

24th session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Written statement by Sigaw ng Kabataan Coalition

Agenda item 8: Strategies for changing mindsets in the public sector, retaining talent and attracting younger workers

The growing complexity of global challenges highlights the urgent need for resilient, inclusive, and forward-thinking public institutions. To achieve this, attracting and retaining a skilled, motivated, and diverse public sector workforce — particularly young people — is essential. Sigaw ng Kabataan Coalition, a youth-led organization representing over 52,000 young leaders across the Philippines, submits this statement to share our insights and recommendations rooted in lived experiences.

As an affiliate of Public Services Labor Independent Confederation (PSLINK), we align with its mission to empower public sector workers and advocate for Strong, Accountable, Comprehensive, Responsive, Effective, and Democratic (SACRED) Public Services. This commitment drives our efforts to ensure young people are recognized not only as beneficiaries of public services but as active contributors to shaping more resilient and inclusive governance structures.

In the Philippine context, young people eager to serve the public face significant structural barriers.

Hiring practices often prioritize political connections over qualifications, sidelining capable, driven youth. Career pathways lack clarity, leaving young professionals stuck in entry-level roles with limited prospects for advancement. Moreover, public sector work environments frequently overlook mental health support, leading to burnout and disengagement.

From our work on the ground, we propose actionable strategies to tackle these challenges:

Governments must implement transparent, merit-based hiring systems.

Recruitment processes should prioritize skills, potential, and dedication, ensuring young professionals can access roles where they can meaningfully contribute. Pairing newcomers with seasoned public servants through structured mentorship programs will foster knowledge-sharing and leadership growth.

Mental health must be recognized as a cornerstone of workforce well-being.

Public institutions should provide accessible mental health services, encourage healthy work-life balance, and cultivate environments where young employees feel heard and supported. A healthy, resilient workforce is essential for effective governance.

Pathways to leadership must be redefined.

Young public servants should have opportunities to assume leadership roles, participate in policy formulation, and influence decision-making processes. Establishing youth advisory bodies within local and national institutions will ensure youth perspectives are represented.

Continuous, future-focused skills development is crucial.

Training programs must cover emerging areas like digital governance, climate resilience, and data-driven public service delivery. Collaboration with academic institutions and youth organizations can ensure these programs remain responsive to evolving needs.

Education and certification equivalency programs should be introduced to recognize the tenure and contributions of experienced young public sector workers.

Many young professionals who have dedicated years to public service remain trapped in lower-level positions due to the lack of formal qualifications, despite their extensive practical knowledge. Offering pathways for their tenure and on-the-job experience to be acknowledged as equivalent to academic credentials will help accelerate career progression and ensure their expertise is not lost to the system.

Finally, public institutions must cultivate a culture that reflects young people's values and aspirations.

Young professionals are drawn to roles that align with their drive for social impact. By positioning public service as a force for tackling urgent issues — from environmental sustainability to social justice — governments can inspire and retain the next generation of public servants.

Building an effective, innovative, and inclusive public workforce requires embracing the energy, creativity, and leadership potential of young people.

Sigaw ng Kabataan Coalition stands ready to support governments and international partners in fostering this transformation, ensuring young voices are not only heard but empowered to help shape the future.