Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development YOUTH FORUM 2021 14-17 March 2021

SYNTHESIS REPORT

Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic in Asia and the Pacific: Youth at the Forefront of Accelerated Transformation



Contents

- 4 ACRONYMS
- **5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**
- 6 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

6 BACKGROUND

8 DAY 1: 14 MARCH 2021

- **9** > Welcome, Introduction and Opening Address
- 13 > Day 1: Questions and Answers_1
- Plenary: Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from the COVID-19Pandemic in Asia and the Pacific from Young People Lens
- 14 > Research Speaker
- 14 > Community Speakers on Impact of Covid-19
- **16** > Solution Speakers
- **18** > Day 1: Questions and Answers_2
- 19 > Plenary: Country/Sub-regional Sharing and Peer Learning
- **20** > Day 1: Recommendations

22 DAY 2: 15 MARCH 2021

- **23** > Plenary: Youth Inclusive Sustainable Development Health and Well Being and Decent Work for All at the Centre
- 23 > Segment 1 Speakers
- **27** > Segment 2 Speakers
- **29** > Plenary: Country/Sub-regional Sharing and Peer Learning
- **29** > Day 2: Recommendations

33 DAY 3: 16 MARCH 2021

- **34** > Solidarity Action with the Young People in Myanmar
- 34 > Plenary: Climate Change and Sustainable Present and Future
- 34 > Expert Talk
- **37** > Day 3: Questions and Answers
- **38** > Youth Engagement in Climate Action
- **40** > Plenary: Country/Sub-regional Sharing and Peer Learning
- **40** > Day 3: Recommendations
- **43** > Symbolic Launch for the Youth to Call to Action

44 DAY 4: 17 MARCH 2021

- **46** > Capacity Strengthening Session on Data Driven Advocacy
- **48** > Day 4: Questions and Answers

51 CERTIFICATES

51 CONCLUSION

52 ANNEX

> Regional Youth Call to Action 2021 and Country and Sub-regional Briefs



Acronyms

AIESEC	Association internationale des étudiants en sciences économiques et commerciales
APFSD	Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
APRCEM	Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism
ARROW	Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women
ANM	Auxiliary Nurse Midwife
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
ASPBAE	Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education
BPS	Bureau of Statistics
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DRPD	Regional Representative Council (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah)
EM	Economic Measurement
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EPIC	Every Policy Is Connected to People, Planet and Prosperity
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FNB	Forum for Nation Building
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HLPF	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
KAPAL Perempuan	Institute for Women's Alternative Education
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Questioning
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation Men who have Sex with Men
MSM NDC	
NGO	Nationally Determined Contributions Non-governmental organisation
PoA	International Conference for Population Development
PWD	People with Disabilities
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Rights
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCC	United Nations Conference Center
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
VNR	Voluntary National Review
YACAP	Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines
Youth LEAD	Youth Constituency, Youth Leadership, Education
YPEER	Youth Peer Education Network
YVC4A	Youth 4 Climate Action Project

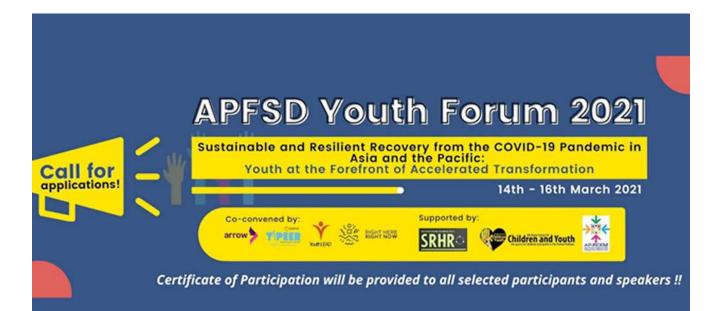
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Acknowledgements

The Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW) would like to thank all the participants for their insight, active participation, energy and involvement in this three day forum. We are grateful for the vibrant discussion from all the participants comprising ambitious and animated young activists, advocates, and representatives from youthled, youth-serving and youth allied-organisations of diverse social movements in Asia and the Pacific region.

At the same time, ARROW would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to our partners Youth LEAD, Y-PEER Asia Pacific Center, and Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (APRCEM) for the collaborative effort in gathering all of these young, ambitious, and animated advocates and activists to collectively pave the way forward in championing for strategic solutions to achieve a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive Asia Pacific. In this regard, ARROW also recognizes Right Here Right Now (RHRN) partnership's contribution to this advocacy initiative since 2017. We would also like to acknowledge Katinka Weinberger and Hitomi Rankine of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), for their unwavering support to the APFSD Youth Forum. A special thank you to the ARROW staff who provided assistance in the forum preparation and many facets of logistics arrangement, including for technology engagements and assistance to accommodate for the largest number of participants in this first virtual convening.

Thank you to Sivananthi Thenenthiran, ARROW's Executive Director, Sai Jyothirmai Racherla, ARROW's Deputy Executive Director, and the rest of the team members at ARROW – Nawmi Naz Chowdhury, Shamala Chandresakaran, Kamal Gautam, Momota Hena, Evelynne Gomez, and colleagues from the Finance and Operations Department for the comments and suggestions made during the review and editing of this document. This report was drafted by the workshop rapporteur, Zana Fauzi, with the aim to reflect and recognise the valuable and diverse contributions that each and everyone provided. It is hoped that this report does due credit to the range of expertise and experiences and quality of discussions that took place.



Executive Summary

The convening of the 5th Asian Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) Youth Forum, held prior to the APFSD 2021, had created a space for youth delegates from around the region to make their voices heard towards the monitoring and review process of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the regional level.

With the theme "Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic in Asia and the Pacific", the threeday forum, plus an extra day of a capacity strengthening session on data driven advocacy, was filled by energetic and vibrant participations from 500 young people from over 34 countries, ranging from activists and advocates from diverse backgrounds in the region. Designed for inclusivity and to maximise participation through multiple virtual plenaries and breakout sessions to discuss opportunities, gaps, and potential youth-led solutions, the forum once again has proven to be one of the most crucial spaces for young people to organise around SDGs in the region towards shaping a holistic response and solutions to the 2030 Agenda.

The main focus of the forum discussions were on mitigating the impact of COVID-19 in respective settings for young people at local, national, and regional levels, and as well as on the SDGs 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16, and 17. Some of the key outcomes include:

- The forum is recognised by the UNESCAP as a youthinclusive and youth-focused preparatory meeting held annually prior to the APFSD.
- The forum brought together about 500 participants from 34 countries (the highest number so far for the Youth Forum) from across the Asia Pacific region from diverse backgrounds, youth movements, and youth led organisations to create a meaningful space for youth to engage in the SDG process. Held virtually this year, the forum also saw more participation from more adolescent delegates, representatives from rural communities, and more underrepresented communities.
- The participants discussed in depth, on the nine SDGs from a youth-lens perspective and able to provide a number of concrete recommendations to be included in the APFSD Youth Call to Action document, as well as in the outcome document for regional implementation and the follow up and review for the 2030 Agenda.
- At the end of the forum, young people developed the Youth Call to Action 2021 to be used for advocacy purposes during the APFSD 2021 deliberations in order to fully integrate the issue of young people in the region in the official APFSD processes.

Background

In the lead up to the High-level Political Forum 2021, the 8th APFSD will be organised from March 23-26, 2021. Titled "Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Asia and the Pacific", it was understood that the 8th APFSD will be organised in a hybrid modality of both physical forums at UNCC campus, but also through online engagements via parallel roundtables and in-depth review of SDGs.

Recognising that young people in the region face varying degrees of challenges to sustainable development across all dimensions of economic, social, and environment, the Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), together with the Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism's (APRCEM) youth constituency, coordinated by Youth Constituency, Youth Leadership, Education, Advocacy and Development (YouthLEAD), co-created the APFSD Youth Forum as the dedicated space for young people from across the Asia and the Pacific region working on diverse sustainable development issues, to meaningfully engage with the monitoring and reviews process of SDGs at the regional level.

This year, the APFSD Youth Forum theme is focused on the impact of COVID-19 in respective settings, at local, national, and regional levels and recommended youth inclusive recovery solutions to accelerate transformation for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Asia Pacific region. The APFSD Youth Forum 2021 was also a space for review of SDGs seen from the youth lens, namely: poverty (SDG1), hunger (SDG2), health and well-being (SDG3), full and productive employment and decent work for all (SDG8), reduced inequalities (SDG10), sustainable consumption (SDG12), climate action (SDG13), peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG16), and partnerships for the SDGs (SDG 17).

Another focus was to assess the implementation of SDGs from a youth lens amongst the Voluntary National Review 2021 (VNR2021) countries, contributing to the voluntary national reviews from a youth lens. The youth forum also discussed how local, national and regional implementation of SDGs are interconnected, and how linkages can be fostered to further accelerate progress around SDGs in the Asia Pacific region in a cohesive, connected, and coordinated manner. The forum was co-convened by ARROW, APRCEM, YouthLEAD and YPEER and supported by interested regional youth organisations and other regional youth networks including peace networks. The aim was to reach out to diverse regional youth groups as well, to be involved in the organising and convening of the APFSD Youth Forum 2021 through a call for applications and a selection process to ensure diverse and meaningful youth participation.

The objectives of the APFSD Youth Forum 2021 were outlined as below:

- To ensure young people voices, their realities and perspectives are included, in setting, transforming, and implementing the regional agenda on sustainable development, with specific reference to the intergovernmental APFSD 2021 processes;
- To sustain the dedicated youth convening space of "APFSD Youth Forum", and discuss SDG implementation with focus on sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Asia and the Pacific from a youth lens;
- Assess the progress, gaps and challenges in the implementation of SDGs slated for in-depth review including SDGs 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16, and 17 from a youth lens, and also address structural and systemic barriers to youth inclusion in sustainable development;
- Contribute to the voluntary national review process, from a youth perspective.
- To develop the Youth Call to Action at regional and national level to inform the intergovernmental APFSD.

Who? Why?

The forum brought together 500 young people from 34 countries representing youth-led and youth-serving organisations across the Asia Pacific region working on all three pillars of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental. The forum, held virtually, managed to convene participants from diverse backgrounds (urban, rural and grassroots) as well as the youth representatives from diverse constituencies of APRCEM.

How?

The APFSD Youth Forum 2021 featured a series of virtual plenary, panel discussions, and dialogue sessions on the identified theme. It was aimed to incorporate capacity strengthening sessions as well with focus on COVID-19 recovery. These sessions included relevant stakeholders, youth-led and youth-serving organisations, and resource persons. Key findings and recommendations from each session were developed into the APFSD Youth Call to Action 2021 to be shared and presented at the APFSD with Member States and the APFSD People's Forum.

This year, the APFSD Youth Forum 2021 was held in a virtual modality using the Zoom platform with the capacity to include young people from diverse contexts to participate from across the Asia and the Pacific region.



Youth SRHR advocates at the APFSD Youth Forum 2019.



Summary of Sessions

DAY 1: 14 MARCH 2021 WELCOME, INTRODUCTION AND OPENING ADDRESS

The first day of the APFSD Youth Forum 2021 commenced with a series of opening and welcome remarks by esteemed speakers such as Sivananthi Thanenthiran (ARROW), Legee Tamir (Youth LEAD), Sangeet Kayastha (YPEER Asia Pacific), Wardarina (APRCEM), and Dr. Katinka Weinberger (UNESCAP).

As this was the first time the forum was conducted online, participants were also onboarded to a series of ground rules in the forum, Zoom etiquette, and guidelines to social media action, followed by an animated introduction of the delegates, where they were introduced by countries and invited to introduce themselves through Zoom's video function.

SPEAKERS: Introductions

Introduction to APFSD Youth Forum

- > Sai Jyothirmai Racherla, ARROW Introduction to APFSD Youth Call to Action
- > Nawmi Naz Chowdhury, ARROW

Welcome by Co-Conveners And APRCEM

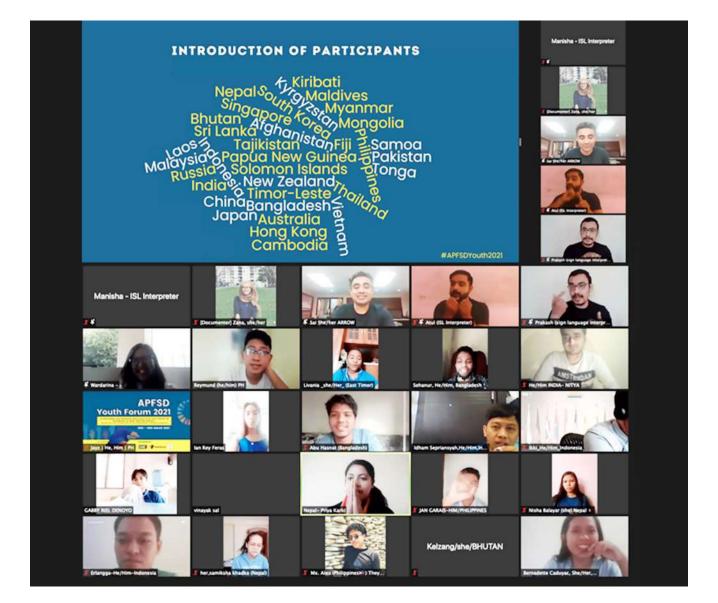
- > Sivananthi Thanenthiran, ARROW
- > Legee Tamir, Youth LEAD
- > Sangeet Kayastha, YPEER Asia Pacific
- > Wardarina, APRCEM

Opening Address

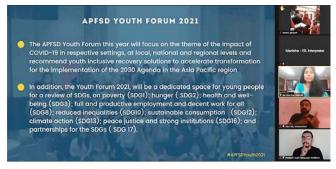
> Dr. Katinka Weinberger, Chief of Environment and Development Division, UNESCAP

Moderator:

> Sai Jyothirmai Racherla, ARROW



INTRODUCTION TO APFSD YOUTH FORUM



Sai Jyothirmai Racherla, ARROW

On behalf of ARROW, Sai welcomed the delegates and provided an overview of the processes for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, laying out the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). These goals, adopted by the UN member states, demand nothing short of a transformation of financial, economic, environmental, social, and political systems that govern our societies to guarantee human rights for all of us. As part of the regular follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda, the member states would be conducting regular reviews annually. For the Asia Pacific region, this will be platformed by the APFSD, of which will be held from 23 till 26 March this year.

The APFSD Youth Forum, added by Sai, was the platform specifically to discuss and deliberate on themes of youth specific realities and recommendations. The discussion and deliberations from the Youth Forum would be used to develop the Youth Call to Action at regional and national level to inform the intergovernmental APFSD.

Sai concluded her brief speech by welcoming all the delegates and recognising all the co-convenors, strategic partners, and all the representatives from youth-led, youth-serving, and youth-allied organisations from all around the region.

INTRODUCTION TO APFSD YOUTH CALL TO ACTION



Nawmi Naz Chowdhury, ARROW

Naz from ARROW took the floor to introduce the APFSD Youth Call to Action. The document is an important advocacy tool as it was used in the regional intergovernmental process and also at international level. The document includes among others: an introduction, development process, key demands, and situational analysis of the lived-in realities of young people from different backgrounds and identities.

Naz reiterated that if the delegates are part of the Youth Call to Action, they can show impact not only on the regional level, but also on the international level. Not only that, with the Call to Action, they can also contribute to the advocacy back to their respective home country.

Ending her short introduction, Naz mentioned that the discussions and the deliberations in all the breakout sessions throughout these three days (14-16 March 2021) would be included in the Youth Call to Action to inform the intergovernmental APFSD at regional and national level.

WELCOME BY CO-CONVENERS AND APRCEM

WELCOME BY CO-CONVENERS AND SUPPORTER OF THE FORUM



Sivananthi Thanenthiran, ARROW

In the first welcoming remark by co-convenors, Sivananthi on behalf of ARROW welcomed the delegates to this year's APFSD Youth Forum by reiterating the forum's very purpose – that is to ensure that young people in the region have a dedicated civic space where their voices are represented in the annual APFSD intergovernmental Forum, along with the implementation of a new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. She added that only through a youthinclusive, human rights-based agenda, intersectional, and responsive approach that we would be able to mitigate the risk of worsening disparities within and among countries and regions. The need for these youth voices and mitigations emerges even more crucial in the time of COVID-19 and other disasters.

With that, Sivananthi added, the APFSD Youth Forum this year was especially designed to discuss COVID-19 impact of young people in all of their diversity. On top of that, the forum will especially focus on the clusters of SDG goals around the themes of health, wellbeing and sustainable development from the perspectives of young people, as well as climate action for sustainable — present and future. This year's programme was also designed to balance around the discussions not only for regional issues, but also for national level sustainable development issues and their recommendations.

All of these discussions and deliberations would feed into the APFSD Youth Call to Action 2021 and would serve as an advocacy tool in the processes leading up to the APFSD 2021. The discussion and deliberations would also feed into the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF) which will take place this July 2021 in New York. Sivananthi concluded her speech by wishing the young delegates all the best for the next three days, as they engaged in an intense learning exchange and advocacy action to further the youth-inclusive and gender responsible sustainable development agenda in the region and in their respective countries.

Legee Tamir, Youth LEAD

Representing one of the co-convenors, Legee from Youth LEAD shared the role of the network in this year's forum. Youth LEAD is a network that empowers young populations – aged between 14 to 30 years old —through leadership, education, advocacy, and development. On top of that, Youth LEAD also works with people who are at risk with HIV infection in the Asia Pacific region. With over 50 focal points across the 19 countries, Youth LEAD's programme is focused on capacity development, advocacy, countries support, knowledge management, and HIV and the sexual reproductive health and rights. The network had been cohosting the Youth Forum with ARROW and YPEER since 2017.

Legee concluded by mentioning how since this year's forum was conducted in virtual modality for the first time, it would be a unique experience to host and support over 500 participants across multiple countries.



Sangeet Kayastha, YPEER Asia Pacific

Representing one of the co-convenors, Sangeet from YPEER commented on what a challenge it would be to host a forum of such volume amidst COVID-19 and the lockdown. However, it was also an opportunity to finally include more than 500 young people from around the world.

Concluding his short speech, Sangeet observed that this time around with the virtual affordances, we had the opportunity to include more adolescents and more youth representatives from rural communities from different backgrounds. This was something that might not have been possible if the event was conducted face to face.

Wardarina, APRCEM

On behalf of APRCEM, Wardarina shared the role of the network as one of the co-convenors for the APFSD Youth Forum and the organising partner for the 2030 agenda process at the global level.

In her speech, Wardarina noted that the number of 500 participants selected from 32 countries for this forum shows that Asia and the Pacific are including the youth to set an example and lead the way to organise and mobilise, and towards sustaining cross movements, power, and solidarity. The idea, according to her, is exciting as APRCEM is the platform that facilitates the civil society engagement for the SDGs in the region. APRCEM has been a civil society platform that is initiated and driven by the civil societies and the people's movement in the region since 2014 — even before the SDGs was adopted.

Dr Katinka Weinberger from UNESCAP reiterated the importance of the SDGs and their goals, especially in the face of the COVID-19. She highlighted how the pandemic might further delay the implementation and assessment of the SDGs, and this is why the recovery must be more inclusive and more importantly, sustainable.

OPENING ADDRESS



Dr Katinka Weinberger, Chief of Environment and Development Division, UNESCAP

In her opening address to the virtual room full of youth delegates of this year's APFSD Youth Forum, Dr Katinka Weinberger from UNESCAP reiterated the importance of the SDGs and their goals, especially in the face of the COVID-19. She highlighted how the pandemic might further delay the implementation and assessment of the SDGs, and this is why the recovery must be more inclusive and more importantly, sustainable.

According to Dr Weinberger, the most recent projections indicate that an additional 89 million people in the Asia Pacific region alone are estimated to have been pushed back into extreme poverty — many of them are children and young people. As the pre-existing inequalities and access to quality education were further intensified during the lockdown, the loss of jobs and livelihoods would affect more women and girls, and migrants and people with disabilities.

On top of that, we are also increasingly facing climate risks and natural disasters. In 2020, 80% of the world were affected both by the COVID-19 crisis and climate induced disasters. With all of these indications, even with full and effective APFSD implementation, emissions will more than double by 2030. All of these undoubtedly will greatly impact the lives of the young people who will inherit this climatechanged planet.

Dr Weinberger reiterated the need for more solidarity and cooperation from all to ensure that young thinkers and leaders must have a place at the decision making table. This is so that they can meaningfully contribute and cocreate in a world where we could finally emerge from this pandemic, and mitigate this issue of climate emergency. In her recommendations for the pandemic response and the recovery effort, Dr Weinberger proposed two recommendations for transformations:



- Reignite the case of action and recognise a global movement beyond the 2030 agenda.
- Young people must have a leading role in these efforts because this is their future that will be shaped by our actions today.

Dr Weinberger ended her impassioned speech with a call to the youth leaders and thinkers in the room, to "use your energy, your enthusiasm, and your skills to propel to make this transformation" for the betterment of the future.

ANSWERS the environmental treaties we have in place are ambitious but sadly not emented. They are especially forgotten in the midst of the pandemic. really require is to ensure that countries have recovery packages that environment as important as other social elements, like economic ing here ESCAP's EPIC tool,* a policy tracking tool for all countries in the hich gives some indication on the policies and the types and range of me time, I would also like to go back to earlier points that there is not mphasis and focus on the environment and environment related actions ermath of the crisis.
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pots, private sectors etc.
different processes here. At the regional level we have APFSD youth eanwhile, a youth forum is being organised in early April in New York PF. do is that we ensure that the perspectives of young people feed into intergovernmental processes. Our secretary general has just issued a agenda that makes it very clear that young people need to be part and e to all intergovernmental processes and discussions.
ress has been so slow because together we are not giving it the attention serves to have. Clearly this is an area that requires more work from our ents, but also from all of us.
als are all very important, but I think what is more important than the the individual goals is the process on how we get there. That process in ere and achieving them needs to include everybody. It needs to be based ussion that involves everybody, and that is something the world leaders nsure.
, we don't make policies. Policies are made at the country level. What we UN is we push for more accountability by supporting member states in g areas that are important and should be addressed, and that are then prward to appropriate policies at country level. These policies are like round the 2030 Agenda and VNR.

