



Press release of the International YCW for 1st May

**Today, one Need is More Obvious than Ever:
Social Protection for All to Ensure Dignity in Life and Work**

Today is the 134th anniversary of the International Day of the Working Class. We are commemorating it by demonstrating or meeting online instead of walking together out in the streets. This shows what we are experiencing every day: our whole lives and societies are impacted by the global Covid-19 pandemic. What are young workers' experiences in this situation? Please read some testimonies below.

"Hello to all co-workers! From now on, my husband and I are without work, without pay. I just finished my contract last February 29th in a food factory. My husband was asked not to go to work because of the lockdown due to Covid-19. I was supposed to work in the factory again, but it was postponed because of the closure. We'll have to wait until the virus pandemic is over. This situation is difficult because we can't work and we can't afford to buy food. There are relief items, but it is not enough for all our daily needs. We really need money, but of course we have to put up with this and stay home. The hardest part is seeing your children hungry. It's okay for us adults, we're willing to sacrifice, but it's very sad for children to experience something like this." - Philippines

"I work as a street vendor, selling lemons, potatoes and oranges in the street. I started this job as soon as the quarantine started. I am working with my cousin right now, he is a mechanic but the workshop where he works is closed because of Covid-19, so he is unemployed. We decided to venture into this type of work. We don't earn a lot but it helps us eat and meet some needs. In these times, people and young people in the sector need to be resourceful and turn to temporary informal work. We are doing this to keep our minds busy with positive stuff, to have some means and be able to survive." - Colombia

"Home office is difficult because we are not equipped for home office! There is actually no possibility to work properly in our own flat: there is no desk, there is hardly any space at the dining table and it is not made for working. I use my private phone and internet, communication is now done a lot through WhatsApp. More professional solutions we don't run because my boss doesn't get behind them either. There is much more communication on private channels. For example, I'm off today, but I had a WhatsApp message from my boss this morning."

“Our business manager doesn't want us to do home office. This is only possible for those who work with technical devices and people at risk. Why? I don't know exactly.” - Germany

“Workers are asked to take days off, to already use holidays or reduce overtime hours. They also expect us to take our annual leave or non-paid vacations.” - Egypt

These testimonies of young workers come from a survey we are conducting about the current global situation. It is not yet finalized, but we already have one conclusion: **the pandemic enhances and exposes already existing inequalities.**

Concretely, it exposes:

- Health system loopholes in many parts of world. Patients are dying due to a lack of bed capacities and ventilators. A lack of doctors is a problem in several countries. In the current situation, health care workers are among the front liners. However even without the pandemic, nurses are often underpaid and people in the health sector are faced with stress. Obviously the world needs quality health care! Quality health care systems would also include dignified working conditions for health care workers.
- The vulnerability of informal workers who lack social security and have to go out and work to ensure their survival because their daily income depends on it.
- The risky situation of free-lancers who are now without income because of the cancellation of their projects and work.
- The dependence of many workers on their bosses' goodwill. Some workers who could work from home are not allowed to do so in the current situation. Another situation also visible in the testimonies is the obligation of workers to take unpaid vacation or their annual vacation.
- The gender imbalance of our society which is rising in the current situation in various ways: women are particularly affected by the home-working orientation and simultaneous closing of schools because in several cases, they are assuming more responsibilities in the care work at home, including looking after the children who stay at home. Working from home means a need to combine this. This challenge is especially big for single mothers. The proportion of women in the current systemically important professions is particularly high, for example in the health care sector. Likewise, the proportion of women inside vulnerable groups is quite high, for example in the informal economy.
- The unequal distribution of wealth which also shows how much space we will have for our living. People living in small houses, flats or rooms are now disadvantaged because they have less space to live in.
- The need for good social protection for all. This includes a health system, but even more a security net for everyone.

We also see a great deal of solidarity today. This includes faith-based actors (Christians, Muslims and others) who support vulnerable groups or people who support each other. In Egypt, it looks like there is a competition between celebrities and famous businessmen to support a lot of families during this pandemic.

The decisions that governments will take today will directly affect the way this crisis will evolve, as well as the lives of billions of people. We can limit the impact of the crisis and the wounds it will cause by taking adequate measures. The aim must be to rebuild and ensure better protection and security for workers. We need to create new avenues so that human lives take precedence over economic and material interests. We must demand a universal health insurance that is more accessible, fair and sustainable. There is a need for swift, determined and coordinated action. Urgent, adequate measures could make a difference between survival and collapse. Of course we need to continue the fight against Covid-19 that has already killed many lives, but we should not forget and we should ensure that workers remain protected by International Labour Standards. The current crisis provides an opportunity for real changes in our social and economic system.

We ask concretely:

- 1) to uphold the right to occupational health and safety, freedom of association, collective bargaining, and gender rights at work;
- 2) for guaranteed income and job security for all workers;
- 3) for greater social protection for all and immediate support to low-income and informal workers;
- 4) for mass testing and free treatment.

We call for a world with more social justice and greater solidarity among human beings in order to build networks and resist the impact Covid-19 will have on workers.

Solidarity greetings for May 1!

The JOCI International Team