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IYCW BULLETIN

Young workers' information medium



EDITORIAL

The International YCW is proposing a new issue and a new format of its bulletin. Together with the International Cardijn Association (ICA), we want to provide you with information that summarizes our analysis as well as the actions carried out in the different countries where we have and build IYCW member movements. This new format will hopefully attract new readers and serve as a training tool for young workers and all those interested in the International YCW.

In this first issue, we will highlight a few points related to the International Council. Delegates from the 5 continents spent several days discussing and reflecting on the actions and electing the new representatives of the International YCW. For the first time in the history of the IYCW, we held an international council online. It is clear that the technological evolution in this post-pandemic period has led young workers to adapt to new, different contexts.

The International Secretariat invites all readers to spread the word and sign up to continue receiving this new format of the newsletter that will keep you informed. We are aware that it is important to look for new ways and forms of communication to make the International YCW and its actions regarding reality known. This is the purpose of this newsletter.

"A young worker is worth more than all the gold in the world"
Joseph Cardijn

HIGHLIGHT

- **XV International Council**
- **Young workers, the new forms of work and the same old problems**
- **The actions of the international movement today**
- **Cooperation between former and current activists**

IYCW Bulletin is biannual publication published by International Young Christian Workers (IYCW) with the support of International Cardijn Association (ICA). Its focus is the action and the activity of Young Christian Workers around the globe.

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XV International Council of IYCW: Let's act for a just world

Our clenched fists show that we have moved forward with power and burning enthusiasm towards a better future. This is what the 15th International Council (IC) of the IYCW embodied when it met to discuss the life and action of young workers.

This year's international council was held virtually from 25 - 29 September 2021, after the planned council which was originally scheduled to be held last year (2020) had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The council began with a one-day seminar attended by YCW representatives from all national movements of the five continents: Australia, Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas.

Some 80 young workers and observers from 50 countries attended the international council which was chaired virtually from Brussels, Belgium.

Sarah Prenger, the IYCW International President officially opened this first virtual council. *"We are connected, we are one international movement, and we are called to act, called to act for just work more than ever. In fact, the social contradictions, inequality, precarity, informality and unemployment are becoming bigger, especially in the midst of the global Covid pandemic,"* Sarah Prenger said at the opening of the XV International Council of the movement, calling all young workers of the world to act for change. *"It is you and I who have to do something, we can make a difference, we can change the world! With this conviction, together with you, I open this XV International Council. We should not be afraid of change."*

The session began with a one-day seminar attended by different international organizations that have worked closely with the YCW over the past decade.

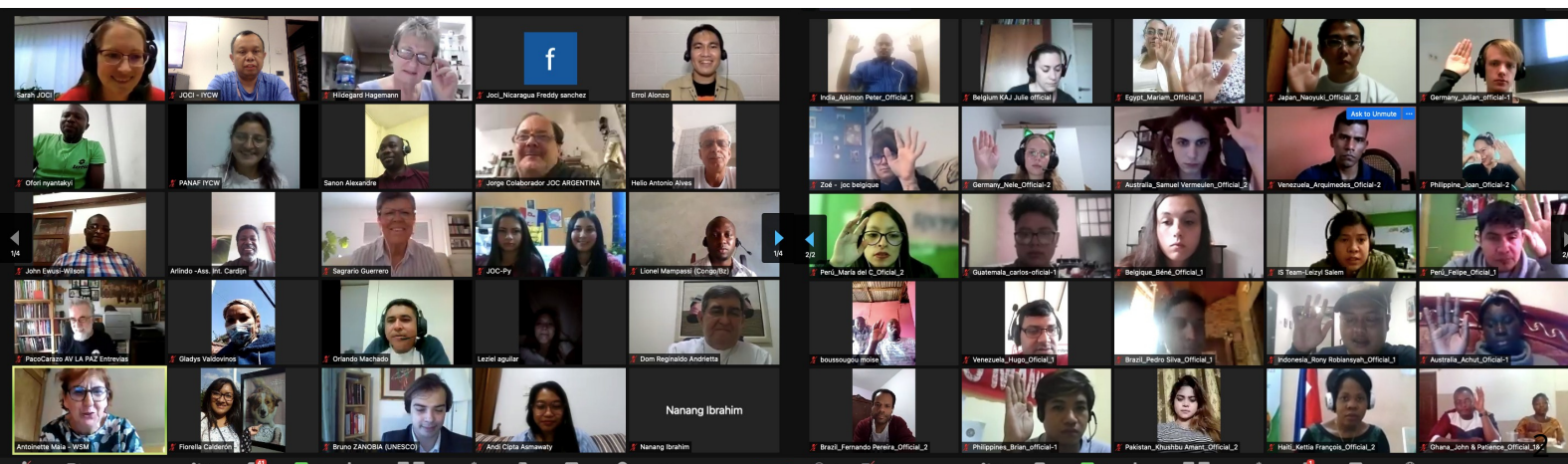
In addition to congratulating the YCW on the meeting, representatives of international organizations (WMCW, ACV-CSC, WSM, Welnotwerk, UNESCO, ILO, etc.) also appreciated its persistence at the local and international levels in voicing the demands of young workers in various sectors.

