

BHUTAN NATIONAL YOUTH FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS) AHEAD OF APFSD 2024

FORUM REPORT



NATIONAL PARTNERS



REGIONAL PARTNERS



ABOUT US

“What we now is what we share, WE ARE Y-PEER!!!”

Y-PEER Bhutan is a one of the youth-led organisations subordinate to Y-PEER Asia-Pacific Center to advocate and create awareness on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) for young people in Bhutan. It was pioneered by the United Nations Populations Fund Country Office in 2012 in collaboration with the Programme and Youth Coordination Division Office, Ministry of Education and Skills Development,

Y-PEER Bhutan focuses on topics such as SRHR, Gender Based Violence, Technology Facilitated GBV, Comprehensive Sexuality Education, SOGIESC, Menstrual Hygiene Management, Digital Literacy, STIs etc along with soft skills development of young people. We exercise the PEER to PEER approach for sharing information and training, leveraging the collective voice of youths in Bhutan. Network device Presentations, Role-plays, Demonstrations, Focus Group Discussions, Debates and Moral Games to engage more than thousands youths from diverse backgrounds.

Currently, Y-PEER Bhutan has its network in 19 Royal University Bhutan Colleges and Technical Training Institutes consisting of more than 1500 registered members. We have in total, 15 youths who have attended ATOT till date. Until 2024, Seven National Meets were conducted, along with completion of 20th National Training of trainers. Around more than 700 youths have undergone National Training of trainers till date.

INTRODUCTION

Bhutan National Youth Forum on Sustainable Development Goals,2024

Bhutan National Youth Forum on Sustainable Development Goals,2024 was a dedicated space for young Bhutanese people to engage in depth review of the progress made towards sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region, with a focus on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, specifically SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger), SDG 13 (Climate action), SDG 16 (Peace, justice, and strong institutions),17 (Partnership for the Goals), SDG 3 (Health and Wellbeing), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). The Forum was organised ahead of APFSD Youth Forum 2024 in collaborations with Programme and Youth Coordination Division Office, Ministry of Education and Skills Development, Circle of Young Minds for Research and Development Career, Working Group on Disabilities along with regional partners Y-PEER Asia-Pacific Center and Asia-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women.

The National Forum was held in the Programme and Youth Coordination Division, Ministry of Education and Skills Development starting from 27th to 28th January, 2024. It was aligned with the theme "Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions with young people at the forefront."

Around 39 youth representatives across various networks and youth organisations joined to draft National Youth Call-to-Action. The forum will be a continuation to Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) Youth Forum, 2024. It will be further addressed to the APFSD Intergovernmental Fora 2024, ECOSOC Youth Forum 2024, as well as the High-Level Political Forum 2024.

APFSD Theme SDGs



Objectives

- To discuss, dialogue, and deliberate on the implementation, follow-up and review process of SDGs from a youth lens in Bhutan.
- To provide educational sessions geared towards enhancing comprehension of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16, 17 along with 3 & 5) and their significance in Bhutan.
- Promote and cultivate dynamic involvement and engagement of young individuals at national levels in sustainable development endeavours.
- Empower youth by equipping them with the requisite skills and knowledge to actively contribute to sustainable development efforts in Bhutan.
- To foster Bhutanese youth alliance from diverse backgrounds during development of National Youth call-to-Action.
- To promote Diversity, Inclusion and Equity in the civic engagement of youths at the National Forum.

DEMOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION



Youth representatives from various Y-PEER Networks and Youth Centres across the country gathered. Through competitive selection process the forum accommodated average of 2 to 3 advocates from each network. The Youth alliance formed during the forum strengthen the actions of each other and further spark the opportunity for future collaboration.

