaged neighbourhoods, many workers do not depend on employers, but on their own means: people recover what others reject, they tinker, repair or recover parts, resell or sell the unusable by weight. I heard a mother speak proudly of these "skills" of illiterate people who manage to support their families with what others reject." *Thérèse, Lebanon*

1.3. Conditions for a dignified work

Everyone must have access to decent schooling, to vocational training and the conditions that allow everyone to succeed in obtaining a professional qualification.

"Failure to succeed in school has serious lifelong consequences. Without training, it is difficult to find a job." *Jacqui, Luxembourg*

Dignified work brings material security (to the person who does it and to his family), through fair remuneration. It ensures the safety and respect of the physical integrity of the person

performing it. It provides access to healthcare in the event of an accident or illness and guarantees food security and access to decent housing. An important dimension of dignified work is access to free time for family, the right to rest and access to holidays, leisure and culture. It is important for work to be carried out over a period of time, which is an important factor of stability.

"Currently, reflection on dignified work is very valuable, because it allows us to rethink that capital is not the fairest way to pay people, that on the contrary, free time (to be with the family, to access cultural, leisure or recreational spaces) has become more valuable for the dignity of human life." *Sandra, Columbia/France*

Professionally, dignified work ensures training and improvement of skills and provides a favourable framework in which the worker can grow professionally. Dignified work context is an enabling environment allowing the workers to learn new skills and one that motivates for work to become more productive, more efficient and satisfying.

"My father always said, "I work, I feed my children." We received those values. I was humiliated a lot myself in the world of work because I didn't have a degree. But when I was young, I was happy to work and contribute to my family life." *Bernard, France*

Dignity of work gives respect to the worker no matter what type of job they hold, manual or intellectual, whether or not the person holds a degree or formal qualifications. Dignified work makes it possible to project oneself into the future, to be able to make projects, to build oneself a future and to prepare the future of children. It brings self-esteem, confidence and gives agency to the worker to take control of their lives.

"Dignified work is at first the way to live and feed and house one's family, without fear of tomorrow, without fear of reprisals." *Anne-Sylvie, France*

Dignified work allows access to speech and the freedom to express opinions, the opportunity to negotiate and defend oneself. Dignified work is work exercised in freedom including freedom of expression, freedom to organise as well as have the opportunity to negotiate the pay, terms and conditions of work, and defend oneself.

"Decent work means that everyone can be free to express their opinions, be heard, and develop personally, technically and professionally." *Fray, Peru*

"Decent work is work where we are respected. Dignified work is stronger - it is work that we are proud of and our children are proud of too." *Carmen, France*

1.4. What is social protection ?

Social protection is a fundamental human right that has been strongly affirmed in international law. The 1944 Declaration of Philadelphia called for social security measures "to provide basic income to all in need of such protection and comprehensive medical care". Social protection is also enshrined in article 25 (1) that everyone has the "right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control". Social protection is also fundamental for creating social cohesion.

For many people who responded to the consultation, social protection includes a set of

collective pension schemes against social risks (sickness, accidents at work and life) to reduce and prevent people from poverty and to cope with periods of inactivity (old age, pregnancy). Its priority is to support the most vulnerable throughout the life cycle by ensuring that everyone has the means to live with dignity.

"Thus, social protection can enable people living in the same family or community to be real beneficiaries of the public policies put in place and to remain protected at every stage of their lives, regardless of the type of work performed. Good social protection should therefore take into account both those who work in the informal sector and those in the formal sector with a desire to lead a dignified life." *Justin, Democratic Republic of the Congo*

Social protection guarantees equal access to health, education, leisure, decent housing and transport. It is an expression of a caring society and a concrete mechanism of solidarity to protect everyone from life's uncertainties and guarantee a dignified life for all.

"I live in Senegal, I have been working with the rural world for more than two decades and I would like to see children eating to their hunger, fulfilled, healthy and going to school." *Seynabou, Senegal*

Social protection is often associated with security, stability and peace. It helps to defend the community, to fight against social insecurity and institutional abuse. What is at stake in the question of social protection is solidarity with one another in society. It is a way of ensuring that everyone has a place in the community.

"All the measures put in place to ensure that everyone has a place in society. Social protection provides security for all and guarantees the solidarity aspect of our society." *Mathilde, France*

Social protection ensures that everyone respects their dignity by guaranteeing everyone the agency to take control of their life and choices. It allows everyone to feel respected and recognised. Social protection plays an important role in poverty reduction, helping to prevent social exclusion and promote social inclusion. Although everyone has the right to social protection, special attention has to be paid to the most excluded and marginalised who face particular difficulties in exercising this right. Social protection helps overcome barriers to participation in economic and social life particularly for the most excluded.

"Everyone should be relevant in any society and everyone's contribution should matter and be appreciated. Everyone should be accorded human dignity and there should be respect for all. If individuals are in charge of their well-being, then there is a feeling of responsibility and that of belonging" *Josephine, Nigeria*

1.5. What is the relationship between dignified work and social protection ?

Social protection is a key pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. Dignified work and social protection are intimately linked and have to be seen as critical elements of a comprehensive framework to end poverty. The income security from dignified work and social protection enables agency for people in deep poverty to take control, to contribute to and benefit from economic activity. Investing in people, taking care of them - in health, education improves their own wellbeing as well as that of society.

"Personal dignity and autonomy are the very foundation of human rights and protection, both are linked to the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Respect for the dignity of all of us must inform all public policies." *Jean, United States of America*

Social protection is a fundamental element of dignified work but it is important that it is not conditioned by professional activity. Social protection applies not only to those working, but to all. It aims to ensure that everyone has a place in society and to provide the most vulnerable people with the means to cope with "social insecurity".

"These two concepts are of great importance because, in today's world, many people lack access to profitable work and are thus exposed to social insecurity." *Joseph, Democratic Republic of the Congo*

2. Dignified work and social protection - putting dignity for all in practice

2.1. Guaranteeing everyone's contribution, a path to peace

Dignified work and social protection protect and recognize the contribution of each person to society. It is an essential means for the dignity of all to be respected and for the intelligence of each to find a way to express themselves and participate in the construction of an inclusive and peaceful society.

"Dignified work and social protection protect an individual so that they can reflect their inherent dignity. When this is provided, it paves a path for social cohesion, a key ingredient for building peaceful and flourishing communities." *Lili, United States of America*

Dignified work and social protection provide autonomy for those who have access to it. They provide material security, social and legal recognition that make it possible to empower people in situations of extreme poverty. It is the assurance of being able to control one's life, to make one's own choices, for oneself and one's family, and to be able to project oneself into the future. A way to assert your rights and claim new ones.