* ESCAP's EPIC tool: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAP.CST_.2018.CRP_.1_EPIC_a_generic_tool_for_ policy-data_integration.pdf.



PLENARY

SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT RECOVERY FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC FROM YOUNG PEOPLE LENS

MODERATOR

Legee Tamir, Youth LEAD

This session was aimed to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on the representing communities in the country level, and the extent of relief and recovery measures on their respective communities, as well as their youth-led and youth-inclusive recommendations.

RESEARCH SPEAKER



Sunil Gangavane, ASPBAE

In the first plenary session, Sunil shared his experience conducting a participatory youth-led action research on the impact of COVID-19.

The goal of the research was to focus on providing young people tools to understand the lived realities of their communities and countries in the face of COVID-19, as well as to share the recommendations and solid solutions. Conducted in nine countries including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, and Sri Lanka, the research found that in the pandemic, young people are facing:

- · Deteriorating physical and emotional health
- Difficulties in accessing education through the increasing digital divide
- An increase of gender-based violence (GBV) at home
- An increase in child marriages
- · Lost jobs and livelihoods
- · Migration and stigma attached to it
- · Increase of fake news and misinformation

The research also outlined some solid recommendations:

 Request for clear support from youth organisations, who themselves are needing more support to continue their initiatives (lack of infrastructure, Internet, electricity, etc.), and governments to ensure these needs are provided.

- Scholarships and funds for higher education, especially for women and girls and people with disabilities
- Resources for more teachers' training, and making the education more inclusive in the face of digital divide
- Committed and empowered community learning centres
- Training and capacity building for entrepreneurship for people who have lost their jobs
- Mental health support through helpline, online, or community centres

Sunil concluded his presentation by stressing the need for all stakeholders to start listening to young people and to include them in every initiative, and how to rethink platforms such as APFSD Youth Forum to be adapted in different communities so no more young people will be left behind.

COMMUNITY SPEAKERS ON IMPACT OF COVID-19 (LGBTIQ, DISABILITY, MIGRANT, AND GENDER/FEMINIST REALITIES)



Purin Almira Chedid, Rumah Cemara Bandung West Java Indonesia

Purin, as a young LGBTIQ activist, shared the impact of COVID-19 from a LGBTIQ standpoint. The community became more aware of maintaining cleanliness — for example, wearing masks and constant hand sanitising when leaving the house. COVID-19 also saw the impact of income erosion and economic violence on LGBTIQ people as more of them are left unemployed. This is very worrying as the majority of the community are sex workers and buskers, thus it made them even harder to pay rent or even to sustain a household.

Purin mentioned that in one of the initiatives, the community produced masks to be distributed free of charge to whoever in need. However, the community is also struggling, as the number of donors are decreasing.



Garima Bhattarai, YPEER/Central Campus of Deaf

Through the help of a sign language interpreter, Garima spoke of the initiatives of YPEER at the central campus of deaf to provide some education for the poor disabled community in Nepal prior to COVID-19. When the lockdown was enforced, the initiative was moved online.

Following this move, Garima observed an increase of mental health issues, as it was difficult to reach the community the same way the interaction would happen face to face. More communications problems ensue, as well as the lack of interpreter facilities. On top of that, it becomes increasingly harder to reach communities in the rural areas.

Umang Dhingra, Project Destinytion

As a young migrant advocate, Umang spoke on the issue that migrants face that have been affected by the COVID-19. According to Umang, international students have been one of the most directly impacted groups. Only 13.9% of all surveyed international students said they wanted to continue pursuing education, while others wanted to postpone or cancel. On top of that, the news of many recent deportations also add to the fear and stigma of migration. More than 1% of the whole world's population have been forcibly displaced around the world, and nearly 90% of the world's refugees live in developing countries that often struggle to provide basic services, let alone combat an entire pandemic. The reality is that migrants face many financial tolls during the pandemic, all while being excluded from economic assistance, due to legal status.

Umang ended her short presentation by calling for the stakeholders to prioritise the migrants and refugees in the effort towards combating the pandemic. "After all, a country's policies are only as strong as the people who were marginalised," Umang said.

According to Umang, international students have been one of the most directly impacted groups. Only 13.9% of all surveyed international students said they wanted to continue pursuing education, while others wanted to postpone or cancel. On top of that, the news of many recent deportations also add to the fear and stigma of migration.



Melanie Joy Feranil, YACAP PH

In her passionate presentation, Melanie as a young feminist advocate shared her perspectives on 'shadow pandemic' – a phenomena where the COVID-19 had impacted women and girls globally around the world more so than their male counterparts. At work, women have been subjected to poor working conditions with discriminations and pre-eminent biases. Women in the working class at the same time have been tied to capitalist exploitation of labour. Some women resorted to sex work, which in assertion is capitalisation commodification and objectification to women's bodies. On top of that, more women lost their jobs than men in this pandemic, and they also face more domestic and online violence.

Melanie ended her presentation by calling for everyone to band together to fight the patriarchy – as an entrenched system of oppression– through a shift of paradigms, procedures, processes, tactics, and movements.

Therese Bjork, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Regional Office for South-East Asia

Therese spoke in length on the importance of human rights and the high price of neglecting it. Putting human rights aside, according to Therese, had led to the long standing equalities and unaddressed human rights problems that had left a slope in a high number of a myriad of issues during COVID-19. Therese stressed the importance of putting human rights at the central recovery as it puts a focus on how the lens affects people, particularly the most vulnerable among us, worldwide. Human rights based approach also states on how we must exercise our unearned power so it can be used for the benefit of people.



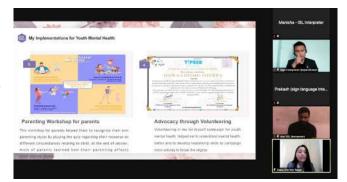
She outlined these recommendations for this youthinclusive, human rights-based in the COVID-19 recovery process:

- We need to focus on saving lives and protecting the right to health.
- We need to ensure availability, accessibility and quality of health care services and information as a human right for everyone without discrimination. While young people are less at risk of dying or serious evidence from COVID, limited access to universal health coverage makes many young people vulnerable if they need health care.
- We need universal health coverage, and we must be sensitive to adolescent and youth specific health care needs including sexual reproductive health, mental health, and social psychosocial support.
- We must also protect women and girls from domestic and other forms of gender based violence.
- We must remind governments that countries that have invested in economic and social rights coped better.
- We must hold governments accountable for their obligation under international human rights law to gradually invest more in people.
- We must ensure the quality education reaches all young people, including minority groups, youth with disabilities, migrants, refugees displaced, young people, and all children and youth who don't have adequate access to the internet.
- We also need urgent employment measures to protect a whole generation of young people, and we need stimulus packages and social protection that are people centred and support those most affected by loss of livelihoods. These measures must take youth into account.
- The virus does not discriminate but its impact does it disproportionately affecting certain communities, highlighting underlying structural inequalities and discrimination. Therefore we must put equality and non discrimination at the centre of response and recovery.
- We must all speak out and take action against discrimination, hate speech, ageism, xenophobia, racism or violence.
- We need more information and more freedom of speech, not less. The voices of young people, especially, can shape a common future.

Furthermore, Therese added, the recovery process must be mindful of the climate change that is now a growing threat to current and future generations. "When we recover", Therese said, "we must be better than we were before." The human rights-based approach recognises that people are the ones causing environmental problems, and as a result, the ones who are also going to be impacted by these very problems. In ensuring a healthy environment, safe, and stable climate, we also ensure a human right in itself. Therese concluded her speech by instilling hope in the young people in the room that if we do this COVID-19 recovery process right through a human rights-based approach, we can stop climate change. The possibilities are endless — we can have an equal, just, and peaceful world without poverty, we can live in harmony with nature, and we can have a world where everyone's human rights are respected and protected. In order to have all of these, we need to ensure the voices of the youth are addressed, and that they have a seat at the table.

SOLUTION SPEAKERS

This session was aimed to raise awareness and present solutions on the impact of COVID-19 in the areas of mental health and well being, institutional approach to youth representation, and digitalisation. The session was then followed by a Q&A.



Dawa Lhomu Sherpa, Forum for Nation Building (FNB) Nepal, Sherpa for Change, Me for myself

Dawa spoke about COVID-19 resilience and mental health solution post COVID-19 recovery. One of the main solutions would be breaking the stigma. According to Dawa, in the midst of COVID-19, mental illness had emerged as a hidden epidemic that is not well talked about due to the stigma surrounding it.

In order to break the stigma, she recommended that we have to have a continuous education about mental health. This can be done through mental health programmes integration in school curriculum. Many young people are currently dealing with mental health issues, and it has come as a necessity to provide a system that they can rely on along with a source of information that can guide them to navigate these issues.

Young people are a very unique group dealing with changes of physical, social, and mental changes every day with multiple exposure to societal issues such as poverty and many other vulnerabilities. It is imperative to understand the needs and



roles of adolescents. Some of the initiatives run by Dawa and her team include by creating a safe zone for parents and students to learn about the role of psychotherapy to win over the mental health issues, a workshop for parents to recognise how their parenting style affects their children's mental health, and counselling sessions.

Dawa concluded her short solution speech with her final recommendation to have more accessible and affordable mental health care through technology, as more and more young people are getting increasingly connected through technology in the midst of COVID-19.



Sahana Kaur, RedTalks; Amnesty International Malaysia Youth Committee; Blue Future; OnePwaa

Sahana spoke about COVID-19 youth structures and decision making structures. In the field of youth engagement, some of the biggest issues include tokenism, a lack of transparency and poor accessibility — all of these issues have all been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In her solution, Sahana recommended a network of youth councils at local, national, regional, and international levels. The overarching aim of all of these councils should be to advance progress towards the SDGs - as that will not only allow us to institutionalise youth representation, it will also allow us to bounce back from the pandemic with youth engagements in the SDGs. These youth councils should each advise government counterparts on SDGs related policies, and conduct a youth policy submission process so young constituents can submit their own ideas for SDG related initiatives. The members should be 15 to 25 years old, as they are a significantly disempowered age group, particularly in the context of COVID-19 recovery. The council should also maximise transparency by making communication materials public record, and can be funded by governments and or the UN, in order to eliminate barriers like the digital divide. At the end of the day, Sahana added, the goal is always to incorporate youth with the decision making bodies.

Sahana concluded her speech by saying that as a result of the pandemic, this is one of the most feasible first steps that we can take to collectively move towards institutionalising youth representation.



Diwash Shrestha, Reduct Nepal

Diwash spoke on how digitalisation can be a solution for youth in the middle of the pandemic. He spoke about his experiences organising physical onsite technology events such hackathons and bootcamps prior to COVID-19. All of these got upended during the pandemic, and it was evident that onsite events are no longer feasible due to a restriction of physical mobility.

In his solution, Diwash and his team organised an online session where participants from different backgrounds were able to come together to discuss and learn about different technologies. The sessions have empowered the young people who are interested in technology to stay motivated by learning technical skills, as well as building networks to boost their career goals.

In her solution, Sahana recommended a network of youth councils at local, national, regional, and international levels. The overarching aim of all of these councils should be to advance progress towards the SDGs — as that will not only allow us to institutionalise youth representation, it will also allow us to bounce back from the pandemic with youth engagements in the SDGs.



DAY 1: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS _2		
QUESTIONS	ANSWERS	
Does human rights and human responsibilities work hand in hand? Why is there more advocacy for the former than the latter?	The human rights framework does consist of rights that we all have as human beings and it is common to all cultures, so no one can take them away from us. It does come with responsibilities. However, when we talk about rights holders and due to barriers, we often talk about governments. Governments have entered into international agreements and we can take them to court for [neglecting our human rights]. For example, when it comes to children, they have rights as children, and as parents, we must respect their rights. At the same time, there are obligations that we all have e.g. we need to respect each other.	
What would be the importance of human rights and the vaccine contribution? Can we see a dilemma such as Israel's vaccine contribution policy in the Asia Pacific region, in a sense of discrimination by contribution?	 This is definitely very concerning. Global problems, like COVID-19, like climate change, pollution etc. these are the things we need to address together. From the human rights perspective, the way that the whole vaccine debate has unfortunately gone in a direction where richer countries get to vaccinate their own people first, is definitely wrong. Until we are all protected, not all of us are – does not matter if you are from the US or Europe – as the virus has the ability to mutate in many forms and can possibly infect us again. The High Commissioner for Human Rights has been very clear in saying that the access to vaccines needs to be equitably distributed, even though we do not see this. How to hold these countries accountable? We don't really have the mechanisms that we would need to have to take them to court. This issue is quite complicated because we are aware of it, but we don't really have the answers to them. The vaccine rollout is an enormous concern to everyone, including young people – because they can also have underlying conditions and fall sick – but also because until everyone, including the young people, are protected, then none of us are really protected. 	
How has the UN SDG contributed to the mental health and wellbeing of youth in the pandemic? Are they focusing on the mental health of youth?	There has been a section for mental health. There has been a slogan, "there is no health without mental health." So there definitely has been implementation regarding mental health issues of youth. Regarding wellbeing and how to cope with it, the contributions have been documented at the country level. However, based on what I see in my community, there has been a lack of real implementation in a major form.	

PLENARY

COUNTRY/SUB REGIONAL SHARING AND PEER LEARNING

PLENARY SESSION: SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT **RECOVERY FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN ASIA AND** THE PACIFIC FROM YOUNG PEOPLE LENS

SPEAKERS:



In these sessions, participants deliberated on key recommendations on the APFSD theme of the day (impact of COVID-19) and the SDG 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, and 16 from the lens of the youth delegates to be taken forward at the APFSD official intergovernmental meeting. The participants were placed in 17 Zoom breakout rooms organised by countries and sub-regions. They were to discuss and come up with recommendations for a youth-inclusive SDG agenda in the Asia Pacifc based on the questions posed each day from

14 - 16 March. They then returned to the plenary and presented the key recommendations. Each of these recommendations were documented and included in the Youth Call to Action document, which were presented at APFSD 2021.

The groups for the Zoom breakout rooms were as follows, and they remain the same throughout Day 1 - Day 3:

DAY 1 – DAY 3: ZOOM BREAKOUT ROOMS			
GROUP	COUNTRIES/SUBREGIONS	GROUP	COUNTRIES/SUBREGIONS
1	East, North East Asia and Central Asia	9	Indonesia
2	Oceania	10	Indonesia
3	Bhutan, Maldives, and Sri Lanka	11	Malaysia
4	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam	12	Nepal
		13	Nepal
5	Afghanistan	14	Pakistan
6	Bangladesh	15	Pakistan
7	India	16	Philippines
8	India	17	Philippines



DAY 1:

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

In the breakout rooms, the participants were asked to discuss the following questions from the respective country/sub-region and the point of view of young people, and then to present the recommendations in the plenary.

- What is the impact of COVID-19 on the respective youth communities?
- Impact of relief and recovery measures on your respective communities. Did this exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, or was it positive?
- What are your recommendations for a sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Asia and the Pacific from young people lens?

The recommendations, according to the countries and subregions were:

GROUP	DAY 1: RECOMMENDATIONS
1	 It's not enough to have only youth voices heard, we also have to be involved in the decision making. Provide enough education, mitigate inequality, and also deal with job and employment issues.
2	 Bridge the digital divide and build stronger digital connectivity in the region by the creation of an alliance. This will inform development and it will aim to adapt to contributing sustainability in the overall aim of reducing the digital divide. The need for inclusive participation in policymaking, and adopting policies to be youth inclusive.
3	 Issues: education sector, and domestic violence, sexual reproductive health. Curb mental issues and SRH by having young people in decision making and include people in the rural area.
4	 Raise awareness on education and mental health in alignment with the SDG. Reduce the gap between the privileged and the underprivileged in the digitalisation effort post-COVID. Reach out to the communities and get support from the third parties.
5	 Education was highly impacted. People have no access to education because no power or internet is very expensive. Government must make the prices of data affordable to everyone where every class of society can access them. As this is the area that affected young people directly, the government should let young people decide for themselves and include them in the decisions. Government should also be prepared if there's another disaster coming.
6	 Increase inclusion and access to government planning level to policy and including local level administration. Mitigate child marriage rates, which have gone high due to COVID-19 for both girls and boys. Focus on skilling up the youth along with the technical skills. Organise youth council structure. Encourage effective implementation of online interventions to reduce the education year gap as well as job year gap inclusive strategies. Improve underrepresented youth groups, including Indigenous youths. Ensure that no one is left behind.
7	 Consider a cluster approach of organising mentorship among country groups. Creation of a consortium by including people within different sectors of the society. Provide CSR programmes . Have gender budgeting – analysis of budgetary and government policies through a feminist lens, discuss LGBTQ problems, sanitary problems, and mental health. Provide digital access to virtual safe spaces. This is important for discussion on menstrual health, sexual reproductive health etc. The interlinkages here become very important. If there's no social empowerment of youth through affordable and equitable access to information on their rights, that would become increasingly difficult for youth.
8	 Strengthen the information and making information available to all sectors of the society, as well as collaboration with NGOs and civil society organisations. Safe space for LGBT community and other communities to address youth issues.



GROUP	DAY 1: RECOMMENDATIONS
9	 Enter organisational body harmonisation to support locally rooted solutions to reach provincial populations, such as supporting youth capacity building while pushing for an inclusive digitalisation of our livelihoods with increased internet access. Push for a bill of rights to support sexual rights as well as reclaiming our civil space for political freedoms.
10	 Integrate corporations where marginalised communities have space. Government has to propose solutions about this issue. Economic support to entrepreneurs where they can share their skills and knowledge e.g. how to build a startup business. In return, young people can have the opportunity and have job opportunities for themselves. It can also help support the national GDP as well. We face a lot of discrimination for gender issues. We must draw the attention and to solve the problem regarding the discrimination.
11	 Look into social protection and stimulus programmes to address the unemployment of youth. Following International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards, look into and begin the divestment of fossil fuels and investment through appropriate stimulus packages. Better investment in mental health services – subsidised rates for patients and comprehensive approach around the whole health sector. Provide gender sensitive training to police and policymakers, and enforcement bodies to implement a domestic violence law that has yet to be passed. Collaborative efforts within local authorities and civil society organisations to address the refugee issues through community based programmes. Address the digital divide, complete with comprehensive policies and programmes.
12	 Financial burden and social stigma has led to mental health issues. An increase of domestic violence, child marriage, young pregnancy and suicide. Bright side: digital literacy has increased since everything moves online. There should be increasing investment in health and developing health infrastructures. Youth participation should be promoted in policy formulation and implementation, and local entrepreneurship. Since there is no digital connectivity in rural areas, data management, security and communications must be strengthened among rural areas amongst vulnerable and marginalised communities.
13	 Prepare backup plans and emergencies steps. Involvement of youth from local and national levels. Provide gender friendly, and disabled friendly spaces. Focus on our health services such as providing safety of abortion services or sanitary services.
14	 Education is really impacted when they have to work from home and impact mental health. Focused on the implementation and steps for the betterment of the society.
15	 Government should prioritise the policy in the pandemic – remove mental health stigma. Policies should be revised. Equal opportunities for education in terms of rural and urban areas. Digital connectivity and effort should be made by governments, NGOs and CSOs (civil society organisation).
16	 Prioritise the health sector especially on the part of the vaccination process – the privatisation side of the government is not well synchronised with the other sectors. Mitigate the lack of information dissemination and increase of fake news. Reduce the gap of the education sector in providing access to online setup for classes, accessibility, and digitalisation.
17	 More partnership between government NGOs and civil society and ensure the participation of youth in policy development particularly in agriculture and food security, education, public health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, climate action and response, transportation and mobility, among others. More response from duty bearers in terms of digitalisation to address the digital divide, as it harms various areas in society.





PLENARY

YOUTH INCLUSIVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - HEALTH AND WELL BEING AND DECENT WORK FOR ALL AT THE CENTRE

PLENARY SESSION: YOUTH INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT- HEALTH AND WELL BEING AND DECENT WORK FOR ALL AT THE CENTRE

SPEAKERS:





DR. JO SAUVARIN ADVISER ON ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH UNFPA, ASIA PACIFIC REGION JENELLE BABB HIV AND HEALTH EDUCATION ADVISOR UNESCO, ASIA-PACIFIC REGION



DR. YE YU SHWE ADVISOR, EPIDEMIOLOGY AND RESPONSE MONITORING UNAIDS, ASIA-PACIFIC REGIION



MODERATOR:

NAWMI NAZ CHOWDHURY PROGRAMME MANAGER ARROW

The second day of the APFSD Youth Forum 2021 was dedicated to discussing SDGs 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 16, and 17, on youth inclusive solutions to achieving universal health coverage, access to safe and effective medicines and vaccinations for all, especially in the midst of the pandemic. In addition to that, the day was also dedicated to discuss ways to enable improved and sustainable economic growth by harnessing the capacities and skills of the diverse youth populations in the Asia Pacific region.

