



APFSD Youth Forum and Regional ECOSOC Youth Forum 2022

Asia-Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action Ahead of the APFSD 2022¹

Building Back Better from COVID-19 While Advancing the Full Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific with Young People at the Forefront of SDG Action

WHO ARE WE?

We are the young people of this region. We are 600 and more in number from 33 countries² across Asia and the Pacific, coming from a range of backgrounds and diversities in terms of our age, race, disability, geographical location, socio-economic status, sexual and gender identities, expression and characteristics, among others. We attended the APFSD Youth Forum and the Regional ECOSOC Youth Forum (virtual) from 19-21 March 2022 in our capacity as students, youth group representatives, social entrepreneurs, academics, development practitioners, changemakers, activists and human rights defenders working on SDG implementation in our own respective countries. We came into the youth forum with our varied experiences derived from our lived-in realities and interests. For the entire duration of the forum we engaged in cross-country and intra-regional exchanges, learning and sharing, and the review of the SDG progress in the region to put forward our unified voice and demands into this “Youth Call to Action”.

There is no building back better from COVID-19 without us. Through this Youth Call to Action and the recommendations contained here, we call upon all our governments to address the issues collectively faced by 750 million young persons aged between 15 - 24 years residing in this region³—taking into account that we are the young people who have not been prioritised for COVID-19 vaccine access, and are also facing the effects of climate change, environmental degradation, lack of access to education and essential health services, war, migration, natural disasters, and rising inequalities and discrimination - directly affecting our lives and our future.

BACKGROUND

We are presenting this Youth Call to Action at a time when we are going through the COVID-19 pandemic in addition to facing the brunt from the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, the prevalence of misinformation, rising sea levels made worse by

natural disasters such as tsunamis, and escalation of conflict in parts of the globe that is adding to the displacement of populations and exacerbating the migrant crisis and overall human rights violations.

In the area of health, the unavailability of vaccines and healthcare on an equitable basis, has further prolonged the duration of the pandemic. It is estimated that around 38 million people had COVID-19 while half a million died from the virus in this region.⁴ The ongoing pandemic and the increased focus of governments on preventive measures have had an impact on access to other healthcare information and services including information and services related to the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people. Also, vaccine distribution plans in the region have not taken into account sensitive approaches that have non-prioritised the needs of young people leading to negative outcomes around young people's health and wellbeing including mental health, education, overall development, and participation.

In the given context and standing at a time when we only have a few years left to achieve the SDG 2030 agenda, we are gravely concerned to observe that the commitment pledged by our governments in the Asia-Pacific region to leave no one behind in implementing the 2030 agenda has not been successful in ensuring an inclusive journey. It has left behind young people from the remote areas, young persons with disabilities and young people coming from marginalised and vulnerable communities. This journey has been further disrupted by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic which has set back the region in its efforts to achieve gender equality, establish access to justice, create opportunities and employment for all and in ensuring accessibility to healthcare, education, water and sanitation, and housing to mention a few. The failure to address environmental concerns and effects of climate change have had adverse consequences in our lives in a region that continues to be the home to the world's largest population of young people. Recent reports documenting the situation of young people from the region highlight that (i) leadership/decision-making roles on all levels lack representation from young people (ii) young people

are still not able to participate fully in the process of development policy-making (iii) national youth or youth-centric policies are not adequately implemented and in most cases do not address the specific needs of young people and (iv) issues faced by young people are not regarded as a cross-cutting priority across the SDG themes.

While we acknowledge the slow progress made so far with respect to the SDGs, we also realise that in the pandemic and post-pandemic era, there is a crucial need to work through partnerships and in collaboration with stakeholders and young people. The COVID-19 pandemic has led governments around the region to take strict preventive measures to curtail the risk of infections and deaths. However, these restrictive measures such as social distancing protocols, school closures and reduced business/working hours have negatively affected the quality of life of young people with impacts on their social, mental and overall well-being which came up repeatedly during the discussions at the Youth Forum this year.