Representatives of the organizations delivered messages related to informal work, wages, social protection, gender equality, unemployment, artificial intelligence, international migration, the Covid-19 pandemic, or the challenges posed by global climate changes that threaten millions of workers in many sectors and places.

Representatives of the Young Christian Workers from different regions also gave testimony about the actions they have taken in their respective countries on certain themes, including the issues of precarious work, migration, gender equality, informal workers, and human rights.

The internal opening took place on the second day, during which we reviewed and defined the rules and procedures for the work of the Council. We also discussed the situation of the national movements and potential changes in their status, as well as the situation of the YCW in the world.

On the third day, we worked on action. During that session, two national movements from each continent presented the actions and demands of young workers in their region.



The third day was action day! The national movements presented the actions and demands of young workers. In the YCW, action is the backbone of the movement. Every national movement is encouraged to take concrete actions at work, at school and in the community. In that session, two national movements from each region presented the actions and demands of young workers.

Action is the Backbone of the Movement

The presentation focused on the starting point of the action, why the action was taken, what situation or problem provoked it, who acted and when the action was taken. The demands put forward in the action were also an important discussion in the presentation on the third day. Demands have become a benchmark for the success of an action. In other words, they should be part of what is the See-Judge-Act methodology of the IYCW and the Review of Life and Worker Action.

Each national movement explained clearly what is being done, the results of the action and the next steps to follow up the action. At the end of the council, the national movements discussed an ideal and realistic vision/form of coordination based on the current context, conditions and challenges of the movement. The discussion focused on defining the responsibilities that should be assumed by the leaders elected by the council.

After the previous discussion, the council decided to proceed with the election of the International Team. The results did not allow for the election of the International President and it was decided to do so at the 2022 in-person International Council. However, an international treasurer was elected, as well as five people for the regional teams. With some members of the previous team continuing in office, the International Team is now composed of:

Errol Alonso (Philippines), Rony Robiansyah (Indonesia), Kenson Sainlor (Haiti), Ana-Cecilia Salazar (Peru), Carolin Moch (Germany), Omeme Geslin (Gabon), John Ofori (Ghana) and Leizyl Salem (Philippines) as International Treasurer.

Pope Francis's message to the International YCW: the right to a secure and dignified job

Holy See Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, wrote to the International YCW on behalf of Pope Francis for the movement's postponed international council, which was finally held via Zoom last month.

"His Holiness trusts that in this time of economic and social crisis, the Council's deliberations will reaffirm the efforts of young people to advance the Kingdom of God through the building of a more just and equitable society which leaves no one behind and which promotes respect for the fundamental rights of all, including that of safe and dignified employment," Cardinal Parolin wrote.

