

Young People's Vision for a Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Asia Pacific

STATEMENT FROM THE PREPARATORY YOUTH FORUM FOR THE ASIA-PACIFIC FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (APFSD) 2018

23-24 March 2018, Bangkok, Thailand

Who We Are and What We Believe in

We, 65 activists, advocates, and representatives from youth-led, youth-serving, and youth-allied organisations across diverse social movements in Asia and the Pacific region came together in Bangkok to call for resilient and sustainable solutions to the 2030 Agenda that cohesively integrates young people.

We reiterate the Asia Pacific Youth Call to Actionⁱ developed in 2017, which provides youth focused recommendations across all the sustainable development goals and recognise that youth leadership and empowerment are key to creating synergies across environmental sustainability and the socio-economic dimensions on the basis of equity, equality and justice. We further reiterate the commitments made in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD PoA) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Young people from the region come from diverse backgrounds including people who are poor; people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identities and expressions, and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC); people with disabilities; people living with and affected by HIV; ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples; religious minorities; people living in remote, rural, and slum areas; sex workers; people who use drugs; migrants, displaced, refugees, and stateless

people; people with limited formal education; and people of all castes and classes.

Our vision for the theme of Fifth Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) 2018, "*Transformations Towards Sustainable and Resilient Asia Pacific*", is an inclusive Asia Pacific where young people have all the needed capacities and opportunities to become resilientⁱⁱ and face emerging challenges in the region and progress towards holistic and rights-based sustainable development.

WHY THIS CALL

We recognise the largest number of young people globally, about 670 million, live in the Asia and the Pacific.ⁱⁱⁱ Children and youth comprise 24% and 16% of the region's population respectively,^{iv} while 68% of its people are of working age and 32% are dependents^v. The Asia-Pacific is in the midst of a historic demographic transition with young people forming a significant population group. To harness the potential of young people and to fully achieve a resilient, inclusive and sustainable Asia Pacific, transformative investments are critical to address young people's unique needs.

Asia-Pacific region has been predominantly rural but from 2018 there will be more people living in urban areas than rural areas. The region is home to more than 2.1 billion urban residents, or **60 percent** of the world's urban population, with young people being a

key group^{vi}. Lack of institutional capacities in the region, poor urban planning and governance puts people especially young people at risk of poor living standards, insufficient incomes and vulnerable and unhealthy environments.^{vii}

The region is making slow progress in its attempts to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for youth and other groups. Approximately 1.7 billion people in Asia do not have access to clean water and sanitation, 780 million practice open defecation and 80% of wastewater is discharged untreated into waterways, leading to increase in water borne diseases.^{viii} The problem is particularly prevalent in rural areas, where only 46% of the population has access to improved sanitation, compared to 75% in urban areas.^x Yet many urban centres are also grappling with unplanned and uncoordinated development, resulting in inadequate urban water and sanitation management. Girls, in particular, face significant sanitation challenges with a lack of menstrual hygiene management and hygiene promotion, particularly in South Asia.^x The lack of safe, separate, and private sanitation and washing facilities in schools is one of the main factors preventing girls from attending school, particularly whilst menstruating. Convenient access to water increases privacy and reduces risk to girls and women from sexual harassment and assault while fetching water.^{xi}

Access to clean and efficient **energy is critical for economic progress, human welfare and environmental well-being** and has been acknowledged in the SDG Goal 7, which focuses on sustainable energy - incorporating targets for renewable energy production, energy efficiency, and energy access. Access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy is crucial to achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals - from poverty eradication to mitigating the consequences of climate change.

Increasingly, governments around the world and in the region are focusing on renewable energy as an important part of the energy portfolio although not enough investment has been made towards providing communities information on the alternative options available. The Asia-Pacific region has emerged as the global leader in renewable energy investment, installed capacity and consumption. Yet, fossil fuel consumption has risen substantially, limiting the growth of the share of renewable energy (including both traditional and modern forms), and resulting in significant local and global environmental impacts.