"Decent work and social protection are inseparable; for me, this means [...] having a place where one can practise a profession or job in order to contribute to the progress of society, that is, to be able to realise one's dreams as a person without being a burden to others." *Elvira, Columbia*

Dignified work and social protection are fundamental rights enshrined in international human rights law and must be guaranteed in practice in every country. Indeed, every human being has the right to a dignified life, to respect for their dignity. In the face of humiliation, crushing,

"Dignified work and social protection are a right for all citizens to live with dignity." *Fatimata, Burkina Faso*

"To respect human dignity is simply to recognize that all Men have the right, regardless of their status, religion or nationality, to a healthy life that guarantees them

a better and pleasant future." *Martinien and Théophile, Cameroon*

Work and social protection that put dignity for all in practice are both essential to ending poverty. By giving each individual autonomy, they recognize the intrinsic value of each person. They give stability and freedom that allow the most vulnerable to share their knowledge of experience with others and to set themselves on a path of activism for respect for their dignity and their rights. It is a way to enter into a fight for a more just society which recognizes the resistance of people living in extreme poverty as a lever for social transformation.

"The recognition and respect of these rights [to dignified work and social protection] guarantee respect for the person and one's environment. It is from this respect that personal development and freedom within the community can be born, which freedom leads the person to make choices of what one wants for oneself and for one's family." *Justin B., Democratic Republic of the Congo*

Dignified work and social protection have a social dimension because they are useful to society and pursue the objective of improving the well-being of the community. When everyone works in good conditions when her/his contribution is recognized, it nourishes the self-esteem that creates the conditions for a climate of trust and peace in society that benefits everyone.

"Dignified work is a work in which personal dignity is respected and in which a person feels useful and participates in the well-being of society or the city." *Nenonene and Sossah, Togo*

"Dignified work and social protection are very important in a person's life because they give dignity, they ensure that there is trust in the society of which we are a part but they also create great respect for all in society." *Justin M., Democratic Republic of the Congo*

"Dignified work is essential not only for people's livelihoods, but also to give them a sense of self-esteem, a healthy and positive view of life that is more likely to produce peaceful individuals, families and communities. When people have decent jobs, they are more fulfilled and more likely to contribute positively to society." *Jim, United States of America*

2.2. Dignified work and social protection, concepts that underpin human rights

The principles of dignified work and social protection that respect dignity do not correspond to the same reality in each country. Some, like Lebanon, are going through deep crises that dissolve the solidarity mechanisms instituted by the State - when they existed - and project the most vulnerable into greater precariousness and distress (*cf. Focus on Lebanon*). In some countries, the State is not strong enough to guarantee this safety net to the most excluded. In many other countries, these social bumpers exist but are insufficient.

"Social protection exists in the rich countries in the west but not all. There are other countries in the world where the state does not guarantee any social protection." *Kysly, Haïti/France*

"Knowing the living conditions both national and local of the citizen in D. R. Congo, our country, decent work and social protection remain mere paper !" *Stanislas, Democratic Republic of the Congo*

"Based on the research conducted on these concepts, in North Macedonia following challenges have been identified: (i) prevalence of precarious and low-paid self employment and part-time employment; (ii) low educational attainment of the working poor; (iii) low level of the minimum wage; (iv) lack of active labour market policies targeted at low-skilled employees; and (v) limited support from the social and child protection system for the working poor." *Maja, Macedonia*

"Three-quarters of the world works without social protection, but that doesn't mean they don't have decent work. They work informally. We could also say that these terms [dignified work and social protection] are western ones, because a Shipiba community lives from fishing, respecting nature and in a natural way; if one of them falls ill or gets old, others support them without needing social protection." *Sylvie, Peru*

2.3. Challenging a system that creates inequities

In countries where the concepts of decent work and social protection are prevalent, where social protection mechanisms exist and where rules ensure respect for dignity and safety at work, social rights are gradually being dismantled. Under international human rights, states are obliged to progressively fulfil our rights like the right to decent work and social protection and yet several contributions testify to the erosion of the social State and a regression in rights fulfilment.

"Work is on its way to extinction". Unfortunately, it is extinguishing faster and more fiercely than social protection. We thought the day would come when social protection would take care of everyone. The year 2000 has arrived and for 23 years we are only going down... Losing protection in all countries." *Sebastián, Brazil*

Many people are now deprived of employment (*cf. Focus on job deprivation*). This permanently affects their self-confidence, especially since they are the object of prejudices and stigmatising discourses within society.

"The judgement of others really put me down mentally. It took me 8 months to find a CDD, it destroys and demotivates in the long run." *ATD Youth Dynamic, Europe*

For people living in extreme poverty, often with few or no formal qualifications, access to employment is very often a path of barriers. Some face "povertyism", a negative attitude towards people living in poverty, where negative judgements by prospective employers are already formed by the neighbourhoods where they live or the school they go to that appear in the CV. For people without identity papers access to decent employment or social protection schemes becomes impossible. Newborns without birth certificates are uncounted, invisible, permanently deprived of access to their rights to health, education and protection.

"Decent work is a right that has, historically, been denied to people living in poverty. The global economic system is designed to overexploit the most vulnerable. The response to this critical situation was the creation of the so-called "informal" economy. People experiencing persistent poverty are excluded from the employment system

which is too demanding. This alternative is a way to survive day by day, but in very precarious conditions, without the guarantees of social protection in the short and long term (health, retirement, overtime, insurance, leave, among others). It also means that even though some people work miraculously (job opportunities are very limited) in the formal economy, the social rights of workers are increasingly being dismantled." *Sandra, Columbia*

"Without an ID card, young people who are in school cannot take the exams, adults cannot have access to their medication or rent housing, have a job... And this problem does not only concern Roma people but many people in Bulgaria. We are talking about more than 150 000 people who are put in difficulty because of the lack of an identity card and the difficulty in renewing it. For example, if her/his address has been destroyed - as it has been the case for many known Roms families who were in illegal precarious homes, if it has been lost and cannot provide all the necessary documents for its renewal." *Sylvie, Bulgaria*

3. Dignity as a compass

3.1. Introduce people living in extreme poverty as partners

This question of dignified work and social protection invites us to reflect on the issue of respect for dignity at the level of society. Several contributions urge us to ask ourselves: what is the price of the suffering of so many people whose dignity is not respected, whose rights are not respected?

"Dignified work and social protection make it possible to respect the dignity of each person and, especially, the whole humanity of society. Who are we if we live in a world where people are being exploited, where people can't have their ID, , where people are uncared for and whose voices and experiences are ignored? What does that mean for all of us?" *Elsa, France*

To fail to recognize the contribution of people in situations of great poverty, to exclude them from the debates of society, is to deprive oneself of the knowledge of experience and intelligence indispensable for building a more just and peaceful society.

"Everyone should have access to jobs where they are treated with dignity and where their health and well-being are protected. Social protection should ensure that everyone is supported with access to health care and decent housing. They are crucial because, without dignified work and social protection, not only do individuals and families suffer, but all of society loses out as community ties erode and knowledge is ignored." *Diana, United Kingdom*

This means making room for the people who live in extreme poverty, the people we never see or hear. Starting with the world of work where their efforts are too often and have long been ignored or despised.

