

# APFSD YOUTH FORUM 2023



## Asia-Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action 2023



## Afghanistan

**Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels in Asia and the Pacific with Young People at the Forefront**

### SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Afghanistan has suffered from war, poverty, and conflict for decades. This situation has led to people not having access to good healthcare and proper education. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation became even worse. The pandemic led to people not receiving proper education, not having access to a good diet due to poverty, a rise in unemployment, and lack of availability and access to good medical care. As Afghanistan was already dealing with many problems brought on by war and conflict, it was not ready to deal with this pandemic and manage it. Hundreds of people lost their lives due to the lack of access to good healthcare. The rate of violence against women and children increased as they suffered from domestic violence within their households from the males and elders in their families. The pregnancy rate increased and many infants were born pre-term or underweight due to their mothers not having access to nutritious food.

For one year everything, including educational institutions, government and non-government organisations, stopped their activities without having an alternative plan. Although some universities started teaching their students online, the lack of good and affordable internet and electricity caused students to not benefit from the classes and be able to learn the materials. The online system of learning became even worse because as soon as the universities opened, they examined students based on the online materials which the students did not learn well. Besides the inability of the government of Afghanistan in handling the situation, the international NGOs also did not help Afghanistan. However, Afghanistan needed the help of those NGOs more than the developed countries. It was among the countries that received a very limited number of COVID vaccines, and at a very late stage. The drawbacks that happened during COVID-19 were reinforced by the collapse of Afghanistan in August 2021.

The fall of the country by the Taliban destroyed everything, including the achievements that people, particularly women, had made in the past. The progress that happened in different sectors such as education, health, and government and non-government sectors were also heavily impacted. This has been a big barrier to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, there is no progress to promote and achieve the SDGs, either by the government or the people. Women are being deprived of their basic and fundamental human rights such as education, employment, and freedom which is against Goal 5 of the SDGs. Also, there is no progress in providing good healthcare for the well-being of people. Millions of people, including children, are suffering from poverty and not having access to food. Hundreds of people are becoming addicted to drugs, including children and adolescents and children are working in the streets instead of attending school. A lot of people are suffering from mental health problems and the rate of suicide has increased. There are many different crises going on in Afghanistan and if the world does not take action there will be a “lost generation” in the future which will negatively affect the region and the world as a whole.

## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Afghanistan needs urgent action that should be taken by the international community, especially on SDGs 3 and 5.

### SDG3: Good Health and Well-being

- To avoid increasing poverty and decrease its rate, NGOs should provide people with jobs. Since the collapse, many international NGOs have stopped their activities and left the country. But Afghan people need them and they should restart their activities.
- Many people are affected by mental health problems, hence they should be provided with professional psychologists and/or psychiatrists to help them with their mental health. At the very least, they should be provided with awareness sessions about mental health problems and how to cope with them.

### SDG5: Gender Equality

- Gender equality is a hot topic when it comes to Afghanistan. It is the only country in the world where girls are not legally permitted to attend educational institutions and work. Thus, the United Nations, and other NGOs must intervene and negotiate with the government about gender equality and the rights of women to education, employment, and freedom.
- International NGOs must take action in providing education for people (especially girls) and training programs for their empowerment, as well as leadership courses for them.
- Implement gender responsive approaches to sustainable development which includes access to comprehensive sexuality education to ensure young people’s health and wellbeing.
- There should be fundraising projects for Afghan women so that they can play their roles in the country and world.
- Afghan youth should be given opportunities to discuss and find solutions for the challenges going on in Afghanistan. One of the ways that this can happen is by providing Afghan youth access to conferences, and opening the capacity for them to participate in other conferences held by international NGOs in the region and globally.
- Countries should provide Afghan women with scholarships and opportunities to study and improve. The women of Afghanistan need the world to stand with them in raising their voices and taking their rights!

### SDG6: Clean Water and Sanitation

- International NGOs should cooperate with domestic organisations and the government in providing clean water and sanitation in Afghanistan.
- Many people living in rural areas do not have access to electricity and the internet. Hence, they should be provided with public health awareness about using clean water and how to take care of their health.

## **SDG9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure**

- Afghan youth are very creative and every year there are many innovations created by them. The Afghan Girls Robotic team and the recent Sporty Car made by a group of youth are two examples of Afghan youth in terms of innovation. They should be supported by NGOs and countries and be funded so that they are able to develop and innovate more.
- NGOs should work with the government in infrastructure because every year hundreds of people are affected and die by natural catastrophes such as floods and earthquakes. Any action taken in this regard helps the economy of the country and reduces the rate of deaths caused by these phenomena.

To conclude, all the SDGs are interrelated and the lack of one of them results in the lack of access to others.

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*The APFSD country and sub-regional briefs were developed through collective discussions and engagements between youth advocates at the APFSD Youth Forum in Bangkok on March 18-20, 2023. The Afghanistan drafting team was led by Marzia Gohari and Safia Salar, with input provided by Eshrat Hussain Dawlatzai, Fariba Aslami Adelyar, and Mursal Fasihi. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW Call To Action team.*

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