



# DECENT WORK FOR YOUNG WORKERS

The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on young workers' employment, incomes, training, and social protection have been catastrophic. Even before the pandemic, young workers were already in a precarious position. The pandemic, and young workers' existing vulnerabilities highlight the need for governments and policymakers to take action on decent work for young workers so that they don't suffer long-lasting consequences from the pandemic. Youth employment must be front and centre in Covid-19 recovery plans.

jobs with young transport workers, we speak about secure and stable employment, equal opportunity and treatment at work, fair income and working hours, safe working environment and connections between physical and mental health with living wages and social security.

Pre-pandemic, only 41% of the global youth population were included in the labour force and 30% of employed youth were in poverty<sup>2</sup>. Now Covid-19 has further worsened working conditions, increased youth unemployment, and undermined future career prospects. Young transport workers have been hit especially hard.

## WHY DECENT WORK IS IMPORTANT FOR YOUNG WORKERS?

Decent work is a fundamental human right. It means respecting workers' rights, which includes guaranteeing full and productive employment, and reducing the number of young people not in employment, education, or training. It means promoting safe and secure working environments where everyone is included: youth, women, migrants, people with disabilities, precarious workers, and workers in new forms of employment. Decent work means having a say in policy making through social dialogue so we can secure decent work for all<sup>1</sup>.

Decent work has four pillars: employment creation, social protection, rights at work, and social dialogue. Decent work and employment are crucial elements of young people's empowerment. When talking about decent

“ One in six young workers have stopped working since the pandemic, while those who are still in employment have seen their working hours reduced by 23%<sup>3</sup>. ”

Employers use crises as an opportunity to drive down costs, including pay and benefits. In many companies, it has been young workers who have had to accept the lowest-paying and least secure conditions. This Covid-19 crisis will be yet another challenge for young workers, who must confront employers set on reducing the standards of employment in order to increase their profits.

1 [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/sdg-2030/goal-8/WCMS\\_403787/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/sdg-2030/goal-8/WCMS_403787/lang--en/index.htm)    <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm>  
2 [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/--publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_737648.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/--publ/documents/publication/wcms_737648.pdf)  
3 [https://www.decentjobsforyouth.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Youth-and-COVID-19-Survey-Report\\_English.pdf](https://www.decentjobsforyouth.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Youth-and-COVID-19-Survey-Report_English.pdf)

# DECENT WORK FOR YOUNG WORKERS

## WHAT DO WE WANT TO CHANGE?

Systemic change is needed. The pandemic, and young workers' existing vulnerabilities are shedding light on the need to focus on youth employment in recovery planning.

Youth employment and decent work must be at the centre of national, regional, and global recovery action plans to build a new, more resilient global economy.

Young people must speak up to protect and promote youth employment, reversing the current trend of job losses, precarious work, insecurity, self-employment, discrimination and poor working conditions. And young people need to be at the table, in meaningful dialogue, on youth employment policy responses to ensure that policies address young people's needs and priorities<sup>4</sup>.

## TRADE UNIONS ARE CRUCIAL TO GUARANTEE DECENT WORK

We cannot secure decent work without a strong global trade union movement. Freedom of association and collective bargaining agreements are crucial to ensuring decent work for all. Young people are and always have been at the forefront of the labour movement and union activism.

## HOW YOUNG WORKERS CAN GET INVOLVED

1. Speak up about what decent work means for youth
2. Join unions, so that we can build our collective strength
3. Push for dedicated youth structures in unions to promote young workers' voices

## WE DEMAND:

- **Decent work** standards that guarantee that all working relationships provide safe and decent working conditions that fully protect fundamental rights
- **Employment support** that promotes youth employment by supporting the transition from school to work, offers job placement and orientation services, incentivises quality apprenticeships and ensures availability of entry level and youth friendly jobs
- **Lifelong learning systems** that invest in youth training and upskilling to prepare young workers for the future of work, including increased reliance on digital tools and new technologies
- **Union rights** for all young workers that recognises and respects the right of all workers to unionise, including workers in the gig economy, through regulation and building platforms that promote fair work
- **Informal to formal work** pathways that support young informal workers in transitioning to formal, decent and safe work
- **Climate justice** principles integrated into youth employment, skills development and recovery plans
- **Anti-discrimination** policies that ensure that no worker is discriminated against on the basis of their migration status, race, nationality, gender or sexual orientation.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/news/young-transport-workers-and-covid-19>