In May 2020, Holy See Substitute, Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, also wrote to the IYCW for the council, which was initially planned to take place in Lima, Peru in August 2020.

"His Holiness assures the delegates of his spiritual closeness as they share their experience of the challenges facing today's youth, especially in the context of the grave social and economic repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic," Cardinal Parolin wrote.

"He prays that their deliberations will promote efforts internationally to raising awareness and respect for the dignity and rights of working people and to rejecting the culture of waste."

"He likewise encourages the apostolate of YCW to help young Christians to grow in closer spiritual and practical solidarity with their brothers and sisters, particularly in the poorest countries and with those who struggle to find employment, so that young people everywhere may have the opportunity to encounter Jesus Christ in their work and to sanctify their lives by contributing to a more just and fraternal world."

Young Workers, New Forms of Work and Perennial Problems



Photo: <https://joc.be/les-bloqueur-euse-s-organisent-les-prolongations-contre-la-loi-peeters/>

The International YCW has just held an atypical International Council. Atypical as is the situation that the world has been experiencing since the beginning of the year 2020, when the World Health Organization declared the state of pandemic caused by Covid-19. Since then, we have experienced a health, social and economic crisis, with the loss of 4.8 million lives directly related to the virus.

Holding an online International Council has allowed a first awareness of the enormous inequalities that continue to characterize the differences between countries, regions and communities. The digital divide is not the same in the neighborhoods of Brussels, Accra or Manila.

And it is even more profound when it comes to communicating with and understanding others who are thousands of miles away in order to define future plans for a youth organization such as the International YCW. The difficulties are obvious.

According to the UN, there are currently 1.2 billion young people aged 15 to 24 in the world. It is estimated that this number will continue to grow to 1.3 billion by 2030. Of course, we do not want to spread the idea that young people are important simply because they represent a large percentage of the world's population. Their weight, their situations, their lives, the responsibilities they will assume, and the planet they will inherit are all crucial.

This article is a synthesis of the IYCW document written in preparation for its 15th International Council. By bringing together national movements grouped under 4 continental coordinations, the IYCW has the opportunity to collect views, situations and analyses of the reality of today's young workers. All this material, added to the documentation accumulated in the meetings of the International Team and the different seminars held over recent years, is rich in content. We present a summary of this analysis below.

An unprecedented unraveling of historically acquired social rights

"My salary is 2,100,000 rupees (US\$150) per month. I don't get any rights like sick leave or paternity leave, just a vacation allowance. But if I don't go to work because I am sick, they deduct 100,000 rupees or \$7.14 from my daily salary. I work eight hours a day and most of the time I don't get enough rest. In a month, I only get two days of rest."

21-year-old man, Indonesia

The testimonies of young workers from different countries and continents illustrate situations where we find the same structure of exploitation, inequality and lack of rights.

Today, on all continents, we are experiencing an unprecedented phenomenon: the main international rights to unionization, collective bargaining, a decent wage, 8 hours of work, are being rolled back, made flexible, or even abolished. Governments, mostly right-wing, act under the guise of economic progress and the need for austerity, but the truth is that, from a legal point of view, the discussions brought by governments and employers to the ILO express a clear tendency to eliminate the historical foundations of international labor law.

All over the world, we see gaps between labor regulations and reality: labor laws are not implemented and respected in terms of wages, working hours, sick leave, protection of pregnant women (including maternity leave), social security and health insurance, inclusion of people with disabilities, and compliance with youth employment provisions.

In the free trade zones of several countries, the legislation is completely ignored, which led, for example, the 5 largest trade unions in Brazil to call for a general strike in 2017 and 2018, mobilizing over 40 million workers in Brazil.

We live and work in precariousness and insecurity

One-day, three-month and six-month contracts, limited contracts, on-demand work, zero-hour contracts and temporary work are all formulas and names that translate into precariousness and insecurity.

