

Sustainability, Innovation and Justice – Young workers leading with purpose

On International Youth Day, the IndustriALL Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) Youth Committee joins the global community in celebrating the role and potential of young people, in line with the United Nations theme: ***“Youth Empowerment for a Sustainable Future.”*** As the voice of young trade unionists across the region, we proudly align this year’s commemoration with our regional theme, ***“Embracing Technology and Innovation at Work,”*** to highlight the critical role youth play in shaping a future that is not only sustainable but also inclusive and innovative for all.

Young workers in Sub-Saharan Africa stand at the crossroads of transformation and hardships. We are witnessing challenging technological advances and climate challenges that are reshaping the nature of work across various sectors. While these changes offer opportunities, they also expose the deep-rooted economic and social injustices that continue to marginalise young people in the labour market and within trade union structures, including:

High Unemployment Rate: Youth unemployment remains alarmingly high across the SSA region, with many young workers trapped in informal and insecure work with no social protection or labour rights.

Lack of Decent Work: Too many young people have access to decent work that provides fair wages, job security and safe working conditions.

Climate-Induced Job Displacement: The impacts of climate change are disproportionately affecting young workers in sectors such as agriculture, mining, and energy, leading to job losses and economic instability in already vulnerable communities.

Exclusion from Decision-Making: Youth voices are often absent from leadership roles and policy-making processes in trade unions and labour institutions, making it difficult for them to influence decisions that directly affect their future.

Gender Gaps in Trade Unions: Discrimination against women and men of all ages in union and societal leadership still prevails, making it challenging for young women and men to participate in decision-making on essential discussions and at higher levels.

Despite these challenges, young workers in the region are not passive bystanders. Young trade unionists are organising, innovating, and pushing boundaries. By embracing new technologies, mobilising around social justice and demanding representation, youth are revitalising the labour movement.

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Across the region, young trade unionists are organising, innovating and pushing boundaries. We are challenging outdated labour systems, calling for safer workplaces, digital access, gender justice, climate-responsive policies and inclusive leadership.

We are embracing new technologies, leading campaigns for digital upskilling and redefining what it means to be a worker in the 21st century.

Young workers are bringing energy and innovation into traditional labour spaces, ensuring that the voice of the next generation is heard on important matters.

The IYD taking place ahead of the 2025 SSA Youth Committee Meeting, we are reminded of the recommendations adopted in 2023, urging young workers across the continent to stay organised, informed and continue to lead the charge for innovation, justice and transformation in workplaces in terms of:

- **Advancing Workers' Rights**
- **Building Union Power**
- **Confronting Global Capital**
- **Sustainable Industrial Policy**

With unity, resilience and global solidarity, we can shape a world of work that works for all. The IndustriALL SSA region wishes all young workers a ***Happy International Youth Day***.