



FROM INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT TO FORMAL WORKING CONDITIONS: **THE IMPACT ON YOUTH**

Executive Summary

Lunchtime briefing

Wednesday, 4 June 2014

In conjunction with 103rd Session of International Labour Conference

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Background

This briefing has been organized by the International Catholic Center of Geneva, the International Coordination of Young Christians Workers, the Kolping International/German Commission for Justice and Peace, and Caritas Internationalis, in collaboration with Caritas Genève and Women in Informal Economy: Globalizing and Organizing.

The event has brought together social and economic experts and those affected by the informal economy and youth employment as well as those dedicated to creating institutional changes to protect vulnerable workers. The organizers have seen this briefing as an occasion to identify windows of opportunity for Civil Society organizations that may be interested in the topic of youth employment from various perspectives as well as to draw to the attention of international organizations towards the local perspective, allowing a better understanding of initiatives occurring on both local and international levels.

The aim of the briefing was to help structure the dialogue regarding the transition from the informal to formal economy, specifically influencing the emphasis of key issues at both the international and local levels, such as poverty, education, migration and socioeconomic rights.

The purpose of this brief report is to offer an outcome of the discussions which have been conducted in the meeting's framework and to keep all interested organizations, NGOs, and individuals up to date over the organizers' activities, working fields, and achievements.



PROGRAM

- Chair** – **Ms. Hildegard Hagemann**
Kolping international / German Commission for Justice and Peace
- 12h30 – **Opening remarks**
Ms. Maria D’Onofrio
CCIG Secretary General
- 12h40 – **Keynote speaker**
Ms. Maria Prieto
Youth Employment Specialist – ILO
- 13h00 – **Initiatives at the local level**
Mr. Niels Bohr
Representative from Caritas Genève (member of Caritas Internationalis)
- 13h10 – **Perspective of a Youth Organization**
Ms. Anna Chiara Bruno
Representative from ICYCW
- 13h20 – **Informal to formal Economy: Gender perspective**
Ms. Paola Caviedes Martinez
Representative from WIEGO
- 13h30 – **Questions and Discussion**
- 14h15 – **Concluding Remarks**
Ms. Amélie Peyrard
ICYCW International President

Executive summary

CIVIL SOCIETY TO SHINE LIGHT ON TODAY'S ECONOMIC CHALLENGES FACING YOUTH

In her opening remarks, **Maria D'Onofrio** (CCIG Secretary General) pointed out that this event was one among several initiatives undertaken by the organizing NGOs since 2010 in order to promote Decent Work for different vulnerable groups, including domestic workers. In particular, an NGO Consultation on the youth employment crisis was held in 2012 (More information available [here](#)). Ms. D'Onofrio highlighted how the international community and all relevant stakeholders have clearly recognized that today youth are facing multiple challenges regarding the implementation of their human rights and the realization of those social and economic conditions that would allow youth to live fully and in dignity. Since these challenges are global and very diverse, it is essential to promote joint actions and exchanges involving actors with different expertise in order to tackle the current situation of youth in the most effective way.



The first panelist, Ms. **Maria Prieto** (Youth Employment Specialist – ILO) presented the framework for ILO actions on the topic, recalling that ILO resolution stemming from the International Labor Conference (ILC) in 2012 urged States to take actions in order to face youth employment crisis. Accordingly, ILO produced specific research papers to highlight the trend of youth employment, since a current challenge relies in the lack of statistics and data, especially to quantify the phenomenon of informal economy. While the standard setting topic of the ILC in 2014 is the transition to formal economy in general, the young population is also largely concerned by issues related to formalization.



Ms. Prieto observed how the issue is very sensitive –as proved by divergent positions between employees and employers– and nevertheless needs to be addressed since the situation is worsening worldwide: according to ILO statistics, 8 out of 10 young workers (aged between 15 – 24) are currently out of

the formal economy. This situation assumes different connotations depending on the regions concerned: in developing countries there is often no alternative to the informal economy, especially for young people, which implies exclusion from professional careers and social protection; in developed countries deep concerns are raised by the number of highly qualified youth being underemployed. As Ms. Prieto emphasized, the key issue is to find ways to promote the transition to formality without undermining the livelihood of those working informally and putting in danger their survival.