Flexibility makes it easier for companies to lay off workers and to deteriorate working conditions. The lack of long-term security and the change of workplace affect life in general, with serious consequences for the stability and dignity of young people.

Outsourcing and the increase of work wrongly called "autonomous" or "self-employed" are other forms of precariousness that allow companies to make more profits, diverting the cost of labor to the people who do the work.

In a press release on September 21, 2021, the WHO and ILO, according to their first joint estimates, state that work-related diseases and injuries caused the death of 1.9 million people in 2016.

For the world of work, major technological changes are comparable to the industrial revolutions of the past. The "old" ways of working are being transformed by digitization, a clear example being online commerce, in line with the dynamics of immediacy, which in turn is causing the collapse of local commerce.

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MAKES A
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You can support our actions and show your solidarity with young workers in action worldwide.

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Technological changes bring more comfort to the population that can afford it, such as online shopping, home-delivered meals, faster travel, and low-cost flights and activities in general, but the other side of the coin is their impact on a large sector of workers faced with low wages, long working days, accidents and insecurity, or lack of medical coverage; in short, they are also synonymous with a setback for social rights in all areas of life.

The globalization of technology and information has given rise to the phenomenon of teleworking, whether in programming tasks, network management, call centers, etc. Thousands of young people are now employed in these sectors who take advantage of their inability to organize and unionize because of their working conditions.

The new forms of work deregulate all legal frameworks; young people work long hours, with no fixed schedule, no social security, no stable salary and no job security. They are therefore faced with an uncertain future, which disrupts their lives in general and prevents them from making plans.

Rising unemployment and youth unemployment

In most countries, unemployment rates have increased in recent years, with higher percentages among young people. Many young women and men are able to access certain levels of education and vocational training or university studies. During and after their studies, they work in a variety of jobs, often unrelated to their specific training. Although it can be said that in many countries we have never had a generation so well prepared for the challenges of the world of work, there is a very large sector of young people who do not manage to complete their basic education and whose personal and professional training has been interrupted. Unemployment has different connotations depending on the context.

If you have not had a work contract, you will have no replacement income; if you have had a contract, depending on the country in which you live and the duration of that contract, you may or may not be entitled to unemployment benefits. For working class youth, this is a defining circumstance that will lead them to consider solutions such as working in the informal economy, migrating in search of work, creating their own economic activity, or engaging in criminal activities.

Informality and unrecognized work or the shadow economy

The number of informal jobs is increasing. This type of economy occupies about 60% of the world's population, without social protection and in precarious working conditions. Although very important, domestic work or care services are still not recognized and are not subject to appropriate contracts, despite ILO Convention 189.

This situation leads to a lack of legal protection against all kinds of rights violations. Youth is one of the main characteristics of the people who work in these so-called informal jobs, a reality often invisible in this world of technology, image and global communication.

Freedom of organization still under threat

It has never been easy to organize in defense of our rights. In the world of work, making demands, demanding improvements, opposing exploitation, continues to be a reason for dismissal, with disguised justifications. Furthermore, flexible forms of work lead to dispersion, prevent direct relations and make organizing initiatives much more difficult. In addition to direct repression in many countries, there are sectors of work with a strong presence of young people, where it is particularly difficult to develop processes of association, organization and unionization.

Increasingly, states are adopting regulations and laws to restrict freedom of expression and freedom of organization, criminalizing discontent and protest.

Gender inequalities

Social progress is very slow in the area of gender equality, and improved norms and laws do not guarantee changes in behavior and attitudes. In the world of work, we continue to see large wage gaps for similar tasks or functions, differentiation of jobs by gender, or concentration in sectors traditionally considered “male” or “female”. Unemployment affects women to a much greater extent, and we are far from recognizing the value of work in the home, including caregiving within the family.

