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Migration and an inclusive economy

In the last decade we have witnessed nationalist and nativist attitudes, resulting in limited acceptance of migrants by receiving communities, and migrants' limited access to social assistance. This refusal and rejection of the Other, of the stranger, has grown even more acute with the pandemic, causing migrants – workers and potential workers – to be some of the main victims of the economic crisis. Furthermore, as the present market economy puts profits before people, great inequalities and growing numbers of people living in poverty are the result – a situation that is unsustainable in the long run.

Such short-sighted approaches leave little room for implementing effective policies that would benefit receiving communities and migrants alike. For this reason, Pope Francis has called for an inclusive economy that would create more sustainable and inclusive societies and that aims at including all their members in growth, beginning with the excluded and the most vulnerable.

The Migrants & Refugees Section hopes for a more altruistic, person-centered approach in both national economies and the global system. The culture of encounter, which fosters the protection, empowerment, and integration of displaced people on the move, is the theme of this bulletin, “Migration and an inclusive economy”.

Towards an economy at the service of the human person

From the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis' teaching has been marked by repeated statements on the economy. In his first Apostolic Exhortation [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#) (2013) the Holy Father sternly condemned economies of exclusion and inequality and called us “to seek new ways of understanding the economy and progress” in order to develop a better financial and economic system for the 21st century. Then, in the Encyclical [*Laudato si'*](#) (2015), Pope Francis wrote about technological and economic development that would lead to a better world and to a



higher quality of life in all respects. In addition, the solution to the ecological crisis is to restrain economic growth in some countries so that it can increase in others. His latest Encyclical, [*Fratelli tutti*](#) (2020), also presents social and economic teachings. In fact, it speaks about fundamental values of the Church's Social Teaching, such as the universal destination of goods and the social function of private property. Pope Francis has also returned to the theme of entrepreneurship as a noble vocation for the production and distribution of wealth and for building the common good. More recently, he has spoken about the foreign debt of poor countries, the repayment of which must not compromise the survival and growth of the poorest populations. Finally, [*The Economy of Francesco*](#), a congress on sustainability, took place virtually in Assisi (Italy) from 19 to 21 November 2020. The aim of the congress was to bring together young people who, in their research and practice, are seeking alternative economic approaches and an economy "that lives and does not kill, that includes and does not exclude". But it wasn't just a one-time event; indeed, it has given birth to a vital community, with hubs scattered around the world.

The Vatican COVID-19 Commission (VCC-19) launched an "Economics Taskforce" to analyse the impact of the coronavirus on the global economic framework, with particular attention to developing countries and to the most vulnerable categories of people, and to offer viable solutions for a more equitable economic system in the future. For example, the Taskforce highlighted efforts [to build a new economy for the future](#) – one that is sustainable, inclusive, and driven by innovation-led growth. Reflections on "restructuring the future" take cues from the plan for a European Green Deal to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and identify five action points to ensure a sustainable, inclusive recovery.

In the white paper ["Relief Policies for Over-Indebted Households and Small Businesses"](#), the VCC-19 Taskforce looks at the social and economical effects of the pandemic on already-vulnerable sectors and families. The root causes must be sought in a global system where a few financial regulations rule over real economies and real people, instead of serving them. According to their analysis, "shifting this paradigm will require developing appropriate public policies and reforms to ensure that the current system can work for everyone."

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State, joined the ["High-Level event on financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond"](#) on 28 May 2020. "Politics must be at the service of the human person and not exploit the human person for selfish interests." In such a perspective, the pandemic "represents a real opportunity to seek the common good and the integral human development of all." But the pandemic has also been undermining humanity, hitting people in more vulnerable

categories especially hard. Cardinal Parolin invited the panel to ensure access to humanitarian and health assistance for those most in need, particularly migrants and internally displaced people. The private sector and all stakeholders have been invited to “place the human person at the center of all deliberations and possible solutions.”

Speaking at the [2020 High-Level Political Forum On Sustainable Development](#), Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, emphasized realities that COVID-19 has made clearer; for example, that “poverty is not merely about the lack of money to survive from day to day, but rather the absence of economic and social justice, of peace, of respect for human dignity.” A new commitment to international cooperation and multilateralism is clearly required if we are not to fail to meet our 2030 agenda goals. To this end, the international community must stand together to “seek the common good and the integral human development of all.” Meanwhile, Abp Caccia reminds us that we also need to change our own lives and move towards a fraternal solidarity, going beyond egocentrism, individualism, selfishness and short-sightedness.

Catholic Actors initiatives: change begins from the grassroots

Including migrants in social and economic frameworks is key to success in promoting social cohesion and their integration in the host community. Below are some examples of how the Catholic Church promotes quality jobs, provides training, and helps people access the labour market, thus assisting migrants as well as the local poor.

