



APFSD Youth Call to Action 2021: East Asia¹



Japan, China, Kyrgyzstan, and Mongolia

INTRODUCTION

Despite the progress made in tackling COVID-19 in the region, some population groups are still at risk of being left behind. Young people are affected by the COVID-19 crisis in terms of income, mental and physical well-being, and education. Government responses to COVID-19 led to a deteriorating private sector, rising unemployment, and even low food security in some countries in the region. Hidden unemployment problems cannot be ignored as policymakers might not count some jobs as official. Furthermore, the medical sector and its employees have been hit particularly hard, faced with an increased workload and decreased earnings.

Students at all levels of education are facing difficulties as lockdowns deepen social gaps, the digital divide, and education inequality. Peer educators are on hold, which is a setback to work such as LGBTI advocacy. In many rising economies, youth inclusivity is neglected, and millions of young people compete for few opportunities while transitioning to adulthood. Work-life balance is a big problem in richer countries. However, a positive aspect is that many young people are inspiring inventors making tangible and beneficial changes.

Concerning universal access to SRHR for all young people, public awareness and wide-scale education campaigns are necessary. Families and older generations do not encourage open discussion around SRHR. Men are usually excluded in SRHR discussions. Furthermore, youth-friendly services need to be encouraged (HPV vaccines, after-abortion care, STI), and media coverage of SRHR is lacking.

Climate and environmental awareness is low in areas with high poverty rates. Attitudes and behaviors need to be changed. Public opinion and quality of education are key factors in the areas of environmental conservation. Having climate change education is vital from early childhood. Apart from providing facts and data about the environment, empowerment and action encouragements need to be made. Failure to do so will result in , people ending up with mental health issues such as climate-grief.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create media awareness campaigns on socio-economic issues (Mongolian example of LGBTI youth's family interview project).
- Include and educate more men on the issue of SRHR.
- Create spaces for meaningful involvement of youth with the local and national governments.
- Develop policies for not leaving anyone behind when AI, and tech developments threaten to claim many jobs.
- Build entrepreneurship and soft skills through various mentorship programs to enable youth in creating jobs.
- Encourage and support environment-friendly startups.
- Change the tone in providing information about climate change to “how we can make an impact” instead of “how bad is climate change”.
- Direct the attention and leverage towards private industries to make the shift towards green production and sustainability.
- Provide assistance to hard-hit areas by climate change. Improve synergy between the public and private sectors.
- Enable mechanisms for youth to convene and participate meaningfully in decision making processes.

1. The APFSD country and sub-regional briefs were developed through collective discussions and engagements between youth advocates at the APFSD Youth Forum on March 14-16, 2021. The East Asia (Japan, China, Kyrgyzstan, and Mongolia) drafting team consists of Kouadio Yao, Joseph Marie, Jean Marcel, and Munkh-Erdene Davaajav. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW team.