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In conclusion, she made a parallelism with the initiatives undertaken in the framework of Domestic Work: despite the difficulties that the ratification of ILO Convention N° 189 is encountering among States, the implementation of the Convention in national legislations would produce a very positive impact in addressing informal domestic work for young people.



Next to take the floor, Mr. **Niels Bohr** (Representative from Caritas Genève - member of Caritas Internationalis) shared his experience in concrete initiatives carried out at the local level, both in Geneva and in developing countries. While recognizing the differences between the situation in Geneva and in some African countries such as Cameron, DRC and Rwanda, he stressed out a similarity in the vulnerability experienced by young people in accessing the labor market. With regard to the situation

in Geneva, Mr. Bohr observed that despite the common perception poverty is a reality in city. Lack of adequate training –he affirmed- is among the main causes for poverty and consequent social exclusion among young people in Geneva.

Specific interventions have been, therefore, realized by Caritas Genève in order to offer adequate training and motivation to young people who are struggling to find employment. The partnership with the State and the private sector has been a key factor in order to provide the young beneficiaries with concrete job opportunities through the traineeship program.

Specific educational programs have been undertaken also through projects carried out in several African countries, where the educational system shows multiple shortcomings that negatively impact the quality of the education provided. High dropout rates and low quality education are among the main causes of the difficulties encountered by youth in terms of access to decent work. Rural areas are particularly concerned and young girls are the most

vulnerable sector of the population. As a result, many youth are employed in the informal economy or get involved in criminal activities. In this context, several efforts have been made by Caritas Genève in order to improve the quality of education, eradicate risks of dropping out. Additionally efforts are made to promote entrepreneurship among young people, in order to make youth catalyst for the development of their own communities.

Lack of adequate training is among the main causes for poverty and consequent social exclusion



Ms. **Anna Chiara Bruno** (Representative from ICYCW) presented the perspective of a young people organization that is working both at the local and international levels to bring the voice of youth in the international *fora* and share good practices for making decent work for young people a reality. Ms. Bruno presented the experience of YCW in Italy in initiating a campaign titled “Sommerso: riporta a galla il tuo lavoro!” (i.e.: “do not hide your illegal work, but tell us your experience”) in order to assess the impact of youth’s informal work on the society. The campaign involved both Italian citizens and migrants, since many young people coming from East Europe or outside Europe represent a large number of the informal workers in Italy.

According to statistics, about 3 millions of workers have no employment contracts in Italy. They are not only without protection, but also illegal. The results of a survey realized among young people through the campaign showed that the most common types of informal work in Italy are the following: (i) Young people with a regular contract, that have a second job to earn more; (ii) Young people with a regular contract who receive a part of the salary “under the table” (as remuneration for work hours exceeding the allowed time); (iii) Young people who are officially unemployed, but in the reality working without any contract; (iv) Workers on the edge of the legality, e.g. atypical contract. 80% of youth participating in the survey declared to be willing to accept informal jobs since this is the only option to obtain financial independence. It should be noted that the age range of interviewed is 18-35 years old.

In response to this situation, ICYCW is working to promote international solidarity, in order to share good practices and learn from the experience of other countries. With regard to concrete actions, Ms. Bruno pointed out that more emphasis should be given to the active participation of young people in the decision making process at the national and international levels, especially when decisions have a direct impact of the young population. Moreover, further awareness raising activities are needed in order to sensitize young people on the risks of informal work and the advantages of a regular job (security, social protection, etc.). Finally, the share of experiences about informal work is the first real step to bring everyone's attention on this phenomenon, restoring the dignity of young workers and finding space to improve their situation with them, wherever it is possible. As Pope Francis said:

More emphasis should be given to the active participation of young people in the decision making process

“IN WORKING FOR GREATER OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT, WE AFFIRM THE CONVICTION THAT IT IS ONLY “THROUGH FREE, CREATIVE, PARTICIPATORY AND MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE WORK THAT HUMAN BEINGS EXPRESS AND ENHANCE THE DIGNITY OF THEIR LIFE”
(Evangelii Gaudium, 192)



Finally, Ms. **Paola Caviedes Martinez** (Representative from WIEGO) shared her experience as waste-picker in Argentina. Despite the fact that waste-pickers are over 40,000 in Argentina and 20 million in the world, playing an important productive and environmental role, they are not yet fully recognized as “workers” by Governments, trade unions and the society at large. They are confined in the informal

economy. Within the broad group of those who are excluded from the formal economy, Ms. Caviedes stresses that women and children are those who suffer the most. In particular, young women need to recycle but also take care of their children. On the other hand, the lack of social protection for the young parents produce a very negative impact on the children themselves: since they are raised in the informal and unorganized sector of the waste pickers, these children are

more prone to abandon early their studies in order to get an (informal) job and contribute to livelihood of the households.

