



Young
workers and
trade union
organising
campaign

Philippines Young Workers Network

**NATIONAL WORKSHOP FOR
YOUNG WORKERS**

Manila, Philippines, 13 March 2014

What do we mean by “youth”?

Youth is transitional phase from childhood to adulthood when young people, through a process of intense physiological, psychological, social and economical change, gradually come to be recognized – and recognize themselves – as adults. So it is more a stage in life than giving rise to the expression that you are “young as you feel,” which is especially popular among those who are well past their youth!

For research and policy it is useful to pin down the period of youth more precisely. Perspectives on the most relevant age range vary across discipline. In the health field youth is associated with the ages of physical maturation that begins with menarche for girls and more gradually for boys, typically between the ages of 10 and 16. In the social sciences youth is defined by the acquisition of various adult statuses, marked by events such as menarche, leaving school, employment, marriage, and voting, with the recognition that becoming an adult is an extended, self reinforcing process, often extending into the 20s.

Social psychologists argue that the subjective experience of feeling adult matters as least as much as the objective markers of adulthood, such as age or particular statuses. While much of this research is based in developed countries, it suggests that young people in their late teens and early 20s often see themselves as not-yet-adult. Some argue that this prolonged period of semi-autonomy can be viewed as a new life stage in which young people experiment with adult roles but do not fully commit to them. Laws in most countries designate ages when people can be treated as adults and are thus no longer offered the protections of childhood. One can thus change from being a child to being an adult overnight. But this varies by context or sector. The ages at which school attendance is no longer compulsory and employment is legally permitted typically ranges between 11 and 16 years.

Legal responsibility for crime can begin early, but individuals are typically not charged as adults until around 16. Political participation through voting is postponed, typically to around 18 or later. Likewise, service in the military, whether compulsory or voluntary, is often restricted until age 18. The purchase of cigarettes, in countries where there are restrictions on sales to minors, is allowed from around 15 to 18. Consumption of alcohol, where it is legally prohibited for minors, is allowed from the ages of 18 to 21 though in some cases it is prohibited until the age of 25.

National policies¹ on youth typically establish an age range for beneficiaries. The lower bound ranges from around 12 years (Jordan) to around 18 years (Bangladesh). In some cases it is not strictly defined, as in Hungary, where the youth secretariat deals with both 0-14 and 15-26 year olds. The upper bound ranges from around 24 (Jamaica) to even 35 or 40 (Kenya, Pakistan). The UN’s World Program of Action for Youth defines youth as people aged 15-24, while WHO and UNICEF use the term adolescent for those 10-19, youth for those 15-24, and young people for those 10-24 year olds.

¹ In Philippines, “youth” is the critical period in person’s growth and development from the onset of adolescent toward the peak of mature, self-reliant and responsible adulthood comprising the considerable sector of the population from the age of fifth teen (15) to thirty (30) years (Republic Act No. 8044)

Who are young workers?

The definitions of youth vary according to culture, history and social context. Among PSI affiliates, young workers range from 18 to 35 years. Although young people are not one homogenous group, they do share common workplace concerns².

ILO and youth employment. Convention 138/1973 sets the general minimum age for admission to employment or work at 15 years (13 for light work) and the minimum age for hazardous work at 18 (16 under certain strict conditions³). It provides for the possibility of initially setting the general minimum age at 14 (12 for light work) where the economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed.⁴

However, according to the Convention No 182/1999⁵, defines "child" as a person under 18 years of age. It requires ratifying states to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, including all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; child prostitution and pornography; using children for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs; and work which is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children

The United Nations define youth as the age group between 15 and 24. Variation in the definitions of individual countries' official statistics makes cross-country comparisons difficult. In some analyses, the youth are further divided into teenagers (15-19 years old) and young adults (20-24 years old).

More specifically, labour market transition is defined as the passage of a young person (aged 15-29) from the end of schooling (or entry to first economic activity) to their first stable or satisfactory job. The distribution of youth across stages of labour market transition varies from country to country.

In transition – A young person is still “in transition” if their status is one of the following⁶:

- a) currently unemployed (relaxed definition); or
- b) currently employed in a temporary and non-satisfactory job; or
- c) currently in non-satisfactory self-employment; or
- d) currently inactive and not in education or training, with an aim to look for work later.

