

Perspectives and Agendas of Solidarity for Human Rights Defenders

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, AUTOMATION AND WORKERS' RIGHTS

Every day, millions of workers head to work or in search of work with the hope of securing the means to live for themselves and their households. For the vast majorities the hope for dignity, fairness and a secure future, appears faint in the daily struggle for survival. As Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation rapidly changes the workplace, greater uncertainty faces workers, as what lies ahead remains unclear.

AI and automation are transforming the nature of work, significantly affecting workers, particularly those in the informal sector. These technologies are automating repetitive tasks and streamlining processes, which can displace low-skilled jobs and reduce demand for manual labour. Informal workers, who often lack stable contracts,

social protections, or access to retraining opportunities, are especially vulnerable to these changes. The lack of regulatory oversight in the informal sector means that AI could worsen existing vulnerabilities, making it even harder for these workers to secure fair treatment and basic rights.

This follows a pattern seen since the industrial revolution, where technology has often been used by employers to make jobs worse. Skilled work is turned into simpler tasks, and human effort is hidden behind machines to cut costs.

Employers often use AI as a way to link technological progress with breaking unions and making jobs less secure. However, this problem is not caused by the technology itself but by how capital choose to use it. The current debate about AI and the future of work is just the latest example of employers trying to reduce worker power by claiming that human labour is becoming less important and blaming these changes on technology instead of their own decisions.

AI-powered systems also exacerbate job insecurity by replacing traditional roles with gig work or platform-based jobs, which often offer low pay and limited benefits. Moreover, the increased use of surveillance and monitoring tools can erode worker autonomy and lead to exploitation.

From the way they're hired to how their performance is measured. AI is becoming a part of almost every aspect of jobs. While these latest technologies promise to make things faster and more efficient, they are also bringing challenges that affect workers' rights, job security, and the fairness they expect at work.

AI isn't just a neutral tool in fact it reflects the values and biases of the people who create it. This means that automated systems can sometimes discriminate against certain groups, make workers' workloads heavier, lower their wages, or invade their privacy. Often, the benefits of AI's increased productivity go straight to company executives and shareholders, leaving workers without

a voice in how these technologies shape their lives.

The way AI is used in workers' jobs raises important questions about who has power and who is held accountable. Decisions made by algorithms can be confusing and hard to challenge, making it difficult for workers to stand up for themselves when something doesn't seem right. AI-driven surveillance is becoming more common, creating work environments where workers' freedom and privacy are at risk.

These issues are happening all over the world. In places where laws are weaker, especially in developing countries, workers are even more vulnerable to being exploited by AI systems. The rise of the gig economy, powered by apps and algorithms, has led to more unstable jobs and fewer protections for workers.

Why Workers' Concern About AI and Automation Matters

The problem with AI and automation is not technology but the power that the ownership

of this technology gives without oversight and control. AI and automation have the potential to create opportunities by reducing drudgery, improving productivity and generating new roles. To ensure these technologies benefit all, we need to put in place policies, structures and processes focusing on worker protections, reskilling programs, and equitable access to technology are crucial.

The future of work is at a turning point. If proper safeguards are not put in place, AI could make existing inequalities worse, widen the gap between the rich and the poor, and take away rights that workers have fought hard to win. But if AI is guided by strong ethical principles and solid regulations, it can be a powerful tool to improve working conditions, protect workers' rights, and create new opportunities.

This charter is a call to action. It is about making sure that technological progress does not come at the expense of human dignity. Workers are urging governments, employers, unions, and international organizations to

put workers first as AI continues to shape the economy. By aligning AI with values like democracy, social justice, and empowering workers, a future can be built where technology makes work and lives better, not worse.

Together, we can shape an AI-driven future that respects and uplifts all workers. Standing united and advocating for these principles, we can ensure that technology serves humanity, not the other way around. Integrating the guidelines given, we aim to protect and empower every worker, including informal workers like construction workers, cleaners, domestic helpers, agricultural workers, street vendors, garment workers, and daily labourers as AI technologies continue to evolve. This charter calls for collective action to enhance human dignity, secure fair treatment, and create opportunities for everyone in the workforce through technological progress.

Workers Charter for AI and Automation Related Workers' Rights and Protections

As AI reshapes our workplaces, we, the workers demand a future where AI respects our dignity, ensures fairness, and provides security. AI should enhance our rights and open up new opportunities, not exploit us, create more inequality, or take away our jobs. This charter outlines what needs to happen to make sure AI works for us, helping us thrive in a rapidly changing world.

- » **Protecting Jobs Proactively:** There is urgent need to be policies in place to address potential job losses caused by AI and automation. Workers in roles at high risk should have access to secure job alternatives.
- » **Fair Workload Management:** AI systems shouldn't set unrealistic productivity goals that push us to overwork, cause stress, or lead to burnout. The way algorithms manage our work should respect our physical and mental well-being.