It is imperative that the long-term effects of the pandemic on young people are prioritised by governments in their national SDG Action Plans and solutions because in this region, young people are heterogeneous, and come from all walks of life - they are in-school and out of school, migrants, workers in the formal and informal sectors and unemployed, and from rural and from urban areas. They are of diverse sexualities and gender identities, they live with HIV, they are sex workers, and they have disabilities. They are young girls and boys who have limited access to education due to many contributing factors. They face multiple challenges, such as poverty, migration, religious fundamentalisms, lack of access to quality education, lack of decent employment and lack of access to healthcare that intersect with harmful traditional and cultural norms.⁵ There are also many of us who are unable to afford a balanced diet during the COVID-19 which has also been exacerbated by the increase of commodities' prices. A holistic, intersectional and human-rights based approach is therefore needed by the States in the region to ensure that no one is left behind.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON BUILDING BACK BETTER FROM COVID-19

SDG 4 – QUALITY EDUCATION

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS ON QUALITY EDUCATION:

- Despite the region having the advantage of a demographic dividend due to the large number of young people residing in this part of the world, young people in this region continue to face obstacles in their access to education. The COVID-19 pandemic has further affected the transition between secondary to tertiary education to employment which has been one of the key obstacles facing young people of the region.
- Exclusion of very young adolescents from accessing education altogether due to various factors such as rural-urban disparities, refugee status, rising socio-economic inequality and continuing exclusion of children with disabilities among others is raising the number of children and young people “not in education, employment or training” (NEET).
- For school-going children there was/is disruptions with classes which resulted in pupils having to miss classes (physically) due to movement restrictions, safety requirements, temporary suspension and permanent closure of educational institutions.
- In most Asian countries, the topic of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is still considered a taboo, and the cultural context prevents young people and youth from being educated on this topic via reliable sources.
- The suspension of in-class lessons during the COVID-19 pandemic meant that adjusting to online learning was difficult as productiveness seemed impossible in the comfort of one’s home. Young girls were mandated to engage in household responsibilities placing them at risk of academic failure. Internet connectivity is still not available in the most remote areas of the country and therefore online learning isn’t easy to access. In some remote/rural areas, students had to climb mountains and hills to find stronger internet connection in order to attend online classes.
- The quality of education has been compromised. Students in technologically-backward areas have little to zero access to education that they once had. Families lying below the poverty line find it to be an ordeal to purchase expensive gadgets and thus consider it to be economically viable and in the interest of the family to have their children drop out from schools. Consequently, there has been a spike in drop-out rates. The declining trend of accessibility to quality education in rural areas is worrisome and has been exacerbated by the increasingly widening digital divide. This correlates directly to rising unemployment levels among young people in the region.
- Rural students are already disadvantaged in terms of education, and many students are unable to acquire a proper education as a result of the pandemic and digital schooling. Furthermore, many schools and students are still having difficulty adapting to the new learning style due to a lack of teacher training and an unrevised curriculum.
- Furthermore, it has been discovered that teachers are the least likely to learn new teaching approaches and technologies, and as a result, teaching methods are not as effective as they should be. The teachers with less digital literacy skills are facing the challenge of managing the school education system effectively.
- Persons with disabilities and marginalised young people have been and continue to be denied access to accurate information and education. They were already a low priority, and they were further deprived of quality schooling during and after the pandemic. Many students continue to be denied access to high-quality, equal-opportunity education.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS ON QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

We urge Member States to take the following actions:

1. **Digital learning opportunities** need to be improved especially for people who have less access. Internet access, technological devices and other needs of students and teachers need to be fulfilled to ensure that nobody is left behind. Also, protection and security for the online community is needed for the safety of children. Rights-based laws or regulations need to be promoted to regulate data privacy and ensure digital security for young people of all ages.
2. **Strengthen social protection measures to enable children of vulnerable and poor families** (including single parents and families with persons with disabilities) through financial assistance, social programmes and labour flexibility and support so that the children are able to achieve quality education.