SPEAKERS:

First Segment - Resource Panel Discussion

- > Dr. Josephine Sauverin, UNFPA Regional Office
- > Jenelle Babb, UNESCO Regional Office
- > Ye Yu Shwe, UNAIDS Regional Office

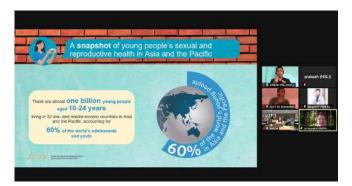
Second Segment – Youth Panel Speakers on Discrimination, Inequality, Decent Work for All, Disability Rights, Data and Sustainable Development

- > Trystancius Sean Matthieu, AIESEC, HELP University
- > Sarocha Kittisiripan, Leonard Cheshire
- > Nguyen ThiN Ngoc Tien, Mirror Mirror Vietnam/Plan International in Vietnam
- > Abida Bhirawasiwi, Bureau of Statistics Ende (BPS Ende), under Bureau of Statistics Indonesia (BPS RI)

MODERATORS:

Nawmi Naz Chowdhury, Kamal Gautam, and Sangeet Kayastha

FIRST SEGMENT – RESOURCE PANEL DISCUSSION



Dr. Josephine Sauverin, UNFPA Regional Office

Dr. Sauverin presented a brief overview of the progress for young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the region. The data is going to be released in an upcoming publication called My Body is My Body, My Life is My Life.

In her presentation, Dr Sauverin mentioned that out of the 60% of the world's young people are located in the Asia Pacifc region. Out of this number, about 14 million adolescents, ranging from age 15-19. As the age of marriage is increasing, we however, are not meeting the needs of these sexually active young adolescents and youth. There are a number of significant barriers to young people in achieving SRHR. One of them includes the lack of knowledge of contraceptives amongst adolescents. This results in 3.7 million births to 15 to 19 year old girls in the Asia Pacific region. The number of actual pregnancies, however, can be much higher, as there are no accurate data of abortions in the region. At the very same time, there are severe impacts on education, future employment, and social activities for young unmarried adolescents who are pregnant.

Child marriage has also been one of the topics that had been highly discussed as one of the significant barriers to youth SRHR. There has been an increase in adolescent pregnancy in South Asia, which are very much linked to the decrease in child marriage. The rates in East Asia and Southeast Asia, however, are staying the same. At the same time, adolescent fertility rates are decreasing over the last few decades.Circumstantial child marriage account for 1/3 of births in adolescent girls under the age of 18 in Southeast Asia.

Another significant barrier would be the fact that the laws and policies fail to recognise the agency of young people. In many countries, the legal age of consent to sex is set at a higher age than when young people are actually becoming sexually active. In this case, it places sexually active young people outside the law, and causes them lots of barriers to accessing SRHR services. Another example is when adolescents under the age of 18 require parental consent before they can access contraceptives, or an HIV test.

There are a number of significant barriers to young people in achieving SRHR. One of them includes the lack of knowledge of contraceptives amongst adolescents. This results in 3.7 million births to 15 to 19 year old girls in the Asia Pacific region. The number of actual pregnancies, however, can be much higher, as there are no accurate data of abortions in the region. At the very same time, there are severe impacts on education, future employment, and social activities for young unmarried adolescents who are pregnant. Another significant barrier would be the fact that the laws and policies fail to recognise the agency of young people. In many countries, the legal age of consent to sex is set at a higher age than when young people are actually becoming sexually active. In this case, it places sexually active young people outside the law, and causes them lots of barriers to accessing SRHR services.

arrow Prese **** SRHR

GBV has been yet another problem in the region. It was estimated that 1 in 2 young women in the Pacific, and 1 in 4 young women in South Asia have experienced physical and/ or sexual intimate partner violence.

Lastly, young people with diverse sexual orientation or gender identity and expression face many barriers due to criminalisation of sexual activities. Young men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender people are a significant proportion of the 420,000 young people living with HIV in our region. They also face stigma and discrimination, bullying, and violence. This more often leads to increased levels of depression and suicide.

Dr Sauverin stressed that all of the barriers are essential hindrances to the achievement of SDGs in our region. Ending her presentation with a high note, she addressed the room that we do have a significant resource. These are the young people in the Asia Pacific region, who are educated and connected, and have the ability and the power to remove all of these barriers, and together we can work towards SRHR and accessible SRHR services for young people in the region.





Jenelle Babb, UNESCO Regional Office

Jenelle presented an overview of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) for young people in all their diversity, and how far we are from the goal in this region.

In 2019, UNFPA, UNESCO and IPPF conducted a regional review on the status of CSE involving 30 countries in the Asia Pacific. The main objective was to provide a strong evidence base on the reach and the impact of sexuality education in this region. The review was also to offer a snapshot of the status of national programmes across the region, through quantitative and qualitative data collection.

Through the review, Jenelle elaborated the findings. It was found that:

- In 12 out of 27 countries, sexuality education is not introduced to young people in early childhood.
- At least 44% of girls and 45% of boys had not received information about menstruation or wet dreams before they experienced them for the first time.
- 79% reported that teachers do undergo training on sexuality education before teaching it at school but responses indicate a lack of knowledge of any robust frameworks for measuring quality of the preparedness or the efficacy of this teacher training.
- Only a few basic topics are covered in sexuality, education, and curriculum at the primary level.
- No country in Asia and the Pacific reportedly covers all of the eight key concepts outlined in the international technical guidance and sexuality education.
- Out of 1402 online youth survey respondents, only 28% of them felt that their school taught them about sexuality adequately. This drives young people to rely on other sources of information about their reproductive health and about relationships and about their bodies e.g. Internet.
- This satisfaction is reported even lower amongst LGBTIQ youth respondents and respondents with disabilities.
 Very few countries in the Asia and Pacific Region address vulnerable populations in their sexuality education curriculum.

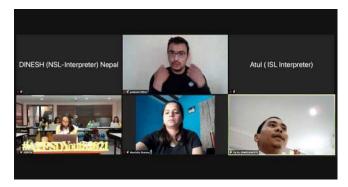
Jenelle mentioned that CSE is no longer a privilege, but it is an important part of a good quality education (SDG₄) - which itself is a human right and a public good. Integration of CSE in education is part of an inclusive quality education, which should support the realisation of individual or group rights, and the building of healthy, sustainable, peaceful, just, and cohesive societies. It was evident that we still have a long way to go in terms of equity of access to CSE - in terms of teaching and learning experience, in terms of inclusion of vulnerable learners in education overall, especially for children with disabilities, migrant and ethno linguistic minority children, as well as in terms of gender equality within and through education, including learners of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. Additionally, all of these progresses have been set further back due to COVID-19.

Ending her presentation, Jenelle outlines some recommendations through four domains:

- Laws and policies: ensure inclusion of mandatory CSE in national laws for all learners from early primary through secondary levels & articulating approaches for engaging vulnerable and out of school learners with CSE that is appropriate to their needs.
- Curriculum development: meaningful participation of learners, their families, and key community gatekeepers in the development of curriculum.
- Enabling operational environments: stronger intersectoral collaboration to bring more closer CSE and youth-friendly SRHR services, & deliberate efforts of building trust with families and communities.
- Teacher preparation and support: investment in teachers' capacity building through quality curriculum and professional learning opportunities, & supportive structures for teachers to grow in their practice through mentoring, peer learning and supportive supervision.

CSE is no longer a privilege, but it is an important part of a good quality education (SDG4)—which itself is a human right and a public good. Integration of CSE in education is part of an inclusive quality education, which should support the realisation of individual or group rights, and the building of healthy, sustainable, peaceful, just, and cohesive societies.





Ye Yu Shwe, UNAIDS Regional Office

Dr. Shwe spoke on strengthening data quality and improving the availability of the disaggregated data for young people. In providing health and well being and decent work for youth, it is important to have quality and inclusive data to inform the system and to prepare the programme to improve the health and well being of all, including young people.

While we do have the data to proceed with the programme, it is also imperative to pose these questions: Do we have quality data? Do we have the disaggregated data by age and sex to inform the system and the programme for the young people? Do we have enough data or strategic information to inform the programmes and the services to make progress on each of the SDG goals and to measure the progress of the targets, particularly when it comes to our young people?

There is a big gap of data that is not fed into the national programme or database, hence they cannot be used for the programme to improve the health and well being of all. Dr. Shwe stressed that we need to highlight this through targeted advocacy to the government and key stakeholders.

Dr. Shwe added that high data quality is a prerequisite for better health policies, programmes and the services. This is why attaining data quality actually requires the commitments and continuous collaboration among all stakeholders. He proceeded to speak about several dimensions to assess and improve in terms of data quality improvement. More questions were posed: How well does the data reflect the reality? Is it comprehensive or complete? Is it consistent with all the requirements? Is it unique? How about the timeliness and validity? To ensure the improvement of data quality, periodic data quality assessments should be done, along with constant monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity building through customised training and measuring. ME& sustainability needs to be safeguarded by strengthening the capacity of M&E staff.

Dr. Shwe also highlighted the need for the availability of the disaggregated data. Many countries face the challenges with disaggregated data through system and data analysis issues. It was understood that data and strategic information can guide the public responses and improve the wellbeing of all, and at the same time it can impactfully guide the response and prioritisation and programming. This however, would only happen if the data could tell the comprehensive picture of the situation of the particular health issue. There is a big gap of data that is not fed into the national programme or database, hence they cannot be used for the programme to improve the health and well being of all. Dr. Shwe stressed that we need to highlight this through targeted advocacy to the government and key stakeholders.

He recommended the solutions at three levels:

- Policy: policymakers to address the system issues such as age of consent or ethical consideration around minors in the survey, enhance the political will and resource mobilisation for the health information systems, & make sure that young people are captured in the system so the programmer can analyse and use and inform the programme.
- Programme: set up the system or adapt the system to allow regular and systematic collection of disaggregated data, enhance the dialogues across the partners as well to improve the coordination in terms of technical support and system strengthening, a collective effort for balance and alignment with a global strategy, enhance the broader stakeholders engagement including civil society and community of young people and improve the collaboration and data sharing, & improve data accessibility and transparency and enhance data harmonisation to the main stream of data or integrate the multiple data sources into the main data system.
- Implementation: align the data demand, strengthen the capacity of the local health management teams and health facility staff in routine data collection for disaggregated and granular data, conduct the routine data quality assessments and implement data quality improvement measures, & enhance the resources, particularly human resources at the implementation level, including the different sectors, the government health teams, and also the committee helping to strengthen the data collection and analysis and use.

SECOND SEGMENT - YOUTH PANEL SPEAKERS ON DISCRIMINATION, INEQUALITY, DECENT WORK FOR ALL, DISABILITY **RIGHTS, DATA AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

YOUTH COMMUNITY SPEAKERS ON DISCRIMINATION, INEQUALITY, DECENT WORK FOR ALL, DISABILITY RIGHTS, DATA AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SPEAKERS





TRYSTANCIUS SEAN MATTHIEU PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT INDONESIA





NGUYEN THI NGOC TIEN PLAN INTERNATIONAL VIETNAM



S. ABIDABHIRAWASIWI YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE JUNIOR STATISTICIAN ANALYST BUREAU OF STATISTICS INDONESIA



SANGEET RAYASTHA COORDINATOR YPEER ASIA PACIFIC CENTER

This session was aimed to share the experiences of prominent youth activists in the region of Asia and the Pacific on the topic of discrimination, inequality, decent work for all, disability rights, data and sustainable development.



Trystancius Sean Matthieu, AIESEC, HELP University

In his passionate speech, Trsytancius spoke about the principles of harmony and the relation of the philosophy of 'wa'. Harmony, according to the philosophy, can only be achieved if we respect differences, and embrace diversity. In reality, we are more divided than ever these days, with racism, unequal treatment, the civil unrest, wars, and many more. Only by coming together and forgoing our differences we can stop the cycle by reflecting on what our predecessors have written in the past about embracing diversity and harmony.



Sarocha Kittisiripan, Leonard Cheshire

Sarocha spoke about the journey of working with the people with disabilities (PWD) in Thailand. There are around 180 - 220 million youth with disabilities worldwide, where 80% of them live in developing countries. Every day they face marginalisation and severe social, economic and civic disparities due to a range of factors, such as stigma and non accessible work environments. As SDG8, that states ensuring decent work and economic growth for all, also applies to youth with disabilities to have decent employment, it is sad that it is still an everyday situation to see how PWD are often excluded from working or earning a living.

Sarocha enlightened on the problems for PWD at the workplace. Many workplaces lack accessibility considerations. For example, they do not provide and assist with devices that can afford more convenience for PWD to work, such as accessible touchscreen for the blind people, and safe ramps for wheelchair users in the building. Employers refuse



to make the system to be more accessible, citing that PWD do not have the capability to work just like people with no disabilities. These challenges are made more visible during COVID-19. Furthermore, employers also think that providing access to people with disabilities will cost too much, rather than think of it as an investment. Adding more to this list of stigma and discriminations faced by PWD at the workplace, employers often refuse to offer PWD proper positions at work. On top of that, there are no salary raises for them, and they are often not promoted to any higher positions. They are also hired to fulfill the companies' corporate social responsibility (CSR), just for the face of diversity, or just to follow the law.

Sarocha ended her speech by asking for two requests for people in the room: firstly, we must begin to share correct understanding and information on disabilities, rather than making assumptions. Finally, we must also have faith and believe in the abilities of PWD by providing them equal opportunities just as everyone else.

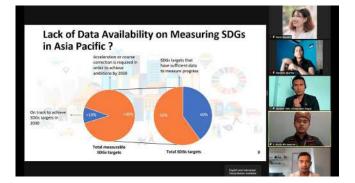


Nguyen Thi Ngoc Tien/Xavia, Mirror Mirror Vietnam/Plan International in Vietnam

Xavia spoke of her experience as a woman working in the automation and testing industry—which is a traditionally male-dominated industry. Sharing some statistics, Xavia mentioned that in 2018, women's participation in the labour force is 48%, compared with 75% for men. At the very same time, the percentage of women on company boards in Asia Pacific is at about 15%. It is very clear that the numbers for the general participation of women in the workforce are still too low, and this leads to the economic case for gender disparity.

Xavia spoke of the challenges working in a male dominated industry, where she was shunned at conferences for the fact that she is a woman. It took her almost a year to prove that she is really capable at what she does. In sharing her solution to this stigma and issue, Xavia added that the issue of gender disparity in corporate leadership is not a problem that will be solved by just women, for women. Men also need to step up, including the people in the organisation, as gender disparity in the workforce is an organisational limitation that needs to be countered by all genders, levels, and departments.

Xavia ended her presentation by assuring women and nonbinary people to continue to have faith, to believe in our abilities, and to raise our voice and be proactive in the fields that we want to be involved in.



Abida Bhirawasiwi, Bureau of Statistics Ende, under Bureau of Statistics Indonesia (BPS RI)

In his presentation, Abida spoke about the role of data and statistics for the SDG progress in the Asia Pacific Region. According to Abida, there is a lack of data availability towards achieving SDGs in the Asia Pacific region. While we are currently on track to achieve less than 10% SDG targets in 2030, we still need an accelerated course correction in order to achieve 90% of other measurable ambitious targets. In the UNESCAP report, there is a significant lack of data to measure the 40% of all SDG targets, and about 53% no data available at the global or regional level for youth related SDGs. This is alarming as we have less than 10 years to achieve the SDGs.

Abida stressed that the gold standard for planning and policy is evidence base, and to do so, we need data as the main backbone for excellent evident based solutions to tackle SDGs challenges. The main question we have now is, how do we plan without adequate data?

While these problems require some serious institutional interventions, Abida outlined a few recommendations for us to contribute ourdata in individual level. Firstly, we could start measuring our impact as a person to the environment and the economy. Following that, we could start measuring our project impact from SDGs perspective by being flexible and continuous on the implementation. From the measurements, we could start to publish our impact on infographics, videographics or annual reports. Finally, with these data, we could reach any organisations or individuals who can help us to organise and report the data.





PLENARY

COUNTRY/SUB REGIONAL SHARING AND PEER LEARNING

DAY 2:

ON HEALTH AND WELL-BEING, AND DECENT WORK FOR THE YOUTH

In the breakout rooms, the participants were asked to discuss the following questions from the respective country/sub-region and young people point of view, and then to present the recommendations in the plenary:

- Goals 3, 10, 16, 17: What is the situation and how do we sustain the progress of the Sustainable Development Goal Agenda related to universal access to SRHR for all young people, including SRHR services?
- Goals 8, 10, 16, 17: How do we increase labour force participation and decent work for all young people?

The recommendations, according to the countries and subregions were:

GROUP	DAY 2: RECOMMENDATIONS
	 Plenary Room (for those unable to access breakout rooms) Build the capacity of the education providers, including teachers, on comprehensive sexuality, education, and SRHR needs for young people. Discussion around barriers, which included language constraints e.g. when a service provider is talking about SRHR, there are some language constraints amongst some young people. To mitigate this, we need to build trust and accessibility. Discussion around health and mental wellbeing at work, which is greatly impacted during COVID-19. Mental health is not part of SRHR discussions when it comes to young people, so this needs to change. During disaster or pandemic, relief is provided in the form of food, medication, etc. but not much emphasis on SRHR. The need to create a good and enabling environment for young people to seek jobs or or entrepreneurship initiatives. This requires a lot of initiatives from the government, which can include counselling, training, and mentorship.
1	 The need for youth friendly services in terms of SRHR to ensure our rights in the East Asian countries. Funding and finances for the programmes related to youth needs to be increased significantly. In terms of labour and force, we need enterprise partnership skills and mentorship programmes to enable us to create our own jobs especially in China where salary, housing, and marriage are being faced with the increasing number of young people.
2	 Improve national curriculum and the improvement of SRH. Promote practices of food security, and a more caring economy Awareness and training sessions contraceptives to be more accessible. Fiji has a youth entrepreneurship scheme programme that supports its youth. Youth should be employed both male and female, promote gender equality and also have some strong referral pathways. Educate our families and relatives about shifting the taboo culture.
3	 The need for incorporation of comprehensive sexual education in the school curriculum. Train teachers on the delivery of SRHR and CSE in the schools and institutions. The inclusion of both men and women to be included in health talks in schools. The parents should also be included in educating them about CSE, since everything begins at home. Making SRHR services available everywhere. Enforce insurance and compensation for the workers as the private workers usually do not have these things in our countries. Taxes on resources. Career counselling to guide youth post school and university life.
4	 Proper health treatment at the workplace, at home, and at the hospital. Demand for social justice and climate protection. Promote women's rights. Provide a space for young people where it promotes freedom of expression, especially in Cambodia. LGBT health is still a male-centric issue, so this needs to change.



GROUP	DAY 2: RECOMMENDATIONS
5	 Work and education is important, so free education should be provided even after school and they attend universities. Workshops for students and teachers to improve the quality of education and to provide students the independence they can have after finishing school.
6	 National Development Policy on sexual issues and to include more young people, including sexually diverse people and disabled people in the policy too. Awareness to help local level people. Inclusive education system for all levels for SRHR. Comprehensive and youth friendly policy to mainstream the SRHR services. Digitalisation and remove language constraints so all youth could access. E.g include translations for languages for indigenous communities. Enhancing government archaic services, which is now not accessible. Government to arrange for teachers to deliver SRHR content to students.
7	 The need to empower and promote social, economic and political inclusion of all. More vocational training. Disaggregated data-led partnerships inclusive of people with disabilities. Private sector to help with apprenticeship and career counselling. Digital gaps need to be addressed for communities impacted in COVID-19. Not just entrepreneurship, but also provide access to decent work opportunities for equal work pay, social security, and many others. Awareness of government sectors to be in course curriculum.
8	 Comprehensive sexual education within its own curriculum and include young people in the development. Train ASHAs (Accredited Social Health Activist) and ANMs (Auxiliary Nurse Midwife) on health related issues including SRHR. Focus on all aspects of health, not just chronic health but also mental and social health. Equal participation of gatekeepers such as parents, teachers, and community members. Create provisions and participatory collaboration with NGOs and private sectors with governments Bring together medical professionals and faith leaders in the discourse of normalising SRH. Relook at current health policies. Make SRHR services available online and offline to young people of all backgrounds.
9	 Universal access to SRHR for all young people Youth friendly and innovative ways on CSE e.g. locally based approach like religious cartoon because people could relate to that Advocate CSE to the government and all duty bearers as well as putting safety to be on the school curriculum. Maximise social media platforms to increase awareness for CSE and comprehensive sexuality services, especially on access to contraception. Provide and strengthen the capacity for consulting programmes for SRHR especially at regional level. Maximise the competencies of medical students in Indonesia especially from SRHR perspective. Vocational training to support youth ability. Create sustainable and green jobs by involving all parties' cooperation, including but not limited to private sectors. Increase political thinking on employment culture, and enforce regulations to locally support them. Youth business training. Campaign to strengthen youth ability as well as the rights and the obligation of young people in the workforce, and the increasing third relation between government and private sector.
10	 Ensure that no legal documents are criminalised in the comprehensive sexuality education initiative, as the government in Indonesia has introduced a bill that will criminalise sexual education. Safe space to discuss sexual education. Ensure harmonisation between stakeholders e.g. government, education or the community that may sustain SDG agenda. Universal access to SRHR services. Pre-work education. Encourage labour union. Youth forums on labour force participation



GROUP	DAY 2: RECOMMENDATIONS
	 A model for a trauma centre. Young people need capacity building in making their future plans. Advocating for minority rights.
11	 Have continuation and amplification of the community and former school education. More awareness campaigns on SRHR among youth so we can make informed decisions. Enhance infrastructures and facilities with the SRHR centre planning so that facilities and infrastructures can be provided free, or at least affordable costs. Important to emphasise gender sensitisation to policymakers and SRHR providers. Don't use religion as an excuse to violate women's rights or to decide what to do with our bodies, this relates to bodily autonomy. Overall need for gender disaggregated data and to ensure transparency and access to information. Universal social protection is important, regardless of employment status, or employment sector or marital status Hold businesses and corporations to the UN guiding principles on business and human rights to ensure what is decent for workers.
12	 Access to mental health and SRHR services for all. Enable operational environment, curriculum development, coverage and content, and teacher's preparation. Public private partnership for growth. Have youth centered intervention and opportunity so we can mobilise our skills. Support and opportunity to youth entrepreneurship, counselling and mentorship. Equal opportunity for all without discrimination. Provide skill education, more than just theoretical. Proper policy and partnership.
13	 The strong need for CSE to incorporate information regarding the availability of sexual and reproductive health services and the service delivery points in the communities. This needs a strong collaboration of our Ministry of Education with the Ministry of Health. There is a huge implementation gap between our policies and our programmes. The government of Nepal has to have a strong commitment to resolve these issues at the federal, provincial and local levels. Remove stigma and abuse regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights. Identify important stakeholders, such as community people, religious leaders, and parents and teachers to facilitate SRHR services. Hygiene management, that also includes environmentally friendly hygiene products. There is a need for health insurance and social security for those in the labouring force and for active labourers Hazard minimisation and the mitigation of economic risks that come along with risky jobs. Use appropriate technologies to minimise and to complement human labour.
14	 Universal access to SRHR for all young people Youth friendly and innovative ways on CSE e.g. locally based approach like religious cartoon because people could relate to that Advocate CSE to the government and all duty bearers as well as putting safety to be on the school curriculum. Maximise social media platforms to increase awareness for CSE and comprehensive sexuality services, especially on access to contraception. Provide and strengthen the capacity for consulting programmes for SRHR especially at regional level. Maximise the competencies of medical students in Indonesia especially from SRHR perspective. Vocational training to support youth ability. Create sustainable and green jobs by involving all parties' cooperation, including but not limited to private sectors. Increase political thinking on employment culture, and enforce regulations to locally support them. Youth business training. Campaign to strengthen youth ability as well as the rights and the obligation of young people in the workforce, and the increasing third relation between government and private sector.



