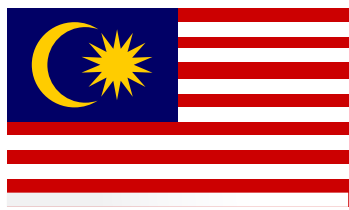




APFSD Youth Call to Action 2021: Malaysia¹



INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, education has been severely affected due to COVID-19. Youth are being faced with low motivation and interest for learning as co-curricular activities and school activities are being continuously halted which reduces the participation of students. There is also a digital divide in the B40 communities as most families have only one smartphone shared by several children who all have to attend online learning, which has further led to children losing interest in learning. Unemployment and financial burdens are being faced by young women especially from traditional households who now have to bear with the double burden of economic work and care work. This has also led to an increase in mental health issues as youth are feeling frustrated and women have more emotional labour to handle. Social protections from the government are lacking as schemes such as EPF and SOCSO only cover those with employment in formal sectors. The lack of protection and coverage for gig economy workers is particularly damaging. Domestic violence and abuse cases have seen a sharp rise in numbers due to the multiple quarantines during the pandemic. Migration and mobility have been restricted which increases the risks and threats to vulnerable groups such as women, youth, LGBTIQ+ communities and people with disabilities. Migrant children and refugees also face the double threat of persecution as well as lack of access to education. Finally, there is a vulnerability in the supply chain - there is a need for a more local, circular supply chain that would also support local youth employment.

The implementation of comprehensive sexuality education is critical within our schools as youth are not being given the necessary information to make informed decisions and choices about their own bodies. The politicisation of religion in the country makes it especially difficult for women to access SRHR services such as abortions and contraception, and many women do not have the autonomy to make decisions on their own bodies without the permission of their fathers or husbands. Period poverty is a pressing issue and is not addressed due to the lack of disaggregated data and awareness. Furthermore, the valuation of care work as women's participation in the workforce is not properly accounted for.

There is a lack of proper awareness within communities when it comes to the environment and climate change. There is little to no implementation of or even awareness of recycling initiatives and there is no accountability of businesses and their impact on the environment. Water pollution is a frequent issue throughout many states in the country and climate-friendly products are not accessible or affordable to many communities.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- To develop social protections and stimulus programmes for unemployed youth (such as introducing more green jobs) following the ILO standards.
- To begin the divestment of fossil fuels and invest in green economy through appropriate stimulus packages to support green industries
- Put better investment into access to mental health services that include subsidised rates for patients
- Provide gender-sensitive training to policy-makers, and law enforcement bodies in order to implement the domestic violence law
- Prioritise the passing and implementation of the anti-sexual harassment bill.
- Establish collaborative efforts between local authorities and civil society organisations to address youth refugee issues through community based programmes
- Implement comprehensive policies and programmes to curb the digital divide affecting education
- Amplify the community and formal school education/ awareness campaign on SRHR among the youth population so that youth are able to make informed decisions on their bodies
- Enhance infrastructure and facilities with SRHR-centered plannings; provide free access to SRHR infrastructure and facilities to the public
- Emphasise gender sensitisation of policy makers and SHRH service providers, and stop using religion as an excuse to violate women's rights to decide what to do with their bodies.
- The Government needs to provide gender disaggregated data and ensure transparency on access to information, especially with regards to SDGs 3, 8, 10, 16, 17
- Provide universal social protection regardless of employment status (formal/informal), employment sector and marital status
- Hold businesses and corporations accountable to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to ensure decent work for workers - this includes providing support and incentives to SMEs and not just the GLCs and MNCs to provide facilities and liveable wages to the workforce
- Implement human rights principles, intersectional and justice-based frameworks in policy-making and governance
- Implement whole-of-government and whole-of-society (localised) approaches for climate change and sustainable development
- Listen to the youth advocating for climate change and invite them to the decision-making table
- Institutionalise climate education in schools for the benefit and awareness of youth
- Ensure environmental laws and policies follow the international standards of UNFCCC and have effective implementation and enforcement of the laws and policies
- Create a cost effective and transparent system/action plan for the public to participate in recycling initiatives