The Asia Pacific region has witnessed a very sharp and rapid increase in urbanisation in recent years resulting in unprecedented demographic, economic and social challenges. Multiple strings are attached to urban growth, including exponential growth of slums, informal settlements, and urban poverty. In

developing countries, urbanisation is often characterised by infrastructural challenges including, but not limited to, lack of adequate housing, densely populated residential areas, poor sanitation and overburdened social service systems including public health facilities. Local governments have not been able to keep up with growth rates of cities in the region and have failed to provide the required infrastructure to meet the needs of the increasing urban population.

Feminisation of poverty is another very vivid consequence of increasing urbanisation. Women suffer doubly - first at the hand of gender inequality and power imbalances in the society and within their families and second, due to the increased poverty. Lack of infrastructure put women and young girls at greater vulnerability.^{xii} Lack of sanitation and water supply systems impact young girls and women's menstrual hygiene, putting them at increased physical discomfort and risks of health and limiting their ability to participate in social life.^{xiii, xiv} Poorly lit streets and lack of transportation facilities have increased women and girls' vulnerabilities to sexual harassment and gender-based violence.^{xv, xvi, xvii} Women and girls in urban slums lack access to SRH information, skilled birth attendants, contraceptives and are at increased risks of reproductive health issues and early and unwanted pregnancies^{xviii}.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to some of the world's most polluted and unhealthy cities, the world's largest urban slum populations and the largest concentration of people living below the poverty line. Adequate shelter, safe neighbourhoods, clean water and sanitation, healthcare, transport and access to modern energy systems or even a legally defined address, are rights still not shared by all. Moreover, cities in the region are among the most vulnerable to natural disasters and the projected impacts of climate change. Almost three-quarters of the global fatalities caused by disasters between 1970 and 2011 occurred in the Asia Pacific. Consequently, there is an urgent need to address the resilience of the region's cities.



RECOMMENDATIONS:**SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.**

1. Ensure universal access to potable water and sanitation in urban, rural, and remote areas through sustainable infrastructure, including the recycling of wastewater.
2. Ensure adequate sanitation facilities in adolescent and youth-frequented spaces in rural, remote and informal settlements, especially in schools, supplemented by proper maintenance facilities. Also ensure that these facilities are gender neutral and disable friendly.
3. Ensure proper water infrastructure and climate change planning systems to promote sustainable use of water resources, limit water-borne diseases, address water scarcity, and enhance monitoring capabilities.
4. Encourage youth-centred initiatives and use of appropriate technologies, including indigenous knowledge on water conservation and management.
5. Ensure proper management of water waste systems as part of disaster risk reduction and management to prevent flood-related disasters and health risks.
6. Implement gender, age and culture-responsive awareness approaches to address stereotyping in water access and management, including consideration of gender-based violence.
7. Ensure access to safe and hygienic sanitation including access to menstrual hygiene management.

SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.

1. Prioritise investments in low-carbon, renewable, efficient and clean energy infrastructure and technology over fossil fuels, while ensuring compliance of the private sector and the state with ethical and human rights guidelines. Governments should also subsidise renewable and clean energy to make it accessible, affordable and efficient for all.
2. Ensure the development of a clear policy on youth-adult partnership to participate and to facilitate access and capability of youth to replicate and scale up clean energy models (e.g. Subsidised energy rates for youth and training on innovation).

3. Perform environment impact assessments and social impact assessment while designing and implementing energy projects. Develop young people's capacities in conducting such impact assessments.
4. Ensure meaningful engagement of youth, develop knowledge and skills of young people and address structural challenges on clean energy by incentivising youth entrepreneurship in the area of renewable energy.
5. Communities should be empowered and capacitated to be able to produce and access its own clean energy.
6. Raise awareness, build capacity, and influence agendas around environmental, ecosystems and biodiversity protection and sustainable use of natural resources.
7. Youth should be engaged in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and accountability of policies and programmes around renewable energy.

SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

8. Institutionalise active youth engagement in a democratic, transparent and result-oriented urban decision at all levels, especially for marginalised youth, in order to meaningfully engage them in building of inclusive and resilient infrastructures.
9. Promote age and gender responsive budgeting for youth led urban initiatives.
10. Improve and expand protection for children and youth people through the development of safe zones with adequate access to basic facilities in urban settings.
11. Adopt specific recommendation from the Sendai framework of disaster risk reduction, taking into account that children and youth are agents of change and should be given the space and modalities to contribute to disaster risk reduction, in accordance with legislation, national practice and education curricula.
12. Ensure the implementation of minimum initial service package (MISP) which are crucial actions to respond to sexual and reproductive health needs, at the onset of every humanitarian crisis. Integrate, capacitate and train young people in the implementation of MISP in crisis situation.
13. Foster the potential of youth and their engagement at all levels of government to counter and prevent radical polarisation,

violence and extremism and to maintain peace and resolve conflict.

14. Encourage accessibility and representation of youth, especially with lived experiences, in all SDGs decision making processes at local, national, regional and international levels.
15. Relevant ministries and authorities must encourage vertical growth rather than horizontal growth of city infrastructures to counter rapid and uncontrolled urbanisation to promote sustainable cities for young people by 2030.

SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

16. Emphasis on enabling youth to play key roles in decision-making, monitoring, and accountability on natural resources and consumption and production patterns at all levels
17. Developing and promoting consumer education for responsible and informed consumption

SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably managed forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

18. Adopting best practices of waste management and reduction across countries.
19. The state must put in place fines and policies on responsible waste treatment and management for corporations, governments and individuals. Capacity building for municipalities to manage waste considering environmental aspects, sustainability, and human rights.
20. The state must introduce curricula and initiatives for young people on continuous engagement and sustainability for forest conservation.
21. Sufficient resources must be allocated by the state to build new skills and techniques for young advocates of environment and climate change with modern technologies for conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems.
22. Encourage youth centered initiatives in wetlands management and provide them with the training required to do so.

23. Call to an end of any kind of privatisation of natural resources and social goods.

SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

24. Build capacities of young people to meaningfully engage with national, regional and global SDG implementation and follow up and review mechanisms.
25. Make high-quality, timely and reliable data available, disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, citizenship and migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national and local contexts.
26. Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally-sound technologies engaging young people in order to reduce the digital gap.
27. Ensure that youth groups are meaningfully engaged at all levels of the implementation, follow up and review of the SDG road map, including the Asia-Pacific Road Map for Implementing the 2030 Agenda. This should also include related agreements and existing partnerships networks, such as “Every Woman, Every Child,” “Higher Education Sustainability Initiative,” “Sustainable Development Goals Funds (SDGF),” and others.
28. Ensure that public-private partnerships, South-South/ North-South, and Triangular collaborations, which are used to secure resources for youth, continuously engage in SDG processes, follow rights-based, ethical guidelines and labour standards.
29. Allocate sufficient Overseas Development Assistance fund for youth human rights defenders’ safety, security and protection.
30. Closely monitor the means of implementation targets and indicators and involve young people in all the stages, including the intergovernmental monitoring and follow-ups.
31. Enhance youth engagements in transboundary knowledge platforms.
32. Ensure that resources generated are transformative, empowering, and creative beyond the grantee funder relationships and build on local realities.
33. Ensure meaningful and inclusive youth participation, including girls, LGBTIQ and other gender and sexual minorities, in

sustainable development policies at national level.

ABOUT THIS STATEMENT

This statement was an outcome of the forum, “Young People’s Vision for a Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Asia Pacific”, which was organised in preparation for the Fifth Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) from 23-24 March in Bangkok. The Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), and AP-RCEM’s Youth Constituency, coordinated by Youth LEAD, co-convened the forum. The forum was organised with the support of Right Here, Right Now partnership, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, as well as participants’ self-funding.

