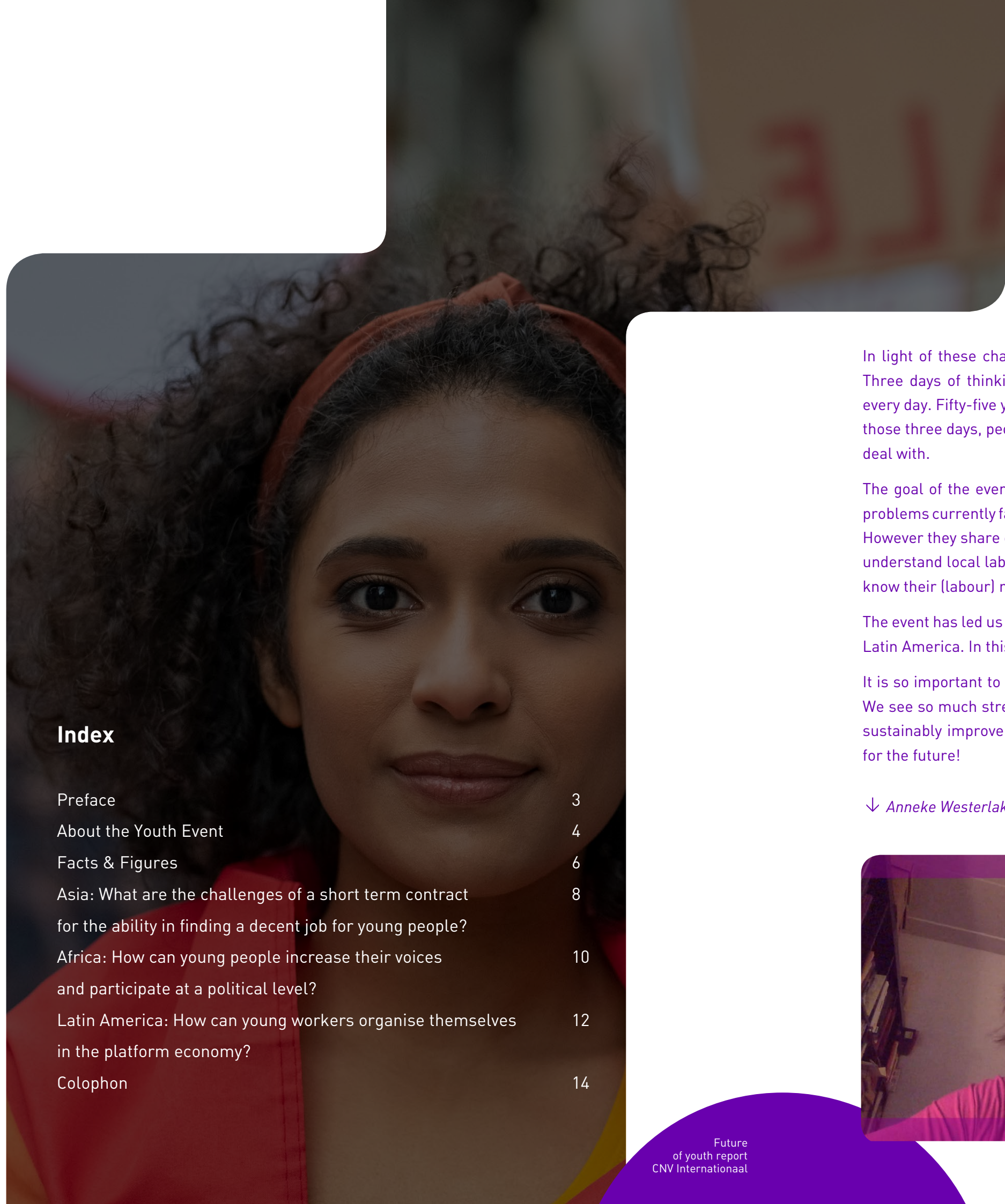




Internationaal

A young man with dark skin and short hair is shown from the chest up, looking upwards with a determined expression. His right arm is raised, with his hand open and fingers spread. He is wearing a dark t-shirt. The background is a blurred, light-colored wall with some faint graffiti. A purple curved line starts from the top left and extends towards the bottom left.

**Strengthening the voice
of youth is power
for the future!**



Index

Preface	3
About the Youth Event	4
Facts & Figures	6
Asia: What are the challenges of a short term contract for the ability in finding a decent job for young people?	8
Africa: How can young people increase their voices and participate at a political level?	10
Latin America: How can young workers organise themselves in the platform economy?	12
Colophon	14

Preface

Across the globe, young people face all kinds of challenges. And the COVID-19 pandemic hasn't made things easier for them. Young people entering the labour market are finding it more and more difficult to find a decent job. It's also becoming harder for them to figure out how to stay in school when their families need money and food on the table.