GROUP	DAY 2: RECOMMENDATIONS
15	 CSE integration into the education curriculum. The provision of educational training and public emergency funds should be initiated well before COVID-19. The safe city and safe public spaces initiative should be implemented effectively in both rural and urban areas. The government should issue a national SDG tracker. Increase the amount of business loans for entrepreneurs. The base salary of women should be on the base of the work and should not be on the base of the genders. There shouldn't be any discrimination. Women entering the workforce should be able to level up to increase meaningful participation.
16	 Integrate the concerns of the minority groups, such as PWDs, indigenous people, the women, the children and the LGBTQ community. More capacity building in the local youth council. Empower the youth in creating programmes and alternatives such as agriculture and financing. Take part in the participation intervention in the policymaking and policymaking process at the national level. Reallocate budget coming from the local youth council and the Department of Health for Reproductive Health programmes. Collaboration for empowerment of these programmes through various non government organisations, private companies and local government units. Have CSE in schools and a safe environment for all youths to speak about this. Set these environments for critical thinking and discussion with regards to the issues and concerns of sexual reproduction. Create opportunities via interlinking and forging partnerships in promoting sustainable livelihoods e.g in agriculture and creation of job opportunities, especially for the youth, along with livable wage and meaningful participation within companies and institutions. Promote inclusive and non discriminatory policies in all sectors for indigenous peoples and the persons with disabilities.
17	 Full implementation of the responsible parenthood and reproductive health laws especially CSE, which will ensure humane, compassionate, and non judgmental and quality post abortion care. Eradicate stigma by pushing for mature principle non discrimination based on age, because youth deserve access to SRHR. Emphasise sexual rights and empowerment of the LGBTQIA community through a comprehensive and strategic plan to mainstream SRHR. This discussion needs to be more inclusive, and to incorporate all even if regardless of the gender and sexual orientation. We need to further extend the SRHR services as a local intervention. Universal access to tertiary education, which makes college accessible for all with this more than the academic aspects skills. Encourage vocational education. This is possible and accessible through the help of the Department of Labour and Employment, which provides people livelihood opportunities through certification and skills assessment, which will entitle them credentials to apply for jobs. Decent work for all means gender equality, inclusion of PWDs, and other marginalised groups and from rural communities. Strengthen and adopt education for out of school youth assistance and innovation of the local government. It's about time to change the strategies of the local government that needs to align with the economic and social circumstances, especially now that we are experiencing a global pandemic.





SOLIDARITY ACTION WITH THE YOUNG **PEOPLE IN MYANMAR**

In line with SDG 18, which involved upholding democracy and human rights, the forum commenced its third day by holding a short solidarity action with the young people in Myanmar currently fighting for the democracy crisis in their country. The necessity of organising collective resistance against a brutal, oppressive military has forced young

people of Myanmar to set aside their differences for the first time and fomented the kind of unity that has long eluded the country. It is with this solidarity that we can restore the democracy in Myanmar.

The solidarity action involved standing up in our respective spaces in silence for 2 minutes, while having our video on. Plenary: Climate Change and Sustainable Present and Future.

PLENARY

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE PRESENT AND FUTURE

This session was aimed to develop common understanding on issues around sustainable development and climate change, as well as discussing the opportunities to accelerate climate action under COVID-19, and beyond. This was followed by a Q&A.



SPEAKERS:

Expert Talk

- > Prakriti Naswa, ARROW
- > Tetet Lauron, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation
- > Hannah Muthoni Ryder, Regional Climate Consultant (UNEP) Deepa Chandra, ARROW

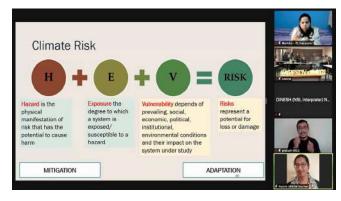
EXPERT TALK

Prakriti Naswa, ARROW

Prakriti's presentation was focused on the fundamentals of climate change and sustainable development. She started off by familiarising the audience with the science behind climate change and some key concepts.

Using Mentimeter, a software that gathers real-time feedback from a poll, Prakriti posed the question to the delegates in the virtual room: "what does sustainable mean to you?" Among the answers sent by the participants were, "long-lasting, resilience, future, long term, just, prosper, progressive,

MODERATOR:





innovative, conserving, climate resilient, harmonise with earth, reliable, responsibility." This was clear that when we think of sustainability, we think of life conditions where we are able to sustain and prosper for a long term.

According to Prakriti, there is a difference between sustainability and sustainable development. Sustainability is defined as a desirable goal that we want to reach, whereas sustainable development entails all the processes and pathways to achieve that goal.

Furthermore, there are more than 200 definitions of sustainable development. The most common is "the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising on the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". There are 3 pillars to sustainability:

- Economic: requires that projects, businesses, activities, etc. utilise resources efficiently and responsibly.
- Environmental: identifies the activities and sources that we are using should not reach the replenishment rates.
- Social: the pursuit of social well being in the long run.

In order to have a proper sustainable development, all of these sustainability pillars should ideally intersect. An intersection of social and environment pillars would be bearable, but does not bring about economics returns in the long run. An intersection of economic and environmental pillars would be viable, but it doesn't give any consideration to social well being. The intersection of social and economic pillars would be just equitable, but would not give much consideration to the environmental impacts. The interface of economic, social and environmental pillars needs to be something that is persistent.

Prakriti proceeded to enlighten the room that there are two causes to climate change - one, that is natural variability (natural causes) and another that is anthropogenic activities (human activities). All of these causes had impacted the gradual rise of the global surface temperature throughout the years. Prakriti added that, as the temperature has risen by 0.85C since 1880-2012, the global impacts we are experiencing, while might be local, they will be differently experienced across different geographies. For example, there are more frequencies of hazards, a wider range of climate variables, and emergence of newer hazards such as acidification of oceans and combinations of temperature and humidity. All of these entails risks for us from three factors (HEV): physical (h)azard, (e)xposure, and (v) ulnerabilty. All of these would incur potential losses and damage in the future.

In her second Mentimeter poll, Prakriti posed the question: "Who is most affected by climate change?" Among the answers were: "Youth, animals, future generations, everyone, humans, children, indigenous people etc." From the answers, it was clear that everyone and everything will not be spared from the impacts of climate change. Prakriti warned that climate change will threaten our existence, and has the potential to degrade all the progresses that we have made so far. As such, we must manage the risks through mitigation and adaptation, and through some serious collective action, especially that the vulnerability will be experienced differently among children, elderly women, disabled, indigenous people, and other socially marginalised communities.

Prakriti concluded her eye-opening presentation by proposing that we use a human rights, gender, and social inclusion lens to understand the differential impacts of climate change, and from there we can construct our mitigations. Proposing her final question to the room to ponder, Prakriti asked: "How can we make our coronaresponse economic package more climate compatible?"



Tetet Lauron, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation

Tetet commenced her speech by announcing, "let me try to be controversial for everyone." According to Tetet, there was a speech made by the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres last December about the state of the planet that was almost 'flawless'. He mentioned that human activities are at the core of the breakdown of the Earth's natural systems, and the time to avert the irreversible impacts of climate change is running out before we have reached the point of no return.

"We only have 6 years and 291 days before we reach the point of no return." Tetet announced to the room.

While we are strategising for our plans to mitigate the climate change, Tetet said, first and foremost, we should ask ourselves, the governments, and the UN, "is this frenzy around increased climate, ambition actually ushered in the much needed transformations, or is this a foreshadowing of dangerous distractions? Is the ambition to achieve net zero emissions the same as transformation?"

According to Tetet, the net zero mantra, while it means the atmosphere is spared from new emissions by restoring forests or using technologies that capture carbon in order to balance out and remove the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, often is used by the rich countries and corporations could buy and dazzle their way out instead of transforming production and distribution to achieve REAL zero. Private sectors are all about maintaining their profitability, maintaining a steady supply of natural resources for their businesses, and the added benefit of having a green label to their corporate practices, and as such it would be tricky to navigate the ethics of forest conservations which are now also requiring the help of corporations and the private sector.

Tetet also touched upon that while climate change is a global problem, it has more impacts for the population in the Global South. The people in the region not only are encouraged to report that the UN on our mitigation efforts - no matter how small our carbon footprints may already be - but also we are expected to dip into our own national budget, trying to attract more foreign investments, and trying to get more foreign loans. All of this we have to do while the rich countries are so reluctant to foot the bill for adaptation for losses and damages for overall climate financing. This kind of construct swept under the rug the structural and historical roots of why poor communities, especially in poorer countries, are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Tetet called for the need to look at how structures and our colonial legacy intersect and add on to the vulnerabilities, as this is a vicious cycle that is going to put us all at risk.

At the same time, Tetet reiterated, ambitious climate action should not be used as a smokescreen for more climate disruptive carbon intensive programmes that reproduce the same inequalities that are especially being magnified by the pandemic. Small scale stories, according to Tetet, while inspiring, downplay the structural links between capitalism, ecological crisis and the need to democratise global economic governance. Without addressing the intersecting crisis that capitalism foments, these communities of practices are just beautiful distractions.

In ending her speech, Tetet circled back to the speech by the UN Secretary General that she mentioned at the start. The speech was almost 'flawless', because a climate positive recovery will not happen just by flicking on an imaginary magical green switch — it is about making another world possible, and climate justice is the only solution for our broken planet. Tetet proposed her final question to the room: do we rise for climate justice, or do we burn because of climate injustice, and structural injustice?



Hannah Muthoni Ryder, Regional Climate Consultant, UNEP

Hannah's presentation was about the countries' actions in terms of the COVID-19 response, and how that links to a green recovery and how it links to action on climate change. In UNESCAP, said Hanna, the intersections of these three domains are what was called the 'sweet spot' – for green recovery, green growth, and effectively sustainable development are needed to ensure full support of the poorest people of the planet. According to Hannah, it is very instructive to look at what governments have done with COVID-19, because both COVID-19 and climate change are great indications.

Hannah, in her work in Stern Review, explained that climate change should be seen not just a scientific issue, but as an economic issue. It also made clear the costs of taking action on climate change now will be lower than leaving the costs of climate change action till later. In essence, it was a persuasive case based on really serious economic modelling to say that we need to act now, or suffer more consequences later. This can also be seen in the case of COVID-19 — the countries that took immediate actions are having a much easier time mitigating the risks rather than those who delayed theirs.

In the research, Hannah and her team looked at what different countries have been doing on the COVID-19 space. These were done through helping and providing support to countries, exchanging experiences, seeing what different governments are spending on COVID-19, and tracking which of these COVID-19 activities are linked to a green recovery, and which ones don't. The research also is an appropriate background to understand the role of youth, and how youth can help accelerate this change.

In the first analysis, these were the findings:

- Many countries have had real challenges in terms of creating fiscal space for COVID-19, and putting money aside in order to deal with climate change.
- 15 countries in the Asia Pacific region have estimated how much they need to spend on climate change going forward,

which is around 1.3 trillion USD. The same countries also put spending for Covid-19 around 1.1 trillion USD.

- This implies that the kind of financial ambition that countries are already needing to think about when it comes to COVID-19 is similar to climate change.
- For many countries, COVID-19 spending could not even cover adaptation or mitigation costs. Dealing with climate change is going to be even more challenging for governments than COVID-19 has been financially.
- The climate costs will fall hardest on the poorest countries, and they have the least space to be able to deal with climate change and even COVID-19 as well.

UNESCAP had also been tracking what different countries have done in terms of the economic and social support measures introduced a COVID-19 in the region. These were the findings:

- 300 different types of measures were introduced to support vulnerable populations to support green recovery including income support and many others.
- Only three Asia Pacific countries have not introduced these social and economic measures, or have not announced. This means the majority of Asia Pacific countries have done this, which is good.

Despite the findings, the question to ask however: how much do all these actions linked to green recovery use the opportunity to recover in a more real way and encourage green activities?

Hannah also walked the room through the overlap of the COVID-19 NDC (nationally determined contributions) policies on the ground for a number of countries and the recommended climate change actions. There are NDCs set out for six different sectors, which are energy, surface transport, air travel (including tourism), land-use (including forestry and agriculture), water and waste, and disaster risk management. In the research, Hannah and her team found that several sectors in many Asia Pacific countries found it easier to take action than other sectors, with some countries, like New Zealand, clearly ahead of others by bringing in new policy for all six sectors. The underlying reasons of why many countries are still not using the COVID-19 response acton to align with climate change opportunity boils down to two factors - one is of the lack of climate ambition or even an understanding of the urgency of climate action, and finally while there are COVID-19 policies, the NDCs policies are not implemented due to a serious lack of finance availability, or the government willingness to take action.

Concluding her presentation, Hannah outlines four key recommendations:

- Scenario analysis to guide responses and planning.
- Continue to expand COVID-19 fiscal responses.
- Identify key domestic challenges and seek support from partners.
- Use reports and workshops to identify new green, resilient actions and increase climate ambition in 2021.

DAY 3: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What is the role of the Paris Agreement for transformative change talked about especially in the context of developing and developed countries?

The Paris Agreement was said to usher an era where we are finally going to address the climate crisis, however it has been 5 years now since the agreement was signed by many countries but we are still nowhere near the solutions that we need to get the transformations we need.

The Paris Agreement, sadly, is non-binding. At the same time there is no punishment or reprimand for countries who do not meet their own targets. With the NDCs as mentioned by Hannah too, the countries can mention what they pledge to do, but they do not always implement them.

The scale of action that we need to do is to keep pushing, especially to help countries who are already suffering from the impacts of climate change. We need to be wary of the corporations' involvement in the climate change negotiations where countries are talking about marketbased solutions to climate change. There is really something fundamentallywrong with the mindset when we think the problems can also be the solutions.

Do you think the agreement from the UN and the Paris Agreement needs to provide punishment for countries who have not reached their sustainability goals?

There is the evidence that the Paris Agreement is not working. The ambitions need to be increased significantly and with regards to more developed countries, we need to do even more. This is more political.

What the UNESCAP can do is to least show that these are the things that can be done, and the countries can adopt them.

In terms of a multilateral system it's always been consensus based, and there are hardly any examples of why there are not any penalties to these countries. All of these come down to the question again that Tetet mentioned, this is a question of the commitment to transformation and real understanding of what the problem is ahead of us.

COVID-19 gives us a really good starting point for understanding what kind of transformation and what kind of effort from the government is really required. The countries in the Asia Pacific region are seen to be taking these efforts seriously, so I would encourage for us to both push for NDCs and to increase our climate ambitions, but also to push for transformation and recovery domestically.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN CLIMATE ACTION

This session featured youth changemakers from the region of Asia and the Pacific on their experiences in youth and community engagement in climate change.



SPEAKERS:

- > Ashley Yong, Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, Malaysia
- > Pallawish Kumar, YVC4A, Fiji



Ashley Yong, Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, Malaysia

Ashley spoke on her journey on climate action in Malaysia. She started her presentation by laying out the causes of climate change. According to Ashley, the transportation sector has been the largest contributor to climate change. Agriculture came second, accounting for approximately 51% of climate change, 30% of water use, 45% of land use, and 91% of Amazon forest degradation. On top of that, our daily actions such as eating meat and using plastics,all directly and indirectly, contribute to climate change and environmental degradation.

MODERATOR: Deepa Chandra, ARROW

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), we have reached 1.2 degrees Celsius of global warming, which is short of the 0.3 degree limitation of global warming set in the Paris Agreement. Unfortunately, the world is still heading towards a catastrophic temperature rise. Now that this is alarming, in addition to holistic systemic change, Ashley added that through our own individual ways, we can transform towards green living through behavioural and lifestyle transformation. These can be done through actions such as eliminating our desire for unsustainable food and lifestyle. According to Ashley, we must not think that our individual action will not matter, but it is a precursor towards a bigger impact to our planet.

Ashley spoke of the activities done at the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation. The activities included education, workshops, and practical activities such as coastal and mountain cleanups, as well as promotion of sustainable lifestyle transformation. At the foundation, every youth is encouraged to apply what they have learned and advocated to their own lifestyle. Ashley stressed that the change should not be a one time action during the events, but we must also aim for a long term behaviour of transformation. She also stressed the importance of advocating not only through words, but also through our actions. "If all of us today who are supporting SDG 13," said Ashley, "could simply translate our words from advocacy to practical action — like going plant based diets, carpooling, and reducing unnecessary material consumption — we could definitely see a tremendous positive result in terms of the welfare of our environment and humanity."

In the presentation, Ashley shared a quote by Dharma Master Cheng Yen, a Buddhist monk who has committed for environmental protection for more than 30 years, "Although humans have damaged the environment, we must be considering that humans could also save the world." It essentially means that, in the human-caused climate change, there could also be human-resolved climate change.

Ashley concluded her presentation by asking the room to recognise that transformation to a sustainable lifestyle is the universal responsibility of all of us at individual community, national, and international level, and that everyone can have an important role to play.



Pallawish Kumar, YV4CA, Fiji

Pallawish told his story on how he got involved in a climate action project. He decided to become a youth climate activist at the age of 17 after being aware of the adverse impact of climate change that will affect the younger generation and the generations to come at a completely different scale. His goal is to work towards a better world where the development leaves no one behind.

Pallawish believes wholeheartedly in the power of collective action, especially from the youths. In the earlier days, he recognised the need to reach out for climate action beyond his community in Fiji. This is why he joined YV4CA, an organisation known for combating climate change and known as well for supporting the 17 SDG goals in different continents around the globe. YV4CA also promotes how to manage risk and climate change, and provides factual information to the people. Speaking about one of the projects conducted at YV4CA, Pallawish enlightened that a significant portion of the population and economy in Asia Pacific depends on fisheries for survival and as an economic generator. Climate change, however, is threatening this. Realising this, he and his team conducted a survey to see the cause of concern for marine biodiversity, island ecosystem, and the tourism economy. He and his team found that there is an increase of coral bleaching, which happens when corals are stressed by a change in environmental condition. The survey results give a grim picture of the state of coral in Asia Pacific, elevated seawater temperatures and acidification for prolonged periods, leading to bleaching.

Another cause of key concern is the rate of deforestation and land degradation. Pallawish and his team recognised the need to do something beyond just plantation. What they then embarked to do was to launch a campaign called One Graduate One Tree Plantation campaign. The objective of this campaign was simply to showcase the young generation the importance of preserving our environment and train youths in addressing the climate problem and environmental problems in the area through youths engagement towards delivering a UN Decade on Restoration.

Pallawish and his team then prepared a concept note for universities and schools to engage youth in plantations that promotes guardianship and to raise awareness for the adverse impact of deforestation. The concept note was aligned with the physical targeting to plant 30 million trees in 15 years. To do this, the campaign started to plant trees in University of Fiji and schools in the Pacific Islands. In the future the team at YV4CA lanning to engage with the government of various countries to allocate barren reserves for planting as a graduate reserve, which would have a tree planted to mark graduation day for each individual. Beaming with pride, Pallawish said that this campaign was successful because the team managed to work on enabling conditions such as climate education, raising awareness, and establishing guardianship before they started the plantation.

The work did not end quite there. Pallawish added that while we demand a lot of actions and biodiversity ecosystem conservation, we also have to work on conditions that ensure long term effects, such as climate education. At the same time, we also need to ramp up our climate action, create more opportunities to engage with the youth, and mainstream climate education in a far greater way into the education curriculum so that we are able to create a climate informed population and mould the climate leaders of tomorrow.



PLENARY

COUNTRY/SUB REGIONAL SHARING AND PEER LEARNING

DAY 3:

ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In the breakout rooms, the participants were asked to discuss the following questions from the respective country/sub-region and young people point of view, and then to present the recommendations in the plenary.

- What according to you, are the priority areas for climate action and what are climate justice issues in them?
- What are your recommendations for accelerating climate action that is sustainable and inclusive in the post COVID-19 world?
- What are your recommendations for policymakers to create an enabling environment for youth engagement in climate action?