MEET THE TEAM



SANGEET KAYASTHA
MENOTR



BHAWANA PRADHAN
FACILITATOR



PALDEN WANGCHUK DORJI
FACILITATOR



SONAM TSHOGYAL
FACILITATOR

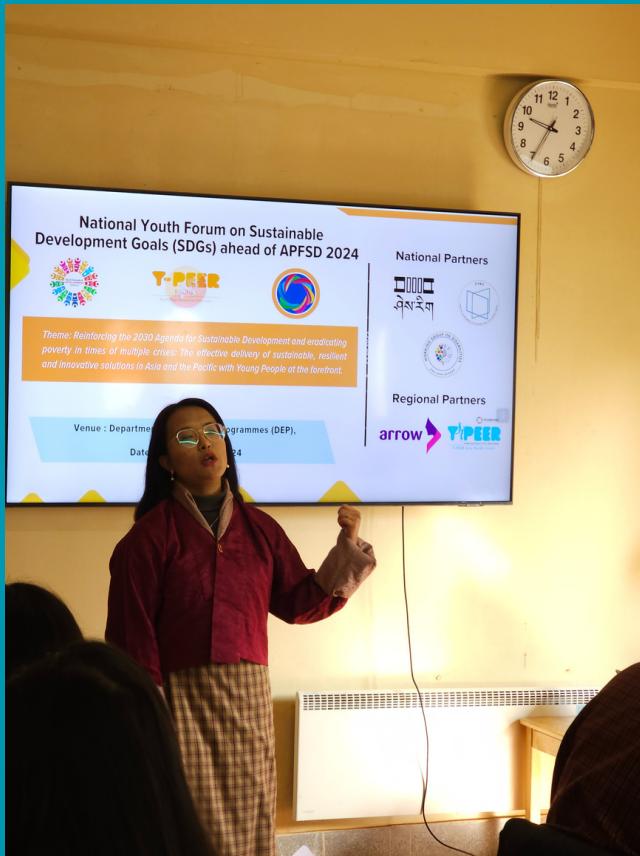


DECHEW WANGCHUK
SECRETARY

Introduction:

Facilitator: Bhawana Pradhan

The program kick-started with the introduction of the participants, where each of them were provided with definite time to make maximum friends in their ability. Followed by a Gusto board to draw their mood, energy, and takeaways. The majority of the participants (99%) were excited about the forum which in turn motivated us to look forward.



She opened the floor with a brief introduction to APFSD Youth Forum. The talk gave an overview on the forum with its key objectives and its focus goals of No poverty (1), Zero Hunger(2), Climate Action(13), Peace, Justice and Strong institutions(16), Partnerships for Goals(17) along with cross-cutting goals Good Health and Well-being (3) and Gender Equality(5).

She mentioned how the youth alliance can substantially contribute to the sustainable development efforts of Bhutan and the Asia-Pacific region. Finally, she highlighted the pivotal connections between the National APFSD Youth Forum to Regional APFSD Youth Forum emphasising the development of youth call-to-action.

Opening remarks:

Sai Jyothirmai Racherla, Deputy Executive Director

Sai virtually provided the opening note, which outlined some progress and follow-up of the SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17 along with 3 and 5 specifically to Bhutan. The presentation included SDGs tracker to give detailed insights on issues in regards to certain goals. She motivated every individual in the room to stand out of their comfort zone to be at the forefront of SDGs battle in the current scenario. The talk delved deeper into each challenge associated with the goals surfacing on the statistics of rising and declining trends.



Session 1.Understanding the SDGs under review

Facilitator: Palden Wangchuk Dorji

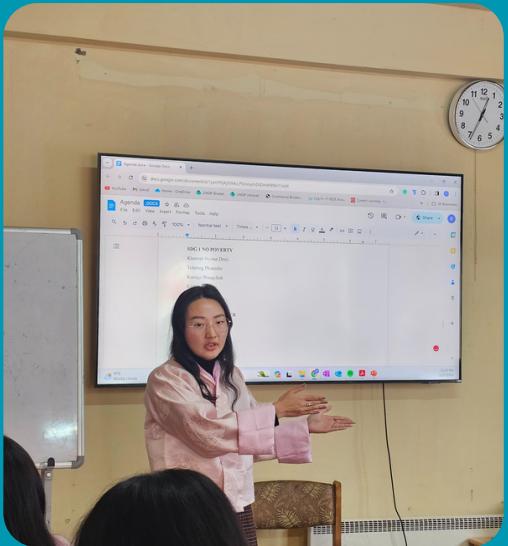
The session commenced with facilitator providing a comprehensive presentation on priority goals with its accurate data through SGDs reports. It starts with holistic approaches to address poverty beyond income metrics. Next, it deliberated on the issue regarding the challenges faced by smallholder farmers and the implications for national food security.



The concept of minority at intersectionality was explored, recognising the intersecting identities and experiences that shape individuals' access to resources and opportunities. Finally, the participants discussed the proper assessment and implementation of SDG progress, highlighting the need for comprehensive monitoring mechanisms and stakeholder engagement to track progress and address gaps in implementation. The group emphasised the need for transparent and accountable practices to ensure effective utilisation of donor resources. Gender-inclusive education and policy interventions were discussed extensively, with participants emphasising the importance of addressing gender disparities in education and promoting equal opportunities for all.