- » **No Workplace Surveillance Without Consent:** We have the right to say no to invasive AI-driven surveillance. Monitoring should only happen when absolutely necessary, and only with our informed consent.
- » **Eliminating Bias in Hiring and Evaluations:** AI systems used to recruit and assess us must be checked for fairness and inclusivity, ensuring they don't discriminate based on gender, caste, race or socioeconomic background.
- » **Equal Opportunities for Everyone:** AI should promote diversity and inclusion, creating opportunities for women, minorities, and marginalized groups, rather than reinforcing existing inequalities.
- » **Formal Acknowledgment:** Governments and organizations must formally recognize informal workers as a vital part of the economy who are impacted by AI technologies.
- » **Inclusion in Policy-Making:** Informal workers should have representation

in discussions and decisions about AI deployment that affects their work and livelihoods.

- » **Accountability Mechanisms:** Establish clear channels for informal workers to report and challenge unfair AI-driven decisions without fear of retaliation.
- » **Extension of Labor Laws:** Governments should extend Workers protections to cover informal workers, ensuring they have legal recourse against exploitation facilitated by AI.
- » **Regulatory Standards for AI Use:** Implement regulations that govern the use of AI in the informal sector, including standards for fairness, non-discrimination, and worker rights.
- » **Inclusive Access to Technology:** Provide informal workers with access to the technology and tools necessary to engage with AI systems that affect their work.
- » **Fair Pay for All:** Savings and productivity gains from AI shouldn't lead to lower

wages. We should benefit fairly from the advancements that AI brings.

- » **Transparency in Compensation:** AI-based pay systems must be regularly checked to ensure they're fair and equitable, preventing any discriminatory pay practices.
- » **Preserving Union Rights:** AI must not be used to weaken our ability to negotiate or diminish the power of Workers unions. We must retain the right to negotiate how AI affects our wages, job security, and working conditions.
- » **Secure Contracts for Gig Workers:** Those of us working in the gig economy need secure contracts that guarantee fair pay, benefits, and protection from being unfairly dismissed by algorithms.
- » **Representation in Platform Decisions:** Gig workers should have the right to join together, bargain collectively, and have a say in how AI systems govern our work.

- » **Worker-Controlled AI Agreements:** The use of AI in our workplaces should be subject to agreements that reflect our needs and interests.
- » **Worker Participation:** We should have a say in decisions about how AI is designed and used in our workplaces. Our unions, worker councils, and representatives need to be involved in all discussions about AI systems that affect our jobs and working conditions.
- » **Transparency and Accountability:** Employers must be open about how they're using AI, especially when it comes to hiring, monitoring us, and evaluating our performance. We deserve clear explanations of how AI impacts our roles and our futures.
- » **Control Over Our Data:** We should own our workplace data. Employers must get our explicit consent before collecting or using any of this information.
- » **Privacy Built In:** AI systems should be designed with privacy as a core principle,

protecting our personal information from misuse or exploitation.

- » **International Labor Standards:** Governments and international organizations must establish global guidelines for AI's impact on work, ensuring fair treatment and consistent protections for workers everywhere.
- » **Using AI for Safety:** In jobs that are physically demanding or risky, AI systems must prioritize our health and safety, by reducing fatigue, and supporting our mental well-being.
- » **Protecting Our Mental Health:** AI shouldn't add unnecessary stress or anxiety by over-monitoring us or using manipulative tactics.
- » **No Exploitation Anywhere:** AI systems must respect local labour laws and uphold workers' rights worldwide, preventing exploitation in any region.
- » **Learning About AI:** Employers and governments need to support education

programs that help us understand how AI affects our jobs and our rights.

- » **Access to Information:** We should have free and easy access to resources that explain the AI systems used in our workplaces and what they mean for us.
- » **Eliminating Gender Bias:** AI must not perpetuate gender biases in hiring, evaluations, or promotions. Systems should be audited to ensure women receive equal treatment and opportunities.
- » **Supporting Women in Tech:** Governments and industries should fund and promote training programs to increase the representation and access of women in AI related changes in the work.
- » **Reskilling and Upskilling:** Governments and employers must provide easy access to high-quality training programs that help us learn the skills needed for new, AI-related changes.
- » **Sharing the Benefits of AI:** The efficiencies and cost savings from AI should lead to

fair wages, better working conditions, and equitable benefits for all of us—not just bigger profits for a few.

- » **Set up a South Labour Commission:** We recognize that a South Commission for Labour could play a pivotal role in protecting workers in developing countries from the adverse effects of AI and automation. Automation threatens many low-skilled and repetitive jobs that form the backbone of the Global South's labour market, particularly in manufacturing, agriculture, and service sectors. Without intervention, this shift could lead to widespread unemployment and deepen inequality. The commission can advocate for policies that prioritize worker rights, such as mandating retraining programs and ensuring displaced workers have access to alternative livelihoods. It can push for ethical guidelines in deploying AI and automation, ensuring that these technologies complement human labour rather than replace it entirely. The commission can facilitate large-scale

skill development programs focused on preparing workers for new opportunities in a digital and AI-driven economy. By lobbying for fair trade and investment agreements, the commission can ensure that the profits from AI and automation are shared equitably, rather than exacerbating the existing wealth gap. Acting as a unified voice, the commission can represent the interests of the Global South in international labour and technological forums, ensuring that the unique challenges of these workers are acknowledged and addressed.



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Actionaid Association, F-5 (First Floor), Kailash Colony, New Delhi -110048

[+91-11-40640500](tel:+911140640500)