² **Source:** PSI's young workers brochure “Giving Young Workers Voice in the Trade Union”

³ any type of employment or work which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to jeopardise the health, safety or morals of young persons

⁴ C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), see the link:

http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C138

⁵ C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), see the link:

http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C182

⁶ Source: ILO, see the link: http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/youth/2013/WCMS_212439/lang--en/index.htm

Young people at work!

Although young people are not one homogenous group, they do share common workplace concerns:

- Lower quality jobs, low pay and informality – *precarious employment*⁷
- Challenges in youth transitions to decent work⁸
- Widening disadvantages among young people and increasing polarization⁹: *gender, literacy, education and skills, socio-economic background, migration, national and ethnic origin, disabilities and the AIDS pandemic*

Global employment trend 2014¹⁰, key facts and figure

- The number of unemployed worldwide rose by 5 million in 2013 to almost 202 million, a 6 per cent unemployment rate;
- Some 23 million workers have dropped out of the labour market;
- The number of jobseekers is expected to rise by more than 13 million by 2011;
- Some 74.5 million people in the 15 to 24 age group were unemployed in 2013, a 13.1 per cent youth unemployment rate;
- Around 839 million workers lived with their families on less than US\$2 in 2013;
- Some 375 million workers lived with their families on less than \$1.25 a day in 2013.

⁷ **Precarious employment** is employment that is of low quality and that encompasses a range of factors that put workers at risk of injury, illness and/or poverty. This includes factors such as low wages, low job security, limited control over workplace conditions, little protection from health and safety risks in the workplace and less opportunity for training and career progression (Source: Rodgers, Gerry & Rodgers, Janine (1989). *Precarious Jobs in Labour Market Regulation; the Growth of Atypical Employment in Western Europe*. Geneva: International Institute for Labour Studies, International Labour Organisation)

⁸ Young people face difficulties during the transition from school to work. If you are wondering what kind of difficulties young people face during their job search, think of the times you read a job advertisement but were not able to apply because of the required years of experience. This is called the “**experience trap**”. Young people are also less efficient when looking for jobs than experienced adults.

⁹ **Job polarization** is also increasing the disadvantages faced by young people. To understand this phenomenon, imagine how technical progress, especially computerization, can affect employment patterns. It reduces manufacturing and clerical work, where routine jobs are now performed not by people but by machines. This phenomenon, together with higher income inequality in industrialized countries, has caused a surge in the proportion of service-sector employment. Therefore, there has been higher demand for high- and low-skilled employment, but not middle-level jobs

¹⁰Source: http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS_233931/lang-en/index.htm

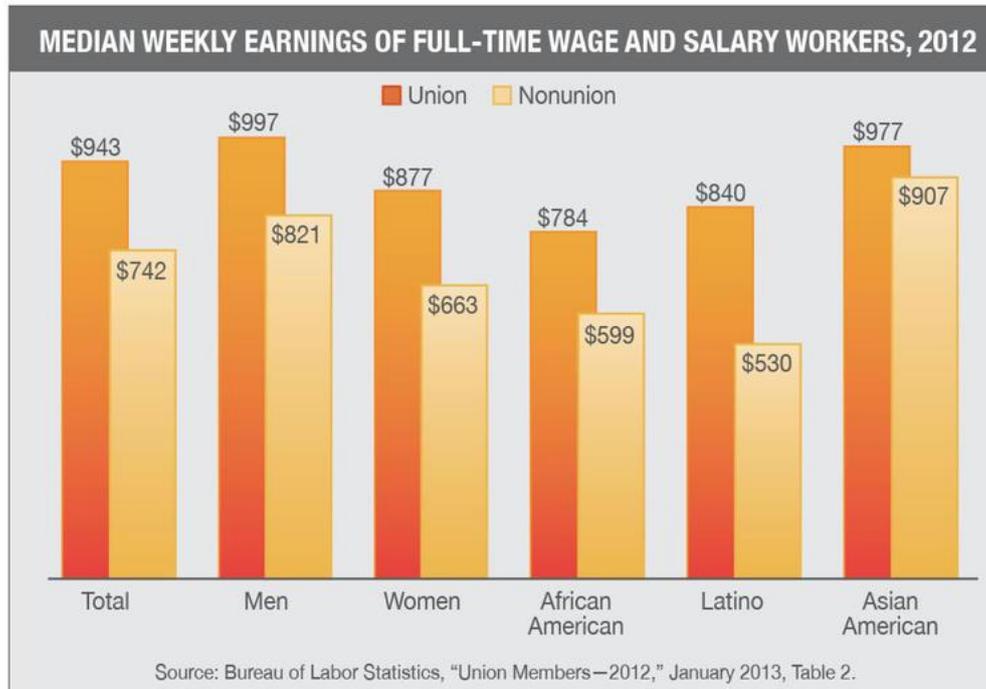
Why do unions matter?