Session 2: Youth's perspectives on the SDGs

Facilitator: Sonam Tshogyal



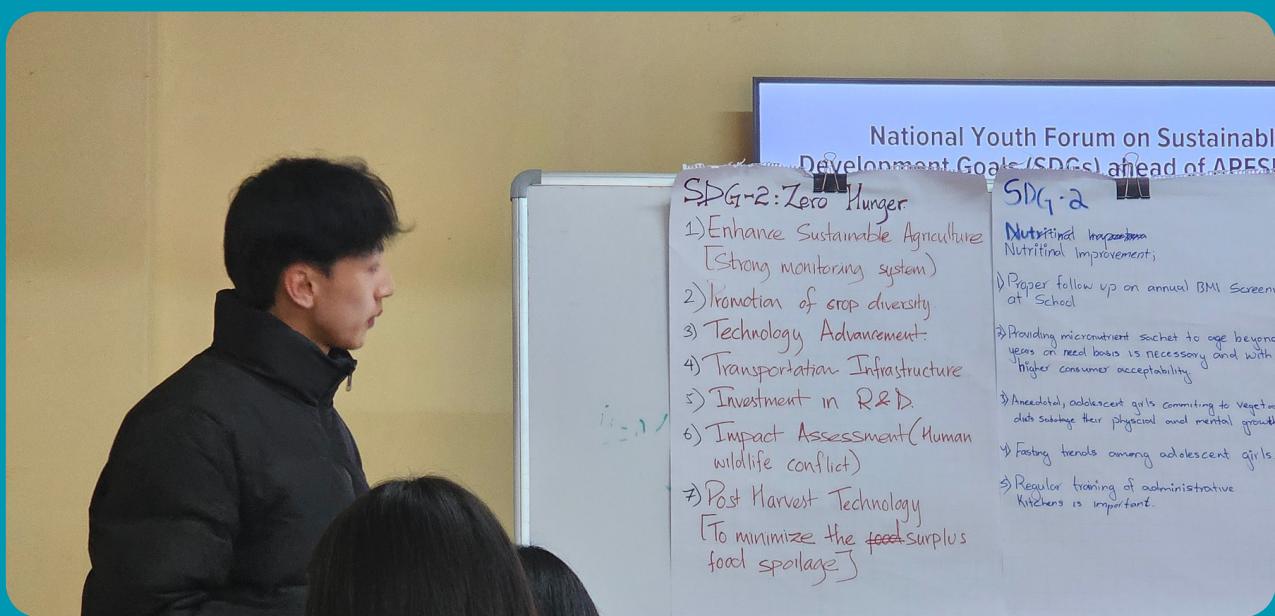
Before lunch participants were divided among the allocated SDGs table arranged in the conference room. The allocation of the participants to respective goals were done during selection as per their field of expertise. All the teams discussed the respective issues and challenges for an hour. This activity enabled the participants to identify the issues related to their respective SDGs in-context of Bhutan. Identification of the issues eventually evoked the thought of mitigation methods for the identified issues



Challenges presented on respective goals:

Goal 1: No Poverty.

