



# APFSD Youth Call to Action 2021: Oceania<sup>1</sup>



Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Tonga

## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic had a severe economic impact within Oceania due to the high job loss, particularly within tourism and with closed international borders there was a loss of laborers as well. It was noted in Papua New Guinea that lockdown meant many women could not access markets and women had higher rates of unpaid domestic labor. With regards to the impact on communities, there was a severe lack of targeted youth plans or schemes by governments. In the face of the pandemic and the challenges it posed, it was youth groups that were providing relief to their communities such as disseminating information within provinces.

There is also a huge issue in representation in leadership within our government and corporations. We need to change the system so that women have the opportunity and capacity to work in these areas. Men could be encouraged to take up traditionally female roles of childcare through the provision of paternal leave, for instance.

There is also a need to protect our environmentalists and environmental defenders who are fighting for climate action and justice. The priority areas are mitigation, adoption and

governance in regards to climate action. Climate justice will help to reduce the causes and effects of climate change. There is also a need to protect our biodiversity and endangered species.

## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations to the State, focused on the importance of e-resilience for development and adaptation to contribute sustainability, are as follows:

- Increase **youth engagement/participation** in SDG sectors and ensure gender equality and equal opportunities. Engage more youths in policy making through taking suggestions, recommendation and innovative ideas.
- Recognize the importance of **digital connectivity** by providing access to more health-related information, ICT drives progress on SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Digital tools can also democratize education and facilitate remote working, thereby promoting SDG 4 (Quality Education) and 8 (Decent Work and Economic

Growth). Furthermore, ICT can lead to progress on SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) among other SDGs. Finally, SDG17 identifies technology in general, and ICT specifically, as an essential means of implementation for the SDGs and as a tool for supporting international partnership towards the SDGs.

- Creating a national contingency policy and measures for the next pandemic based on **lessons from this region from the Covid-19 pandemic**.
- There should be psycho-social training, collective voice and group formation and coping mechanisms where women suffering from domestic abuse or other forms of violence must be given immediate protection. There should be mental health initiatives for sustainable and **resilient recovery from COVID-19 with the inclusion of Gender and Ethnic minorities**.
- We recommend to make **contraceptives and other SRH services more accessible**, and even free, for young people, and to encourage that the stigma behind accessing contraceptives is removed. We also call for an **improved national curriculum** and change the way it talks about sex and reproductive health. The current curriculum in every country of the region is often out-dated or the way that the curriculum is delivered does not engage with or address the needs of young people.
- For SDG 10, there is also need to change the way we talk about **sexual abuse and gender abuse and violence** so that the conversation doesn't revolve around victim-blaming, but that it should actively call out the perpetrators, such as in the case of violence by men against women.
- For SDG 3 we recommend the need to **promote backyard gardening and other forms of practices for food security**.
- There are two types of problems that the homo economicus, or economic human, whose only goal is to promote his selfish interest, will never resolve: collective goods and poverty in the midst of plenty. To solve these problems, **we need to bring about the voice of care and altruism**. The economy must exist to serve society, not to be served by society. It must also benefit society as a whole.
- **Learn from other countries in the region. For example, Fiji has YES program that supports its youths** that wants to start and own their businesses it's called Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme and we should promote that.
- For decent work and economic growth, **youths should be employed, given equal opportunity to all genders, promote gender equality and have some strong referral pathways**.
- The government should strengthen its efforts to **minimise industrial waste** and to recycle waste resources.
- Government should also form a **climate agenda or roadmap** (which NGOs and interested parties can sign on to and lobby governments to take in to consideration) as a means to strengthen policies. Women are often excluded from climate action related initiatives but this needs to change by allowing women and young people in all their diversity to be part of the climate action efforts.
- **The virtual awareness could be done on climate action** through the use of social media platforms such as Facebook. After covid 19, the community awareness could be conducted to preserve nature and reduce climate change issues. Social media awareness and peer to peer regarding climate change would be beneficial in this regard.
- With regards to policymakers, we would recommend a **youth parliament** to create policies and recommendations to push governments to take climate action. And also, to push policymakers to be more inclusive and take into account the way in which climate change affects various groups from minorities to those belonging to other diverse groups within society.
- To accelerate climate action more awareness and education should be done on **conservation and importance of preservation**. This includes encouraging more green activities including backyard gardening.

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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 Oceania report was drafted by Pallawish Kumar. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW team.