

TRADES UNION CONGRESS (GHANA)/ ROSA LUXEMBURG FOUNDATION



workshop report

**POLICY PAPER ON THE STAGE OF YOUNG WORKERS IN TRADE
UNIONS IN GHANA**



October 17, 2023

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Erata Hotel, Accra

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Background

The Trade Union Congress (Ghana) recognises the significance of mobilising the youth (defined to include persons in the 18-35 age cohort) and retraining them in the labour movement. This commitment has led to a number of progressive initiatives including the establishment of a youth desk, development of a youth policy, implementation of youth programmes and a review of the TUC Constitution to accommodate more young people at the General Council. These initiatives have brought some improvement in the participation of the youth in union activities.

In spite of the above, representation of the youth in trade unions is limited. Not all of the member unions of the TUC (Ghana) have functioning youth structures. Our youth structures in the regions and districts are not working as anticipated. There are also simmering intergenerational issues and contestations in our trade unions. These issues need to be address so that we can attract young workers and sustain their interests in unions.

It is therefore important that we find new ways to improve participation of young workers in trade unions activities. It is also imperative that as the TUC prepares for its 12th Quadrennial Delegates' Congress in 2024, it assesses the state of young people within the trade union movement to properly plan for effective interventions in the years ahead.

It is against this backdrop that the TUC in collaboration of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation initiated the process of developing a policy paper on the state of the young workers in the labour movement in Ghana.

The development of the policy paper commenced with a preparatory workshop in March this year which brought together selected young workers of the TUC, researchers, and leadership. It served as a good platform to discuss the building blocks of the policy paper. This was followed with the writing of the draft report and a validation workshop.

This activity report presents proceedings during the validation workshop which took place on October 17, 2023, at Erata Hotel, Accra.

Objectives

The overall objective of the workshop was to provide a platform to validate the draft policy, gather diverse perspectives towards the finalization of the policy paper.

Specifically, the workshop objectives were as follows:

- To present and disseminate the draft policy paper to young workers within the trade union movement.
- To gather feedback, comments, and suggestions from participants to enhance the draft policy paper.

Expected outputs.

The following shall be expected to be achieved by the end of the workshop.

- Enhanced participants understanding of the draft policy paper.
- Increased trade union support, ownership, and acceptance of the policy paper.
- Updated Draft Policy Paper based on the feedback received.
- Actionable Recommendations that can be implemented to improve the draft policy.

Participants

The workshop brought together twenty-nine (29) made up of youth Desk Officers from the affiliates National Union of TUC, researchers, heads of departments and leadership. Out of the 29 participants, sixteen (16) were females and Thirteen (13) were males.

Workshop Approach

The workshop utilized a participatory approach to encourage active engagement, foster inclusive dialogue, and promote an open exchange of ideas. The facilitation process involved a combination of presentations and interactive activities to ensure all participants have the opportunity to contribute.

Detail Program/Key Activities

Time slot	Activity	Responsibility / Facilitation
October. 16, 2023	Arrival of participation: check in from 3:00pm	
October 17, 2023 09:00 – 09:30	Arrival of participants / Registration	All
09:30– 10:00	Opening Remarks	Bro. Joshua Ansah, Deputy Secretary General, TUC
10:00 –11:30	Presentation	

	Draft Report: State of Young Workers in Trade Unions in Ghana	Dr. George Domfeh, Research Fellow, Centre for Social Policy, University of Ghana
11:30 –12:00	Snack Break	All
12:00 –14:00	Feedback on draft policy report	Youth Representatives from Affiliate Unions, TUC
14:00-15:00	Lunch	All
15:00-16:00	Analysis of feedback for integration	Dr. George Domfeh, Research Fellow, Centre for Social Policy, University of Ghana
16:00-16:30	General Discussions	ALL
16:30-17:00	Conclusions/ Closing Remarks	Bro. Joshua Ansah, Deputy Secretary General, TUC
17:00	Departure	All

General proceedings

Opening Remarks by Deputy Secretary General of TUC

Bro. Joshua Ansah, the Deputy Secretary General (DSG) of the TUC expressed his happiness to be part of the validation workshop that look at the state of young workers in trade unions in Ghana.

DSG noted that the TUC strongly believes young workers are the future of the workforce and the survival of the trade union movement. Bro. Joshua however acknowledged that youg people face many daily challenges from high rate of unemployment, social exclusion as well as issues around self-determination among others. In addition, Bro. Joshua indicated that the situation was not different in the trade union movement as there is relatively low involvement and low participation of young workers in union activities.