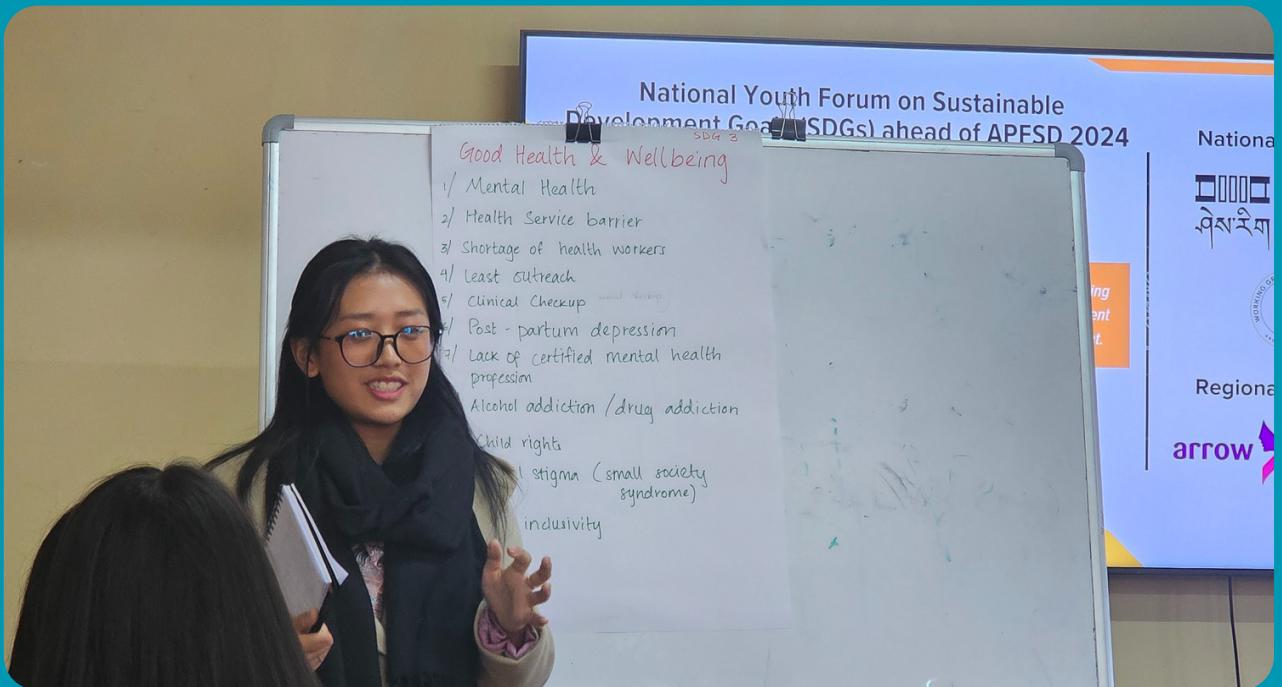
Participants engaged in a comprehensive dialogue on the challenges hindering poverty alleviation, focusing on the stigma of blue-collar jobs and societal biases. Consensus emphasized targeted interventions to combat biases and promote equality, calling for comprehensive employment policies and skill development initiatives. They recognized unemployment's impact on family income and advocated for investments in infrastructure to address geographical disparities. Political corruption was highlighted as a major obstacle, requiring robust governance frameworks. The discussion expanded to the challenges of inclusive education, noting its correlation with restricted economic opportunities and socio-economic disparities perpetuated by inflation and corruption. Limited exposure to urbanization further entrenched poverty. The consensus stressed comprehensive interventions addressing education, economic stability, corruption, and global disparities to effectively tackle poverty.



Goal 2: Zero Hunger

Participants addressed challenges in achieving Zero Hunger, focusing on weak monitoring of sustainable agriculture, insufficient crop diversity, and limited technological advancements. They highlighted road infrastructure issues hampering fresh produce delivery and the lack of investment in Research and Development, especially involving youth. Post-harvest losses threatened food surplus, exacerbated by significant food waste, as indicated by the Bhutan Food Waste Accounts Report (2021). Urgent action and investment were urged to address these issues.

Nutritional improvement was underscored as crucial for achieving multiple SDGs. Concerns were raised over the lack of follow-up on annual BMI screenings in schools and the need for micronutrient sachets for young children. Vegetarian diets' impact on adolescent girls' growth and the rising trend of fasting were noted. Irregular training at administrative kitchens compounded the challenge of delivering safe meals. The consensus stressed targeted interventions, education, and consistent training to address these issues and enhance nutritional outcomes.



Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being

They begin with a lack of focus on mental health challenges. Participants highlighted barriers to accessing health services, including shortages of health workers and limited outreach efforts. Concerns were raised about the increasing prevalence of postpartum depression and the scarcity of certified psychiatrists, with only two available in Bhutan. Additionally, the issue of alcohol and drug abuse among certain demographics emerged as a significant health concern.

Participants also addressed the importance of child rights and the need for inclusive disability infrastructure to ensure equitable access to healthcare services. The discussion underscored the urgency of addressing these issues to promote holistic well-being and improve health outcomes for all individuals. Collaborative efforts were emphasised to enhance mental health services, increase access to care, and prioritise the rights and needs of vulnerable populations, thereby advancing its objectives.

Goal 5: Gender Equality

Several critical issues pertaining to gender equality and women's rights were highlighted. Firstly, there's a concerning increase in gender-based violence, underscoring the urgent need for robust prevention and intervention measures. Additionally, the low representation of women in political positions signifies a systemic barrier to women's empowerment and participation in decision-making processes.