3. For better health and wellbeing, children and youth need more reliable networks for helping each other and seeking help, which leads to **stronger community resilience**. Support from the government on exploring various mechanisms and networks can help people go back to normal life, especially children and youth who grew used to online communication and therefore lack in-person communication skills. Help from educational institutions in order to **accelerate social and emotional recovery, with a mental health focus** is crucial as we build back better from the pandemic.
4. More quality **sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)** needs to be implemented. SRHR education should be incorporated into school curricula and be funded and should address comprehensive topics in a more open, free manner. To implement more quality gender and SRHR education, society as a whole has to create a safe and healthy space for discussions on gender and SRHR. Furthermore, stereotypical images of men and women in a binary sense should not be enforced when addressing the topics. Media, especially, needs to play a strong role in bringing about a **change in perception** within societies.
5. Mainstreaming of **CSE for in school and out of school students** and integration of CSE and the Sustainable Development Goals should be included in school curriculums so that sexuality education is not seen as a taboo. This could be changed by integrating SDGs and CSE into the national school curriculum.
6. Encourage the use of **innovation and technology in education, such as metaverse and virtual reality**, for young people and youth to benefit from immersive learning experiences while ensuring nobody is left behind. More public internet facilities should be installed in communities to bridge the digital divide that has severely affected young people and youth. In addition, educate parents on the benefits of edutech so they provide understanding and support for their children, youth and adolescents in their pursuit of education in the modern digital world.
7. Implement **policies to reduce the digital gap and recover from learning losses whilst addressing the learning crises**.
8. Include **civic education and political participation as part of educational curricula**. Insufficient civic education has resulted in a low voting rate and political participation of youth in certain countries like Japan.
9. Advance the implementation of inclusive education which ensures the participation of those from vulnerable groups and **global citizenship education** that enables young people and youth to think globally and act locally in schools.
10. Develop and support **two-dimensional quality assessment**; the internal reviews or self-assessments by schools and the external reviews through mechanisms such as school inspections.
11. Explore alternative programmes for teaching students in remote areas instead of **online classes like providing offline educational packages for students who do not have access to the internet** during the pandemic.
12. Invest in guidance workshops and training on digital literacy by **training teachers and parents** from all levels especially rural, unprivileged and disadvantaged areas on **online tools, services and platforms** and ensuring capacity building training for youth and students to cope with the digital world.
13. Increase financial investment in quality education for all and deploy adequate resources to enable the following:
 - a. **Strengthening of contingency plans** for education systems by (a) encouraging the hybrid mode of teaching and examination (b) introducing systems that monitor the functionality of the introduced concepts and solutions.
 - b. **Curriculum changes** need to be made so that they include courses relating to sustainable development, gender and climate education so as to foster an innovative young generation. In this regard, **separate budgetary allocations** can be made for electronic devices and resources.

- c. **Multilingual education and accessible education for students with disabilities** should be provided and this must be accommodated while giving virtual classes so that classes could be organised in local languages.
 - d. Introduction of **incentive programs to bring children back to school**, like the Mid Day Meal Schemes (currently in practice in some countries) and incentives to promote education of girls, young people from indigenous communities, and other marginalised communities.
14. Affordable education that is inclusive for all people is the need of the hour and for that an accountability framework is required that includes government and non-government entities that are essential to ensure implementation. Subsidiaries for underrepresented communities for education and healthcare resources should be provided by the government sector.