Within those excluded from formal economy, women and children are those who suffer the most

On the basis of her experience at WIEGO, Ms. Caviedes identified several best practices for transition to formality, such as the involvement of women leaders, specific attention to be paid to the needs of teen parents, as well as the organization of vocational training for young people. However, she pointed out that much still needs to be accomplished in order to reach out to the totality of informal workers. From her over 15 years' experience as a recycler, she stressed that, in order

to effectively respond to the needs of youth in informal economy, more extensive actions must be taken in the following areas: (i) sexual and reproductive education; (ii) professional and technical training as well as vocational training; (iii) creation of recreational and educational structures to represent an alternative to the street; (iv) and effective prevention and drug rehabilitation programs.

Presentations from the speakers were followed by a debate with the participants. Main questions and issues raised concerned the possible coordination among UN agencies in order to tackle informal work for young people; existing disparities in the age range for youth according to different UN bodies; the strong link between child labor and youth's informal work; the possibility to use international *fora* to present demands of Civil Society to Governments and international institutions.

Concluding remarks

by Amélie PEYRARD
International President of ICYCW

Main points resulting from the presentations to describe the informal economy are the following:

- The concept of the informal economy differs from country to country according to their different situations.
- It is an increasing phenomenon, in particular among young people.
- It is a vicious circle: the informal economy causes vulnerability which causes poverty. There is also the other way round. Informal economy is a consequence of poverty.



- In the informal economy, the most vulnerable social categories are: migrants, domestic workers and young people.

Throughout the different presentations we were able to identify some consequences of the informal work:

- Lack of recognition;
- Illegality;
- Exclusion;
- Criminality;
- Risks for Young people.

To fight against the informal economy is essential to make the principles of decent work a reality in the labour market. In order to achieve the transition from the informal economy to the formal economy, NGOs have to be present and active in the negotiation at local, national and international levels.

Finally, participants to this meeting shared that it is difficult to find one comprehensive solution to this very complex problem. As NGOs, we try to commit ourselves and work together with the ILO to find some solutions and share good practices to reduce the number of people in the informal economy, such as:

- providing space for sharing, exchange and discussion on the topic;
- raising awareness;

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- sharing information and experience with the 3 parties of the ILO: workers, employers and governments;
- offering training on labor rights and social protection to those working in the informal economy;
- working to accompany them and facilitating professional insertion in the formal sectors by creating training centers, stages for young people etc.;
- strongly committing to work together in accordance with the principle of international solidarity.
- promoting a more inclusive social dialogue, which includes NGOs.

At the end of the meeting, it was expressed that this workshop offered us a starting point to envisage strategies to collaborate more closely. We should take advantage of the meeting to identify ways forward, including future joint actions and sustainable perspectives to bring the voices of NGOs in the negotiation for the transition from the informal economy to formal economy within the ILO.

-Thank you very much to all.



ANNEXES

List of participants and contacts

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Links to presentations by the panelists

For the full presentations of the panelists, please consult the following links:

- Opening Remarks by Maria D’Onofrio, CCIG Secretary General:
http://www.ccig-iccg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Opening-Remarks_Maria-DOnofrio.pdf
- Presentation of Maria Prieto:
<http://prezi.com/uwsj7a8ym2a0/copy-of-youth-in-the-informal-economy-a-global-challenge/>
- Presentation of Niels Bohr:
<http://www.ccig-iccg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Niels-Bohr-Presentation-LR.pdf>
- Presentation of Anna Chiara Bruno:
<http://www.ccig-iccg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Presentation-of-Anna-Chiara-Bruno.pdf>
- Presentation of Paola Caviedes Martinez:
http://www.ccig-iccg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Presentation-of-Paola-Caviedes-Martinez_ES-EN.pdf

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