Moreover, the unrecognised and undervalued unpaid care work performed by women were brought on board to discuss. Furthermore, religious beliefs perpetuating the notion of women's inferiority further marginalised and disempowered women in various aspects of life.



Goal 13: Climate Action

Participants discussed the impact of human activities on climate action, including Glaciers Lake Outburst Floods and depletion of cordyceps, leading to migratory extinction and ecosystem disruption. Erratic weather patterns were noted to exacerbate climate risks, affecting the economy, public health, and overall well-being. Waste generation, consumption patterns, and industrial energy consumption were highlighted, advocating for sustainable practices and proactive measures for food security. Cross-boundary policies on greenhouse gas emissions were deemed crucial for global action, alongside adaptive strategies to enhance resilience.

Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

The discussion highlighted critical issues in justice administration, notably a shortage of legal specialists in the diaspora, hindering effective justice delivery. There was a call for legal advertisements to improve public awareness and access to legal services. Concerns were raised about children in conflict with the law being detained alongside adults, emphasizing the need for separate facilities for their safety and rehabilitation. Cyber-crime, particularly Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence, was noted as a significant issue, requiring stringent regulations and enhanced technological capabilities. The complexities surrounding rape cases, including statutory rape and technological limitations in DNA confirmation for prenatal issues, were also addressed. In conclusion, urgent comprehensive reforms and investments in technology and human resources were underscored to strengthen institutions, promote peace, and ensure access to justice for all.



Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Bhutan faces challenges in achieving SDG targets due to limited financial resources and technology in key sectors like agriculture and sustainable energy. Transitioning from a least developed country status has reduced access to funds, necessitating global economic partnerships. Accurate data collection and monitoring are vital, but Bhutan may struggle due to limited resources. Adapting to climate change while maintaining climate neutrality amidst industrial neighbors presents challenges. Policy coherence and institutional coordination are essential for effective implementation, alongside inclusive participation, particularly involving minority groups. Addressing these challenges requires integrating sustainable development principles into policies and fostering collaboration across sectors and levels of government.

Recommendations:

To address the challenges highlighted, several recommendations were considered on the aforementioned specific goals. Bhutan can explore innovative financing mechanisms such as public-private partnerships, foreign aid, and impact investment to mobilise funds for SDG implementation. Additionally, prioritising sectors with high potential for economic growth and job creation can help diversify revenue streams and reduce reliance on imports.

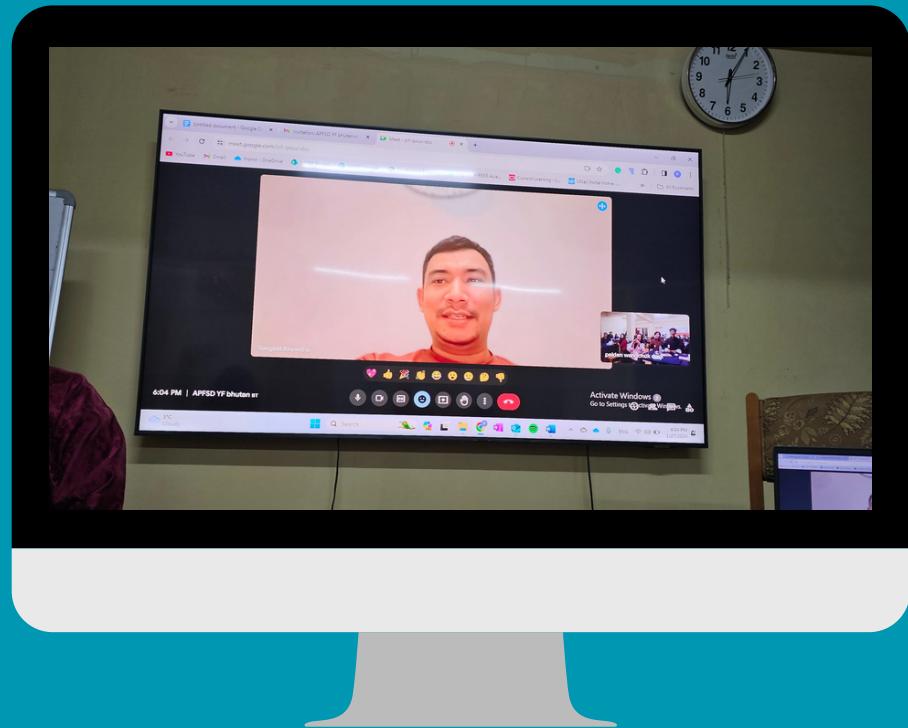
In terms of technology transfer, Bhutan should prioritise capacity-building initiatives and establish partnerships with international organisations and technology firms to facilitate the adoption of modern technologies in agriculture, energy, and other key sectors. Efforts to improve data collection and monitoring should focus on enhancing institutional capacity, promoting data sharing and collaboration, and leveraging technology for more efficient data collection and analysis.