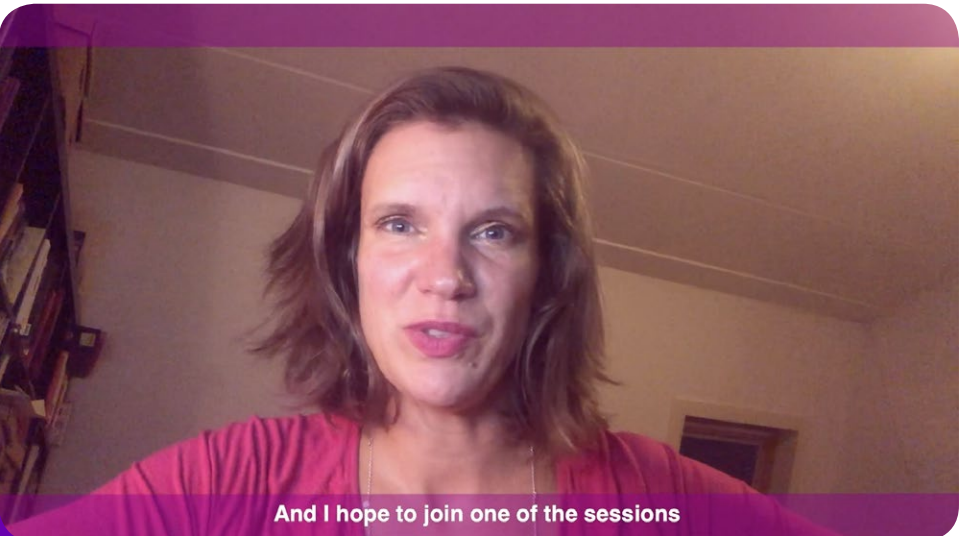
In light of these challenges, CNV International organised an international (digital) youth event. Three days of thinking together, finding solutions for the biggest problems young people face every day. Fifty-five young professionals from Asia, Africa, and Latin America participated. During those three days, people from each region discussed the issues that their youth population has to deal with.

The goal of the event was to jointly define, discuss, and come up with solutions for the biggest problems currently faced by young people. Each of the three regions are very different in character. However they share common goals. They all lobby and advocate for youth to know their rights and understand local labour laws. They all strive to improve education systems, so that young people know their (labour) rights and are able to execute them when they enter the labour market.

The event has led us to solutions and a concrete plan of action for young people in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In this report, we'd like to share our results.

It is so important to give young people a voice. After all, it is their future! And they can handle it. We see so much strength, enthusiasm and knowledge in these people. Together they are able to sustainably improve the international labour market. Strengthening the voice of youth is power for the future!

↓ *Anneke Westerlaken, Chair CNV Internationaal*



About the Youth Event

The goal of the event was to jointly define, discuss, and come up with solutions for the biggest problems currently faced by youth. We wanted an equal balance between male and female participants (50/50), with a maximum age of 35, as this event was intended for youth. Each participant represented his/her organisation.

Pressure cooker

During the event, we used a tool called 'the pressure cooker', a method for defining and solving a problem for a diverse group. In the first session, we looked for causes of the problem. In the second session, the participants generated solutions. In the third sessions, the groups decided which solutions would bring about the best results. A facilitator hosted and guided the sessions. During these sessions, each region discussed their own themes.

To make the event more fun and more like an in-person event, we collaborated with [Spot Me](#). We also used this platform to share media and connect with other participants.

→ The final solutions were integrated into the '[Youth Principles](#)' at the 'Youth at Heart', which were organised by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the 2nd of November.

Facts & Figures

Number of participants

In total: 55
Latin America: 31
Africa: 16
Asia: 8

Future of you(th) event

This was a three-day online event where youth from Asia, Africa, and Latin America came together. Per region, they defined and discussed their challenges, and then came up with solutions and actions for the biggest problems. This event established solutions and a concrete action plan for the challenges being faced by young people in the three regions.

Findings

Overall, we found that young people:

- don't know their rights
- don't hear about their rights at school
- don't get opportunities for capacity building
- don't always have choices: Sometimes just have to earn some money to feed their families
- don't have social security with short term contracts
- sometimes think that unions are bad
- are getting paid even less due to Covid-19
- are afraid to speak up
- are insecure about standing up for what they believe
- don't have as much of a right to speak as older people in their cultures

Methods used: CNV Youth's Pressure cooker

- In three days they defined:
- The problems
 - The causes of the problems
 - The solutions and actions to be implemented

Problems identified and discussed

- Asia: The challenges of a short term contract and finding a decent job for youth
- Africa: How young people can increase their voices and participate at a political level
- Latin America: How young workers can best organise themselves in the platform economy

Young people need to:

- be able to submit ideas for legislation/ labour laws
- become educated about labour laws
- work together with universities and unions
- use their voices through social media
- use the knowledge of unions
- organise themselves



Asia: How do short-term contracts create challenges for young people in their search for a decent job?

Defining challenges

We discussed the challenges of a short term contract, as well as the opportunities available for finding a decent job. In our journey to define these two challenges, we discovered multiple challenges, such as:

- It is not safe to be a member of a trade union; you can lose your job and/or there is no right to organise as workers.
- Working hours are long and you get paid by the hour and/or based on results.
- Short term contracts are attractive to companies because they keep wages low, while with a fixed contract, wages have to increase.
- COVID-19 is causing a major decrease in income for many workers. Young people are especially affected, as they are often working in sectors which are being hit hard by the pandemic, i.e. the tourism and garment sectors.