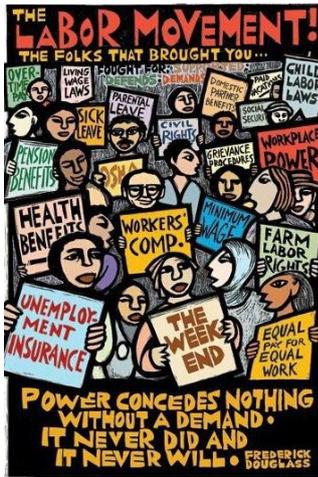
Strength in numbers: Unions are about a simple proposition: By joining together, working women and men gain strength in numbers so they can have a voice at work and about what they care about.

Dignity: They negotiate a contract with their employer for things like a fair and safe workplace, better wages, a secure retirement and family-friendly policies such as paid sick leave and scheduling hours. They have a voice in how their jobs get done, creating a more stable, productive workforce that provides better services and products.

Ensure Workers Have a Voice on the Job: Always adapting to the challenges of our nation's evolving workforce, unions are meeting the needs of workers in today's flexible and non-traditional work environments. Because no matter what type of job workers are in, by building power in unions, they can speak out for fairness for all working people in their communities and create better standards and a strong middle class across the country.

Why we should give thanks to the union? Please refer to below statistic the comparison that the union members earn better wages and benefits than workers who aren't union members. And workers who are in the minority status (gender or race)





A five-day work-week, mandatory minimum wages, and paid leave are all legacies of organized labour. So are Social Security, Medicare, and child labour law. Without organized labour it is very possible none of these benefits for workers would exist.

Workers who join a union earn more money, have better benefits and have a voice at work. Why don't you join a union? If you are already in a union, be active and participate!

A worker standing alone is a worker in trouble

Organising Young Workers to Join Trade Unions

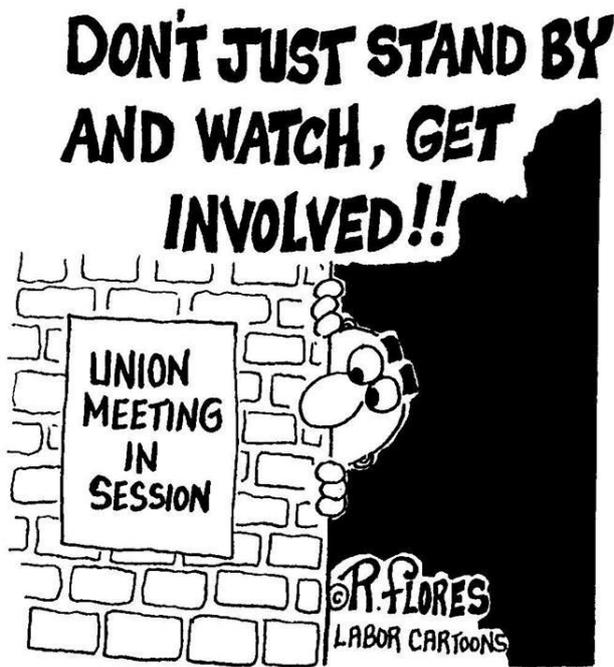
Generation Y: Generation Y'ers or the Millennial are the names for the generation generally defined as being born between the mid-80's to the late-90's, the generation that was raised to be comfortable with technology, and never knew life that wasn't changing rapidly, permeated with media entertainment, and a weakened and declining labour movement.

Most of the generalizations and stories about the Yers are negative and wary. Yers, sometimes known as "**Generation Ritalin**", are often described as fast paced but positive individualists. Yers are often characterized as more pessimistic and cynical about job opportunities. Another characterization of young people is that they are apathetic politically and are more interested in the antics of movie stars than the war in Syria, the newest Iphone than healthcare.