In many cases, women are forced to combine their (socially invisible) tasks with extremely flexible jobs and are excluded from social security systems. Cases of women being dismissed because they are pregnant are common, and women's access to employment is often difficult because of the possibility of becoming pregnant.

In some parts of the world, women need their husband's permission to go to work or participate in a social activity.

Gender stereotypes persist. These gender inequalities are present in the world of work in general, including in social movements, trade unions and institutions that defend equal rights, where the most recognized positions are mostly held by men.

Feminist mobilizations or simply the huge women's demonstrations of recent years highlight the old structural problems of patriarchy, such as macho violence and domestic violence, sexual abuse in the family, at work and in public spaces, and the trafficking of women, which constitute major challenges and generate significant youth participation in many countries.



Photo @ Santi Diaz, El Pais

One of the positive effects of pro-equality actions is the incorporation of many men who call for sharing the responsibility of care work, who defend equal rights for women and who adopt other supportive attitudes in this struggle.

Internal and international mass migration and the double morality of migration

There are no borders for goods and services. What is global is consumption. The movement of people is free as long as it constitutes a market "need," whether for tourism or business. Thus, immigration as an expression of access to jobs and livelihoods depends on agreements between governments and businesses, or it is tolerated according to seasons that require more labor.

Employment International Agencies and intermediaries facilitate the displacements of people from one country to another and their entry into a territory, charging abusive sums of money, putting people's lives at risk or exposing them to persecution by the authorities in the countries they go to. Institutional racism is the order of the day.

The great challenges of global reality

The above-mentioned aspects of young workers' reality are linked to global problems and challenges that need to be named, including:

The environmental disaster

Global warming, environmental depredation and pollution are causing serious consequences, such as unpredictable natural disasters, heat waves and major climate change. Political powers are, however, unable to stop the actions that contribute to the worsening of the global situation, because of their dependence on large multinational companies which are mainly responsible for the problems we suffer.

The climate crisis is a cause of migration, pushing large numbers of people to move around the world in search of food, water and job opportunities.



Photo @ YCW Ghana

Public services are reduced in scope and quality

In many countries, education is aimed at guaranteeing a workforce to meet the needs of capitalism; it does not guarantee an integral formation as human beings who have importance and dignity. It is very common for work experience to be required in order to obtain a job, a condition that young people do not fulfill when they enter the world of work. There is a growing trend towards privatization and with it an increase in the price of consumer goods and a decrease in the quality of life of the less affluent population.

Access to social protection, including access to health care and unemployment benefits, is declining in developed countries; in dependent countries, the institutions that protect them function poorly or do not exist at all.

Corruption is common to most countries, with personal and sectoral interests taking precedence over the general interest. Large sectors of the population are disillusioned with false promises, corruption and major scandals that discredit politics as a space for popular participation.

The political parties, mainly of the right, unashamedly make xenophobic, racist and patriarchal speeches, while the opinions and actions of the population against them and in favor of human rights are violently repressed. Corporate investment is facilitated by like-minded governments which relax labor policies to suit companies and guarantee favorable conditions for them to establish, operate and develop their businesses in pursuit of maximum profit.

Social networks have both positive and negative consequences. The communication potential they offer is fantastic, but they are often a factor of social disintegration, depriving us of direct face-to-face relationships with people and reducing human interaction. Smartphones are also instruments of the system in the service of consumption, the transmission of fake news, and they are very often used to spread anti-democratic political propaganda.

The dynamics of immediacy, the urgency to respond, to be available at any time, are imposed by social networks and cause stress. It is also an instrument of control allowing companies to contact their workers at any time and any place, crossing the border between professional and private life.

Actions that promote and seek gender equity and equality in order to achieve greater participation of young women workers, including in decision-making, in Germany, Egypt and Wallonia; actions related to education and training in Flanders, Argentina, Paraguay and Haiti; and finally, remote solidarity actions carried out by movements in Asia such as Australia, the Philippines, Japan and Indonesia to support local actions that are suffering the impact of the measures put in place since the Covid-19 outbreak.

