

## young workers fighting

Tuesday, 27 April 2010

Young workers across the world are becoming more united in their struggles for just work, says the International Young Christian Workers (IYCW) president, Geethani Peries.

“Young people are making a difference because they are one in their vision of just work for all,” asserts Ms Peries. The IYCW campaign for Social Protection for all is continuing to attract support right across the world, in both rich and poor communities, in many diverse religious and human rights groups, and among people of goodwill everywhere.

“We must build this spirit of solidarity if we are to change the conditions of young workers such as Isabel Alvarez Rivas and the young isolated laborers in the Philippines,” says Ms Peries. Their stories can touch us all.

“I am a 19-year old girl, and my name is Isabel Álvarez Rivas. I started working when I was 10. I came to Caaguazú in the city of Capiata and I have been working hard in people’s houses. Now I am feeling really depressed because when I look at my job as a domestic worker, I don’t see anything wrong in what I do. But my bosses keep asking me to do the chores more quickly, and to make a greater effort, because they say I don’t produce as much as they expect me to. They ask me to get up at 5 a.m. to save time and do more work. But there isn’t any chance that they will give me a pay raise.” Isabel Álvarez Rivas, domestic worker, Paraguay.

We are workers in a sugar cane plantation belonging to one of the five most powerful sugar-plantation owners in Negros. During the off-season, our work consists of pulling up weeds, ploughing the fields, cultivating the soil, planting sugar cane and irrigating. We are paid by the day. When there is no work on the farm, we look for other jobs in the building sector, fisheries, packaging, as dockers. Our wages are too low to meet the basic needs of our families: food, education, electricity, water, health, etc. The plantation owners get richer and richer and we can barely survive.&#x201c; -Young workers in the Philippines-

The IYCW is convinced that demanding &#x201c;social protection for all&#x201c; is the best way to ensure social, economic and cultural development for young people in all countries. As the ILO Social Protection document points out: &#x201c;Only 20 per cent of the world's population has access to adequate social security benefits.&#x201c;

The IYCW has a clear and strong policy on this.

&#x201c;Social Protection is the right of young workers, and contributes to a society that lives the value of solidarity. Social Protection is ensured through programs, policies and laws that guarantee stable and just work, economic security, health, the right to education, as well as equality, freedom and dignity in life. This security enables young workers to realize their full capacity and to make their contribution to society.&#x201c;

This Social Protection campaign, launched in 2008, underpins the three focus areas for the IYCW: Just Work, Gender Equality, and Quality Education.

In promoting Just Work in its Social Protection campaign, the IYCW demands:

- Stability in work
- A just income for all
- The right to association and collective bargaining
- Dignity at work
- Occupational safety and health

&#x201c;Across all continents,&#x201c; says Ms Peries, &#x201c;we appeal to IYCW National Movements and to all our friends to continue to focus on this campaign.&#x201c; &#x201c;Only in this way&#x201c;, she insists, &#x201c;will we be able to build a better life for all young workers.&#x201c;

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International Secretariat

Geethani, Arlindo and Augustine