"About work, I always refer to a text by Father Joseph Wresinski "We are all workers". This was the time when the people of the Fourth World were considered as sub-proletarians while the workers were called proletarians who could access the trade unions. Works, sufferings, small works or tasks such as chinage, by the poorest were not recognized as work. Research on the *Hidden Dimensions of Poverty*¹ shows this in various countries today. Enrolling the most excluded among the working class is necessary to change or revolutionise our advanced industrial society as that of the least developed countries. It is a waste, an injustice and an affront to the dignity of excluding some from the struggle of all workers. This theme invites, from below, to give access to every worker whatever they do and whatever they are, the equal dignity and recognition for work." *Kysly, Haiti/France*

Embracing the dignity compass requires creating the conditions for active, informed and meaningful participation of people experiencing poverty and socioeconomic discrimination and involving them as genuine partners in the construction of public policies: this means that the most excluded takes part on an equal footing at the negotiating table with decision-makers, agree on the roles, responsibilities and levels of control of each actor in the march towards the realisation of human rights and a life in dignity for all.

"[...] the basis of any project to be undertaken is the dignity of persons. Starting with their involvement and involvement from the very beginning of the design to implementation." *Cecilia, Argentina*

"The best way to achieve [everyone's access to the rights of all] is to involve people living in poverty, by including them in the design of projects and by listening to their concerns." *Mati, Bangladesh*

3.2. An economy at the service of humanity

In our globalised world, where economic decisions have a considerable impact on our societies and especially the most marginalised among us, it seems relevant and urgent to put the economy at the service of humanity. It is a question of changing the way of seeing and living the economy so that the production of material wealth is subordinated to respect for human dignity and to the search for well-being and harmony among human beings and with nature.

"The principle of dignity obliges us to put the economy at the service of humanity and that all programmes of economic and financial action must be appreciated and accepted, only to the extent that the right of all human beings "to continue their material progress and spiritual development in freedom and dignity" will be guaranteed." *Manal and Azzedine, Algeria*

"[...] dignity must be put in practice for the respect of humans, the human person must not be treated as a means but rather as an end." *Edouard, Democratic Republic of the Congo*

¹ [The Hidden Dimensions of Poverty report](#) is the result of a participatory research project led by ATD Fourth World and Oxford University to improve our overall understanding of poverty in its multiple dimensions.

"Many generations have worked in terrible conditions to survive, without the possibility of leaving savings or wealth to their descendants. On the other hand, other generations have been enriched by the work of others, a chain that has persisted since slavery or the conquest of territories. [...] Ultimately, although capital is necessary to circulate in this economic system, its objective is consumption. We are in a society of overconsumption, exhausting resources and filling emotional voids with material things. If we are talking about dignity, we need to balance the workload so that people living in poverty have not only decent jobs but also access to spaces that have been denied them for centuries." *Sandra, Columbia/France*

Some respondents highlighted that a society can be judged by how it treats the most marginalised or the most in need.

"Social protection is essential because the capitalist business model will never protect the majority of people, but only the elites. Together, these two ideas are the only way to achieve the 2030 Agenda for people and the planet in prosperity and peace. And social protection also means responding to the true judgement of a society - how it treats the disadvantaged among us, not GDP or the size of the army, or the large stock market..." *Jim, United States of America*

"Social protection is essential because it represents for me the humanity of a society that supports those in distress, on an ad hoc or longer-term basis. Solidarity is an indicator of the evolution of a society." *Maëlys, France*

Note from the Forum team

Reading these contributions inspires two remarks: a nuance in terms of meaning between decent work and dignified work and the contribution of the idea of a "social footprint" put forward in an article published in the *Revue Quart Monde* n°250.

Decent and dignified work

Decent work meets several conditions: a wage that allows the worker to support themselves and their families, reasonable working hours that allows free time to rest, to be in family and for leisure, working conditions which respect the safety and health of workers. These conditions may be specified and guaranteed by an employment contract. Finally, work is decent if the right to negotiate these conditions exists. Social protection is also one key pillar of decent work.

In the idea of **dignified work**, there is more than the reality of decent work. Dignified work is work for which the worker feels recognized, which allows them to feel pride. Dignified work offers the means for personal fulfilment, it provides well-being and joy. Dignified work is useful to society "making its contribution to the world" (artisans of the solidarity company MMM in Madagascar). What makes the work "noble" is that it improves the quality of life of the entire community, it is a collective contribution to making everyone's life better.

Could we measure our social footprint?

The idea that we can understand or measure the development of a society in terms of how the people experiencing persistent poverty are treated and considered reminds us of the proposal for a new qualitative measurement instrument, our "social footprint" :

"We came to think about our responsibility to each one of us to get out of this separation, and get involved beyond giving a few dollars.

We have learned through the environmental currents to calculate our environmental footprint on the planet and to take stock of our actions towards the planet. But could we also calculate our social footprint? Were those who created slavery, our ancestors, two hundred years ago aware that they would have an imprint two centuries later on people like you and I today who inherit prejudices, embarrassment and hatred passed on? Were they aware that they would leave a social imprint on the seventh generation? Could we become aware of our footprint on the planet, but also on humanity for generations to come when we exercise violence and social contempt? Are we aware of our imprint on humanity, of the inventory of our gestures towards human harmony?"²

In addition, we felt it was important to pay particular attention to certain experiments, which inspired the following topic sheets called "focus". They are anchored in concrete and lived realities that open the field of our understanding of the theme.

2 TARDIEU Bruno, « Pauvreté et écologie », *Revue Quart Monde* [On line], 250 | 2019/2, uploaded on 01 December 2019, accessed on 13 March 2023. URL : <https://www.revue-quartmonde.org/7989>

4. Focus on Lebanon

Ideas and contributions made by Thérèse Ricard and the members of the *Beitouna* association.

"In Lebanon we are no longer at the stage of talking about a "dignified work and social protection", but more about survival."

*Background: Since 2019, Lebanon has been plagued by an unprecedented economic and social crisis that has pushed more than 80% of the population below the poverty line. The situation worsened with the coronavirus pandemic and the devastating August 4, 2020 explosion at the Port of Beirut. **The country is facing significant shortages of basic necessities, including drugs and fuel.***

Work

In disadvantaged neighborhoods in Lebanon, many workers do not depend on employers, but on doing their own: people recover what others reject, they tinker, repair or recover parts, resell or sell the unusable by weight. I heard a mother speak proudly of these "skills" of illiterate people who manage to support their families with what others reject. Others try small businesses, but it is much more difficult to succeed and there are more administrative constraints. Selling on the street on a wagon should be done with a permit (but around).

"Dignified work, today, is way beyond our reach. My husband must accept any abuse because the unemployed are waiting in line. People are deprived of basic elements and have no other choice. We do not have access to medicines or medical care, or even basic food products, milk is extremely expensive. We don't have electricity, security. How can we talk about Dignified Work in this case!" *Georgette*

Today, only a few institutions grant full rights to their employees: medical coverage, student aid, end-of-service allowance, annual leave. Many take advantage of the situation to breach these rights; for example, they deduct wages in case of forced absence, due to illness or an emergency.

"Before, it wasn't like that, we went to work with much more enthusiasm, but that's not the case anymore. Personally, I am well treated at work, but I am talking about other colleagues, especially that foreign workforce, who are often intimidated, harassed even by their colleagues because of their differences. For me, this is unacceptable." *Sayyed*

With the rapid devaluation of the currency, what to do with wages that become paltry, especially when you have family. Today, wages prove insufficient.