All these actions respond to the situations of exclusion of working class youth who have few economic means and little access to social protection. The actions aim to fight and stop the precariousness faced by young people and they are carried out through collective spaces, analysis meetings and the formulation of new strategies that encourage young people to get going.

As mentioned above, the YCW takes as its starting point the personal and collective situations that young workers experience on a daily basis and the contradictions that exist in society. This remains the starting point for the actions of the YCW base groups and national movements. These actions are directly linked to the national and international campaigns of the movement.

We want to highlight some of our achievements and avenues for action

It is clear that we are confronted with many difficulties in some countries and with different contexts that can be favorable or unfavorable to the development of our actions. Nevertheless, taking into account this situation and reality, we would like to summarize some of the achievements and avenues that have emerged from these actions:

YCW members have some knowledge of labor rights, social protection and organizing. In the factory workers' sector, demands to employers such as raising the minimum wage, obtaining social insurance and establishing a union are met. These actions are taking place in the Philippines and Indonesia, as well as in Central America in the so-called free trade zones.

We can also see actions carried out in other sectors related to the international plan of action: experiences of production through productive patios, actions related to gender equality and equity, campaigns against police repression. Increase in the number of young workers who join the YCW.

Some activists have capacities and improve their personal skills, such as advocacy, organizing and management (we can refer to movements such as Australia, Japan and Wallonia). The activists have more experience in practicing dialogue and developing advocacy and lobbying strategies.

A strong network is established with other organizations such as trade unions, Christian organizations, youth organizations, research organizations, workers organizations, etc.

Common demands we have at international level today

The demands in these actions are the horizon we want to reach to achieve the dreams and aspirations of young workers. They are the spearhead for living in a more just and balanced society, without class distinctions and differences. All these demands are linked to the worldwide campaign that the International YCW has been carrying out for several years and which is promoted in the national movements. Our demands through these actions are the following:

We demand dignified work, access to labor rights and social protection for young workers. We ask the states to take measures to guarantee the implementation of labor laws and access to social protection. Regularization and support for the different forms of work, including informal work.

Gender equality, freedom of association and quality education. We demand that the states guarantee the training of young workers through programs and public policies.

We defend the right of young people to organize and the right to organize against exploitation, psychological, sexual and workplace harassment. We defend the health, physical and mental well-being of people as a fundamental right that must be guaranteed by states, companies and society in general. We demand that the states and companies guarantee dignified and fixed wages to improve the living conditions of young people. "Dignified work and life for all young workers"

Cooperation between former and current activists

On October 1, 2021, after a long period without face-to-face meetings, we met in a public square with the young people involved in the Canudo Azul project, led by the YCW in Volta Redonda (Rio de Janeiro). One of their common concerns was the desire to have a job and an income to support themselves and their families. So they decided to continue the experience as the Event Cooking group. The idea, already tested by the group at a diocesan event that gathered 100 people, is to provide meals at events such as conventions, seminars, parties and others.

While waiting for an event opportunity to come up, the group has decided to better prepare for kitchen work. To this end, they will sell 100 portions of food ordered in advance that will be prepared and delivered by the group. The menu, the price of the take-out meals, the neighborhoods where they will be sold and delivered, and the kitchen utensils needed to prepare the meals have already been determined.

The objective of the group is to establish itself as a solidarity economy enterprise, the aim of which is professional training and the creation of jobs and income for young people. The money collected will be divided equally among the members of the group.

History of the group

The group is composed of young people between the ages of 14 and 19, who are in elementary school or beginning high school. Most of them live in a housing area covered by the "My House, My Life" program, a program created by the Lula and Dilma governments to serve the low-income population.

The young people who take part in the Canudo Azul project and who are now involved in the Event Cooking project have this socio-economic profile. Most of them come from single-parent families: they live with their father or mother, or with another family member. For the majority, the "Bolsa Família" is their only source of income.