SDG 5 – GENDER EQUALITY

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS ON GENDER EQUALITY

- The pandemic also gave rise to a “shadow pandemic” of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence against young people in the region. This rise of violence also included police brutality faced by young people and young human rights defenders, as well as domestic violence and intimate partner violence during the pandemic. Stay-at-home orders limiting personal movement and confining young people to their homes intended to protect the public and prevent widespread infection, left many victims trapped with their abusers.⁶
- Before the pandemic it was estimated that adolescent childbearing rates was high in the region because of the persistent prevalence of child marriage. Global data showed that in South Asia, “30 per cent of all 15–19-year-old females are in a married union, compared to a world average of 22 per cent”.⁷ During the pandemic, UNICEF estimated that an additional 10 million girls were at risk of child marriage due to COVID-19, threatening the progress made in ending such a harmful practice.⁸
- Domestic violence, societal and peer pressure, and lack of sensitivity and inclusive primary health care facilities have contributed towards deteriorating mental health among the young community. Marginal communities have lost access to mid-day meal schemes and nutrition levels among the students in the category have taken a downfall.
- Technology-facilitated gender-based violence also increased online caused by the lack of awareness and zero policy and bylaws that protect youth who are at-risk in this context. The cases of online gender-based violence have surged while online discriminations and hoaxes have unavoidably spread among young adolescents. Radical and extremist movements are also on the rise among young people with the widespread use of digital platforms. In addition, various cases of intolerance toward minority beliefs are on the rise due to a large amount of hate speech targeted at this group on social media.
- Additionally, the pandemic significantly increased the burden of unpaid care in this region and it is disproportionately borne by girls and women. Loss of jobs and livelihoods and a decrease in income, in both the formal and informal sector also put young people in all their diversities in a disadvantaged situation impacting on the progress made on gender equality so far.⁹
- The lack of adequate social protection mechanisms in the region also contributed to the problem, making women and persons with disabilities in particular vulnerable in terms of their socio-economic status.
- In the area of health, the unavailability of vaccines and healthcare on an equitable basis, have further prolonged the duration of the pandemic. It is estimated that around 38 million people had COVID-19 while half a million died from the virus in this region.¹⁰ The ongoing pandemic and the increased focus of governments on preventive measures have had an impact on access to other healthcare information and services including the information and services related to sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people.
- COVID-19 has also impacted essential service deliveries for people with disabilities, refugees, and those who require monitored healthcare support.
- Although the governments of the region prioritised COVID-19 healthcare, problems related to scarcity of oxygen supplies, beds, resources and ICU capacities threatened the overall health and wellbeing of all including young people and the impact on them varied from person to person depending on their circumstances.

- Young people with refugee status or living in slums in crowded unhygienic settings for instance, faced issues related to water scarcity and unavailability of sanitation which in addition to making them vulnerable to COVID-19 also made them susceptible to sexual and reproductive health issues, particularly affecting girls, young women and young people with disabilities.¹¹
- Young people are facing numerous challenges due to limited knowledge and skills on digital, technology and innovation in the country. The pandemic has now reminded us of the importance of moving into the digital economy, blockchains, and artificial intelligence to not be left behind and compete with the developed nations. However, this poses a higher risk of increased digital divide between those who can afford technologies and those who cannot. Furthermore, the virtual spaces also accelerate the risk of cyber-crime and violence with maximum usage of social media platforms.
- The pandemic has created a void in the sphere of education, which has resulted in misinformation and false news. This means that there is and has been misinformation and news spread as a result of widespread use of social media. This wreaked havoc on students, young people, and the general public who used social media. People used social media because it was a simple and quick source of information. As a result, a lot of spam, inaccurate information, and news produced turmoil and friction among users. Along with this, there was a lot of online crime, bullying, and harassment.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS ON GENDER EQUALITY

We urge Member States to take the following actions:

1. **Mandate implementation of anti-discriminatory policies in organisations and companies** to ensure that all employees undergo trainings or workshops on gender equality, abuse and harassment including sexual abuse, exploitation, and harassment to prevent the occurrence of stigma, discrimination and abuse in the workplace and educational settings.
2. Focus on eliminating all forms of **sexual and gender-based violence against all young people**, particularly on women and girls in the public and private spheres.
3. Increase **government funding towards prevention of sexual and gender-based violence**, rehabilitation of violence survivors through strengthening communities, ensuring access to justice and scaling up national response mechanisms including national/hotline helpline services that also provides counselling support.
4. Ensure **massive awareness and sensitisation on gender equality including SOGIESC**. At the same time, awareness raising efforts need to include older generations as they still occupy the seats at the decision-making table, so that the society as a whole can move forward. Gender study workshops and subjects need to be developed to fight the stigma and stereotypical expectations.
5. **Unpaid labour at home** should also be recognised. The unpaid labour done at home is a pillar of society and should receive more recognition and support.
6. **Support and initiate more young people and women-focused entrepreneurship programmes** to empower young people in all their diversities to live an independent life (through interest-free loan support, free scholarships and education courses on small business management for those who want to create their own income).
7. Implement strategies that enable **young people, including women, to partake in leadership roles** and decision-making role in development initiatives happening on a national and international level,