He expressed TUC commitment in championing the course of young workers and also encouraging their participation and representation within the union.

According to the DSG, establishment of the youth desk, development of youth policy, implementation of youth programmes and review of the TUC constitution to accommodate more young people at the General Council were progressive initiatives of TUC to encourage the youth. He hinted that these initiatives has encouraged the youth in participating in union activities.

He concluded that it was important for TUC to assess the state of the young people within the trade union movement to guide in planning for effective interventions for the youth in the years ahead especially as this moment the TUC was preparing for its 12 Quadrennial Delegates Conference. DSG, on behalf of the executive committee of TUC, thanked Rosa Luxemburg for supporting the development of a policy paper on the state of young workers in trade unions in Ghana.

Presentation: Policy Paper on the State of Young Workers in Trade Unions

Brother Prince Asafo-Adjei (PhD), Deputy Head of Labour Research and Policy Institute of the TUC presented the Policy Paper on the State of Young Workers in Trade Unions in Ghana.

Dr. Prince noted that the policy paper has five (5) sections. The section 1 looks at the introduction and background of the policy paper, section 2 looks at the policy context: the youth in the TUC (Ghana), section 3 is about the youth policy options, section 4 is about policy goal and objectives and section 5 is about policy implementation arrangements.

According to the Dr. Prince, the structure of the Youth in TUC constitution and in practice are Youth Desk officer, National Youth Council (NYC), Regional and District Youth council. In addition, he said that the constitution and internal regulations of the TUC require that not less than 20% of delegates of member unions to Delegates Congress of TUC (Ghana) should be youth.

Dr. prince presentation touched on how the TUC were sustaining the interest of the youth in the TUC affiliates and also ways to being used mobilize or recruit new young workers or youths into the unions in Ghana. In addition, he also shared international best practice of other labour organisations strategies they used in sustaining and attracting young workers to trade unions.

Key Discussions and take aways.

The Deputy Secretary General (DSG) of the Trades Union Congress, Bro. Joshua Ansah thanked the presenter and opened the floor for questions/comments and inputs.

The Chairman of the National Youth Council (NYC) of TUC noted that the National Youth Council of TUC has a number of flagship programmes worth noting and he mentioned NYC donations to the vulnerable in society on international youth day celebration, establishment of youth clubs at some universities, sensitization of national services personnel etc.

The resource person responded that with regard to the best practice, he acknowledged some activities of NYC including how some youth has progressed to occupy their union leadership position and representation at the decision-making structures of TUC but he has taken note.

A participant shared how Public Utility Workers Union (PUWU) was transiting the youth by adopting in their constitution Regional Youth and Women Coordinators. According to him, some of the female young union activists were able to move to become the Regional Women Coordinator but the challenge he alluded has to do with their male counterparts, which are difficult to transit.

DSG noted that he has taken note of the PUWU model but holistic efforts was needed for all sex to transit smoothly after exiting the youth bracket.

A participants indicated that a clause in the constitution of PUWU indicates that after a junior staff has been promoted to a senior staff position, the junior staff has to wait for four years before he or she eligible to contest for union positions. The explanation was that the junior staffs were mostly in the youth bracket.

A participant indicated that the TUC should develop an organogram of the youth structure in the TUC to indicate how the youth should transit to the mainstream union activities that the national union of the TUC may emulate.

A participant also stated that it would be ideal if the unions have transition and succession plans for the youth and the youth structure respectively.

There were suggestions from participants that the educational programmes of both TUC and Its affiliates should include Technical and Vocational training for the youth.

NYC Chairman noted that some of the unions like HSWU have vocational skills training for their members so it will be important for unions and TUC as well as NYC to emulate it to help members acquire new skills through training.....

There was a suggestion that the National Unions should have a policy that will allow the Unions to request National Service Personnel to do their internship in the unions. It was explained that the service personnel's would know what the unions do and also educate other young workers about the need to join union when employed.

A participant asked if the youth desk officers are the only young workers in the unions that need education and training because any time there is invitation for training programmes mostly, the youth desk officer attends.

NYC Chairman explained that sometimes an invitation sent to national unions to nominate a youth who has not participated in NYC activity, but the unions sometimes bring the same people except a few that do as requested so he said the educational programmes are for all.