"Last month, my neighbour banged on my door to borrow the price of a gas cylinder to finish cooking... Then, a gas cylinder was 500 000 pounds, but today it is 1 million. **What to do even in the face of a small problem?!** Work can no longer offer social protection and therefore cannot provide dignity, for this it is necessary to adjust wages." *Bertrand*

Without a minimum wage, the priority is to survive and find food for the next day, which

prevents us from projecting into the future and building a life. Without days of rest, the risk of illness increases, you are tired and less efficient at work, you do not have time to take care of your family, friends, nature. Without health insurance, every disease can be a disaster. We are faced with an immediate daily survival so we cannot think about the future, we will not do medical checks that can prevent serious illnesses. Without a holiday, you do not take a step back to build a future project, a life project: stuck in work, free time is only used to rest.

The schools and hospitals are stretched and the economic crisis weakens the social structures threatening the continuation of activities and services. Wage increases, which are essential because of runaway inflation, remain below what they should be. Some employers try to compensate with "gifts" or "gestures" from time to time. This does not guarantee any rights, but if we leave, we will have trouble finding elsewhere.

The young

It is not enough for a young person to train in a vocational qualification: a few years ago, many young people and girls took the training in industrial sewing. It was a good degree to get a job. Today, this is no longer the case: the imported "ready-to-wear" is cheaper and the small factories have closed. These skilled people, who were so proud to have graduated, are worthless in the workforce.

Many young people enter the Lebanese army because of the stability of the job, the regular salary, the assumption of health care, the relatively young retirement, with an end of service allowance. But **the economic crisis is now affecting the army, which is struggling to provide salaries and even meals.** A number of young people have left the military for that.

Women

Women can find households in homes or businesses without having to be reported. This allows amicable work but does not give any job security, fair pay, regularity in the remuneration. In official schools, the school administration has to manage the household. Thus there is no employment contract, no salary during the holidays or during the long strikes of teachers. These are stressful days for some mothers. And what about the pandemic period when schools were closed?

Generally speaking, **foreign workers** are in a situation of deprivation of freedom. **The law provides that the employer withholds their passport so that they do not flee.** Then the Women are more at risk of abuse and exploitation. working hours exceeding 10 hours sometimes, no leave, lack of respect and, sometimes, violence or sexual abuse and impossible to file a complaint. Many foreign workers have left the country since the financial crisis made it impossible to pay them, but there are still many women from Ethiopia, a country even poorer than Lebanon today. Foreign workers who have fled their employer find themselves on the street, without identity papers or passports, immediately accused by their employer of having fled by stealing something, and therefore threatened with prison. They cannot consider going back home one day. They "hide" themselves in the poorest environments where they have to face great difficulties, unless it is prostitution.

The elderly

Also very painful is the problem of old age. Seniors are trying to use their strength to the end, even though they have many health problems. Without that, they have to beg, and ask for help where they hope there will be help. The old age in poor environments is particularly

austere. The economic crisis and cutbacks in social services has exacerbated their struggle for survival.

"The concept of social protection does not apply here."

People know that there is a "medical safety" that employers of more than 10 people are required to register their employees. This is why many small businesses are satisfied with 9 employees.

Medical security registration normally gives rights to be supported – at least partially – for health care. But since the medical security fund is often empty, hospitals prefer patients who are not there and ensure that they have no room. The "medical security" fund, when it pays, does so with great delay.

***"What is the life of these people worth?
The only recognized medical protection is money."***

"In the last few weeks, I was shocked by the death of a 20-year-old girl who was turned down by hospitals in a state of emergency because her father could not pay cash on admission. Similarly, the death of a poor dad, unable to pay for dialysis, and the government hospital race to find another government hospital... until the patient's friends finally raise the money to go directly to "intensive care"..." *Thérèse*

This is the reality of a country that has not thought much about its people experiencing poverty. The economic crisis is forcing everyone in Lebanon to deprive themselves more and more. Today, the poor certainly struggle but I also see their dignity in their ability to support each other.

"Yesterday, I was with an unemployed man, leading a miserable life, but still having a few hours of electricity every day. He received a Sudanese dad who he offered hospitality to recharge his mobile phone, since he has no electricity at all at home. It speaks of his dignity !" *Thérèse*

5. Focus on Tanzania

Ideas and contributions from members of the ATD Fourth World Movement in Tanzania.

***“The dignity of work and social protection
are the basis for the recognition of all human beings.”***

"I see persons in Tanzania struggling every day to find a job (house keepers, stone breakers, street vendors, waste pickers, etc.) or to do poorly paid activities, contracting debts everywhere in a vicious circle (family, neighbourhood, friends, religious communities, NGOs, etc.) to afford (or not / or not completely / or in a really poor and risky quality) the cost of health issues and sometimes to see people passed away without even knowing the reason because of no access to healthcare, diagnostic, medicines..." *Damien*

A dignified job should be one that does not degrade human beings, one that respects the employee who is paid fairly. Social protection should be guaranteed to all as a fundamental right.

If these conditions are not met, **labor can become exploitation and slavery**. In Tanzania, many people have unstable jobs to survive, but these jobs often do not allow them to support themselves and their families, creating stress in the minds of people living in poverty who cannot plan for their future. As many people are in informal jobs, they cannot save money and have no social protection, which affects other areas of their lives, such as child rearing or health care.

In the course of research into the *Hidden Dimensions of Poverty* in Tanzania, it became clear that people living in poverty are those in precarious jobs that can ruin their health and, at the same time, these types of jobs do not prevent or cure diseases because of the lack of income and social protection. Dangerous jobs performed by the most excluded can lead to physical disability and even death.

About 88% of people living in poverty in Tanzania live in rural areas and two-thirds of the workforce is engaged in agriculture. Most people living in poverty use a **subsistence farming system which, practised on a day-to-day basis, does not benefit them and locks them in a vicious circle of poverty** (Dimension 7 "Constraints on the agricultural livelihoods of smallholders"). A woman from a village in Dodoma said, "The rich take advantage of the poor. There is economic exploitation. Small farmers are forced to sell their products at prices set by the rich who come from the city. Most of the time, they also manipulate measures to take advantage of people living in poverty." Without enough money, people can go into debt to cover their basic needs, becoming more dependent on others and exposed to exploitation and greater economic insecurity. **Sometimes, adults' incomes are so low that their children are forced to work** to support their families and pay for their education. This work can put children in physical danger and expose them to abuse. It is also quite common in Tanzania, **when a woman is looking for a job, to be asked for a sexual favour as a reward**. In Tanzania, due to lack of jobs, many people are forced to accept any type of work and many have daily jobs like selling goods on the street (these people are called *machinga*). Recently, the Tanzanian government sued them and chased them out, leaving them unemployed, with no opportunity to repay the loan they got to start

their business, with difficulty finding another job, not to mention the humiliation and violence suffered.

"It is important to improve the quality of work and social protection for all so that no one has to fight in disrespect, exclusion and oppression, ruining her/his life (body and spirit) and that of her/his close family members as well." *Damien*

6. Focus on the status of women

"It is common in my country, when a woman is looking for a job, to be asked for a sexual favour as a reward."

Informal and precarious work, situations of insecurity due to poverty, wars and displacement, as well as the lack of social security or legal framework, expose women to all kinds of abuse and violence. Women also carry a disproportionate amount of unpaid care and household work as a result of discriminatory social institutions and stereotypes on gender roles impacting on their wages, conditions, job quality and wellbeing.

