

INTERNATIONAL YOUNG CHRISTIAN WORKERS
JEUNESSE OUVRIERE CHRETIENNE INTERNATIONALE
JUVENTUD OBRERA CRISTIANA INTERNACIONAL



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IYCW Statement on the International Women's Day – March 8

Young Women Workers: Actors for Change

On such an important day for women and society, the young women workers of the IYCW want to make a statement in order to share part of their reality and to announce the campaigns they are carrying out for young women workers around the world. They want to speak of the actions they are taking in all continents to promote equality and participation of all young women workers so that they can live with dignity and justice.

The situation of young women workers:

"I will begin by saying that in my country, Bolivia, female domestic workers are among the lowest wages of the working class" says Fatima, a 26 year old domestic worker and mother of two children.

"Thanks to god I am now working in a family that recognizes my work and now I earn Bs 800,(above the minimum salary) but I must live in the house where I work which means that my work hours are always over 8 hours"

According to a new ILO study, domestic work, which makes up 15.5% of the total female jobs on the American sub-continent, is expanding. Segregation at work, which confines women to the least privileged levels, still exists.

In **Paraguay, Peru and Chile**, there are laws to protect domestic workers. This is definitely a sign of progress but it is not reflected in an improvement of the day-to-day lives of young women who continue to be mistreated and subjected to physical or psychological violence.

It is necessary to look at the working conditions facing young women in countries such as **Sri Lanka** for example, where women workers of the Free Trade Zones (FTZ) are forced to work overtime, and where they are only allowed to go to the toilet once a day. In **Chile**, secretaries are forced to do additional tasks, like serving coffee to their boss and oftentimes cleaning the office at the end of the day.

In **Africa**, many young women workers working in the informal sector are victims of sexual harassment or rape, which often lead to sexually transmitted diseases, the worst of them being the HIV/AIDS.

We want to share our actions so that all this injustice comes to an end.

In **Sri Lanka**, the YCW is working together with other organizations to help realise their demands. Together with the partner organisations of the "AlaRM" network, the YCW are demanding a living wage of US \$119 per month for garment workers working 8 hours a day, in the Free Trade Zones (FTZ). Very often, our fellow workers earn much less. This is why we have developed actions demanding a minimum salary. Last year the government decided that FTZ workers could not earn less than US\$57, which is a very important achievement for us.

In **Thailand**, we carry out actions related to the discrimination faced by pregnant women working in factories, and in **Indonesia** about the possibility to have 2 days off during menstruation because it is often difficult for women to work in these conditions. In **India** we are fighting to obtain equal salary for men and women and to see that all work is valued equally.

In the Americas, we develop actions with young domestic workers in **Paraguay, Bolivia, Chile** and **Peru**, promoting affiliation to the domestic workers' trade union. We organize alternative workshops dealing with self-esteem, affection, participation, and leadership of women, and we denounce all forms of physical and psychological abuse against women. In **Haiti**, we carry out actions with young women workers in the informal economy, encouraging them to organize themselves and to exercise leadership within the organization.

This year the IYCW will hold its world council in India, including an exchange between young women workers of their reality and their response to this reality they face. This will be a place to see in a concrete way the participation and role of the young women workers who are part of the IYCW.

In the words of Fatima from Bolivia:

"I still believe that the lack of organizational spaces for us means that we do not take steps to change. One of my aspirations in the future is to create a union of workers in my home town where they fight for our rights, principally the power to sign a contract to access the rights that all workers deserve"

At the world level, we want to encourage young women workers to be promoters of their own change, to be actors for change which will generate respect and promote the dignity of young women workers, and their right to equality of opportunity in the field of education, work, and leisure.

More information can be found on our world council website www.togetherinaction.org, and the IYCW homepage www.jociycw.net

IYCW Young Women Workers Working Group