Why organise young workers? Unions believe that young workers are very important for the organisation movement in the future. Trade unions are powerful organisations and have a key role to play in shaping the present and future of the global economy. However, the traditional role of trade unions to promote unionism and encourage young people to join a union often limits unions in reaching young people. The age gap in relation to taking up the issues and negative perceptions of trade unions are also factors that contribute to the young workers and their perceptions about joining a trade union. To them, trade unions are only for seniors.

Why are unions important? Millions of young women and men work in vulnerable conditions. In the public sector there is a growing trend for causality, or the contracting out of services. We believe that many youth have less knowledge of their rights and have less ability to defend themselves. They also know very little about unions when they enter the labour market.

Challenges in organising young workers in the union! Young workers still believe in unions as an agent for change: to improve the quality of their work life. But unions must change the way they manage and organise themselves in the current situation and for



future development. To better defend the interests of young workers, unions must first convince them to join the trade union ranks. And unions should not forget that today's youth is tomorrow's negotiating strength.

The organizational future of unions depends on organizing young workers, and unions must address the interests and concerns of these workers.

However, attracting young workers into the labour and trade union movement is not easy. Trade unions are often perceived by them in a negative light: too old-fashioned and bureaucratic, focused only on the traditional struggle for wages

and working conditions.

What can unions do to encourage young workers to join and be active in the trade union movement? Young workers still believe in unions as an agent for change, but unions must change the way they manage and organise themselves in the current situation and for the future. Young workers want unions to go beyond their traditional roles, they want modern, strong, vibrant public sector unions that can play a role and have an influence in the political and economic spheres.

Organising young workers in the union movement is not just a matter of merely giving them activities but it is also giving them a strategic position (institutionalised) under the trade union structure. This gives them channels through which to address and voice their issues and interests.

Organise, organise and organise. This is the key message on how to improve young workers' conditions and how to assist workers in informal employment to win more secure work with better wages and rights.

Key factors for the trade union in organising young workers:

- **Organising, organising, organising** is the key to the role of unions and their activities. Unions must find the way to attract more young workers to joining trade unions.

- **Youth mainstreaming:** unions must be committed to engaging young workers in all aspects of union policy and union work. Giving youth more power in organising youth-to-youth strategic campaigns is important.
- **A quota system** as affirmative action in order to give more participation to the young workers in trade union activities; providing a youth budget.
- **More power** for youth committees and an **integrated structure** in all union levels.

Campaigning

What is a campaign? A campaign is a series of coordinated events that may include public speaking, protests, meetings and publications with the aim of achieving a social or political goal. A campaign can go for a few months or weeks, or be ongoing, to achieve a range of outcomes but never quite coming to an end.

Why campaign? It is easy to identify problems but it's more difficult to think about ways to influence and change something for the better. By campaigning, young members make a difference in the workplace on the issues that affect them directly, such as job security and training, apprenticeships, workplace rights, pay and conditions problems and bullying. If you are union member you can take part on your union campaigns. It takes courage, energy and resources to start a campaign. Having said that, let's get started.

Social media and organising young workers

Organizing young workers is crucial to maintaining a vital, growing labour movement, but, how to reaching out them? As the generation born in the technology savvy, we found considerable evidence of organisers, particularly young organisers, engaging with technology and lobbying internally for better use of technology. For short, the internet is now an integral part of their lives, giving them a way to communicate, connect and learn on their own terms.

With the birth of new social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Path, MySpace, there is a significant new impact on organising change toward young workers. The use of social media and new technology for organizing has been particularly effective among young workers, many of whom have grown up with computers and the internet their whole lives.

How social media is used:

- an on-line presence enables workers to check out the union for themselves
- social media helps younger workers see the union as “hip”

- YouTube or blast texts got people talking about the union by creating a “buzz around the campaign”
- unions should now ask for cell phone and email information on union authorization cards;
- home phone numbers are practically useless for contacting young workers, and change it with WhatsApp, Line, WeChat
- organizing committees communicate through Facebook or blogs and/or texts
- social media and the internet allow people to communicate in flexible time, which helps people with family responsibilities
- social networking helps people connect across geography and jurisdictions

Users Need Union Support

- labor movement must become skilled in using these ways of communicating
- organizers need technical support from their unions
- frontline organizers need authority to respond rapidly

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