High vulnerability and numerous risks

"Many young girls who were once students have reconverted into activities where their dignity was violated because of their extreme poverty – sex work, services in bars and places of pleasure, businesses. All motivated by one idea: "to feed, even at the cost of their dignity, their families living for the most part in precarious housing in the working-class neighbourhoods of the city of Douala." Several human rights organisations in their monitoring and reporting of human rights violations have denounced cases of sexual harassment, rape and physical violence against some internally displaced girls due to the vulnerability of their survival activities." *Martinien and Théophile, Cameroon*

"My older sister didn't have the chance to go far in her studies. She worked in the family of an army colonel for 11 years as a housekeeper. Every day, she left the house at 5:00 am until evening. Even if she got sick, she took care of herself. Time passed without improving her working conditions, especially salary. When she tried to make a claim with her boss, the colonel made her have sex in exchange. It was hard to go and complain because she was afraid of her boss. She gave herself a lot to watch over this man's children. But she was hunted without any support from this family. My dad doesn't have the strength to face this man. We tried to see the neighbourhood manager, but he also admitted he's scared. My sister found herself unable to cope and decided to go into the village to hide out of shame for her life." *Collective contribution, Central African Republic*

"The law provides that the employer withhold the passports of foreign workers so that they cannot flee. Then the woman being at his mercy, he can abuse anyway: working hours exceeding 10 hours sometimes, no leave, lack of respect and sometimes violence or sexual abuse and impossibility to file a complaint. Foreign workers who have fled their employer find themselves on the street, without identity papers or passports, immediately accused by their employer of having fled by stealing something and, therefore, threatened with prison. They cannot consider going home one day. They "hide" in the poorest environments where they face great difficulties, unless it is sex work." *Thérèse, Lebanon*

"We have no choice": accept unacceptable situations

"My neighbour works in a garbage truck out of necessity, she earns less than the minimum wage in my country, is exposed to unsanitary conditions, works at night hours very dangerous for women, is exposed to sexist abuse, and it is impossible for her to have access to any social protection in this area." *Soledad, Bolivia*

"Before I knew my rights I accepted all the mistreatment, the inadequate pay, the hours of slave labour, a work that was not for me, that I did not like to do. I suffered a lot, I had nightmares. I felt nothing, let alone as a woman." *Ana Isabel, Peru*

"Women working in rice farming on the banks of the Congo River in the city of Kinshasa suffer from working conditions that are often very difficult. The fields are cleared when the rainy season returns. They face snakes when clearing fields at the risk of being bitten or injured with their tools. Some of these women have already one day been victims of snake bites. The Ministry of Agriculture which could support them with appropriate work equipment remained indifferent to their multiple demands. Despite this, these women never give up on activities that are vital to them and their families." *Justin, Democratic Republic of the Congo*

Motherhood is unmanageable when work does not respect dignity

"The daily work in the fields of individuals lasts from 6:00 am to 4:00 pm, to have something to eat for oneself and one's family, and this is even so for pregnant women." *Ferdinand, Burundi*

"The mayor of the city made sure that a cleaning employee did not have time during the day to breastfeed her daughter and for having asked for a leave, she was dismissed without any economic benefit." *Teodoro, Peru*

Actions to empower women

Many associations and actors against poverty responding to the questions under the consultation, highlighted their work in prioritising actions that empower women.

"As part of our work to combat early and forced marriage, we believe that survivors must be given dignified work and social protection, to help reduce social vulnerabilities, and to strengthen the impact of social resilience. Today, the right to social protection is not yet a reality." *Darwin, Democratic Republic of the Congo*

"I have been involved in the missions and call to give hope to the marginalised exploited young girls from poor families in slum areas since 1959. The call was to give the young people holistic human, spiritual and emotional formation. Girls receive good education and training for a fruitful future and then reach out to help others in society." *Edel, Kenya*

"Faced with this case of injustice, despite the low financial capacity that our Association has, we make lobbyings so that some of these girls can be trained in professional sectors (hairdressing, sewing, trade, aesthetics) to be able to find a decent job where their dignity is respected. To date, we have managed to facilitate the integration of 10 internally displaced girls who live with dignity from their jobs and contribute to the social resilience of their families." *Martinien and Théophile, Cameroon*

"We recruited 8 women from the community to be trained in the installation of solar home systems. They work as farmers and housewives with very little income. One of them couldn't even read or write and none of the women had ever been involved in public domain." *Paula, Indonesia*

7. Focus on the condition of children

"Dignified work is the work that allows me to prepare the lives of my children."

Children's lives are affected by their parents' difficulties in accessing dignified work or social protection. There are direct consequences most often on their schooling but also on their diet and place of life. This can lead to high stress situations and even to family separation. When children find themselves in situations of great vulnerability, and without protection, they can suffer violence and abuse of all kinds.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Excerpt from the preamble

[...] the child, for the harmonious development of her/his personality, must grow in the family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding, [...]

Article 32 (excerpt)

A child has the right to be protected against economic exploitation and to be free from any work that is hazardous or likely to jeopardize her/his education or harm her/his health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

"I want everyone living in poverty to have a job to get their children out of poverty."
Hyacinthe, Democratic Republic of the Congo

"One of Burhiba's mothers was robbed of everything she owned. Some want her plot, others even want her life. One day when she returned home, she met her children hit by those of the neighbours; wanting to complain, people laughed at her. If her social protection had been guaranteed, the mother and her family would feel in a free space to perform dignified work that will give an income to the family."
Jureh, Democratic Republic of the Congo

"My belief is that social protection systems help individuals and families, especially the poor and vulnerable, help them cope with crises, find jobs, invest in health and education of their children."
Jean, United States of America

"Dignified work is work of value, it is work that helps me in my family so that my children can eat and be educated without problems."
Judith, Democratic Republic of the Congo

"Social services are there for us. I am not ashamed to solicit them for my children."
Mariam, Burkina

"With a dignified job, you can pay the school fees of the children, ensure their vitality and development, build beautiful houses, make livestock projects, agriculture, trade for the family."
Crispin, Democratic Republic of the Congo

"Everything we earn in a day, we use to eat because it's very low. And if you don't earn money during the day and you can't eat at night, your children are kicked out of school regularly. And even harder is paying the rent. I wonder, when I will be old without having the strength to push, what will be my fate because social protection

does not exist for our profession of pusher. But we are fighting to enhance it. But, in terms of social protection and dignified work, this concerns those who have had the chance to work in large companies and organisations. We work to feed our families without any sense of social protection. The rights of the poorest are being violated and we risk being left in the same situation, and this will be a vicious cycle for our children, who are also at risk of inheriting our poverty." *Collective contribution, Central African Republic*

"Children are facing a future in which they will live in fear, a life of denial of human rights." *Mati, Bangladesh*

Children working without protection, clandestinely: a violation of dignity

Extreme poverty drives children out of school and into the fields, factories and homes to work with low pay and often under dangerous conditions and exploitative conditions harming them physically and mentally as well as violating their fundamental rights.