DSG hinted that there were discussions at General Council to establish a fund to cater for educational and training activities, but the decision did not materialized. He further indicated that it is important to make budgetary allocation for education and training for members especially the youth.

DSG noted that if the unions are reluctant to establish the youth structures it will be a hindrance to the 30% youth representation anticipated so he asked for opinion from participants on what should be done to the union that has not establish the youth structure?

The National Youth Council (NYC) Chairman of the TUC informed participants that a decision has been reached by NYC that any national unions that has not established the youth structures, its youth members cannot contest for any position even though they can vote at the youth congress.

There was a suggestion that the youth should be trained on how to use social media platforms effectively and positively to take advantage of technological platforms to attract the young workers. It was explained that the unions could stream live union activities on Facebook and post on other social media platform like TikTok, YouTube etc.

A participant indicated that PSWU of TUC has introduced an interesting initiative called **"HOT SEAT"** for the youth. She explained that a young worker who is a member of PSWU may occupy the hot seat a day for discussion on social, economic, political and union issues and it makes the young workers learn to be able to occupy that seat. She suggested this initiative for the NYC of TUC to consider.

The former Youth Desk Officer and Regional Secretary of TUC, Sister Freda Stephanie Frimpong asked that how can the unions establish inclusive structure such that it can give more responsibility and trust the youth to be able to influence effectively through their participation. She indicated that the young workers were not well represented and the unions that have the youth structures are not functioning properly as it should.

The Regional Secretary noted that the unions needed to be strategic towards the youth. She posed the following questions to be ponder over;

- a. What sought of young people are the unions targeting?

- b. What are the strategies being used to attract them?
- c. What sought of skills do the targeted young people have?
- d. How does the union do strategic organizing to enroll the targeted youth?
- e. What sought of training or education do the new recruited young workers need?

She also mentioned that the TUC and its affiliates engagement with the state agencies needs to be intensify. Further, she explained that there is a need for deliberate and strategic engagement with government agencies and employers' organization to help the youth get the right and sustainable jobs. Japan labour movement was referred as a trade union organization that facilitate for the unemployed youth to get employment.

A participant suggested that the unions should have a data base of its members to know its gender and age segregation to know how to plan towards these groups.

A participant hinted that some unions don't see the need to established youth structure so there was a request for the leadership of the TUC to identify and participate in those unions National Executive Council (NEC) to explain to them the need for youth structure in the unions.

A participant shared his observation at NYC meetings. According to him, any time youth representatives of National Unions were presenting their report there is always one reason why the youth were unable to carry out their planned activity that is lack of funding so, he proposed an increment in union dues to fund youth activities.

DSG noted that additional increase in union dues maybe a burden to the members but youth activities budget must be provided from the available funds so he has taken note of it.

The youth also acknowledge the international youth day as very important because it gives them the opportunity to educate other members of the public about unionism and it also contribute to the social responsibility of the TUC. He however noted that if there are enough funds more of such programme could be done to educate the youth on unionism and sensitizing the youth on radio programmes.

A participant asked how TUC monitors and evaluate the national union activities. It was explained that if the national union are left unchecked and they did not service their members well, TUC would suffer for it because the workers or youth will not see the need to belong to a union.

A participant expressed worry about lack of feedback from the unions or TUC on a particular matter so they requested proper feedback mechanism on labour issues to the youth and NYC.

NYC Chairman proposed informal meetings for youth on Fridays to discuss matters of interest to the youth.

The NYC Chairman informed participants that 11 out of the 22 affiliates National Unions of TUC have established the youth structure and 3 affiliates promised to establish their youth structure at their conferences.

Sister Mary Karimu noted that if an award scheme introduced to encourage women participation in trade union can be replicated to encourage the youth or young workers to actively participate in union activities going forward.

The resource person informed participants that to make the policy document complete it has to provide clear guideline on how the youth in trade unions in Ghana should progress from the youth bracket so he encouraged participants to give it a thought a revert back on the best and appropriate ways they as the youth want to transit to the main trade union.

He noted that the progression or transit stage is still work in progress.

Closing remarks

The Deputy Secretary General (DSG) of TUC expressed his appreciation to all the participants for their active participation and he mentioned that he has taken note of their suggestions and concerns.

DSG noted that TUC is prepared to do anything to sustained the interest youth and also attract the young workers to the unions. He noted that his office is open for further deliberation towards the cause of young workers.