and for our respective governments to achieve a 50/50 gender balance with women leaders elected into parliament by the year 2030 in the region and also take steps to create a 50/50 gender-balanced environment within all areas of the workforce and salaries.

8. Capacitate the young people, especially women and other vulnerable groups, with ways of **initiating income generating activities from home**. Identify potential and interested youth and provide capacity building training on demanding topics based on their interest.
9. Create relevant **internship opportunities in public and private sectors** for young students and job seekers. Make policies to ensure paid internship opportunities for young people in government and private institutions to create engagement and experience opportunities for youth.
10. To cope with the loss of time and prolonged academic years, **increase the age limit for employment**. Create skill-based job opportunities and ensure fair employment and wages for young people.
11. **Foster and support intergenerational cooperation enabling a conducive space** for the older generation and youth to work together to find solutions to achieving gender equality.
12. Provide **health care services, including mental health and sexual and reproductive health services and healthy food** for young people in all their diversities to especially support girls, women, and mothers who are malnourished and have to raise their malnourished children during the pandemic.
13. Adopt **targeted approaches to reach all social groups** when it comes to humanitarian aid and services. Recognition needs to be made of the individuals that are in need, especially marginalised groups, including LGBTIQ persons, people living with HIV, and migrants.
14. **Remove discriminatory laws, regulations and policies** that have the potential to criminalise and legalise gender-based violence and harmful practices disproportionately affecting girls, women and young

LGBTIQ+ individuals and prevents their access to education, healthcare and employment among others.

15. Reinforce the **availability of research and data**, related to young people and SDGs focusing on youth's mental health, discrimination, challenges and hardships, education, labour rights and decent work. **Increase investments in generating disaggregated data** in regards to the education system, drop out as well as other social norms and traditions focusing on SGD 5.
16. Take **concrete actions to address the issues faced by the marginalised communities**. The indigenous population is further left out during COVID-19 times and they do not have adequate knowledge and resources to acquire healthcare, education, and food.

SDGS 13 (CLIMATE ACTION), SDG14 (LIFE BELOW WATER), AND SDG15 (LIFE ON LAND)

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS ON CLIMATE ACTION (LIFE ON LAND AND LIFE BELOW WATER)

- The Asia-Pacific is the most disaster-prone region in the world.¹² Its geography of extensive coastlines, low-lying territories, and many small island states, means that the region is highly susceptible to rising sea levels and extreme weather.
- According to estimates by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), the Asia and Pacific region has suffered an annual loss of US\$675 billion due to climate-induced disasters,¹³ and the progress in the region around climate action is on a negative trend.
- Ocean acidification and coral bleaching are a result of climate change. Both processes directly affect the biodiversity of marine ecosystems and as a result, food webs are altered and fish stocks collapse, putting millions of lives and jobs at risk. In the Asia-Pacific, around 200 million¹⁴ people depend on fisheries and healthy oceans are needed for jobs, food, identity, and coping with a changing climate.
- Women tend to be more employed in certain sectors such as agriculture, health care, household food production, garment industry and others. However, in the agriculture sector, they often do not have ownership of assets such as land, tools or tractors, or have any decision-making roles.¹⁵