"Sometimes, adults' incomes are so low that their children are forced to work to support the family and to pay for their education. This work can put children in physical danger and at risk of abuse." *Collective contribution, Tanzania*

"It should be noted that the children of poor families are beginning to support their parents as they are still young and this is in violation of their rights, including the right to education, the foundation of family and country development. And that's not to mention the work of men or children in mines, without insurance in case of an accident." *Ferdinand, Burundi*

"There are so many children who have the desire and the concern to study but, given the financial costs of getting them to school and the Congolese government that does not ensure their protection, they give up. Children living on the street are not protected by others or by the government." *Josué, Democratic Republic of the Congo*

"In the DRC, children are given heavy work, which is the source of various diseases." *Anonyme, Democratic Republic of the Congo*

Faced with these situations, adults must act, protect and allow parents to have a dignified life, but children too can act and mobilise to change their lives, that of their families and those around them. Their friendship with others is an essential lever for the transformation of the world.

The Taporí Children's Network brings together in friendship children from different backgrounds who want all children to have equal opportunities. They learn from children whose daily lives are very different from their own. They act for a more just world, inventing a way of life that leaves no one behind.

Excerpt from Taporí Letter No. 441 "Getting Started"

We are Taporí when together we make new friends and continue to open our minds. When we think about all that is important to build our future. When we discover children from other parts of the world. When we understand that what we are experiencing is not normal. With all this, we come home feeling more courageous.

8. Focus on youth

"A job is what unlocks everything, money, housing, the meaning of life"

Young people in poverty are under pressure at work. They are discriminated against, humiliated and unrecognised. People have negative preconceived ideas about them. The contracts offered to young people are precarious and salaries are often indecent. All this leads to a lack of confidence and self-esteem.

"I started work when I was 13 and as soon as I started my first job my boss told me straight away that he would be keeping an eye on me because I come from a violent neighbourhood." *ATD Youth Dynamic, Europe*

"I discovered that in a well-known bakery in my city, in order not to pay the work benefits of a formal worker, they hire young people "as a probationary period"and that this probationary period does not exceed 90 days or 3 months, This means that the employer is not obliged to hire subsequent staff. To me, that is very unfair because they take advantage of many young people who, out of necessity, have to accept this type of work." *Patricia, Peru*

"Here in the East of the DR Congo, we are witnessing the unemployment of the majority of young people despite the diplomas obtained at school. Overwhelmed by this situation, many are engaged in the use of drugs and alcohol." *Joseph, Democratic Republic of the Congo*

Young people in poverty do not have access to training and if they manage to access education beyond adolescence, they are directed to training and apprenticeships that will not allow them to have a satisfactory working life. Often, the difficulties experienced in their schooling due to poverty situations further reduce the range of choices available.

"Young people living in poverty say that for them, dignified work is not only a job that allows them to earn money, but is also fulfilling. They talk a lot about issues related to forced orientation that prevent them from having access to what they consider worthy work." *Maëlys, France*

"Failure to succeed in school has serious consequences for all life. Without training it is difficult to find a job, it will be necessary to adapt the qualifications, adapt the training to the existing jobs." *Jacqui, Luxemburg*

"I met a young man who couldn't work because he didn't have his ID card, I also saw young people from rural areas who left their communities to work in the city and they felt bad, because they were working without adequate conditions and they were paid much less than the minimum wage. For some time now, we have been participating in a campaign to obtain the national identity card. It is important because, otherwise, they are living in desperate situations of humiliation and discrimination because they cannot work." *Gladys, Peru*

"In my apprenticeship as a carpenter, I got up at 6am to start at 7:30am. I rode 12 kilometres on my bike, both in winter and summer. I was being made to do shit, and I never got to learn this job because nobody showed me. I earned my money, so I was worthy. But I was never recognized." *Bernard, France*

Young people are also the drivers of tomorrow's change. Access to dignified work, with good social protection, in peace, surrounded by friendship and friendly relations would allow them to develop their full potential for a world without exclusion or poverty.

"The program builds the capacity of young adolescents to make observations about the world around them. This increases their ability to identify what is working well in the community and areas that need improvement. Such skills and capabilities, which become stronger as they continue to participate in the program, enable these children to become adults fully aware of the injustices of the world, [...]" *Lili, United States of America*

"I've also have the opportunity to support young adults in the slums of Indonesia to find a decent job, which they never had before, (they even didn't know what was a social protection) and when they get a decent job, it's a stepping stone to becoming self-sufficient, confident, and an example for the whole community!" *Romain, France*

"Social protection"reminds me of my experience with young people in the Philippines. I am thinking of a young woman, Mheann, who needed to see a dentist. She had little money. The issue of teeth is important. We had the idea, with those around me, to go see dentists to ask them for discounts for young people who have little means. But Mheann did not agree: she wanted to be able to pay like the others for not being singled out. It was a matter of dignity for her. And a quest for equality." *Thomas, France*

"We support projects where training and knowledge drive the proposed changes, or the needs the project meets. Many of our projects have aimed to provide vocational training for professions such as the bakery workshops of the La Luciérnaga organisation, where, today, the children who left it now work in gastronomic companies or bakeries. Knowledge that takes people to new jobs and builds self esteem." *Cecilia, Argentina*

From 7 to 11 July 2022, 80 young people from ATD Fourth World discussed the meaning of decent work and the conditions for access to decent work as a young person.

"In decent work, we feel recognized and treated equally. We feel useful and included. We receive a living wage to meet the needs and not think too much about the bills. We have fixed schedules. it is a work that allows us to have other rights (right to housing, health...)

In decent work, we have the right to express ourselves, to work in our own way, to be able to share our knowledge as young people, to do what we love with passion.

In decent work we find autonomy, mutual respect and lack of judgement. It motivates us, allows us to progress, and allows us to thrive."

These young people also put forward proposals:

- Take more time to get to know and understand each other and focus on workplace wellness ;
- Introduce measures to make workers more aware of their rights ;
- In some countries, set up a monitoring system to ensure that employers respect the minimum wage ;

- Set up transport aids for young people ;
- Offer training to make employers aware of what young people are going through, so that they have a more positive and understanding attitude towards them ;
- Offer training to managers to take them to the field, to show them the reality of their employees. Make them really live the tasks of the young people they supervise.

The youth group of the Beitouna association read the contribution and proposals of young Europeans gathered by ATD Fourth World to start thinking about dignified work and social protection. These are young people who have started working, mostly very young (sometimes since the age of 12). This reading helped them share their own experiences.

"By working as a saleswoman, it is the customers who are causing us problems. They make us spread out all the merchandise and they don't buy anything. And in case they buy, it's like they're giving us handouts. There's no respect for saleswomen.

Young people who work for the first time are not paid well (perhaps because of the situation in Lebanon), either they are given half a salary or nothing at all. The boss tells them "later I'll pay you" and that never happens, so we feel like all our work goes up in smoke because we're underpaid. You have to, at least, give a bonus or a gesture to make you feel useful." *Christelle*

"In my first job in a sewing factory, it was very good even if we worked from 7 am to 7 pm and we had 1 hour for lunch. I had to leave for family reasons. Afterwards, my aunt sent me to another factory. The treatment was horrible. The boss was contemptuous, we were not allowed to sit next to one's girlfriend and we had only half an hour for lunch. When he wants to pay the salary, he humiliates us first." *Asra*

"No one has to work. I prefer to stay home and not suffer humiliation and exploitation and waste my time for nothing." *Mhamad Nour*

9. The reality of undocumented people allows a new form of slavery

"People uprooted from their homes are vulnerable."