Global economic partnerships should be pursued strategically, leveraging Bhutan's unique selling points such as its commitment to sustainability and carbon neutrality to attract investment and expertise from multinational corporations. Addressing climate change requires a multi-pronged approach, including investments in renewable energy, sustainable land use practices, and climate-resilient infrastructure. Bhutan should also prioritise policy coherence, institutional coordination, and inclusive participation to ensure that development efforts are aligned with sustainable development principles and responsive to the needs of all segments of society.

Closing note:

Sangeet Kayastha, Regional Coordinator(Y-PEER APC)

During the end of the forum regional head of Y-PEER Asia-Pacific Center virtually joined to expressed his utmost appreciation to all the youth advocates present. He offered congratulations for being part of the 2024 cohort of National APFSD and collective efforts towards development of national recommendations that can be further taken to regional forums. He motivated everyone to apply for any future opportunities and continuously volunteer for sustainable journey through Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights approach. His wishes at the end to see everyone at the forum instilled volunteers to work hard to represent their nation.



Day 2:

Session 1: Result-Based Management

Facilitator: Sonam Choki, UNDP Bhutan

Result-Based Management (RBM) is vital for youth organisations and it fosters accountability by defining strong monitoring and evaluations, ensuring transparency to stakeholders. It facilitates impact measurement, guiding evidence-based decision-making, encouraging strategic planning, keeping organisations focused on mission-driven objectives.



The session provided participants with a comprehensive understanding of result-based management principles, including outcome, output, impact, and cause and effect analysis. The Theory of Change methodology was introduced as a valuable tool for planning, monitoring, and evaluating development interventions. Moving forward, participants are encouraged to apply these concepts in their respective Y-PEER network projects to enhance effectiveness and accountability.

Session 2: Action Plan Development

Facilitator: Sonam Tshogyel

Afternoon, the task assigned to various youth groups to draft their action plans for the year 2024 with a standard template. The template required the inclusion of key elements such as activity name, objectives, target audience/indicators, tentative implementation dates, estimated budgets, and means of verification (Monitoring & Evaluation). Each youth group was tasked with providing a concise yet comprehensive description of their planned activities, outlining clear and measurable objectives. Additionally, they were instructed to identify the specific target audience or indicators to gauge the success of their initiatives.

Furthermore, tentative dates for implementation were to be provided, allowing for effective scheduling and coordination of activities throughout the year. Lastly, means of verification for monitoring and evaluation purposes were to be outlined, enabling the measurement of progress and the assessment of outcomes against predetermined benchmarks.

The importance of meticulous planning and strategic foresight was to ensure success and impact of youth-led initiatives in the year ahead. It underscored the need for accountability, transparency, and efficiency in the execution of planned activities, all of which are vital for driving positive change within communities.



Conclusion:

The Bhutan National Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) has provided a comprehensive platform for youthd to engage in meaningful dialogue and collective action towards achieving sustainable development goals. We extend our sincere gratitude to all our partners, Ministry of Education and Skills Development, Circle of Young Minds for Research and Development Career, Working Group on Disabilities along with regional partners Y-PEER Asia-Pacific Center and Asia-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women, for their invaluable contributions and unwavering commitment to this endeavour.

Through collaborative efforts, we have identified key challenges and opportunities, explored innovative solutions, and forged partnerships that are vital for driving progress towards sustainable development in our nation. It is through the dedication and collaboration of our diverse partners that we can overcome barriers, leverage resources, and catalyze positive change across all sectors of society.

As we move forward, let us continue to prioritize partnership building, inclusive participation, and collective action to accelerate the implementation of sustainable development initiatives and ensure a prosperous and resilient future for all. Together, we can make a lasting impact and build a more sustainable and equitable world for generations to come.

Compiled and designed by :

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