- Climate change and natural disasters create more economic constraints for families, which in turn creates an increase of the risk of gender-based sexual violence,¹⁶ and even early and forced child marriage as families use the marrying off of their daughters as a means to escape economic hardship.
 - Rapid urbanisation and the increase of palm oil plantations has led to serious deforestation issues across the region as well as the loss of natural habitats, flora and fauna, and the illegal poaching of animals, including protected and endangered species.
 - The Asia-Pacific region has trouble managing plastic pollution. Many countries in the region are both enormous producers and consumers of plastics. Plastic waste has accumulated in landfills, dumps, and the natural environment, which eventually finds its way to the sea, making it a major contributor to ocean pollution, the harming of marine life and fisheries, and a threat to human health.¹⁷ COVID-19 has further led to the escalation in the usage of single-use plastic and a strain on waste-management systems.
3. **Take urgent action and raise awareness on zero-waste management** to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, acidification of oceans, corals and plankton and the spreading of harmful pollutants in the air through unchecked energy production, product consumption and irresponsible waste management.
 4. **Strengthen response mechanisms and humanitarian efforts** during environmental crisis and extreme weather events, such as heatwaves, storms and floods, that kills thousands and disrupt millions of lives, while threatening healthcare systems and facilities when they are needed most to prevent food insecurity and food-, water- and vector-borne diseases, such as malaria, while climate impacts are also negatively affecting mental health of young people.¹⁹
 5. **Invest in innovative ideas and support green projects that change and improve landscapes, urban environments, transport and mobility** by promoting sustainable, healthy urban design and transport systems, with improved land-use, access to green and blue public space, and priority for walking, cycling and public transport.²⁰

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS ON CLIMATE ACTION (LIFE ON LAND AND LIFE BELOW WATER)

We urge Member States to take the following actions:

1. Strengthen the meaningful youth involvement in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) commitments, its implementation and carbon neutrality pledges, and **increase youth-led green investments and funding** to match the targets.
2. **Implement the 10 global calls made by WHO** on sustainable, healthy and green recovery, as found in the WHO COP26 Special Report on Climate Change and Health, published in the lead-up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland which spells out the roadmap for climate action for the global community based on a growing body of research that establishes the many and inseparable links between climate and health, particularly in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁸
6. **Protect and restore nature as the foundation of our health**, natural systems, the foundations for healthy lives, sustainable food systems, livelihoods and communities.²¹
7. Furthermore, governments must **ensure transparency, accuracy and availability of climate finance data and disaggregate on the basis for youth led actions.**
8. **Support vulnerable groups' empowerment** to access climate information, justice, finance, and decision-making in development that deals with independent redress mechanisms, reparation, loss and damage, and debt.
9. Invest in and **ensure the production, affordability and availability of biodegradable materials** to curb the usage of single-use plastics and other materials harmful to the environment, and increase youth engagement in conservation and restoration of land and marine ecosystems

10. Ensure the **preservation of wildlife and biodiversity by banning deforestation** and ensure the recognition, protection and promotion of local varieties of plants and other vegetation through sustainable farming practices.
11. Assess gender and climate change policy frameworks to **enable youth and CSO engagement at all levels**; address the technical knowledge needed to **design age and gender responsive, gender specific and gender transformative climate actions**; and build national frameworks for monitoring and evaluation of climate change adaptation to **strengthen gender mainstreaming and gender responsive programmatic action**.
12. Invest in the capacity building of young people, women, girls, persons with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+ communities and ensure the representation of their voices at the local and national level or by **creating youth councils or youth parliament committees** for climate change.
13. **Education and awareness training on climate change**, natural resources, and wildlife preservation must be made available in the curricula in schools at the primary to tertiary level so that youth will understand the importance of the issue of climate.
14. Recognise and monitor the detrimental effects of climate change in relation to health and human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, especially among young people, women, girls, persons with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+ communities. This includes **monitoring and planning for the effects of climate change on issues such as gender-based violence, and early and forced child marriage**.
15. **Strengthen the interlinkages between SRHR and bodily autonomy in differential vulnerability to climate change** and allow space for integration of women, girls and LGBTI people's needs in climate change action with a specific focus on health and climate change, **prioritising the voices of youth and their inter-generational concerns**.²²
16. Implement small-scale farming, as well as the **availability of low-interest loans for starting businesses and promoting local products**, should be promoted. Subsistence farming will be fostered as a result, and farmers will have access to sufficient resources
17. Invest in **youth and locally led climate change mitigation and adaptation plans** that recognise that young people and marginalised communities are on the frontlines of climate change and are therefore also the best placed to identify sustainable solutions.