The dignity of migrant workers is very often violated. All migrant workers have rights regardless of their legal status. Undocumented workers are subject to abuse, exploitation and are forced to accept unsafe and precarious working conditions.

"If a person is an entrepreneur, a street vendor or a town crier, and fears every day that the police will come to dislodge him from his place, whether in Paris or Manila, his work may be worthy, but he is not respected in his dignity. He is not counted, if he is sick or has an accident, he earns nothing, there is no compensation. I know some people who have experienced this in France, who have come from abroad, have worked in an undeclared manner, and now have a chronic disease. Some are housed in a structure belonging to the Federation of Actors of Solidarity, but they cannot prove that they have worked, not having a salary record. They cannot therefore benefit from any social protection other than State Medical Aid for their care. But what strikes me is that for a number of them, those who no longer have the ability to go out and make a few pennies, they haven't seen one in months and years. They live literally penniless, so very dependent on the goodwill and benevolence of those around them. In addition, many people do not have this access to accommodation, the waiting list is two years. Do you have to be sick to have a roof over your head, a little protection?" *Anne-Sylvie, France*

"It is important to demand dignified work, and an unconditional universal income of existence without resource control and without counterpart, in terms of social protection, since every woman or every man is a human. It is a safeguard against modern slavery today. Migrants are almost enslaved in other countries leaving their "native" country, where their gains or values are counted for nothing without any recognition. The migrant must often be satisfied with menial work. And on the other hand, in the least developed or poorly regulated countries, the conditions of workers are simply a camouflage to dignity, from wages to working conditions. And those who have no recognized work exist by struggling along." *Kysly, Haïti/France*

"Today, a few institutions in Lebanon grant full rights to their employees; such as social security, annual leave... Most take advantage of the situation to breach these rights; they deduct wages in case of forced absence, for example because of illness or an emergency. Besides the financial problem, there is also the bad behaviour of supervisors who verbally abuse workers, ranging from coarseness to the unjust underestimation of their returns, this without being able to resort to the employer. Employees are deeply affected in their dignity and feel marginalised, deprived of their rights. Personally, I am well treated at work but other colleagues, especially this foreign workforce that is often intimidated, even harassed by their colleagues because of their differences. This is unacceptable to me." *Sayyed, Lebanon*

It is very important to change the way people look and to work to promote the dignity of every person, to avoid thinking about migrants in terms of labour that could "compete" with local workers. This vision dehumanises and causes social abuse. To cope, we can set a course for dignity by cultivating meetings at eye level.

"Migrants are rich in skills developed in their country of origin and during their migration project (migration has been a competence since the Lisbon Treaty). When will we decide to really take this wealth into account, to value it in their job search?"
Magali, France

"The forced displacement of many families to other quieter cities has increased their impoverishment. [...] To deprive them of their dignity is to deprive them of all their life, all their desire to live and to consider themselves as human. If all men are free and equal in rights, it also means that we all have the right to a happy life, decent work and adequate social security. No one has the right to be left behind in society, to live on the margins of their dignity." *Martinien and Théophile, Cameroon*

10. Focus on job deprivation

***"When you're not working, you're like a fish in a jar,
you're going in circles."***

In Western Europe and North America, where work has become a commodity subject to market logic, employment is an unevenly distributed resource. Many people are permanently deprived of it, excluded from access to decent and recognised employment.

"My son is not yet sixteen years old. Since September 1, he has had an apprenticeship. "Now your son can take care of you", I was told at the JobCenter. Now, I only get 200 euros. I don't understand the state. The family allowance has to be increased, but it doesn't help me. It's deducted from Hartz IV³. I don't think things will get better with the citizen allowance. What will I still be used for, if I am taken everything anyway? I want my son to be okay. But I also want me to be okay. It's hard to ask my son for 10 euros to buy me something to eat. In fact, it should be the other way around." *Anonymous, Germany*

It impacts their daily lives, their confidence. In job-seeking, people living in poverty face many barriers including discrimination on socio-economic grounds, what the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights terms as "povertyism". Meaningful measures must be introduced to combat discrimination and equity in securing decent jobs.

"If you are unemployed, you have no dignity, you are oppressed. Rulers should see for themselves how difficult it is to live with Hartz IV, especially with a child - that literally destroys you. [...] Maybe one of them will hear that up there and think a little bit about what he's doing to people like me.

I can talk about it: after school, I did an apprenticeship as an office worker, hoping to find work afterwards. But there were only two internships that didn't lead to a job. That's how I found myself unemployed immediately after my apprenticeship. Once, I got a job for 1 euro. I liked the work. But the boss treated me like a stupid little child. During the classes I had to take, I was also demolished. I was told several times that I had to apply for positions. Once, I went there thinking that I had an appointment. But they didn't know anything. For another position, which failed, the JobCenter blamed me and claimed that I had not made it to the interview. I thought, "I've had enough. I can't take it anymore."

I even asked if I could work in an ESAT⁴, because I wanted to work and be with people. I was told I was too smart for that. Now it's possible according to the JobCenter. But now I can't work at all. My disability pension was initially denied. I appealed. If I got the pension, I'd have my money and I wouldn't be dependent on the Hartz IV compensation. It would be as much as my son's first-year apprenticeship." » *Anonymous, Germany*

More and more discourse is circulating that refers to the people furthest from employment as "profiteers" in the welfare system. Their efforts and difficulties faced in securing decent work

³ Hartz IV refers to a labour market reform decided in 2005 in Germany. This reform saw the elimination of unemployment assistance and social assistance for people who are the furthest away from employment, subject to the signing of an integration contract.

⁴ ESAT stands for work-based settlement and support service. This type of medical and social institution welcomes people with disabilities to support their social and professional integration.

are not recognised. People facing extreme poverty and the insurmountable social and economic barriers they face remain invisible to society.

"In Belgium, people living in poverty are victims of many prejudices related to this: people who have social assistance are called "lazy". It is thought that people "choose" not to work for social benefits by doing nothing." *Nicolas, Belgium*

In this atmosphere where there is a great deal of prejudice about extreme poverty, new measures are emerging all over Western Europe, in the Netherlands as evidenced by a group of people in poverty below, in France now, which force people who are entitled to social minima - the amounts of which are sometimes below the poverty line - to work volunteer hours to keep this right. This profound reversal of social rights humiliates the unemployed and devalues work. To uphold the dignity of the human being, we need to embrace and operationalise a human rights based approach that respects people experiencing poverty as rights holders and that every effort must be made to ensure that their fundamental rights to decent work and social protection be respected.

"People receiving benefits under the Participation Act are required to volunteer to gain a pace of work and work experience, but not enough attention is paid to what people are willing to do and no attention is paid whatsoever to their talents. It sounds like an obligation if you don't want to see your support cut. It doesn't give you pleasure or satisfaction; it's discouraging." *Marion, Netherlands*

When working, people in poverty often do so in the informal economy, not being reported and, therefore, exposed to many risks (being deprived in the event of a work accident, for example). The work they do is often precarious and difficult. Having not necessarily enjoyed the same opportunities as others in school, they do not necessarily have a vocational qualification and access to training is all the more complicated, because they have been permanently cut off from the world of employment.