The recommendations, according to the countries and subregions were:

GROUP	DAY 3: RECOMMENDATIONS
	 Plenary Room (for those unable to access breakout rooms) Climate budgeting to assess the impact of budget on vulnerable communities Combine the traditional and indigenous knowledge with scientific groups along with safeguarding the intellectual property rights of the local group Green entrepreneurship. Restructure the educational system to be more mindful of climate change. Strengthen the groups, like ASEAN, to work unitedly in the Asia Pacific region.
1	 Raise the importance of how we can make an impact to combat pessimistic views. We need to be encouraged and empowered on taking action on our own on every community level. Provide direct assistance to the economically disadvantaged in the hard hit areas due to COVID and the climate change. Encourage synergy between public and private sectors to forward integration and public collaboration on every level.
2	 Encourage a climate agenda with parties like NGOs and those in the wider community where they could sign, petition, or lobby governments to take into consideration as a means to strengthen policies. Increase virtual awareness on climate action through the use of social media platforms Youth Parliament should be created for policies and recommendations to be pushed to governments to take climate action and also to push the policymakers to be more inclusive and take into account the way in which climate change affects various groups and societies.
3	 Protect indigenous people and their assets. Identify alternative resources. Treat climate change as a political issue. At the same time, we should also contribute to our own individual initiatives such as reducing food waste. Encourage green energy. Youth Adult partnership program Inculcate a culture and society where youths and organisations can interact and share ideas Enforce Polluters Pay principle. Inclusion of climate education. Advocacy programs by stakeholder. Nationwide climate actions competitions.
4	 Promote innovative climate friendly projects that are led by youth across Southeast Asia and also all over the Asia Pacific region. Ban coal based energy plan. Promote youth-led innovative eco-friendly tourism. Strengthen intersectional collaborations to implement the circular economy principles pertaining to waste management in daily life that aligns with SDG 17. Promote local creativities in terms of the sustainable consumption e.g. bamboo base. Promote advocacy to the government on climate change by every youth in Asia and the Pacific. Change the roots of the system such as education. Make climate education accessible for every PWD, both mental and physical.



GROUP	DAY 3: RECOMMENDATIONS
5	 Adjust the optimum point between pollution and technology. Government to make programs for young people and involve them in decisions. Mobilise young people for surveys to find out insights about their life – education, job, health etc. Access to digital technology. Media should provide unbiased data for awareness and precaution Regulate outdated transports that could contribute to air pollution. Solar system.
6	 Raise unified voices from country level to all international decision making tables as Bangladesh is a poor country and is not the reason for most of the carbon dioxide emissions in the world. Include climate change issues in all levels of argument – private, secondary, primary, secondary and tertiary level for meaningful participation, including indigenous people, PWDs, communities etc. Establish a national platform to simplify the leadership skills development of young agriculture entrepreneurs or young farmers. Transparency must be added in all the stages of allocation and implementation. Enforce laws directly to stop climate change. Ensure ecotourism and consider indigenous people's voices – the development projects must take the environment into account.
7	 Agroforestry and land should be priority along with water rights. The energy transition should be inclusive and just, which includes all the marginalised communities. A better intersectionality lens should be at the heart of everything that could go forward post COVID-19. Opportunity for enhancing NDCs. Avoid lock in conventional fossil fuel power. The need for youth to have a seat at the table to make decisions, and the creation of democratic spaces where youth can clearly raise our opinions without fear of any political action. Mainstream sustainability in all areas, followed by SMART goals approach and investments in land restoration.
8	 Form an advisory body and committee to involve youth across the states and regions of different districts. Scholarships to be provided to youth for environmental studies. Form M&E committees to keep check on climate issues by the youth in collaboration with NGOs.
9	 Raise public participation in climate action, as well as policy making process. The government must have an inter sectoral or inter sectoral collaboration on any climate action. More space for youth to engage, such as the National Youth climate council, but not only for tokenism, but also real participation at the national level.
10	 Utilise technology for checking the carbon emission Collaboration between each party, government, NGOs, and local community to push for change Advocacy for policy changes in many ways. Product and creativity for changes and innovation. Green lifestyle. Eco sustainable economy framework. Ensure accountability for companies regarding waste. Create a Youth Council for climate change. Push a corporate economy. Mobilise eco friendly projects for the economy. Enforce climate justice defenders policies. Enforce policy to reduce plastic waste and tax for emission.
11	 Implement human rights principle and intersectional justice in policymaking and governance. This can help approach climate change in a more holistic manner and not just climate change, but also sustainable development. The need to look into a more whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach. This also includes educating local governance and local authority for more variety and leadership, implementing better policies at state level and to foster more collaboration with non-state actors. Policymakers have to listen to us more in advocating climate change and invite them at a decision making table, not just relying on the tokenistic mechanism that is currently in place. That also includes institutionalising the climate education for the benefit of all youths and students.



GROUP	DAY 3: RECOMMENDATIONS
12	 A balanced eco-geology concerning Himalayan region of Nepal by the government. Policy to promote eco-friendly innovation. Government and policymakers should focus on preserving natural resources and training youth. Prioritise women in decision making as they work more with natural resources. More initiative for youth for startups and entrepreneurship. More political will for climate change. Strict law and rules for the conservation of natural resources.
13	 Focus beyond the eco friendly policies, laws and implementation, but also to focus more on the indigenous sectors. Improve research and assessments related to climate action in the defence sector areas. Policymakers to create an enabling environment Leaders should be able to review the policies and the implementation of the existing laws and acts related to climate change and the environment. Improvement of the private public partnerships with different kinds of levels in all sectors. Youth inclusiveness is a very important part that should be looked into. Renewable innovations such as improving cooking stoves.
14	 A community of professionals should be made on climate change for better policies and recommendation. Young people should engage in climate change initiatives and climate change policies. Government should join hands with the local community to implement these initiatives. Waste recycling projects. Tree plantation drives and recyclable trash points.
15	 An inclusive approach where the youth leading the change. A proactive approach to preempt the situation must be adopted instead of a reactionary approach. The government must intervene to institutionalise climate action. More investment needs to be placed in renewable sources of energy, innovation, and advancements Use of SDG tracker by UNESCAP. Decentralisation of the governance to municipal local level to allow for immediate and relevant action in a wide array of localised issues. Government to incentivise for innovative solutions.
16	 The need to project sustainability into practice, as some of us are dealing with food consumption and probably over consumption in the post-COVID era. The need to address the economies putting much more on the scale. Produce more agricultural products. Urge the government to act immediately. Encompass all of the sector's multifaceted approach. Policymakers to fund the research and development regarding climate change. Safeguard the rights of our climate activists.
17	 Education to start with indigenous people knowledge Knowledge on climate resiliency and actions Commemorate a special day for awareness on climate change, but this also includes areas responsible on agricultural investment Vertical farming with entrepreneurships and environmentally environmentally sound technology. Promotions of research and development. Strengthen more partnerships with youth and stakeholders including the CSOs and public and private sector to create a consortium Platforms for local innovators.



Symbolic Launch for the Youth Call to Action

Following the 3-day plenary and breakout session, a smaller drafting team was created to draft the Youth Call to Action 2021. From the engaging and enriching conversations in the plenaries and the breakout rooms, the drafting team managed to come up with a substantive input from the discussions and draft a document that fully captured the demands of the young people. As such, on the final day of the Youth Forum, the team at ARROW conducted a symbolic launch for the Youth to Call to Action over Zoom.

The statement from the Youth Call to Action was presented at APFSD 2021 and reflected the clear and precise demands of the youth actions to realise the 2030 Agenda. The full document can be found in the Annex of this report.

A few photos from the ARROW team are as follows:







ARROW team preparing for the APFSD online forum









CAPACITY STRENGTHENING SESSION ON DATA DRIVEN ADVOCACY

Data and evidence can be a powerful tool that youth advocates can use to change minds, build consensus and influence policy decisions. When used effectively, data leads to the design of stronger, more impactful policies and programs. Data and evidence can challenge values or beliefs with concrete facts and evidence to foster debate.

As such, an additional capacity strengthening session on data driven advocacy for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific was held for selected APFSD Youth Forum participants on 17th March 2021. The 2-hour session was held with these objectives:

- Become familiar with the range of regional and global commitments relevant to young people.
- · Become familiar with the concepts of data and advocacy.
- Understand the data driven advocacy approach.
- Use data to amplify advocacy.
- · Learn how to create compelling advocacy using data.

SPEAKERS:

- > Aarushi Khanna, ARROW
- > Sai Jyothirmai Racherla, ARROW
- > Justin Anthonie, Institut KAPAL Perempuan, Indonesia

MODERATOR:

Momota Hena, ARROW



Sai Jyothirmai Racherla, ARROW

Starting off the day, Sai gave an overview of the range of global and regional commitments pertaining to young people that the youth advocates can take part in to further their advocacy. On top of APFSD for the regional level and the HLPF at the global level, there are a number of other international agreements of which young people can take part. According to Sai, active engagement of young people in sustainable development is central to achieving sustainable, inclusive, and stable societies by the end of the target date. On top of that, youth involvement is a much needed participation to avert the worst threats and challenges to sustainable development, including the impacts of climate change, unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, conflict and migration. These are the issues that have been very relevant to young people, as glimpsed from the issues brought up at the APFSD Youth Forum.

Focusing on SDG5 for gender equality today, Sai spoke on the key conferences that the youth advocates can keep in mind to further their advocacy in the area, which are the International Conference for Population Development (PoA) for global level, and the Asian and Pacific Population Conference at the regional level. Sai reminded that these are the standards of conferences that are available for the youth delegates to advance their advocacy for SDG5.

Ending her short presentation, Sai hoped that the session today would be a beginning of a much longer journey for participants to use data in their advocacy.



Aarushi Khanna, ARROW

As a programme officer at ARROW who also works in partnership with Economic Measurement 2020 (EM2020), Aarushi led the session by introducing the room to the general concept of advocacy and data.

According to Aarushi, advocacy can mean a range of things. In our case, the advocacy we do towards the SDGs is meant to achieve more social justice and equality. In doing advocacy, we give voice to people about issues that affect them. In addition, we can build evidence on what needs to be changed, and how that change can happen. Aarushi added, advocacy can include a range of actions. It can influence the policies that governments have created, social attitudes, attitudes of key important people and the people around us, or other social and political processes that can empower marginalised populations to speak for themselves. Advocacy, both strategy and action, are meant to achieve an objective towards the greater social justice and equality of the communities that we are a part of.

Aarushi then proceeded to introduce the concept of data. While data can be found everywhere we look, it is only meaningful once they are analysed and brought together to understand its whole contexts. Speaking about the importance of data, Aarushi highlighted the need to include and invest in data to be able to track the improvements and the progresses made by the government towards achieving the 2030 and the SDG agenda. Without data, it is very easy to ignore the problem as there are no numbers and narratives to provide evidence to the issues. Thus data, both numbers and the stories behind them, can be a really powerful tool for advocacy, as data and evidence can be used to change thinking and perception towards a more impactful policymaking, as well as being able to enhance credibility of the advocacy itself.

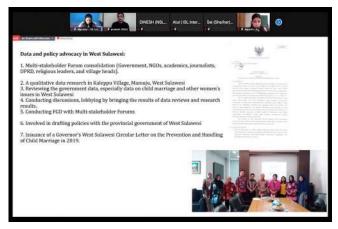
Speaking on data driven advocacy, Aarushi pointed out that the data driven advocacy approach recognised the powerful and unique role of official data, provided by the governments and other systems, to be able to track real impact of the policies. By providing advocates with easy to use data and evidence, advocacy will be more well informed, more amplified, and it can help fuel progress and integration of the sustainable development agenda. Aarushi added, by using data effectively, youth advocates can influence the design of a stronger and more impactful programme.

There are many ways we can integrate data into our advocacy tactics and tools, including petitions, media campaigns, panel discussions, policy briefs, videos, position papers, and many more. The same kind of data can also be used to create different advocacy tools to suit different audiences. In this case, Aarushi showed the example of the 2020 SDG Monitoring Report and the infographics used from the same data to be shared to social media.

Youth advocates could use the data driven messaging approach to effectively communicate to key stakeholders. The reasons to consider the approach include to demonstrate the scale and impact of the issue we are advocating, to demonstrate the effectiveness of the solution, to overcome people's biases and opinions, to be able to make the message 'hit home', lend credibility to the issue and the position we are advocating, and more importantly, it can give people the confidence to act based on the data we are presenting in our message. Aarushi shared four steps on creating a data driven message:

- 1. Identify the message in our data.
- 2. Craft our message that can be used across the different platforms.
- 3. Identify the target audience.
- 4. Appeal to the head and the heart.

Aarushi ended her presentation by showing examples on how to create a data-driven messaging using the available data from the EM2030 Gender Advocates Data Hub website, which can be found at *https://data.em2030.org*.



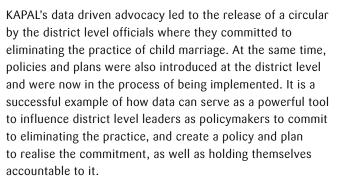
Justin Anthonie, Institut KAPAL Perempuan, Indonesia

Justin shared her experience at KAPAL on how the organisation used the existing government data to push for policy on child marriage issue in Indonesia. Responding to this, Justin and her team at KAPAL decided to use the data driven approach to focus on policies at the selected districts at the provincial level, where the rates of child marriage were especially high.

The research was conducted through multiple steps:

- Multi-stakeholder forum consolidation (government, NGOs, academics, journalists, DRPD – regional representative council, religious leaders, and village heads).
- Qualitative data research in Kaleppu Village, Mamuju, West Sulawesi.
- Reviewing government data, especially data on child marriage and other women's issues in West Sulawesi.
- Conducting discussions, lobbying by bringing the results of data reviews and research results.
- Conducting focus group discussion (FGD) with multistakeholder forums.
- Involved in drafting policies with the provincial government of West Sulawesi.
- Issuance of a Governor's West Sulawesi Circular Letter on the Prevention and Handling of Child Marriage in 2019.





In summarising the research, Aarushi, on behalf of Justin, outlined the lessons from KAPAL's data driven advocacy approach:

- Data can be integrated at every stage of the advocacy issue.
- Data can be used to identify advocacy goals and set targets, define evidence based solutions, and the identification of alternatives.
- Data can help set clear demands for change based on the realities of the group that we are working with and whose lives we are trying to improve.

• Using data in our advocacy will not only ensure that our demands are real, but also they are representative of the target group that we are advocating on behalf

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- Data can also provide a very clear rationale for why we are working on the problem that needs to be addressed and the likely impact that we are trying to create through our advocacy.
- Data can help us mobilise our key stakeholders and the people whose perception we are trying to change.
- By transforming a data point into a compelling message or a visual outfit, it can help mobilise public opinion and other key stakeholders.
- Data can have an influence on policymaking process by creating legitimacy and rationale for the issue we are working on.
- Data can also help us ask the right questions to our policymakers and government officials, as well enable us to track the commitments and the implementations of the government interventions and investments.

DAY 4: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS		
QUESTIONS	ANSWERS	
What's the difference between advocates and activists?	In many ways, activists and advocates work in tandem. The minor difference is activists lead and build movements against any social injustices, while advocates do more actions clearly targeted towards policy changing and directed towards decision makers. This includes actions such as lobbying and advocating towards policy outcomes, whether at the regional or the global level.	
Does advocacy mean we have to involve our political leaders?	Political leaders can be a critical audience because if we are trying to influence policy processes, then having political will and having buy in from political leaders can act as a great catalyst to achieve the advocacy objective. What we can do is we can tailor our advocacy approach to the kinds of data we are using to meet the political leaders' bandwidth and mindset in a way that the data and the approach appeals to them, recognising that they have their own beliefs and they have their own capacity.	
What do you feel about data collection means? Is face to face better and reliable, or digital better?	This is an important question that is relevant to post-COVID. Technology does work well for certain things, for example, to get data on access to particular services. However things like nuances and contexts are harder to discern online. As a researcher for example, when we sit and have a focus group discussion or in-depth interview, we are likely to understand social cues much better. Depending on the theme and the kind of research question, there are certain approaches to data collection that work better. There are many ways we can get data: • Surveys • Census • Official data from the governments and agencies • University data	

University data



DAY 4: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS				
QUESTIONS	ANSWERS			
	It is encouraged for us to look for existing official data before we go out and design our own research. This can be from non government free sources, the SDG framework, the SDG databank, where there is enough data available, which needs to be analysed and needs to be used.			
	One thing that we have to bear in mind when we think of technology and data is that we must think of the gender divide that still exists. In this case, when we collect data, we are still exposed to the biases and gaps that we need to be aware of. So when we are designing and thinking about collecting information using technology, it's very important that we understand the context of our respondents and we are aware of the existing challenges and biases e.g. gender biases that exist when we design and when we identify the approach that we want to use to collect data and generating data. In considering so, we ask these questions: • What is the intent of the research? • What is the intent of the work that we are trying to do?			
	This is definitely a big concern especially if we think about youth participation.			
Data gap is one of the major issues in most of the developed countries. Do you think that data driven advocacy driven	What we can do with data gaps that are dated or not up to date is something that we can integrate in our advocacy. it can be a key message which is demanding for better or disaggregated data and better quality data. This is also a key critical advocacy message that can be integrated in our advocacy campaigns and approaches.			
by such non updated data results into effective policy?	As an example, we know that violence rates pre-COVID were high. If we have any existing data point from back from 2015-2016, we can always use that as a starting point to point out the message that this was the rate at this stage, and while we hear on the ground that the numbers are increasing these days, we have no numbers to back it up. Thus, we need more up to date data to be able to shine light on the problem and we need immediate action based on that data.			
	It's more about the perception and the language that our audience understands and is comfortable with. Ask ourselves the question, "How would I present the data to compel and engage with that particular audience?"			
Can you explain what you meant when you say, "think about your audience when you craft your message and decide on advocacy tools and tactics"? Does that sound like manipulation?	For example, for a civil society stakeholder, we might want to present the data in a certain way that talks about the context. But on our social media, if we want to build awareness about a certain issue, we might want to present the data in a different, more concise, way.			
	So it's not about manipulating the data, it's more about the kind of tools and tactics that we decide to use and to integrate that data depending on the kind of audience we are trying to reach.			
In advocating issues, for example diversity in private firms, is it always the case that they are more likely to listen when you mention business and	Using storytelling in these contexts where we are engaging with private entities can be an effective way as it provides a narrative and nuance in the community perception that numbers could not provide. It's not always necessary to focus on the kind of data mentioned, but complement that data with narratives and stories that can really serve as sort of a good advocacy message.			
economic metrics like profit growth, sales, etc.? Or are the other approaches?	It's really about using data to tell the story in a way that sometimes with private entities — it's telling the story in a way that they might not have seen or understood based on where they're seated and what their value system is and their propositions.			



DAY 4: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS				
QUESTIONS	ANSWERS			
What do you think about the indicators on SDGs formulated by UNSD for every country with limited data ability? Will they be able to present this?	 Overall ARROW has been engaged in the interagency expert group on SDG indicators development process. There are 193 countries with the common agreed definition, and it is very important in order to collect data for these aspects. The indicators are marked at three tiers: Tier 1: There is data available and already collected. Tier 2: Data not collected yet for these indicators. Tier 3: Indicators with no proper definition. Many of the SDG key indicators actually fall within the bracket of tier three which means there are not many countries where the data is being collected. They can be found here: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/. The straightforward answer is — there is no data for all the indicators for all countries. 			
How can you ensure ethical and privacy issues by collecting and analysing data?	 There are several ethical considerations that need to be taken while thinking of collecting data with identifiers. Within the development phase we do have guidelines around data collection. All research design should go through some rigorous ethical review and considerations through the review board. When we are the researcher, we have to go through the ethical standards of privacy, confidentiality, and consent. There are steps to be taken to make sure there are no identifiers are shared and data is aggregated or representative of a certain population. However, in doing advocacy, we are not the data producers. At the very same time, we should also responsibly keep our audience in mind for our approach and the tools we are going to use. 			



Above: Youth advocates from Asia at an APFSD Youth Forum holding up their favourite SDGs. Top right: Youth SRHR advocates from Asia with the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth at the High-level Political Forum in 2019. Below right: Youth SRHR advocates at the first APFSD Youth Forum convened in 2017.



Marca.



Certificates

Certificates were presented to participants at the end of the event to acknowledge their valuable contribution to the forum discussions as participants and youth speakers and for volunteering to be part of the Call to Action Working Group for the development of the regional Youth Call to Action and the country and sub-regional briefs.



Conclusion

The 3-day APFSD Youth Forum 2021, as well as the extra day for Capacity Strengthening session on Data Driven Advocacy, managed to bring together participants from all over Asia Pacific region to discuss and deliberate youth inclusive solutions towards the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals agenda. Held virtually for the first time ever, we managed to create a participatory and inclusive space for all participants to discuss the opportunities, gaps, and potential solutions to empower young people in reviewing their roles and contributions to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in respective settings at local, national and regional levels, as well as for the SDGs on focus: on poverty (SDG1); hunger (SDG2); health and well-being (SDG3); full and productive employment and decent work for all (SDG8); reduced inequalities (SDG10); sustainable consumption (SDG12); climate action (SDG13); peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG16); and partnerships for the SDGs (SDG 17). All of these were discussed using an intersectional, nondiscriminatory, and human rights-based approach in order to realise a resilient and inclusive sustainable development, where no one will be left behind.

Towards 2030, the Youth Forum is positive that we will be able to achieve an inclusive Asia Pacific where the voices of young people are heard and their capacities and potentials are encouraged, supported and empowered, especially in the face of various emerging challenges in the region.

The Regional Youth Call to Action, Country, and Sub-regional briefs are annexed to this report in the following section.

Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development **YOUTH FORUM 2021**



Regional Youth Call to Action 2021 and Country and Sub-regional Briefs



Asia-Pacific Youth Call to Action

REGIONAL YOUTH FORUM AHEAD OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2021 14-16th March 2021

"Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic in Asia and the Pacific: Youth at the Forefront of Accelerated Transformation"

Who Are We and Why This Call To Action?