SDG17 (PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE SDGS)

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS ON PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE SDGS

- The 17 SDGs are interactive. The implementation of one SDG will have an influence on another and furthermore, the SDGs can only be realised with strong global partnerships and cooperation.
- Though there are some clear necessary actions that need to be undertaken in the region—such as generating more nonagricultural livelihood opportunities and boosting officials' capacities on the climate front lines—these are solutions that will take time to implement and regional cooperative efforts are constrained by diplomatic obstacles. South Asian countries, in particular, rank at the bottom of the recent global environmental sustainability rankings.²³
- With a narrow focus on climate literacy and environmental education across the region, most young people have little understanding of climate change as a multi-faceted issue that spans across all the SDGs and require more information to contextualise the scope and severity of climate change.²⁴
- Despite the positive engagement and inclusion of young people in development and cooperation for the SDGs, many people continue to be denied equal rights, opportunities, and equity participation. Furthermore, even though many young people are attempting to establish their own businesses or engage in entrepreneurship, adequate assistance, opportunities, and encouragement is lacking.

- According to the recent IPCC report, there is still time to avert climate catastrophe through stronger mitigation policies, monitoring and enforcement, anti-corruption, and sufficient funding in the region.²⁵
 - However, COVID-19 has also opened new methods and approaches to collaborations and partnerships. The immediate boom of online platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, and other applications have closed the gaps in collaborations and partnerships. It has been easier for youth organisations to collaborate and partner for events and initiatives due to the existence and emergence of online platforms. It has also opened new opportunities for young people and youth organisations to join international events they may have not been able to access before.
- experiences, know-how, harm mitigation methods and innovation.
5. **Monitor and regulate the private sector** in their efforts to achieve climate goals. Develop social designs with more incentives for private sectors to make a shift toward climate-friendly ways of management and production.
 6. **Indigenous voices must be integrated into all partnerships and collaborations, and at the same time South-South, North-South, and triangular partnerships** should be fostered. These collaborations must be multisectoral, multifaceted, and inclusive.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS ON PARTNERSHIPS FOR SDGS:

We urge Member States to take the following actions:

1. Provide **capacity building, and learning opportunities for young people to effectively plan, implement, and follow up on national plans and frameworks**, the resolution of systemic issues through policy coherence and partnerships, and transparent data, monitoring, and accountability systems.
2. Coordination and meaningful involvement of young people in all our diversities with stakeholders and governments is required at the local, national, and international levels. There is a need to **allocate budget and set priorities to uplift youth-led organisations** and the inclusivity of the young people across decision making processes at all levels.
3. **Include the SDG agenda as part of educational curricula** and empower youth by creating understanding and awareness of the SDG agenda and the interlinkages between the goals.
4. Include **diverse stakeholders and networks, including vulnerable groups, progressive human rights aligned faith actors**, etc., to the discussion at the decision-making table. These partnerships and cooperation will make it possible to widely and effectively share the accumulated knowledge,
7. Meaningfully **engage youth in policy-making processes**, strategising, and leadership, including monitoring decisions and law related specifically to COVID-19.
8. Ensure **high-quality, timely, reliable data is available**, disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location, and other characteristics relevant in national and local contexts, across all the SDG indicators.

CONCLUSION

As presented, though some gains in SDG implementation across the social, economic and environmental dimensions have been made, this is far behind from the targets we aim to achieve by 2030 across the Asia Pacific region. COVID-19, now going into its third year, has severely impacted the progress that could have been made in the region, particularly to the detriment of young people in all their diversities. The above document presents the voices of the youth from the Asia Pacific region, and highlights the recommendations and actions that should be taken, particularly with regards to SDG4 (Quality Education), SDG5 (Gender Equality), SDG14 (Life Below Water), SDG15 (Life On Land), and SDG17 (Partnerships for SDGs).