What is causing the problems?

When we looked at what might cause these problems, we found that a worker's level of education and their level of knowledge about their rights are two important factors. Workers are currently too dependent on the needs of the company. Many companies aren't willing to invest in their workers. Young workers have little access to ways to improve and develop their (occupational) skills. They have no access to (continuing) education and they need information about labour laws, their rights, and how to negotiate a better wage. They have no access to networks. Moreover, companies don't provide any social security for their workers. This is especially problematic now due to the COVID-19 crisis.

How could we solve these issues?

- Young people need to be informed. They should know their rights and the labour laws for where they live and work.
- They should organise evidence-based lobbying. Collect issues and cases, use evidence to file a complaint against factories/companies, and inform their government.
- Trade unions should build networks at national and international levels and open up their memberships.
- Youth should use events and social media to organise about (labour) issues.



Sunday Pheng, Cambodia

vlog

"It was an awesome event and I loved the group discussions so much. Truly valuable."



Africa: How can young people increase their voices and participate at a political level?

Defining challenges

- There are multiple facets to the concept of “youth”. Age (18 to 35 years) is only one characteristic of being young. It means also being in a vulnerable position, not having the power to influence or enough capacity to engage and act. Young people are also diverse, passionate, dynamic.
- The lack of power attributed to youth: The right to speak, the right to have the floor. To be a member of a trade union or a political party or an organisation gives young people the opportunity to have the floor and participate.
- The need to work together and cooperate, so young people can increase their voices. Youth should organise in order to have a level of power. They need political support in order to be heard. They need to make themselves visible to be heard. Being involved, you make yourself heard;
- Young people lack knowledge and experience when it comes to political activities. They are usually not taken into consideration. No organisation is run by young people. They are absent in the arena of politics and/or they’re put aside. While older generations tell youth, ‘You are the future generation’, they’re not included in national assemblies, for example.



What is causing the problems?

We have found that a young person’s level of education and their knowledge regarding their rights are very important factors. At this time, young people lack experience and/or the right level of education. Young people do not know their rights. The main problem has to do with education. They do not know their rights in society or what it means to be in politics. And they do not have enough (self) confidence. In addition, political parties and unions don’t give youth very much space to be heard. This also applies on the work floor. Young people tend to join political parties, but not unions. They feel they’re at risk if they become a member of a trade union.

How could we solve these issues?

- Schools, unions, and/or political parties should develop skills training programmes to increase what young people know about their rights and (local) labour legislation.
- Political parties and trade unions should organise activities with and for young people.
- Include more young people in organisations and/or associations, for example, by implementing a quota for young people in the board room.

Bouli Adamou Idé, Niger

I am a member of the Youth Committee of the CNT.

“With these sessions I got to know people personally. It deepened my knowledge and strengthened my capacity.”

Latin America: How can young workers organise themselves in the platform economy?

Defining challenges

- In Latin America, young people are defined as workers when they enter the labour market at +/- 15 or 16 years of age and aren't given a contract and/or a traineeship. This means a lot of young workers are being exploited by the state and/or employers. They are given long working hours and earn low wages (usually under the minimum wage). Moreover, they get no social security and work in the informal sector. There is no legislation to support these young workers;
- Due to the platform economy, young people are not identified as (legal) workers, but as independent workers. This type of work is coordinated by the platform. An example of this is Uber. People working for a platform company find themselves in a grey zone. They are not workers with a contract but they are also not self-employed. There is a contract between the platform and the worker, but it's not a formal labour contract and the worker still has to adhere to the company's rules.
- Union membership is very low.



Looking for causes

Labour laws do not focus on young workers. This problem needs to be taken up with the Ministry of Labour. In addition, because the youth are so young when they begin working, they have had no education regarding their (labour) rights.

Labour rights are not a part of their education. Education is fundamental in making people aware and knowledgeable. Schools should educate young people about their labour rights. We need to invest in guidance and education about their rights as we are lacking support and information about this. However, young people are usually not interested in reading. They don't want to be bothered until they experience a problem. Then they discover the need to organise. We should use media channels to inform people about their rights.

It is important for young people to claim their rights. We have seen people fight for social rights in the past; let's continue.

Finding solutions

- Invest in education. We need to begin early in letting young people know they have (labour) rights.
- Advocate for educational change and integrate labour rights into school and at university curriculum. Let them participate in discussions so they are better prepared to enter the labour market.
- Organise and share information through social media platforms.

Justo Jimenez,
Guatemala

I have participated in the virtual event for the Future of You(th), organized by CNV Internationaal with young people from Latin America.

"It connects us. We are in the same line of work. I would love to have a follow up!"



International

Colophon

The Future of You(th) event took place on 8, 15, and 22 October 2020 and was organised by CNV International. Youth from Asia, Africa, and Latin America took part.

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