We are a diverse group of 500 young activists, advocates and individuals¹ across social movements, youth led, youth serving, feminist, and allied organisations who have come together during the 2021 APFSD Youth Forum held virtually this year from 14 – 17 March 2021. Together, we represent youth belonging to the 13-30 age group and our representation is varied, consisting of young people with disabilities, youth from indigenous communities, ethnic and minority groups including Dalits, young people living with HIV and young people belonging to various sexual orientation, gender, identity, expression and characteristics among others. Our participation in the forum is a representation of our collective voice from the Asia and the Pacific region.²

This APFSD Youth Call to Action reflects our concerns and embodies our demand for sustainable, inclusive and human rights focused solutions for the Decade of Action.³ The theme for this year's APFSD is "Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic in Asia and the Pacific," and it will not be possible without young people at the forefront of accelerated transformation and action in the region. 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, so we can collectively address the issues that affect our agency, our decisions and our quality of life - namely gender inequality, poverty, the socio-economic gap, and sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination, to name a few. We demand unrestricted access to basic necessities, health, education, information and technology, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities - all of which disproportionately affects young persons living in remote, rural, and slum areas, youth working in the informal sector, and those from marginalised groups including migrants and refugees, stateless and displaced persons. While the world explores transformative recovery from COVID-19, crucial lessons from the pandemic must be understood to enable accelerated sustainable solutions that will benefit us, our planet and our environment.

For common issues faced by countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including on recovery and resilience on COVID-19 and Climate Action, we call for an inter-country and regional collaborative effort to be put in by all actors in addition to

the State. As equal partners in turning the 2030 Agenda into reality, we reiterate that this ambitious agenda can only be achieved with young people's leadership, meaningful participation and support, and empowering youth-adult partnerships across the region. We believe that it is critical that regional and national action plans put in place to implement the SDGs are coherent with prior commitments to international agreements.⁴

How Are We Left Behind?

Globally, the Asia Pacific region is home to more than half of the young people in the world today — about 750 million⁵ — who face a broad range of intersecting challenges. Ours is a diverse region that is facing the burdens of rising lack of access to education and decent work, extreme poverty, and the most disastrous effects of climate change. 71 million young people aged 15-24 are unemployed worldwide, of which 33 million are from the Asia Pacific alone.⁶ Even though the region has one of the world's highest youth labour force participation rates, it is marked by poor work quality, conditions, and informality,⁷ which in turn is leading to rising cases of mental health issues of youth in the region.⁸

About 1.88 billion people in Asia-Pacific lack access to the internet, nearly half of the population.⁹ When COVID-19 emerged, the world had to adapt to online modes of communication, work, and education, deepening the disadvantages for people in the region who had little or no access to the internet and in turn, exacerbating issues of rising unemployment and lack of access to quality education, essential services and information.

Furthermore, the Asia Pacific is the most disaster-prone region in the world and despite the region's poorer communities contributing the least to carbon emissions, they are the ones bearing the harshest consequences of climate change.¹⁰ The poor, young people, women, people with disabilities and people living in rural areas are those who find it hardest to adapt to the changes and consequences of climate change and have been put at greater risk for food and water insecurity, forced migration and displacement, and the inability to react to disaster response and recovery situations.¹¹ These inequalities have only been exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19.

COVID-19 and its' Impact On Us

The pandemic poses an unprecedented threat to development in the Asia-Pacific region. By the end of 2020, 25% of the globally confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 20% of reported deaths caused by the pandemic were in the Asia Pacific region.¹² To add to the vulnerabilities of young people and other marginalised communities that were already substantial in health sectors, the impact of COVID-19 has been even more damaging, with even the strongest healthcare systems around the world struggling to keep up. As hospitals and healthcare centres continue to be overwhelmed, treatments for marginalised communities, such as young people, women LGBTIQ+ persons, and persons with disabilities, have been pushed to the side, leaving them exposed and vulnerable. Accessing safe abortion services and related sexual and reproductive health services has become even more difficult for women and girls. When it comes to LGBTIQ persons, COVID-19 has caused the de-prioritisation of health services such as HIV testing and treatment, hormonal treatment and gender affirming treatments for trans individuals, hitting LGBTIQ+ youth the hardest.13

In terms of employment, youth in the Asia Pacific are being hit harder than adults in the immediate COVID-19 crisis and will also have to bear more long-term economic and social costs. Nearly half of young workers in the region are employed in the four sectors hit hardest by the crisis and are therefore facing a greater digital divide, and more job losses and labour market disruptions than adults due to COVID-19.¹⁴ Coupled with the suspension of schools and difficulties of accessing proper online learning in the region, the transition of youth into the workforce will be heavily impacted.

The impact of COVID-19 on the environment has been daunting. While the levels of air pollution levels and carbon dioxide emissions initially lessened due to global travel restrictions in the beginning of the pandemic, they are beginning to rise once again. Furthermore, the levels of medical waste and usage of single-use products in the region have increased substantially over the course of the pandemic.¹⁵ Finally, recovery measures put in place by governments across the region give little to no consideration of the long term impact the pandemic will have on climate change.

We cannot ignore the detrimental impact that COVID-19 has had and this call to action highlights the ways in which we are being left even more vulnerable. We urge governments, international organisations, United Nations agencies, development partners, funding agencies, and other duty bearers to address the following priority issues.

Health and Our Wellbeing

OUR RIGHT TO HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE

- The health and well-being of young people must be understood from a holistic, rights-based lens that considers mental health and emotional well-being given that young adults' social, emotional and mental well-being has been impacted by the pandemic and the trauma faced at this developmental stage may have longterm consequences across their lifespan.
- In the face of the pandemic, there is a need to reemphasise and ensure that health, including sexual and reproductive health and right of young people, is not side-lined, including but not limited to adolescent pregnancies, maternal mortalities and morbidities, abortion, and other issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights; communicable and noncommunicable diseases; universal health-care coverage and access to medicines and vaccinations.¹⁶
- Disaggregated data needs to be made available to create evidence around health issues faced by diverse communities, including but not limited to, youth groups, such as adolescents, marginalised women, LGBTIQ people, people with disabilities, religious and ethnic minorities, people living with and affected by HIV, young sex workers, and marginalised castes. These include taking into consideration the impact of COVID-19 but also other pre-existing barriers to health and well-being affected by gender inequality, sexual, gender-based and psychological violence poverty, climate change, environment, disasters, conflict, food and nutrition security, housing, sanitation, access to potable and drinking water, and politicisation of religion.
- Institutional mechanisms should be in place to end stigma and discrimination in accessing health services and information for all including digital/telehealth access to such services and information that is available to all, including young persons with disabilities. Contextsensitive and equitable technological innovations should be promoted to advance the health and well-being of all.
- There is a continued lack of a commitment to measure comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). CSE implementation is still a challenge and is still a topic of neglect in schools, as well as out of school CSE. Surveys have shown that the internet and online discussions with peers was a more widely used information source for most youth in the region.¹⁷

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

We urge Member States in the region to take the following actions:

- Ensure the quality, affordability and availability of vaccines and health services and information for all young people, including those from marginalised communities as the availability of vaccines, medicines, health technologies and health therapies is an essential dimension of the right to health, the right to development and the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications. Everyone is entitled, on an equal footing with others, to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health.¹⁸
- Re-visit current health policies and re-draft them with shifting contexts taking into account the intersectional identities of young people such as ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, class, disabilities and their socio-economic status influenced by factors such as the pandemic, migration, natural disaster and climate change, etc.
- Adopt a multi-pronged approach bringing in different actors (including CSOs, journalists, medical professionals, faith leaders and community members) in the discourse of normalising SRHR of young people.
- 4. Provide access to accurate, evidence-based information on health and well-being, including life skill-based and comprehensive sexuality education for adolescents and young people in formal and non-formal education settings, as well as in out-of-school and workplace settings. This needs to recognise and cater to the evolving capacities of young people, and be scientifically evidence-based, context-specific, gender-responsive, and disability-friendly. Invest in the training of teachers, and health service providers to sensitise them on the fact that Comprehensive Sexuality Education is important for young people's health, wellbeing and education and that it promotes gender equality and the prevention of violence against women and girls.
- 5. Provide and improve access to youth-friendly health services, including for mental health counselling and sexual and reproductive health, that are confidential, non-judgmental, non-discriminatory, and are affordable. Services must include access to contraception, safe abortion, reproductive cancer prevention, and gender transition-related services. Programmes need to be based on a human rights framework, including the right to be free from discrimination, coercion, and violence, as well as on principles of bodily integrity, dignity,

equality, respect for diversity, and affirmative sexuality. Make online and offline SRHR services accessible and affordable to young people of all backgrounds by bringing such services into public health systems.

 Allocate a minimum of 15% of the GDP for health¹⁹ (with an adequate proportion for young people based on demography) and to apply learnings from the COVID-19 situation to ensure contingency planning for health services for future pandemic/emergency scenarios.

OUR RIGHT TO EMPLOYMENT

Young People and Decent Work For All

- The youth bulge in the Asia-Pacific, resulting in the demographic dividend, is still under-utilised for this region. Only 20% of the region's workers are aged between 15 - 24, and these young people account for almost half the Asia-Pacific's jobless. The lack of new, decent employment opportunities risks the social, economic and social growth of the region.
- Gender gaps in employment exist and female participation in the labour force in 2018 ranged from 60.1% in East Asia at the top end of the spectrum to only 25.9% at the bottom end in South Asia. A large percentage of women (including trans women) work in the informal sector where wages are typically lower without social protection. In developing Asia, the gender wage gap still stands at 75% and women spend 80 % time in Asia and the Pacific doing unpaid care work which is 4.1 times more time than men.²⁰ Women and girls are disproportionately affected by forced labour and modern slavery, accounting for 99% of victims in the commercial sex industry, and 58% in other sectors.²¹
- Other trends in relation to unemployment in the region include job losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change-induced crises; increased financial support burden on young people due to demographic shifts (1 in 2 youth will need to support an elderly person by 2030); and high risk of automation and resulting reduction in the job market.²² COVID-19 and lockdowns have also led to work being shifted to an online modality favouring people with higher levels of education who learn skills faster, and favouring those who have access to technological devices. This digital inequality has reinforced the existing social inequalities.
- Young people do not have access to adequate career guidance, counselling and soft-skills training which are only available through small scale government led initiatives and in a limited number of educational institutions.

- The number of working children is another concern in the Asia Pacific as it is by far the largest in the world and represents 18.8% of the 650 million 5–14-year-olds in the region. Progress to eliminate child labour is inadequate compared to other regions.²³
- Despite the relatively high economic growth in some countries in the region and their progression from least developed countries to developing countries, a significant portion of their populations are living in poverty, affecting a large percentage of youth and contributing to the socio-economic inequalities and gender inequities in the region.²⁴
- A high percentage of NEET (Youth being Not in Education, Employment or Training) is an issue for most countries (ranging from 15 - 42%) in the region and the age group of 15-24 years represents one of the most at-risk groups.²⁵ An ILO study²⁶ shows that around 269 million new jobs could be created if investment in education, health and social work were doubled by 2030.
- Urbanisation is led by East Asia followed by Southeast Asia, whereas South Asia still remains the least urbanised sub-region. In the latter, the majority of young people will remain in the rural setting even by 2035²⁷ and young people employed in rural settings are more likely to be employed under poor conditions.²⁸
- Young persons living with HIV and those with nonbinary sexual orientations and gender identities continue to face greater discrimination in accessing decent work and employment opportunities. SOGIESC-based discriminations include denial of jobs, hostile work environments, and workplace bullying and harassment.²⁹
 Women refugees and migrant workers face the double burden of discrimination due to their gender and social status, and are the most vulnerable group in the migrant and refugee constituency in all countries in the region.³⁰
- For young persons with disabilities, availability of jobs with accessibility features and options continues to be a challenge. Barriers to the employment of persons with disabilities range from a lack of adequate and accessible infrastructure, including information and communication services; lack of accessible transportation; and employer's preference for candidates without disabilities.
- Policy, programming, and budgetary interventions around youth and employment are not adequate or inclusive and lack of reliable data/statistics. Coupled with neglect towards the most marginalised, this affects young women, trans women, young persons with non-binary SOGIE, people living with HIV, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees the hardest.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

We urge Member States in the region to take the following actions:

- Invest in career guidance, counselling, out of school youth assistance programs, and innovation of the provincial/local government/ministry of youth led units. Soft-skill training, technical and vocational training, and education is required to prepare youth for the labour market with the requisite skills, attitudes, behaviours and personal qualities that enable youth, from all walks of life and in all their diversity to effectively navigate the changing environment, work with others, perform well and achieve their goals.³¹
- Initiatives to enable wider digital literacy must be increased to close the digital gaps for communities that have been adversely affected during COVID-19 where work has now shifted online.
- 3. Increased access to finance and enterprise support complete with a wider range of business development services are effective financial instruments that can lead to new job creation and a favourable environment for start-ups and entrepreneurship for young people living in the community level. Support must also be given to young people and migrant workers affected by COVID-19.
- 4. Provide legal protection for all workers against workplace discrimination and abuse on the grounds of SOGIE, gender, disability, and migratory status. Laws and policies should be strengthened to eliminate slavery, child labour and forced labour and exploitation of women and children in all sectors and ensure remuneration and equal pay for equal work as well as social security benefits like health insurance, maternity benefits access to decent work opportunities for all.
- 5. Invest in research and collection of disaggregated data to make sure that policymaking and programmatic interventions are informed and address the intersectionalities and marginalisation to protect young people's right to employment that enables social, economic and political inclusion irrespective of sex, disability, race, origin, religion and economic status.
- 6. Urge the government to invest in the national level social security net programmes to address NEET among other issues. Also, States should take care to ensure that labour laws are compliant with the International Labor

Organisation (ILO) Conventions and the standards laid out in business and human rights to ensure decent working conditions for young people in all sectors and ensuring fairness in hiring practices, mentorship, communications, and advancement potential and promote inclusive workplace culture to close the gender gap in the workforce.

- 7. Put in place plans/schemes that allow for subsidy for loans for unemployed youth who want to start their own business/ventures. The private sector should also foster youth entrepreneurships and increase financial investment in youth-led and small businesses and enterprises, and work closely with the Government to encourage an active labour market. Use public-private partnership as a tool for decent growth in the economy.
- Youth centered interventions and opportunities (paid internships, work placements, youth leadership and business training, early career development opportunities and youth oriented entrepreneurship skills development programmes) must also be encouraged so that they can mobilise their skills and knowledge.

Climate Change and Our Environment

YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS

- The Asia-Pacific is the most disaster-prone region in the world.³² Due to its geography of extensive coastlines, low-lying territories, and many small island states, the region is highly susceptible to rising sea levels and extreme weather.
- Changes in the oceans are particularly critical in the region. The Indo-Asia Pacific's coasts are highly vulnerable to sea level rise, and saltwater intrusion into freshwater aquifers.³³ The rapid depletion of fish stocks is impacting food security across the region, which is being exacerbated by rising temperatures. Furthermore, island ecosystems are highly vulnerable. Coral reefs in particular have been adversely affected due to industrial contaminations.
- Climate literacy is not a priority in public and private institutions. There is little to no awareness of the impact of climate crises on our lives, or how to deal with climate disasters, and there is even a lack of clarity on these issues within governmental institutions as well.
- Climate change and natural disasters create additional economic constraints for families, which in turn creates an increase of the risk of gender-based sexual violence.³⁴ This then also leads to an increase in the risk of early and forced child marriage for girls as parents aim to provide more economic stability for their families.

- The use of single-use plastics, especially from food packaging, as well as the production of fast fashion in mass-producing clothing using exploitative labour, and environmentally-harmful processes is a big problem in the region. Countries in the region that are some of the largest garment exporters in the world also have some of the highest water pollution levels due to the fast fashion industry.³⁵
- COVID-19 has caused a significant strain on waste management chains that were already weak to begin with, and nearly caused them to collapse in some cities.
 154 to 280 tons of more medical waste per day were produced in some big cities in the region.³⁶ Furthermore, 85% of countries in the Asia Pacific that have a recovery plan for COVID-19 have little to no environmental considerations.³⁷
- There is a lack of inclusive participation of marginalised communities such as young people, women, rural and indigenous populations, people with disabilities, and transgender communities when it comes to creating "clean-energy" and sustainable solutions and policies to the climate crisis.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

We urge Member States in the region to take the following actions:

- Building community empowerment programmes and creating wider awareness about climate change on how to cope with extreme weather. Raising awareness about natural hazards, planning disaster drills, and installing early warning systems can help prepare people ahead of time and save their lives and livelihoods in the face of disasters.
- 2. Adding curriculum about natural resources and climate change to schools at the primary, secondary, and tertiary level. This should be done so that the children and youth will understand the importance of natural resources, agriculture, and climate.
- 3. Ensuring meaningful engagement of marginalised youth young women, rural and indigenous youth, LGBTIQ+ youth, and youth with disabilities – in policy, decisionmaking and monitoring related to climate change. This can be achieved by investing in their capacity building and ensuring representation of their voices at the local and national level or by creating youth councils or youth parliament committees for climate change.

- 4. Investment in the production, affordability and availability of biodegradable materials to curb the usage of single-use plastics and other materials that are harmful to the environment.
- 5. Recognising 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, persons with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+ communities. Monitoring the effects of climate change and disasters on issues such as early and forced child marriage is also crucial.
- 6. Ensuring that the national stimulus and response strategies to the COVID-19 pandemic take the environmental dimension into account. Recovery measures that work on accelerating a green transition in the future need to be highlighted and prioritised.

Conclusion

YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE FOREFRONT OF COVID-19 RESPONSE, RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

Although the Asia Pacific region has made achievements in socioeconomic development, the progress has been uneven across and within countries and severely set back by the onset of COVID-19. The above document brings in a youth perspective to the status of progress in achieving the SDGs and highlights areas in need of attention in relation to SDGs 3, 8 and 13 (good health and wellbeing, decent work and economic growth, and climate change). Each of these SDGs have been analysed through the lens of other related and cross-cutting SDGs especially SDG 1 (poverty), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), and SDG 17 (partnership and goals).

In order to get the Asia Pacific region back on track, the COVID-19 socio-economic recovery efforts must be carried out to stimulate equity, resilience, sustainability, and progress towards the SDGs by emphasising the need for research to advance gender equity, engagement with marginalised populations, ensuring decent work, preventing a digital divide, tackling intersectoral challenges around healthcare, and informing global governance reforms. An intersectional, human rights and gender responsive analysis is crucial for sustainable COVID-19 resilience on a global scale - this is the only way in which recovery efforts can address the impact of the pandemic on all diverse and marginalised populations. The inclusion of young people in all our diversity the building of these recovery efforts is crucial for creating a more resilient and sustainable future. We believe this regional call to action, and the national level call to action briefs,³⁸ will enable our governments to strengthen their political commitment and allocate adequate resources, to enable us, the youth of the Asia and the Pacific, to make the most effective transformation of the world into a better place for all.

Acronyms

APFSD – Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
 CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of
 Discrimination Against Women
 CSE – Comprehensive Sexuality Education
 CSO – Civil Society Organisation

- **GBV** Gender-Based Violence
- **GDP** Gross Domestic Product
- **ICCPR** International Covenant on Civil and
- **Political Rights**
- **ICESCR** International Covenant on Economic,
- Social, and Cultural Rights

ICPD – International Conference on Population and Development

ILO – International Labour Organisation

LGBTiQ+ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer

NEET – Not in Education, Employment, or Training **SDG** – Sustainable Development Goal

SOGIESC – Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics

SRHR - Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights

Endnotes and References

- 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 participants in the forum mostly derived from their personal experiences. The drafting team consisted of the following participants: Alexis Sebote, Danish Tariq, Dicky Aditiya Kurniawan, Fayeq Ibrahimi, Harish Lama, Ika Nindyas Ranitadewi, Joshua Dilawar, Kashvi Chandok, Mahmuda Samanjar Chowdhury, Nguyen Thin Ngoc Tien, Noor Imran, Pallawish Kumar, Phin Savey, Qandeel Naeem, Situ Shrestha, Sufiya Khatun, Trystancius Sean Matthieu, and Venicia Agnes Fernandes. The team was led by Nawmi Naz Chowdhury (ARROW) and Evelynne Gomez (ARROW), with review support from Sangeet Kayastha (Y-PEER Asia Pacific Center), Ayeshwini Lama (Y-PEER Asia Pacific Center), and Legee Tamir (YouthLEAD), and with overall supervision from Sai Jyothirmai Racherla (ARROW).
- 2 The countries represented in this Youth Forum are: Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, and Vietnam.

- 3 This document also took into account previous statements made by young people at previous fora, such as the past APFSDs in 2016 and 2017, the Yangon Declaration of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Youth Forum, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Youth Charter, the Small Islands Developing States Framework on Youth, the ICPD Review: Global Youth Forum Bali, the 6th Asian Pacific Population Conference (APPC) Youth and CSO Statements, and the World Humanitarian Summit Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action.
- Such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) and Λ its Optional Protocols, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD POA), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY), the 2016 Political Declaration on Ending AIDS, the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's, and Adolescents' Health, the Paris Agreement, the Kyoto Protocol, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) of Financing for Development (FfD), the Berlin Urban Agenda for Young People, the Yogyakarta Principles, Standards to be met under Business and Human Rights, United Nations Security Council (UNSCR) 1325 and subsequent resolutions on women, peace, and security, UNSCR 2250 on youth, peace, and security, and the World Association for Sexual Health Declaration of Sexual Rights, amongst others.
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The Youth Forum was organized with the support of:



Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development YOUTH FORUM 2021

Regional Youth Call to Action 2021



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 socioeconomic 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 entrepreneurships 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.

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.



FSD Youth Call to Action 2021: Oceania¹



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 outdated 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.
- 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 draft by Pallawish Kumar. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW team.



APFSD Youth Call to Action 2021: Southeast Asia

Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam

INTRODUCTION

In the discussion on the impact of Covid-19 in our countries, we noted that the pandemic has worsened the situation for persons with disabilities experiencing exclusion in all facets of their lives, particularly those with intellectual disabilities. The pandemic has exacerbated their experiences of isolation ad exclusion due to the digital divide as barriers created through limited technological access and digital literacy prevents them from benefiting from the digitisation of essential information and services.

