

## PRESS STATEMENT

### Youth unemployment

**Theme: “A generation without work is a future defeat for the country and for humanity.”**  
*Pope Francis.*

The United Nations General Assembly in 2007, recognized the need to address ongoing social injustices in the world and declared February 20th as the **World Day of Social Justice**. The day was established with the aim to promote equity, fairness, and inclusion for all. This annual event provides an opportunity for governments, civil society organizations, and individuals to unite, raise awareness, and be more proactive towards a just and equitable world.

The World Day of Social Justice also serves as a reminder of the need to bridge the gap between privilege and disadvantage. It is a day dedicated to advocating for the marginalized, as well as challenging systemic injustices, and demanding for meaningful change.

Since Caritas PNG is highlighting the issue of youth unemployment on this occasion, we have adopted a profound statement by Pope Francis as our theme. The statement reads “A generation without work is a future defeat for the country and humanity.” Pope Francis challenges us not to resign ourselves to losing a generation of young people who do not have the dignity of work. He urges us to fight against this and help each other to find a solution.

How fitting is the Pope’s message to all of us as we come together to discuss this important issue of youth unemployment.

Statistics on Papua New Guinea indicate that, of the country’s total population of more than 8 million people, 67% are below 35 years of age and 25% are between 16 and 35 years of age. Of this, only 10% of the 80,000 young people who graduate from educational institutions annually, find employment<sup>1</sup>.

Furthermore, the country’s youth unemployment rate for 2020 was 5.36%; in 2021, it was 5.26%; and in 2022, it was 5.20%<sup>2</sup>. This indicates a gradual decline however, one that cannot be considered remarkable. It is still a far cry from the overwhelming majority of young people who graduate annually with very little job prospects.

The consequences of unemployment in general are widespread and detrimental to many of our citizens. Unemployment not only leads to economic hardships but also affects the livelihoods and overall wellbeing of individuals, especially those living in towns and cities.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.developmentaid.com](http://www.developmentaid.com)

<sup>2</sup> [www.macrotrends.net](http://www.macrotrends.net)

According to a report published in 2022 by Julian Melpa, unemployment can result in social unrest, increased crime rates, and a low quality of life. Some of the most common consequences of unemployment are:

- **Social instability**  
High youth unemployment rates can lead to social unrest, crime, and substance abuse, as frustrated individuals feel disconnected and marginalized from society.
- **Poverty and inequality**  
Youth unemployment contributes to a cycle of poverty, as young people struggle to access essential resources and improve their living conditions.
- **Reduced productivity and economic growth**  
Youth unemployment represents an underutilization of human capital, hindering economic progress and productivity for the nation.

On this note, Caritas PNG calls on the government, Churches and the private sector to unite and work together towards reducing the unemployment rate and ensure dignity for all.