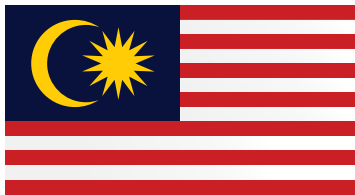


APFSD YOUTH FORUM 2023



Asia-Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action 2023



Malaysia
and Singapore

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

While Malaysia and Singapore have made good progress towards achieving the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), momentum was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The economic impacts of COVID-19 have not yet fully recovered. Focusing on the SDGs to be reviewed at the 10th APFSD and HLPF—SDG 6, 7, 9, 11, and 17, along with SDG 5, we highlighted the situational analysis and recommendations from young people below.

SDG5: Gender Equality

The existence of gender disparity in several aspects of a society has a negative impact on the overall wellbeing of women and girls. In Malaysia, gender-based violence leaves women vulnerable and limits them from realising their full potential. Barriers to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), such as sexual harassment, adolescent pregnancy, baby-dumping, period poverty, and limited access to services, are urgent concerns that should be highlighted in sustainable development. The uneven citizenship rule in Malaysia and 26 other nations denies mothers and children education, healthcare, and other essentials. The representation of women in leadership positions in Malaysia and Singapore is low—14% and 29.8% for Malaysia and Singapore respectively; impeding the implementation of policies that reflect the realities of women and girls.

Our SDG5 Recommendations:

1. To ensure that the intersectionalities between all other SDGs and gender equality are addressed to safeguard women and girls from the negative gendered impacts.
2. The implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) should be a priority for young people in and out of schools so they are equipped with essential knowledge and decision-making skills regarding their SRHR.
3. To allocate more budget in leadership development programmes, especially for women and girls, as well as create more opportunities and spaces for women and girls to learn and work in STEM-related fields.

SDG6: Clean Water and Sanitation

The implementation of SDG 6 in both countries is hindered by several challenges. Singapore has adopted a holistic approach to secure its water supply, including desalination and wastewater treatment, but faces risks of imported water source disruption and increasing water usage for food production. In Malaysia, the low tariff structure promotes wasteful water usage, and lack of community engagement in planning and decision-making causes clean water supply issues in remote villages. Deforestation affects the water cycle necessary for sanitation, and recycling rates in both countries require improvement to promote a circular economy and reduce water wastage.

Our SDG6 Recommendations:

1. To foster a circular economy in relation to wastewater, to mainstream reduce, reuse, and recycle (3R) water in all industries, and execute the 3R principle stringently.
2. Adopt an ethical approach to alter mindsets and promote responsible water consumption.
3. To support community-based initiatives for sustainable clean water supply projects in rural areas through youth social entrepreneurship and youth innovation projects.
4. To invest in technological transfer to ensure effective management of water resources for all.

SDG7: Affordable and Clean Energy

Malaysia has been heavily relying on fossil fuel as its primary energy supply - more than 80 percent generated from non-renewable resources, accounting for 75% of the total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Similarly, Singapore's energy mix uses mainly natural gas, which contributes to 90% of total electricity generation. As a resource constrained country, Singapore also imports almost all of its energy needs and has limited renewable energy (RE) options, with solar power as the most viable source. In 2022, Singapore released a National Hydrogen Strategy that aims to generate up to half of the country's power needs from hydrogen by 2050. However, there is a need for both countries to increase their pace in mainstreaming RE in their development.

Our SDG7 Recommendations:

1. To invest more in inclusive research and development (R&D) in the RE sector which involves all stakeholders, particularly women and young people.
2. To increase efforts in raising awareness on RE as the solution for climate change and to have young people leading at the forefront, acting as the educator and mobiliser of the community.

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

There is still room for enhancement in Malaysia and Singapore's implementation of SDG 9. In Malaysia, the interconnectivity of public infrastructure is insufficient and must be expanded to be more inclusive. Decreases in R&D expenditures are accompanied by a lack of community participation, particularly among youth and other stakeholders, such as persons with disabilities and women. In addition, there is a shortage of experience between theory and real-world application. The infrastructure and accessibility of ICT in remote areas in Malaysia are still inadequate, which hinders digital learning activities and research. Meanwhile, Singapore has invested heavily in the Smart Nation Programme, Industry Transformation Maps, and Research, Innovation and Enterprise Plan 2025. Malaysia is catching up with technology and innovation investments to meet these concerns.

Our SDG9 Recommendations:

1. Promotion of more inclusive investments in R&D, ICT, and infrastructure planning for young people to benefit them from the rapid growth of development in their respective countries.
2. To integrate more data from R&D to solve local issues and support better policymaking and program implementation through awareness of problem-solving for sustainable development, technology, and knowledge transfer starting from the higher learning level.

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

In developing sustainable cityscapes, both rapidly-urbanising Malaysia and fully-urbanised Singapore are facing challenges. In Malaysia, one significant issue is the unreliability of the public transportation infrastructure. Notably, infrequent and inconsistent bus and train arrivals coupled with inaccessible bus routes which provide inadequate connectivity inspire increased private vehicular use, causing congestion and increasing emissions. This unreliability also disproportionately affects youth, a group with lower car ownership rates, and main users of public transportation.

Our SDG11 Recommendations:

1. To adopt people-centred and gender-responsive public transportation. A detailed survey of urban dwellers' needs, especially young people - as we are the main users, are needed to recalibrate routes and schedules.
2. To increase youth engagement, especially scaling to community-level engagement in shaping proximal lived spaces and realities, allowing youth to more concretely translate their visions into reality.

SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals

Both Malaysia and Singapore have long supported global partnerships and provide technical assistance to other developing countries through the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme, Singapore Cooperation Programme and other initiatives. However, the domestic institutional landscape in Malaysia is fragmented due to the different priorities between federal and state governments as well as the overlapping roles across implementing agencies. For example, localising SDGs remains a challenge in translating the federal level plans and policies to benefit those on the ground, including youths, vulnerable and minority groups. Monitoring and evaluation also remain a key challenge due to data availability and access.

Our SDG17 Recommendations:

1. To strengthen the participation of civil society organisations in the localisation of SDGs through the creation of enabling policies, effective coordination, capacity building, and funding.
2. To empower young people to lead their communities at the grassroots levels with the support of local leaders, as well as promoting constructive, youth-led, and youth-focused conversations between different stakeholders.
3. To scale efforts in mobilising Sustainable and Green Finance towards achieving the SDGs.

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 Malaysia and Singapore brief was written by Sharifah Norizah Syed Ahamad Kabeer (Malaysia), Yee Siang Yong (Malaysia), Fara Rom (Malaysia), Egwin Fan (Singapore), and Thern Wynn Ho Justin (Singapore). Additional inputs were given by Anastasha Arul Abraham (Malaysia), Malcolm Fernandez (Malaysia), and Yee Siang Yong (Malaysia). Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW Call To Action team.