Secondly, we noted that SDGs, despite being a useful tool, is distant from the ground realities as implementation of SDGs have a number of shortcomings. For instance, health and SRHR related conversations and initiatives still excludes non-binary and marginalized groups such as LBQ women. Thirdly, for other SDGs, including the one on climate change, cross regional coordination through sharing of data on climate change, health and geopolitical human rights are needed in the region.

In conclusion, SDG implementation in each of the countries in the region lack an inclusive, participatory and intersectional approach that continues to exclude young people including those with disabilities, those belonging to other sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, characteristics and expression and also those belonging to various minority groups. In the long run, this leads to major concerns of young people from going unaddressed, particularly issues related to access to equal opportunities, decent work, mental health and other concerns relevant to the overall well-being of the youth.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

We urge the States to take the following steps:

- Importance of adopting an intersectional lens, where
 no one is left behind from digitalisation. Provide
 training and build the culture of cyber communication
 among the users; Enrich the access of internet to
 vulnerable communities. While digital solutions
 are being created, ensure that capacity-building is
 provided to close the gap between diverse youth
 groups, such that all have equitable access to any
 solutions that are being implemented.
- Raise the mental health awareness among people: via training, communication. Build the practice group of mental health issues prevention. Include youth friendly services for mental health, SRHR and key population on the universal health coverage policy of government for increase accessibility of services. Create local based mental health support group such as 'friendship benches' in region to tackle mental health problem widely in the region.
- Improve educational accessibility and creating job opportunity for the population. Develop easy-read resources to improve accessibility of information. Ensure disability-sensitivity training for employers and vocational training service providers.
- Promote innovative climate friendly project led by youth. Promote youth lead innovative eco-friendly tourism.
- Ban coal-based energy plan and strengthen intersectional collaboration to implement circular economy principles pertaining to waste management in daily life. Promote folk/traditional wisdom and local creativities for sustainable consumption and combat the effects of climate change from the community level.
- Ensure that climate education is disability-inclusive climate change is a difficult concept that is complex and difficult for people with intellectual disabilities to understand.

 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 discussions were facilitated by Phin Savey and Nguyen Thin Ngoc Tien on behalf of the country team. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW team.

Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development **YOUTH FORUM 2021**

Youth Call to Action 2021 Country Briefs



APFSD Youth Call to Action 2021: Afghanistan¹

INTRODUCTION

The education system has become incredibly vulnerable in Afghanistan during the COVID-19 pandemic as most students do not have access to the internet to attend online classes, and the online system of learning did not go well. Although students were not able to attend the majority of their academic year (2019-2020), their exams have started and they are still required to pass them. COVID-19 has not only adversely impacted the education system but the employment sector as well. Many restaurants, markets, entertainment places, courses, and gyms were closed, and a lot of projects were canceled and their staff were fired. This critical situation was intensified by the increasing price of goods in the market. Additionally, most people are mentally suffering from this pandemic as they are afraid of losing their family members as the rate of people affected by COVID-19 in Afghanistan has been increasing day by day. Even the rate of violence between couples has increased and numbers of early marriages have also risen in some areas. Due to financial problems and psychological distress some parents have forced their daughters to get married earlier than the age of 18. Being witness to such events has been a heart-wrenching experience for youth. Due to the low level of education and lack of awareness among young women in remote areas or low-income families,

young girls and women did not have access to their medicines and vaccinations on time, and sometimes they could not access them at all, which put their health and wellbeing in hardship and danger. In remote areas of the country, they did not even have access to very basic hygienic goods and essential health services. This causes a rise in diseases and deaths among young women and girls. It should be mentioned that there are many other obstacles as well which women face in Afghanistan. For example, most young women are not allowed to work or do not have freedom of choice in selecting their future careers. This decreases the country's workforce and adversely affects the development of it. Considering the issues from an environmental side, currently, climate change and global warming have become one of the most acute problems in the global context. Although each country suffers from the negative side effect of this global challenge, third-world countries are most affected. Since the economics of the most underdeveloped countries are based on agriculture, they have a less negative impact on climate change. In Afghanistan for instance, decreased snowfall and rain, scarcity of freshwater, and increased infectious diseases have been some of the negative effects of climate change. Climate change is a global change, and hence it requires global consensus to deal with it.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- The government should develop plans for avoiding problems in pandemic situations. For example, the government should prepare offline packages as most people do not have access to the internet.
- The government should create and implement programmes for young people to involve them in decision-making processes, and include their opinions in international, regional, national, and local plans.
- The government should increase people's accessibility to information communication technology especially in • rural areas by lowering the price of ICT services.
- The government should create mental health workshops and involve volunteers and active young people in the building of these practices.
- The government should improve the overall quality of health services.
- Fighting against corruption and discrimination play a significant role in the development of Afghanistan. The government should provide equal opportunities for both men and women.

- New companies and factories should be assessed and monitored to make sure their work does not affect the environment badly.
- Mobilise young people to have surveys of venerable youths to involve them in their activities such as education, job, health and so on.
- The media should provide true and factual data and distribute it among people to raise awareness on how to follow COVID-19 precautions.
- Solar energy is a suitable alternative to produce power and energy and should replace fossil fuel consumption.
- The government should enhance people's awareness regarding the negative impact of climate change through social media and hold programmes such as conferences, and workshops.
- Since each unit of technological production requires a level of emission, the government should find an optimal point between production and pollution.

 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 Afghanistan drafting team consists of Fayeq Ibrahimi, Sayed Nasratullah Mussawy, and Fariba Aslami. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW team.



APFSD Youth Call to Action 2021: Bangladesh¹

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh, one of the densely populated countries of the world, has heavily impacted household and individual level earnings with a large number of people becoming unemployed. Lowerand middle-income classes have been experiencing a significant drop in income. It has also affected education sectors by shutting down educational institutions in person activities without prior technological intervention preparedness temporarily pushing students out of school. Educational activities, classes, exams are mostly in halt during the pandemic from primary to tertiary level. Bangladeshi children and youth will stay out of education until the coronavirus situation is overcome.

COVID-19 has brought unbearable mental health difficulties with the concern of educational loss among students as well as for entering into the labor force. The ongoing pandemic now threatens to roll back progress on ending child marriage. As children and families cope with school closures, loss of income and increased pressure in the home, there are heightened risks of child marriage. In severe cases these consequences have led to suicidal behaviour among individuals. Domestic, sexual, mental abuses also increased due to COVID-19 affecting young people the most. It has had a disproportionate impact on people, and the effects are varied – depending on genders, disabilities, ethnicities, socio-economic class, race and even age. When it comes to differentiated impacts, women bear a disproportionate load of the adverse impacts of the pandemic.

Bangladesh has policies in papers but gaps in implementation. For SDG 3, there is a lot of challenges that hinders the expansion of knowledge and awareness on sexual and reproductive health and rights (mostly the challenges arise out of superstition and conservative religious beliefs). There is still hesitancy around conversations/discussions regarding basic sexual and reproductive health and needs (e.g., menstruation, puberty, sexual hormones) especially in rural areas. Unacceptability to generate mental-health related discussions due to the existence of some socially conservative rules, regulations and superstitions prevents young people from getting the information or services they need. In Bangladesh, achieving SDGS still mainly depends on development in the labour market and success in expanding decent employment opportunities especially for young people that mainly indicate SDG 8 but there is a lot that needs to be done to enable income generating opportunities. Another one major problem is the impacts of climate change in Bangladesh. Due to its geographical location and elevation from sea level, our country is more vulnerable to the effects of climate change but climate literacy is still not a priority in public and private interventions. It is high time to implement all climate policies and plans taken under SDG 13.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

We urge the government to take the following steps:

- Ensure young people's inclusive unbiased, nonpolitical participation while making government policies and access to government level planning
 from local level administration to national decision taking tables.
- Ensure effective implementation of technological interventions (taking online fair exams) to address education system failure due to COVID-19.
- Focus on 21st century/soft skills development among young people along with technical skills to build a better workforce as well as a better country.
- Organize youth councils/structures to empower youth through youth-led solutions and community learning centers and by connecting them with the government's different initiatives.
- Focus on sustainable development issues of youth from micro to macro level as young people's concerns is still not a priority.
- Ensure inclusive Covid-19 recovering strategies by including under-represented youth groups, ethnic, indigenous youth, climate impacted people with the tagline of- leaving no one behind.
- Expansion of awareness programs both on online and offline platforms for ensuring the inclusion of young people from different walks of life and also enable digitalization and removal of language barriers to get easy access from all levels of youths.
- Creating opportunities to raise 'unified' voices from country level at all international decision taking tables.
- Inclusion of comprehensive sexual education (CSE) in the primary level education and ensuring the practice of it.

- Inclusion of sexually diverse people and people with disabilities during the construction of various national policies.
- Establishment of youth groups regarding the SRH educations and policies and youth friendly SRHR policies while considering the perspectives of youths to ensure better implementation. Establish national development policies regarding the various complex sexual and reproductive rights related issues which should address the youth exclusively.
- Include climate change issues in all level of curriculum (primary, secondary, tertiary)
- Ensure meaningful youth participation and capacity building that includes indigenous persons, persons with disabilities, individuals from the trans gender community and establishing a National Youth Platform to develop Climate Leadership among youth groups.
- Invest in skill development of young agri entrepreneurs/farmers and strengthen local food supply.
- Ensure accountability and transparency must be ensured in all the stages of allocation and implementation of climate action initiatives.
- Enforce laws directly to stop climate pollution.
- Ensure eco-tourism and consider indigenous communities voices in CHT in the fight for climate change. The foreign donation led development projects must also take environment and human wellbeing as priority.

 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 Bangladesh drafting team consists of Mahmuda Samanjar (country facilitator) and Sufiya Khatun (rapporteur). Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW team.



APFSD Youth Call to Action 2021: India¹

INTRODUCTION

In India, the despondent effect of COVID-19 has affected almost all spheres of life, particularly mental health. Youth communities were one such vulnerable group facing challenges from deteriorating mental health and inadequate resources to sustain their education. The growing digital divide between socioeconomic classes in the country led to a fall in the quality of education and learning. Migrant workers were another group that was hard hit because of the pandemic. The lockdown implications left a large number of daily wage workers stranded in their workplaces making it difficult for them to go back home to their families. The COVID-19 relief measures adopted by the government lacked the means to consider the long-term impacts of the virus. The centre also lacked the data and national aggregate in terms of healthcare facilities and the impact of COVID-19 on marginalized sections. Further, lack of adequate policies for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services during lockdown served as a major constraint to provide adequate access to menstruation, contraceptives,

abortion and other related services. The country-wide lockdown brought ongoing programmes on gender sensitization and de-stigmatization of SRH to a standstill. India currently lacks a more in-depth comprehensive approach including a lack of robust model for information dissemination on environmental degradation and its ill effects among people. Increased impacts of climate change are also visible on marginalized identities and vulnerable communities. Access to water and other natural resources are a problem in the country especially for people belonging from the lower economic sections. A contributing factor to this is the disproportionate division and allocation of the resources. The country is still dependent on non-renewable energy and there is a slow shift towards renewable energy alternatives. Hence, although India has shown promising policy initiatives to achieve the UN's sustainable development goals, it still needs to expand the scope of its operations and include citizen participation at the ground level.

We urge the government to take the following steps:

- Encourage social and financial empowerment of young people through upskilling programmes (including digital and green skills) in rural & urban areas with career counselling.
- Establish collaborative efforts between the local authorities and civil society organizations to address gender inequality and gender-based violence.
- Private companies' involvement needs to be increased through the sustainable business model encouraging corporate social responsibility.
- Developing robust policies to ensure inclusion and representation of young people from marginalized identities (caste, gender, religion, class, linguistic groups and ethnicities).
- Addressing gaps in accessing technology (such as digitalization, access to devices) to ensure participation of marginalized groups in workspaces and educational institutions
- Sensitization of people on mental health issues and creating national helpline directory for the same.
- Promote training and equal participation of grassroot level frontline workers, faith-based leaders, law enforcement bodies, and gatekeepers (like adolescents, parents, teachers and community members) to strengthen SRHR initiatives.
- Introduce SRHR services (online and offline) in the public health systems at an affordable price.
- Adoption of the #NothingAboutUsWithUs principle to respect the body autonomy.
- Inclusion of strict policies on sexual harassment at workplace.
- Developing curriculum on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education and including it within formal education system across regions.

- Invest and promote in research and development to strengthen public health system
- Implement comprehensive policies for equal pay (including a person with disabilities, LGBTQI+, minorities, migrants, women, and refugees) following the ILO standards
- To develop a comprehensive community -based intervention focusing on SGD3.
- Larger investment to be made for the implementation of SGDs at the grassroot levels
- National level employment schemes (like MNREGA) to promote a curriculum (involving soft and hard skills, security benefits) to all sectors.
- Ensure active inclusion and participation of local, indigenous and vulnerable communities during policy making and implementing developmental projects involving natural resources.
- Accelerate and promote educational and research opportunities for developing sustainable and environmentally friendly alternatives in agricultural, transport and manufacturing industries.
- Form state and district level youth bodies to sensitize people and include voices of young people in policy making with respect to issues of environmental degradation and climate change.
- Develop and strengthen partnership with grassroot, local and regional organizations and individuals to work issues of climate justice.
- Promote investment on developmental projects which use sustainable technologies and renewable energy.
- Address gaps with respect to environmental policy implementation and monitor heavy penalties for law breakers.

 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 India drafting team consists of Kashvi Chandok (kashvi chandok.25@gmail.com), Arzoo Garg (arzoo@theypfoundation.org), Venicia Agnes Fernandes (venicia.fernandes@humantouch.ngo). Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW team.



APFSD Youth Call to Action 2021: Indonesia¹

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many vulnerabilities in Indonesia. Youth unemployment and disempowerment levels are becoming extremely high, which has a ripple effect on mental health as well. Fresh graduates are finding it particularly difficult to find jobs in the current economic situation. LGBTIQ+ persons and sex workers have also lost their jobs and are facing high discrimination, earning less income, and are unable to access HIV treatment and other public health services due to the reprioritisation of the health sector in dealing with the pandemic. A rise in sexual abuse cases coupled with lack of access to public health services and Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), has resulted in the number of child marriages also increasing. The situation is worsened by the current discussion on the Draft of the Penal Code, in which CSE is criminalised. In terms of education, there is limited access to the internet to support online schooling or working from home that has further created inequalities.

This pandemic has also influenced climate change and environmental problems. In regards to waste management, people at the individual level are still unaware of the importance of implementing 3R (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle) and need to encourage the government to push for a better waste management system. Furthermore, the deforestation in one of Indonesia's provinces, Kalimantan, to create more palm tree plantations is triggering problems as all the minerals in the soil are being used up for palm trees and cannot be used to replant the forest. This is also connected to the land rights of the indigenous people as large companies are taking their land by force and using them unethically to damage the environment and destroy the community ecosystem. We should be using the opportunity right now to move from fossil fuel to renewable energy, and planning to counter sea pollution and ocean warming, as we are an archipelago with a larger sea area than land. Furthermore, methane and biogas created by the livestock industries is also a big problem.

COVID-19 has brought us an opportunity to increase the communities' awareness on sustainable living and other solutions in contributing to the SDGs which are covered in our recommendations.

Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from COVID-19

- Establish inter-organisational harmonisation and build sustainable partnerships between the government and CSOs by supporting locally rooted solutions to reach provincial populations (such as to support youth capacity building), while pushing for the inclusive digitalisation of our livelihoods with increased internet access.
- Continue capacity-building for youth -- including marginalised communities, in policy development, decision making processes, strategy, and implementation of targets, particularly in agriculture and food security, education, public health (e.g. sexual and reproductive health and rights, climate action and response, transportation and mobility, and other areas).
- Improve education literacy, pedagogy, and accessibility, particularly regarding online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Strengthen the national statistics system through improved questionnaires and methodologies.
- Provide social protection by giving food assistance and cash to marginalised populations, such as pregnant women, children, people with disabilities, and the elderly.

SRHR

- Provide and strengthen capacities for counselling and advocating on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) programmes and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services, especially in regional and national level syllabus.
- Increase awareness of CSE using youth friendly and innovative ways through locally based approaches, cartoons, internet-based platforms, and television channels.
- Pass the Elimination of Sexual Violence Bill (RUU-PKS)
- Build partnerships and intergenerational cooperation between different stakeholders in providing CSE to sustain the 2030 Agenda to provide universal access to SRHR.

Labour Force Participation

- Implement pre-work education programmes and campaigns to grow youths' skills and critical thinking before they join the workforce
- Create partnerships between entrepreneurs and the government to disseminate knowledge related to entrepreneurship that will target young people. This endeavor will consist of knowledge related to life skills, which includes entrepreneurial skills.
- Create sustainable and green jobs by involving all parties cooperation, including but not limited to, the private sector.
- Encourage the establishment of labor unions. With more unions, more advocacy can be done to push for a healthy working environment.
- Ensure the government's transparency and accountability for job incentives and training programmes to be accessible for all.

Climate Action

- Innovate through utilising technology to create an application to calculate our own personal carbon emissions.
- Ensure collaboration between the government, NGOs, local communities, and other stakeholders to create an eco-sustainable economic framework for the post-COVID-19 era.
- Advocate for policy changes regarding plastic waste, replantation, waste management, medical waste, organic waste, incentives for the mobilisation of ecofriendly projects, and increasing taxes for emission.
- Raise awareness on climate change through implementing green lifestyle, and save biodiversity by revitalisation and improving conservation efforts.
- Provide more space for youth to engage and become involved in the policy making recommendations through the creation of the National Youth Climate Council.

 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 Indonesia drafting team consists of Trystancius S.M., Verli Ismail, Ika Nindyas R., Dicky Aditiya Kurniawan, and Naura Nabila Haryanto. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW team.







PFSD Youth Call to Α Action 2021: Malaysia

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.

- 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 antisexual 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 SRHRcentered 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-ofsociety (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

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. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW team.



APFSD Youth Call to Action 2021: Nepal¹

INTRODUCTION

In Nepal, the impact of COVID-19 and the lockdowns on infrastructure such as health services, education, technology, and mobility has been extremely detrimental. This has exacerbated the issues of gender inequality, discrimination of LGBTIQ+ communities, and people with disabilities, which in turn has caused a rise in cases of domestic violence, sexual harassment, physical assaults, mental illness, suicide (especially amongst youth), child marriage, and stigma. Due to the lockdown, the workload for women and girls has doubled now that they have to work from home and take care of both household work as well as office work. People with disabilities did not receive proper guidance and education about COVID-19 which created more chaos and discrimination towards them. LGBTIQ+ people were more discriminated against as they did not receive proper access to health or any protection services. Furthermore, health services and products such as access to abortion, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, child vaccines, contraceptives, sanitary pads, etc. were not made available which caused more problems, mainly to women and girls.

Lastly, 2020 had been announced as the year for tourism in Nepal. Due to this, many youths had started new entrepreneurships and businesses. Migrated workers had also returned to the country for better opportunities. However, due to lockdown and COVID-19, the tourism year was cut off, many youth lost their businesses and are seeking work abroad for better opportunities and to sustain their livelihood. Due to this, many youth are unemployed and don't have access to decent work for their livelihood.COVID-19 has added more challenges to the labor force and work as youth were already not given equal participation and opportunities even before the pandemic.

Climate change is a real discussion that needs to be had, but many youth and people in Nepal are not aware of its direct and indirect effects on various sectors of life. The gaps in planning, implementation, research, and monitoring regarding climate justice have led to a further decline in climate actions being carried out. In the name of development, many natural resources, and heritage sites have been destroyed due to improper planning and implementation. Despite being an agricultural country, urbanisation has been affecting the environment and causing various natural disasters. Due to this, climate change is affecting physical, mental, and social aspects of our health. Many innovative ideas, start-ups and eco-friendly products are being launched by the youth, but there is difficulty in sustaining them due to the lack of support, opportunities, and security. The lack of education and political influence is also highly impacting climate justice. The topic of climate change has always been ignored and COVID-19 has created even more issues regarding climate change.

- **Government:** The government should work with the Ministry of Education and other related sectoral partners to bring in the topics of CSE, SRHR, and SDGs into school-level curriculum. The interventions should also be focused on providing psychosocial support and counseling for the well-being of students. For climate action, the political involvement and interests should be guided more towards the policy and acts concerned with the conservation of natural resources including eco-friendly policies, EIA (environmental impact assessment) initiatives, and **Environment Protection Acts. Renewable innovations** such as improved cooking stoves by CEN in Nepal, agriculture farms, carbon trading, green mechanism, bio-gas plants and promote electric vehicles, should be encouraged and implemented
- Local government: The local government should improve its Public-Private Partnerships and
 promote SRHR, prioritising youth engagement and inclusiveness in all aspects of policy and decisionmaking at the local levels. Local entrepreneurs and youth innovations like carbon trading, and electric vehicles. must be encouraged and recycle, reuse and reduce initiatives must be practiced, focusing more on
 subsidising the green economy.
- Youth Inclusiveness: There should be involvement of youth in all levels of policy making and decision making. There needs to be a focus on SRH services prioritising access to abortion services, contraceptives, and sanitary pads, especially for youths, during disasters, prioritszing the safety of women, LGBTIQ+ persons, people with disabilities, and other marginalised communities. Youth-centered interventions, increased youth entrepreneurship, and innovations should be promoted. Information, opportunities, security, and protection regarding decent work and labor targeting youth should be initiated by the government. Young people's entrepreneurship and innovations that can sustain their livelihood in various sectors like water and farming, should be encouraged. In the long run, this will hich help increase the economy of the country.
 - **COVID-19 and other Disaster Pre-planning:** Proper disaster preparedness plans focusing on mental, physical and social aspects should be in all policy at national and local levels. The focus on youth issues during disasters should also be initiated.
 - Health Services: Provision of quality adolescent health, gender, and disability-friendly services should be included at all health facilities. The provision of the information and services should be made accessible to all.