Prolibertas, a social project of the Trinitarian Order to “fight against social exclusion”, run a [training school in Madrid in tourist accommodation and catering](#) (ES). Almost all the participants have previously been imprisoned and the vast majority are immigrants, often alone with children to raise and with no prior work experience. The purpose of the project is to help women in situations of exclusion to find their way to employment and integration. The project was realised thanks to the support of the European Social Fund and the Holy Trinity Educational Foundation and the whole network of the Trinitarian family.

Similarly, the Scalabrini Mission Sisters offer a [course to train young migrant people to work in the catering trade](#) in Syracuse, Italy. The program is divided into two phases, theoretical and practical. The theoretical part includes Italian lessons with specialised terminology in the field of catering; lessons in civics and basic terms of labour law; lessons in health and hygiene regulations; and basic knowledge of information technology. The practical part includes training internships in restaurants or bars in the

Syracuse area. A total of 26 young people from Nigeria, Somalia, Ghana, Bangladesh, and Gambia are receiving training.

The Jesuit Urumuri Centre (JUC) has initiated the first phase of its [youth empowerment program](#), which aims to combat high unemployment rates among high school and university graduates in Rwanda. JUC selects Rwandan youth and Burundian refugee youth and takes them through five modules: self-discovery and self-realization; innovation development and prototyping; marketing and promotion operations, financing and financial management; and strategic planning and sustainability. At the completion of the program, beneficiaries are expected to have the skills required to be innovative in business creation and management and to be able to contribute to their communities by creating jobs for their peers.

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is particularly engaged in promoting refugees' integration through livelihood programmes supporting their self-reliance. One of these is an online shop called ["Refutera"](#), a combination of "refugee" and "sejahtera", an Indonesian word that means wealthy. The products offered in Refutera are made by refugee women in Bogor and Jakarta, who produce beautiful, attention-grabbing handicrafts. Elsewhere, through a new initiative called [Skilling Circles](#), JRS is creating new job opportunities for Chin and Afghan refugee women in Delhi to better respond to the needs of the labour market. The women can learn new skills (such as sewing and arts and crafts) that in turn they teach to other refugee women in various communities. Finally, the [JRS skills training centre](#) in Arcadia, South Africa, offers skills development to roughly 200 women a year. Among them, there are hairdressing and beauticians' courses, as well as English and computer classes. In addition to spaces for refugees, the programme also admits migrants and a small number of South African women.

Voices from the Church: a more equitable economy is possible

Pope Francis argues that the economy is sick because of unequal economic growth and distribution. In today's world, a very few rich people possess more than all the rest of humanity combined. This is a mockery of fundamental human values. Nowadays [homo sapiens seem to have succumbed to homo æconomicus](#), an individualistic creature interested only in profit. "We forget that we are the beings who are the most cooperative and we flourish in community," the Holy Father explains. "When the obsession to possess and dominate excludes millions of persons from having primary goods; when economic and technological inequality are such that the social fabric is torn; and when dependence on unlimited material progress threatens our common home, then we

cannot stand by and watch. [...] We must act all together, in the hope of generating something different and better.”

The publication [“COMMON HOME, Migration and Development in Europe and Beyond”](#) by Caritas Europe is part of MIND (Migration, Interconnectedness, Development), a three-year project financed by the European Commission. The aim is to raise public awareness of the relationship between sustainable development and migration, through the lens of a faith-based ethical framework respectful of human rights and dignity. In Caritas’s view, under the right conditions, migration can contribute to the integral human development of migrants and of members of both countries of destination and countries of origin. Such a vision implies the recognition that migration, regardless of its drivers, is an opportunity for our societies to build a more prosperous, global Common Home, where everyone can make a meaningful contribution and live in dignity.

"The consequences of the pandemic continue to be felt and will intensify in the course of this year. We will see more unemployment, more inequality and more poverty," said Rita Sacramento Monteiro, coordinator of the team [*Economy of Francesco Portugal*](#) (PT). She then recalled the challenges identified by Pope Francis: the need to "start processes", to "open roads, without shortcuts, and continue with hope". In line with such challenges, "the time we are living is an opportunity to risk a new insight, to question the difficult decisions that everyone will have to make in families, in organizations, so as to try to ask questions with the values of fraternity, inclusion, the common good," Monteiro added. The coordinator of the *Economy of Francesco* network also described the publication of a "youth encyclical" entitled "A Graça de Trabalhar" (The grace of work), as a result of dialogue among the participants in the project. In addition, the network will launch a course on "Francesco’s economy" to help people deepen the values of this economy.

For earlier issues of this Bulletin, please visit: migrants-refugees.va/en/c-19-bulletin

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