In this book, Guy Standing introduces what he calls the precariat – a growing number of people across the world living and working precariously, usually in a series of short-term jobs, without recourse to stable occupational identities or careers, stable social protection or protective regulations relevant to them.

They include migrants, but also locals. Increasingly frustrated and potentially dangerous because they have no voice, vulnerable to the siren calls of extreme political parties, the precariat could produce new instabilities in society.

How might these dangers be addressed? Standing outlines a new kind of good society, with more people actively involved in civil society and the precariat re-engaged. One way to this better society, he suggests, would be an unconditional basic income for everyone, contributed by the state, which could be topped up through earned incomes.

This is a topical and radical book, which will appeal to readers concerned about the growing problems of labour insecurity and civic disengagement.
Guy Standing is currently Professor of Economic Security at the University of Bath in the UK. He was previously Director of the Socio-Economic Security Programme of the International Labour Organization, where he worked for 30 years. He has been involved in numerous research and advisory projects, in developed and developing countries and, in the early 1990s, in the “transition” countries of Eastern Europe. He has written and edited books on labour economics, labour market policy, unemployment, labour market flexibility, structural adjustment policies and social protection policy.


Dr. Standing is a founder member and co-president of the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN), an international non-governmental organization that promotes a citizenship income for all. He is currently involved in several unconditional cash transfer pilot schemes in India.