"I'm struck, a young woman who works in a tomato sauce factory (a big one) that offers only temporary contracts. She has an interim contract for 1 year-and-a-half but in this company, no one has a fixed-term or permanent contract. Which seems completely illegal to me!

As temporary workers, their schedules are constantly changing. They never know in advance when they are going to work.

Beyond these extremely difficult conditions, I think that for these people, having a job is an essential dimension for their lives. A man who has worked and who is now trying to get back into work by doing training told me how difficult it was to find a rhythm to follow training, once you dropped out of the world of work." *Bénédictte, Belgique*

"Here in London, I know a woman over the age of 60 who has a physical disability and, yet, has to work very long days at the station, sometimes for 11 hours in a row, and often until 1:00 in the morning, or from 5:00 in the morning - sometimes with these odd schedules in the same week, so she can never have a regular sleep schedule. When the agency allocates overtime, this means that its universal credit allowance will be reduced - but not until the following month, so in addition to its long hours, it must budget in advance for future reductions in its allowances." *Diana, United Kingdom*

11. Solutions for the future

"The struggle is to recognize work as the bearer of human dignity."

People who responded to the consultation draw on their lived experiences in the present to offer perspectives for the future. These are actions that already exist and have been tried and tested and which bear witness to the intelligence and courage of those experiencing extreme hardships. These are examples of initiatives from around the world that are making a difference, examples of dignified work and social protection that are putting dignity in practice for all. Whether today or tomorrow, all these solutions for the future bring the hope of a world that finally makes room for everyone.

"No one must remain neutral in a society of injustices; for this reason, it is a moral and human duty for everyone to commit themselves to ensuring that everyone can have decent jobs and that their social protection is guaranteed." *Martinien and Théophile, Cameroon*

"This program [*Youth Spiritual Empowerment Program*] provides youth with the means to obtain better quality employment, but also to consider employment issues not only from a financial or personal perspective, but also in the light of ethical and moral issues related to the community [...]. Over the years, program participants have cultivated values rooted in solidarity, collaboration and justice, as well as a focus on service to society. When these young people enter the labour market as employees and end up becoming employers themselves who are committed to ensuring the well-being of all and removing barriers to meaningful participation, a new culture of dignified work is gradually developing." *Lili, United States of America*

"There are many experiences of how the poor have managed to make their lives more dignified through collective work. One of the most valuable of these is community mothers. Although women have been excluded from different scenarios, they perform domestic work that is neither paid nor sufficiently valued by society. Women who are heads of families have to do this double duty, work and look after the home. In working-class neighbourhoods, women have organised themselves so that those who stay at home can look after the children of those who have to go to work, and that they, in turn, receive a salary that helps them to be less dependent on their husbands. All this in a natural system of solidarity, without state aid or social benefits." *Sandra, Columbia/France*

"In 2013, the Wadah Foundation initiated a collaboration with Barefoot College International India to install solar electricity in a number of villages on the islands of Flores and Timor that did not yet have electricity. [...] The Wadah Foundation recruited 8 women on the condition that they already have grandchildren and that they are not colour-blind. There was no minimum requirement for education, language proficiency or experience as a technician. These 8 women were...working as farmers and housewives with very low incomes. One of them could not even read or write and none of the women had ever been involved in the public domain.

After their training in India, they began to fulfil their role by installing a domestic solar system in each house, maintaining it and repairing it regularly. They began to be considered by the village elite and villagers. Gradually, they began to be invited to participate in village meetings, their opinions began to be heard and their

suggestions were taken into account.

Today, they have become agents of change in their respective villages and have had a positive impact in the fields of education, health and the economy for toddlers, schoolchildren, other women and other villagers.

What makes us proud is that 11 of the 27 new technicians were trained in Indonesia and the trainer was Rasmi, the former trainer of the first batch. She was assisted by a male executive who trained her several years before." *Paula, Indonesia*

"Being disposable, having to deal with uncertainty and instability are key markers of unworthy work. What does it mean when you reverse, if I may say so, these concepts?

Reversing being disposable means being essential. Walter⁵ (Working And Learning TogethER) is all about people. We trust each other to do what needs to be done. You will be picked up if you are behind. It also means being paid above the minimum wage, with a clear process of increase and with long-term prospects of possible evolution, at Walter or elsewhere.

Reverse uncertainty and instability. At Walter, we have high expectations - the company needs to be autonomous as soon as possible and, at the same time, the way we operate is very flexible. We know that even if one of us does not show up for work, he can show up again. There is some accountability, but the door is always open. Walter thus offers a sense of stability and security. And Walter's associates contribute to this stability: there was no turnover. All those who started have stayed until now.

From our perspective, dignified work opens the door to a better future - for people who work, their families, their communities, and I would add the future of our planet. It develops a sense of belonging. It has a positive impact on others and the world. It provides purpose and social and economic recognition." *Guillaume, United States of America*

"[...] plum growers and communities with community forests have come together in a multi-purpose cooperative. They have thus strengthened their negotiating power and expressed their concerns and interests to the outside world. Since plants such as plums are harvested once every 3 to 5 years, these farmers regularly hold meetings to discuss issues affecting them and exchange ideas." *Thompson, Cameroon*

"The experience that we can share together is to do community work and make meetings to see how we can fight against ill healthunhealthy, this to protect the health of all; to have the knowledge to live and to be in society; educate people about the importance of planting trees in environments and teach them how to protect nature. Reforest and combat deforestation. Teach children how to live and know how to be in society." *Mélanie and Yvette, Democratic Republic of the Congo*

"For some time, RENIEC has been participating in a campaign to obtain the DNI (national identity card), RENIEC representatives have visited the communities to

⁵ Walter is a social enterprise that helps organizations and individuals in New York City safely and responsibly dispose of their used electronics by recycling them, while creating jobs for people facing persistent barriers to employment.

make their presence known and to obtain their documents, this requirement is essential. It is important because otherwise they are living in desperate situations of humiliation and discrimination, because they cannot work because everyone has the right to work." *Gladys, Peru*

"People's trust in social protection systems plays a central role in extending coverage, and beneficiaries must fully understand and live the value of social protection. Experience shows that the provinces that have been able to extend their social protection coverage to their populations have, in addition to political and technical measures, designed and implemented programmes aimed at developing a culture of social protection. These programmes seek to convey the values, the principles, the obligations in terms of social security, but also the operating modalities of social protection." *Darwin, Democratic Republic of the Congo*

"Basic income, or universal income or allowance, paid by a political community to its members from birth to death is a project that should extend to every man in every country, in the name of equal human dignity." *Kysly, France/Haïti*

"Regarding "social protection", as said above, I think that we must fight for it to be as automatic as possible and that people should not multiply the number of checks and procedures. All this is ultimately linked to the prejudice of the "unemployed fraudster", while social fraud is derisory, often linked to human errors rather than to "conscious"fraud." *Nicolas, Belgium*