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 Nepal drafting team consists of Harish Lama, Lirisha Tuladhar, and Situ Shrestha. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW team.



APFSD Youth Call to Action 2021: Pakistan¹

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan's main problem dealt with the economic aspect of daily wage labourers. The shutting down of small-scale businesses had a large impact on youth and there was an absence of mechanisms to build digitised businesses. There were no social protection programmes for gender and ethnic minorities initiated by the government as well as a lack of student friendly digital resources once education had to move to the online sphere. Nearly 60% of the Pakistani population is under the age of 30 and this Youth Bulge comes with major challenges of unemployment and limited engagement for these young people. Formal education does not provide the necessary skills for employment and young people face a huge barrier after completing their education. This further leads to isolation, dejection and depression among young people. The issue is only magnified for youth belonging to sexual and gender minorities.

Due to COVID-19, other areas of the healthcare sector took a backseat as all priorities were shifted to combating the pandemic, and therefore proper treatment for various other health issues could not take place. Universal health care and physical health has been the top issue during this pandemic. Furthermore, mental health issues, gender-based violence, absence of psychosocial support and problems in accessing services related to sexual reproductive health have all been major hurdles. According to the Global climate risk index, 2017 ranks Pakistan at number 7 in the list of most vulnerable nations, due to its geographical and climatic features.

Variability in the monsoon rains, massive floods and droughts further add to its vulnerability. The cumulative effect of all these climate peculiarities puts the country in a severe threat of food, water, and energy security. In Pakistan there is Lack of awareness among the community, even the Government regarding the Climate Change crises and Climate Actions. Ad hoc measures have been implemented by the government over the years which have not contributed effectively such as the Billion Trees project of banning the use of plastic bags without an alternative.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- Human lives need to be prioritised over economic advantages.
- The education system should be improved by the government in terms of COVID-19 this would include improving the curriculum and implementing a proper virtual system of education.

- There should be more learning platforms to help young people be the change agents in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. There should be training sessions for youth to use digital devices and raise donations to provide internet devices/laptops for students. Digital spaces should be improved at the mass level, including awareness of digital platforms, and speed of the internet.
- The government should adopt various fiscal and monetary measures to revive and sustain economic activity. Programmes like cash transfers to households, extending unemployment or social security benefits and loans to business will aid in reviving the economy. Social welfare programmes should also be put in place so that people can afford to quarantine and students can afford to attend online classes.
- There should be psycho-social training, collective voice and group formation and coping mechanisms for women suffering from domestic abuse or other forms of violence.
- There should be mental health initiatives put in place for sustainable and resilient recovery from COVID-19 which make sure gender and ethnic minorities are not left behind. The prioritisation of the mental health of students and frontline doctors is crucial.
- Mass level awareness campaigns should be initiated to address the rumours and superstitions regarding vaccines.
- Equal opportunities need to be given for all in terms of rural and urban areas, caste, and social status.
- The government must strategize and institutionalize focus on improved SRHR for young people including the transgender and differently abled community. This can be done through setting up clinics specifically designated for SRHR services.
- Stigma free Youth Friendly Health Services Centers and information counters should be developed to increase young people's access to healthcare services.
- Mobile applications should be developed by the Government at the national level to facilitate access of the right information.

- Labour force participation and decent work for all young people can be enhanced by increasing access to the right skills, more platforms, capacity including entrepreneurial skills and linking them with technical and vocational training institutes (e.g. TVET).
- A mechanism must be built to address the rise in Gender Based Violence during the pandemic through virtual courts to combat the already existing systemic delays in justice.
- Taking the example of Sindh, all other provinces' governments need to work on a LSBE curriculum for schools to address SRHR.
- Youth Policies must be implemented in the country that already address the need for entrepreneurship, small loans and skills building in youth to prepare them for employment.
- Strict action must be taken against Child Marriages which have again risen during the pandemic. The law must be revised to increase the legal age of marriage to 18 years of age for girls (currently 16) and boys.
- The government must develop a pro youth employment strategy to promote entrepreneurship and facilitate youth initiatives through tax incentives.
- The government must implement the National SDGs tracker to measure the country's progress according to the 2030 agenda. This will also ensure data gathering against all indicators.
- Youth networks should be developed at provincial and district levels by Government so that these networks can work in their communities/areas on Climate Action to achieve the Global Commitments and Sustainable environment at the grass root level.
- Young people should be engaged at all levels of decision making regarding Climate Change initiatives taken by government and Climate Change Policies. Implementation strategy should be made in collaboration with Youth networks and government.
- Awareness on recycling of the waste should be initiated at a mass level. Awareness sessions, public service messages through national channels and radio campaigns should be generated in order to aware people about recycling of waste and disposable mechanisms.
- 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 Pakistan drafting team consists of: Danish Tariq, Joshua Dilawar, Nasir Sajjad, Noor Imran, Qandeel Naeem, and Zoha Jamshaid. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW team.



APFSD Youth Call to Action 2021: Philippines¹

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 outbreak has resulted in significant disruptions of the provision of social services in the Philippines. As health systems are overwhelmed in pandemic response, services related to sexual and reproductive health and mental health are less prioritised. Even before the pandemic, young people already faced barriers in accessing these services which include uneven health service provision, particularly affecting geographically-isolated and disadvantaged areas, and requirements such as parental consent to avail such services if they are available. Meanwhile, inequality and access issues have also plagued the provision of basic and tertiary education in the country during the pandemic. The shift to remote and distance learning posed a threat to the quality of education and has become a challenge for Filipino youth, especially those that belong to poor and rural communities. The pandemic created further barriers such as the lack of access to stable internet connection. decreasing livable wages for teachers and professors, and lack of funding for institutions unable to cope with online learning requirements. Moreover, fresh graduates and young job-seekers are also struggling to find and keep decent jobs with livable wages as big companies downsize and micro, small and medium enterprises are being forced to shut down.

The Philippine government's pandemic response has been largely focused on instituting mobility restrictions, such as community quarantine and curfews, and military

presence in communities to enforce these. Throughout the quarantine period, government aid has mostly consisted of food packs, non-food items and the occasional monetary support. Provision of aid is also uneven in many areas and plagued with corruption issues at both local and national levels. Part of the problem is also the lack of credible sources of information for the public to access as fake news becomes more widespread. The combination of stayat-home measures, economic closures and food scarcity has created tensions that have resulted in gender-based violence. While emerging data shows decreases in the reporting of cases, past experiences can validate that this only indicates significant barriers for women to report, not fewer instances of violence occurring. State violence also presents an alarming picture with the passage of the Anti-Terror Law, a regressive law that threatens human rights activists in the country. In the wake of the passage of the law, the nation has seen rampant red-tagging (or terroristtagging) of activists, journalists and killing of community leaders and activists, lawyers and opposition politicians. Amid all of these, Filipinos have also had to cope with the recent disasters, particularly the spate of strong typhoons that hit the country. Community quarantines slowed quick responses that resulted in several casualties affected by calamities and catastrophes. Despite many barriers to their well-being, Filipino youth were able to rise and initiate school strikes to demand quality education and to call for a declaration of national climate state emergency as environment and climate risks worsen.

- Ensure young people's meaningful and inclusive participation for mapping of the key issues concerning the youth and development of inclusive programmes and policies and invest in building their capacities.
- Fully implement a Universal Health Coverage law and Reproductive Health Law and include coverage for vaccines and mental health services as well as removal of parental consent requirements to access sexual and reproductive health services.
- Push for the enactment of progressive SRHR legislation, including Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Bill, Ending Child, Early and Forced Marriage, Decriminalization of Abortion, and a SOGIE bill, and ensure multi-stakeholder efforts (government, civil society, especially the media) to address social and cultural norms that hamper support for SRHR.
- Emphasise sexual rights and empowerment of the LGBTQIA community through comprehensive and strategic planning to mainstream SOGIE in policies.
- Address the digital divide in education, particularly for those in geographically isolated and depressed areas, and maximize the use of the internet and technology to facilitate access to markets of the agricultural sector.
- Create opportunities, via inter-linking and forging partnerships (government, private sector and CSOs), to ensure decent jobs for young people, provide technical-vocational training, provide business loans, funding for agriculture, and promote sustainable livelihood for the marginalised and minorities.
- Ensure livable wages and promote inclusive and nondiscriminatory work-related policies for young people, indigenous people and persons with disabilities.

- Repeal the Anti-terror law and safeguard the political and civil rights of human rights activists, youth leaders and environmental defenders.
- Allow and empower local communities, especially rural and indigenous communities, to lead in their own environment rehabilitation, respect ancestral domains and introduce policies to divest from extractive industries.
- Prioritise the country's shift to renewable energy as alternatives for energy consumption, and ensure environment-led policies to hold corporations and global north countries accountable for producing the most carbon emissions, over-consumption of natural resources and destroying natural habitat through large-scale mining.
- Strengthen national environmental laws and strictly monitor the implementation of central and local policies to the local and grassroot communities and implement a total and absolute ban on single-use plastic and initiate circular eco-waste segregation, composting, and fertilizers.
- Embark on public education-information campaigns on climate degradation which integrate indigenous knowledge and partner with media houses in providing awareness among marginalised sectors through localisation of key messages in their native languages and dialects.
- Engage young people in policy-making and devising youth-led climate action agenda and highlight youthled practices among local communities such as eco-bricking, information campaigns, formulation of environmental organisations, changing eating habits, usage of less packaging or plastic materials, treeplanting, biking, recycling, segregation of waste, and climate justice campaigning.

 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 Philippines drafting team consists of Alexis Sebote, Armand Budlao, Jonero Dacula, and Shiphrah Belonguel. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW team.

Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development **YOUTH FORUM 2021**

Youth Call to Action 2021 Sun-regional Briefs



APFSD Youth Call to Action 2021: Sub-region¹



INTRODUCTION

Maldives, Sri Lanka and Bhutan had faced similar issues due to this pandemic however the government's response towards the safety measures were much faster and effective in Bhutan than the rest of Sri Lanka and Maldives. Some of the issues faced by these countries:

- Maldives faced severe issues of transportation of logistics in the country due to lack of connection between their own areas. Since Maldives have a lot of islands within the country, the peripheral areas were disconnected from the capital due to the lockdown and people faced issues of limited resources within areas. People were depending on the government's limited resources. Schools were closed down and the education system shifted to online learning. However, young people could not learn from it effectively due to internet issues. This pandemic has created unemployment in the country since most young people either did not or lost their job.
- 2. Similar situation exists in Sri Lanka where the lockdown was imposed a couple of times. Schools and institutions were closed down which created a huge gap between the education sector. Online lectures were implemented but it was not effective since most of the young people in rural areas did not have access to internet or electronic devices. Sri Lanka still faces internet facilities in the region. Students were stressed

and under mental health issues because of the inability to cope up and do well like the others. Most of the young people often landed up in high risk areas in search of internet networks where they were often abused or harassed. High unemployment rate, young employers were abused and expelled by organizations, financial crises within families and in broad, the economy of the country has collapsed.

Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan

3. Bhutan also had similar issues with Maldives and Sri Lanka. The students had a difficult time shifting to online studies. Infact, the timing of young people was all messed up and most of them became nocturnal. Mealth health issues increased with the lockdown and SRHR services were not available during the first lockdown. But with the pandemic condition, the tourism industry in Maldives and Sri Lanka has drastically depleted. Young people in the tourism sector lost their jobs and most of them are still unemployed at the moment. Export and imports were banned for a while so it indirectly impacted the economy of the country. Most of the people started to grow their own vegetables then. Now, most young people are trained in 'Dessung; the guardians of peace' who volunteer to look after the country during such needs. They guard the borders and make sure everyone is following the covid protocols. Unemployed ones are given the opportunity and given salary by His

Majesty which is a way to involve young people during emergencies. His Majesty also provides an emergency relief fund for those who are in special needs.

HOW DO WE SUSTAIN THE PROGRESS OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL AGENDA RELATED TO UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO SRHR FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE INCLUDING SRH SERVICES

Health Wellbeing and Sustainable Development from Young People Perspective (gender equality, human rights and intersectionality lens)

Since the societal structure is conventional in Maldives, Sri Lanka and Bhutan, the concept of reproductive health is suppressed. Especially the patriarchal mindset has hindered sexual and reproductive rights of women. In some instances, there is a misunderstanding on sexual and reproductive rights. Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives always take only girls into consideration when they are talking about sexual health and rights. In the three countries there is no open platform to discuss this subject. Neither schools nor adults are giving any space for the young girls and boys to discuss their reproduction health. In the school curriculum, there are no modules on comprehensive reproduction health and rights. Even the schools' staff is not well equipped with knowledge of reproductive health. Subsequently, they are a bit reluctant to openly talk about SRH with the students and sexual and reproductive education has been considered as a taboo in the school's system. Therefore, young girls and boys have to conceal their emotions and needs which directly impacts on their mental stress. Lacking education on SRHR almost leads the sexual harassment and violence in Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives. In Sri Lanka, there are many sexual crimes recorded every day. Most of the violence cases are recorded in public places. There are no mechanisms to provide training and knowledge for the academic staff on SRHR. The national level decisions on identifying solutions for the SRHR issues are not well penetrating to the bottom level due to lack of law enforcement and prevailing SRHR exclusive policies. Marginalized rights have been notably violated in Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan. Basically, fishing communities, estate populations, people who live in urban shanties and slums, minor ethnic groups and LGBTQIA+ groups are categorized under the marginalized entities in the regional countries. Society has a negative impression on the marginalized communities as well as the government is passionate on the marginalized rights to be incorporated in their constituencies and policies.

The hygiene and sanitary health issues of women and girls who reside in slums and estate can be clearly noted.

UNEQUAL TREATMENT IN LABOR FORCE

There is no any equal consideration on the occupations in Maldives, Sri Lanka and Bhutan. Since the entire society is constricted to the traditional framework, only few jobs are considered to be decent. Moreover, the education system doesn't leverage the youth to have decent jobs. For instance, in Sri Lanka and Maldives, basic education is not always aligned with the current job market. Thus, the youth drop out from the stream. As a result, most young people in Maldives tend to engage in tourism and hotel fields. Then the society used to label them with a negative perspective giving high demand for the jobs in the government sector. This sort of long-term conventional perspectives has been concreted in the system that has resulted in irreversible phenomenon.

THE PRIORITY AREAS FOR CLIMATE ACTION AND CLIMATE JUSTICE ISSUES IN THEM

Climate action for sustainable present and future: young people in the forefront goal focus: 12 and 13, 10, 16, 17 (intersectionality/ human rights and gender equality lens)

As the result of being the islands, Maldives and Sri Lanka are notably facing the same spectrum of issues due to climate change. Sea level rising directly impacts coastal erosion, coral degradation and coastal land inundation in both countries. The Western coastal belt in Sri Lanka has been eroding for the last few years at a significant rate. It has crafted a high-end risk on marine fauna and flora in Maldives. According to Sri Lanka's context, those who reside along the coast are suffering from the consequences of sea-level rise. Global warming has altered the weather and climate patterns. Subsequently, ordinary agricultural practices have been hindered by this unprecedented calamity. In Sri Lanka, farmers are paranoid in benefitting in yield during seasonal shifts (rainy and dry seasons). Thus, farmers and their families have become climate victims. In Sri Lanka, there has been an apparent decline of the forest density over the past few years since people have been clearing the forest for settlements, constructional and agricultural purposes. Moreover, the Sri Lankan government facilitates devastative projects (Hotel complex construction, golf course construction, Colombo port city etc.) in the middle of the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) failures.

Sri Lanka has institutions combating climate change and building climate resilience building but they are not deployed well. Lack of institution framework and lack of disaster management mechanisms is a vibrant gap in the system. Decision makers are not following the international climate conventions (Paris agreement, COP 26, climate summits etc.) in compiling policies.

Bhutan is the only carbon negative country in the world. They also have encountered the issues due to climate change and global warming. Bhutan is susceptible to the risks of glacial lake of outburst due to global warming. There is a lack of vigorous advocacy on environment and climate action. Bhutan is a landlocked country and the inland water resources should be protected. Bhutan already has a society in our college where the environment majors can share their ideas and contribute to the environment and it is in collaboration with WWF Bhutan and RSPN (NGO).

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

Since the countries in Southeast and South Asia are located closer to the equator, they are most vulnerable and sensitive in terms of climate change. Maldives is also known as the floating country of Southeast Asia, in the past year of 2020 it has been recorded as the hottest day(s) in the history of Maldives. The sea levels rise up to 1.6 meters per year, according to The World Bank within the range of 10-100 centimeters by 2100, the entire country might be submerged. In Sri Lanka 50% of its 22M citizens live in low-lying coastal areas and are at risk of high sea rise levels. According to the UN Climate Index, Sri Lanka was also ranked 2nd among the climate prone countries in 2019. In Bhutan, The beautiful glaciers are receding at the range of 30-60 meters per decade. The following climate change calamities have been identified in Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives.

- 1. Collapsing agriculture
- 2. Negative of impact human health
- 3. Flash flood (GLOF) in Bhutan
- 4. Coastal submerging
- 5. Coastal Erosion
- 6. Coral Reef Degradation
- 7. Temperature increase

Urban areas and metropolitan cities which contribute most to the climate change hence require the most climate action. The climate justice issue associated is that the people who did not pollute or contribute to climate change are forced to face the consequences of it.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Therefore, the recommendations that the team came up for a sustainable and resilient recovery from the **COVID-19 pandemic** in Asia and the Pacific from young people lens" are:

- Implement an active nationwide plan to cope up during the pandemic. The government like in Maldives and Sri Lanka had slow reactions to issues and were not solved accordingly.
- Provide more resources like food, logistics, internet, human resources to the rural areas. Since internet is not available in most marginalized communities, health expertise or teachers should be sent to make sure people are well taken care of regarding mental health and also students are not left behind in education learning.
- 3. Mental health should be taken into consideration and health sectors should immediately work on it and related issues that affect young people. E.g. SRHR, disability and stigmatization. Advocacy programs by expertise through visual displays and in local languages so that those who do not read and write understands as well.
- 4. Door-to-door SRHR services. Teenage pregnancy and early marriages increased during the pandemic. Most young people had to drop out of school because of the lack of contraceptives. Therefore, SRHR services are necessary. For e.g., In Bhutan, the government made sure to supply contraceptives to those who are in need by reaching them to their door by the young volunteers called 'Dessuung'.
- Encourage young people into the agriculture and farming sector by giving them financial support so that a certain percentage of what and how many they produced can go to the country.
- 6. People should start investing in domestic tourism in order to keep the economy running and also so that young people are still employed.
- 7. Government should strengthen internet facilities especially in rural areas for effective learning.
- Education sector should incorporate their emergencies curriculum and make sure it is made accessible to low socioeconomic students. Implement emergency learning plan by broadcasting on national television and make printed copies accessible to underprivileged students.
- Free toll-free number which is known to everyone so that people can seek help during the times of emergencies and clarifications.

10. Stakeholders, NGOs, CSOs and organizations should advocate on domestic violence and similar issues for a safe conducive environment at home.

Recommendations for Health and Well-being

- 1. Implement SRHR services at school level.
- 2. Incorporate CSE in the school curriculum based on age appropriateness.
- 3. Implementation of inclusive policies by the government is necessary and laws must be enforced to 4. Identify Alternative sources: strengthening uphold young people's SRHR.
- 4. Governments, NGOs and private firms must provide training and capacitate teachers. on the delivery of SRHR and CSE in the schools and institutions and set up an inclusive process in terms of women and men in health talks in all the institutions.
- 5. Parents' awareness of SRHR and CSE must be raised and advocacy programs must take place in local languages.
- 6. SRHR services must be made available in and around the society. E.g. HIV testing
- 7. Implementation of inclusive policies by the government is necessary.
- 8. Ensure proper mechanism to safeguard minority and marginalized rights.
- 9. National level policy makers must identify the youth talents and provide a better health insurance mechanism.

Recommendations for accelerating climate action that is sustainable and inclusive in the post COVID 19 world

- 1. Protecting people and their assets: diversifying agriculture chains.
- 2. Reducing exposure: Low lying islands should consider coastal safety barriers.
- 3. Financing and ensuring: To maintain growth & eradicate poverty a collaborative approach is necessary, including participation by institutions.
- infrastructure to withstand damage, restoring natural environment(s) and ecosystems.
- 5. Enact the Green Policies (Including 5 R concepts and reducing ecological footprints).
- 6. Encourage Green climate funding.
- 7. Fortifying the institutional structure for climate actions.
- 8. Promoting subsidies (Green funding schemes) for victimized farmer families.
- 9. Advocate youth groups to move with green concepts.
- 10. Lobbying the government officials, NGO's, CBO's, national level decision makers and private sector.

Recommendations for policy makers to create an enabling environment for youth engagement in climate action

- 1. Develop a National-level youth platform to support in climate resilient governance.
- 2. Formulate National level youth networks to combat against common climate issues in the region.
- 3. Add the youth climate action as a cross-cutting aspect in youth policies being implemented in Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives.
- 4. Encourage youth to engage in climate smart organic agriculture.
- 5. Set-up a youth inclusive climate resilient mechanism in Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives.
- 6. Develop a Front-Line youth network at regional level to response upon the disasters (Vigilant youth groups).
- 7. Establish regional-level early warning mechanisms to reduce the disaster risk.
- 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 sub-regional drafting team for the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan consists of Pema Choden and Nimesh. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW team.



ARROW is a regional non-profit women's NGO based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Established in 1993, it envisions an equal, just, and equitable world, where every woman enjoys her full sexual and reproductive rights. ARROW promotes and defends women's rights and needs, particularly in the areas of health and sexuality, and to reaffirm their agency to claim these rights.

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