ENDORSEMENTS:

1. Aahung, Pakistan
2. ACT2030, Philippines
3. Aliansi Remaja Independen (ARI)
4. Aman Foundation, Pakistan
5. ASEAN SOGIE CAUCUS
6. Association for Youth Organisations (AYON), Nepal
7. Bandhu Social Welfare Association, Bangladesh
8. Bargad Youth Development Organisation, Pakistan
9. Blue Veins, Pakistan
10. BRACU, Bangladesh
11. CamASEAN, Cambodia
12. Cambodia National LGBTI Network
13. CCIHP, Vietnam
14. Channan Development Association, CDA, Pakistan
15. CliMates Nepal
16. Fokus Muda, Indonesia
17. Forum for Dignity Initiative (FDI), Pakistan
18. ISEE, Vietnam
19. Jurnal Perempuan, Indonesia
20. Natural Ache, Indonesia
21. Pamflet, Indonesia
22. PKBI, Indonesia
23. Pravah, India
24. Rahnuma - Family Planning Association of Pakistan (FPAP), Pakistan
25. Restless Development, Nepal
26. Rural Women’s Network (RUWON), Nepal
27. Sanghar SWARA, Indonesia
28. SERAC, Bangladesh
29. The QKnit, India
30. The YP Foundation, India
31. UBR Alliance, Bangladesh
32. Vanuatu National Youth Council, Vanuatu
33. Visible Impact, Nepal
34. YFP, Indonesia
35. YIFOS, Indonesia
36. Youth Action Nepal
37. Youth Advocacy Network (YAN), Pakistan
38. Youth Voice Count (YVC)
39. YPEER Asia Pacific
40. YUWA, Nepal
41. Yuwalaya, Nepal

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ⁱ <http://arrow.org.my/pre-apfsd-youth-forum-2017-asia-pacific-youth-call-action-sustainable-solutions-eradicate-poverty-promote-prosperity/>

ⁱⁱ Resilience is the ability of a society to absorb and recover from shocks, to adapt and transform their structures and means for living in the face of long-term stresses, change and uncertainty. (Source: UNESCAP)

ⁱⁱⁱ UNDP, Asia-Pacific Human Development Report; Shaping the Future: How Changing Demographics Can Power Human Development (New York: UNDP, 2016), accessed 24 March 2017, <http://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/hdr.html>

^{iv} UNESCAP, Economic and Social Survey 2016 (Bangkok: UN, 2016), accessed 24 March 2017, http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Economic%20and%20Social%20Survey%20of%20Asia%20and%20the%20Pacific%202016_o.pdf.

^v UNESCAP, Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2014 (Bangkok: UN, 2014), accessed 24 March 2017, <http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAP-SYB2014.pdf>.

^{vi} https://www.unescap.org/commission/73/document/E73_16E.pdf

^{vii} Ibid

^{viii} United Nations. *Switched On: Youth At The Heart Of Sustainable Development In Asia And The Pacific*, Regional Coordination

Mechanism – United Nations Development Group Asia-Pacific Thematic Working Group on Youth, 2015.

^{ix} Ibid.

^x United Nations, *Switched On: Youth At The Heart Of Sustainable Development In Asia And The Pacific*. Regional Coordination Mechanism – United Nations Development Group Asia-Pacific Thematic Working Group on Youth, 2015.

^{xi} United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *Worlds Apart: Reproductive Health and Rights in a World of Inequality*. State of the World's Population, 2017.

^{xii} <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/59778/urban-poverty-asia.pdf>

^{xiii} <http://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/guest-articles/sanitation-and-the-sdgs-starting-with-the-one-in-everyone/>

^{xiv} <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/59778/urban-poverty-asia.pdf>

^{xv} Ibid

^{xvi} <http://arrow.org.my/social-inclusivity-city/>

^{xvii} <http://blogs.worldbank.org/transport/category/tags/gender-based-violence>

^{xviii} <http://www.medicusmundi.ch/de/bulletin/mms-bulletin/gesundheit-und-verstadterung/risiken-und-chancen-der-verstadterung/urbanisation-and-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights-srhr>