Faced with this reality, dropping out of school and entering the labor market prematurely seems to be an inevitable fate for these young people. The Event Cooking project is an alternative that aims to provide vocational training and generate employment and income to prevent children from dropping out of school.

They are accompanied by Helio Alves and Josinete Maria, both former YCW members, who have supported the development of the action from its beginning.

According to Helio, "In 2017, we formed a first group of YCW with a strong focus on Solidarity Economy. In 2018, new young people joined the team of militants and the Canudo Azul project was born. With this project, the Volta Redonda YCW also began to act in a high school and could develop a wide range of activities with young people, using many rounds of conversations and organising activities inside and outside the school, with the participation and leadership of the young people themselves."

The Contribution of Former Members

The Brazilian YCW has a long experience of working together with former activists to strengthen the movement. In addition to the historical collaboration of adults in the national team, the YCW also counts on the valuable contribution of former YCWers in the regional coordination teams and often in its local groups.

In 2018, a new experience was carried out: a network called Enajocista was created to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the national movement, and it now brings together former YCW activists from a wide range of generations, regions, genders, categories of action and responsibilities within the movement (from the local and national level to the international level), in addition to the current national team of the Brazilian YCW.

The Enajocista organizes many training activities, debates on the current situation, a compilation of the experiences and actions of the activists, as well as cultural activities (Sarau Enajocista). The group cooperates with the movement in different ways (currently, for example, it is conducting a campaign to support the renovation of the YCW headquarters in São Paulo). Among the many people in the group who have a lot of experience, there are people who directly support the organization of the grassroots groups and their actions.

Here are some concrete cases:

Helio Alves, former IYCW international president, helps with the organization and action experience in Volta Redonda. According to Helio, "Our role as adult collaborators since 2017 is to be extension workers. Imbued with the mission of rebuilding the movement in the city, we looked for spaces to introduce the YCW to the youth. At first, they didn't really know what it was about, but they identified with our friendly and convivial way of being. They became part of our life and we became part of theirs.

Little by little, their level of understanding of the movement increased and the first initiations of new young people took place with them. The ROLWA became more constant, the militant fee was introduced and a lot of fundraising activities were organized to raise funds for the movement in the city.

In the cities of Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais and Jataí, Goiás, former activists have started to organize and accompany groups of young people in initiation who are taking their first steps. They are still at an early stage, but those young people and former members are very enthusiastic about making this project a reality.



Photo @YCW Brazil

This was confirmed by Amauri Barra and Eva: "The experience with the young people is very rich. They give us a contemporary vision of their realities and their daily life as young workers, which I personally could not even imagine. We discover with them many of the challenges and problems that we faced in our youth. It is not easy to support them because we also have our own challenges and needs that appear with age, but I still believe strongly in these young people and their capacity for action and change."

Amauri Barra "We were challenged to start organizing the group with some young people from the church. We are in the very early stages. Because of the pandemic, we have had some difficulties in organizing face-to-face meetings, but we are very, very excited to continue to grow stronger and take on this challenge." - Eva, adult supporter of an initial group of girls in Goias.



Photo @YCW Brazil

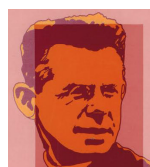


JOCI-IYCW

IYCW is a movement of education through action based on the experiences young workers live. The starting point of YCW is personal and collective situations that the young workers live in everyday life and the values that are contradictory to their beliefs and aspirations that exist in the society.

The YCW opts for the education of young workers. This is the specific and primary task of the YCW if it is to reach the the objective of liberation of the mass of people.

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ICA - AIC

The International Cardijn Association (ICA) is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to serve the present and future generations of young workers throughout the world.

The ICA provides financial support to the projects implemented by young workers in order to improve their capacities to take responsibility and change their living and working conditions. By doing so, those young people can find the place they deserve in society and the dignity inherent in all human beings.

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