COVID-19 has proven that it is here to stay for the foreseeable future. Without an intersectional, human right and gender-responsive approach to our COVID-19

recovery efforts moving forward, there is no feasible and sustainable way in which the impact of the pandemic across all the SDGs can fully be addressed, especially with regards to marginalised populations. In saying this, it is crucial that the inclusion of young people in all our diversities be included from the development to implementation stages of these efforts moving forward.

As the world moves ahead to meet the target of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, we call for Member States to adopt an intersectional, non-discriminatory and participatory approach, one that fosters youth empowerment and leadership, human rights and gender equality, and meaningful and inclusive

youth participation, so we can collectively address the issues that affect claiming our agency, our decisions and our quality of life drawing on crucial lessons from the pandemic to enable accelerated sustainable solutions that will benefit us, our planet and our environment.

It is our hope that this call to action will enable our governments across the Asia Pacific to gain a deeper insight into the barriers affecting youth in the region and in doing so, work towards strengthening their political commitment and allocating sufficient resources, to enable us, the youth of the Asia and the Pacific, to be able to affect change in ways that are effective sustainable for all.

ABBREVIATIONS

APFSD	- Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
COP	- Conference of Parties
CSE	- Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSO	- Civil Society Organisation
ECOSOC	- Economic and Social Council
GBV	- Gender-Based Violence
GDP	- Gross Domestic Product
IPCC	- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LGBTIQ	- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer/Questioning
NEET	- Not in Education, Employment, or Training
SDG	- Sustainable Development Goals
SOGIESC	- Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression and Sexual Characteristics
SRHR	- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UNESCAP	- United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNICEF	- United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	- World Health Organization

ENDNOTES

- 1 The call to action was developed by a dedicated drafting team who worked on behalf of the larger group to capture the key discussion points and demands put forward by 600 participants in the forum derived from their personal and country experiences. The drafting team consisted of the following participants: Munkh Erdene, Harumi Endo, Puri Faith Tarutia, Cameron Artango, Pema Choden, Sangay Loday, Aishath Shiman Ahmed, Le Thu Giang, Bhurichaya Solanda, Fariba Aslami Adelyar Ahmed Nasir, Monower Hossain Umme Salma, Samanjar Chowdhury, Disha Sarkar, Prakhar Agrawal, Venicia Agnes Fernandes, Maanav Vinay Kejriwal, Manojj Dhinakaran, Hendri Surya Widcaksana, Angeline Eugenia Ariestantya, Aqilla Izzi Fekrat, Dicky Aditiya Kurniawan, Yee Siang Yong (Ashley), Lirisha Tuladhar, Situ Shrestha, Upakar Pandey, Pooja Kumari Baishya, Qandeel Naeem, Joshua Dilawar, Mohsin Baig, Danish Tariq, Rushba Ansar, Jesse Antoniette Sunga, Mark Jacinto, Truong Vu, Huynh Van Hoang supported by Krishanu, Hafiza Binti Abdul Samath, Fan Wei Liat Egwin, Dipesh Limbu, Yao Yao, Aishath Shiman Ahmed, Karma Sangay Phuntsho. The team was led with overall supervision from Sai Jyothirmai Racherla (ARROW) and development and finalization of this document supported by Nawmi Naz Chowdhury (ARROW) and Evelynne Gomez (ARROW), Kamal Gautam (ARROW) with review support from Sangeet Kayastha (Y-PEER Asia Pacific Center), Ayeshwini Lama (Y-PEER Asia Pacific Center), and Legee Tamir (YouthLEAD).
- 2 The countries represented in this Youth Call to Action were as follows: Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, Georgia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kiribati, Laos, Macao, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Tajikistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu, and Vietnam
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