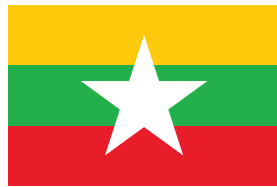
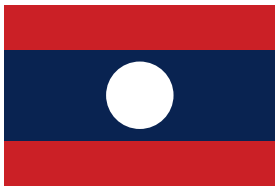


APFSD YOUTH FORUM 2023



Asia-Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action 2023



Myanmar and Laos

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: MYANMAR

In Myanmar, the implementation of SDGs has been largely sidelined since the outbreak of COVID-19 followed by national conflict. Only a few sectors have shown interest in SDGs, and there is a need for support for the rule of law to implement them. The lack of resources such as finance and technical support to local organisations, especially youth organisations, has also hindered SDG implementation. Myanmar's basic materials supply chain is adversely affected. Additionally, the limited advocacy from international organisations to support SDG policies is due to the ongoing conflicts within the country which present a hurdle to progress in the SDGs, especially for those from vulnerable communities. The progress that can be considered for Myanmar is the result of innovative digital solutions that share SDG information among young people, but it is still limited to urban areas.

Myanmar faces challenges in achieving gender equality under SDG 5, as campaigns are limited to younger age groups and the generation gap poses a challenge to activism progress. Nonetheless, women continue to play an important role in resistance activities against gender-based injustice. In SDG6, Clean Water and Sanitation, progress has been made with the Mekong and Irrawaddy rivers serving as the main water sources, but challenges remain such as lack of awareness and education on water treatment and care for the rivers. SDG11, Sustainable Cities and Communities, poses challenges such as insufficient public transport infrastructure and citizens' betel spitting behaviour. While road infrastructure has been improved, work remains. Myanmar faces challenges under SDG13, Climate Action, such as inadequate waste management education, natural disasters, deforestation, and inadequate irrigation coverage for agriculture. In addition to the point, jade mining management

needs improvement such as tailing management. Finally, SDG17, Partnerships, is hindered by the lack of networks between sectors. Despite these challenges, the local women's organisation in the country has made progress in empowering women to participate in resistance activities against injustice and continuing sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In terms of SDG9 on Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, Myanmar has improved its infrastructure for technology, with more investments made in recent years. In 2021, many investment and technologies companies left the country. Limitations on the use of Facebook may hinder communications for the service sector. The lack of complete knowledge of consolidated building codes, safety standards and reviewing standards may impact the quality of infrastructure.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS: LAOS

In recent years, Laos has made progress in engaging youth volunteers both online and offline to promote SDGs. There is now greater awareness of SDGs among young people in the country since the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, more businesses and local and international organisations in Laos are accepting and embracing the LGBTQ+ community and those with disabilities. However, some elder communities still cannot accept the LGBTQ+ community, and inflation remains a major problem in Laos during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. It has led to an increase in social inequality and poverty in the country.

In Laos, gender equality under SDG5 faces challenges such as acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community and young women giving birth due to limited education and employment opportunities. Education has become more equitable, increasing opportunities for girls. However, challenges remain, and opportunities exist to promote gender equality in all areas of life. SDG6, Clean Water and Sanitation, has seen progress, but challenges such as open defecation and limited access to resources in rural areas remain. Deforestation and natural disasters are challenges to climate action in Laos. Despite this, young people show increased interest in climate action. Funding for SDGs is also a challenge, but the country has made progress by collaborating with stakeholders, including regional and international organisations, through partnerships.

Laos has made significant progress towards achieving SDG7 on Affordable and Clean Energy, with 100% access to energy supply for its population in 2020. However, despite this achievement, only 48% of total energy came from renewable sources, and most of the population still relies on coal as their primary energy source. To address these challenges, Laos needs to invest in more renewable energy sources and phase out the use of coal. Additionally, while the infrastructure for technology has improved in recent years, there is a lack of cyber security and investment security policies in place, hindering the country's progress towards SDG9 on Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. Therefore, Laos needs to develop policies to ensure investment security and cyber security, which will encourage more investment in the country's infrastructure and help to achieve SDG9.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

We have provided a general recommendation for both countries (Laos and Myanmar), with a focus on some aspects of each.

- To provide more opportunities for young people in Myanmar to engage in SDG implementation, we recommend easing strict criteria such as age and nationality, and facilitating cross-border mobility throughout the Asia Pacific region.
- To empower young people in Laos to make a significant contribution to sustainable development, we recommend encouraging and supporting their engagement in volunteering and creative social projects that accelerate the achievement of SDGs.
- To further support the promotion and implementation of SDGs in both Myanmar and Laos, we recommend increasing the resources available for youth organisations, including financial and technical support, to enable them to effectively participate in the development and implementation of policies that support sustainable development.
- To recommend promoting intergenerational dialogue between young people and stakeholders in both countries to foster greater understanding and cooperation in advancing sustainable development goals.

SDG5: Gender Equality

- To provide awareness-raising to the community, and all stakeholders about the concept of gender: through workshops, training, and other awareness-raising activities.
- To promote gender mainstreaming in advocacy: by integrating a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, it is possible to ensure that the needs and perspectives of stakeholders are taken into account.
- To practise gender equality in public education: by ensuring that all individuals have access to education and that education is gender-sensitive.
- To implement gender responsive approaches to sustainable development which includes access to comprehensive sexuality education to ensure young people's health and wellbeing.

SDG6: Clean Water and Sanitation

- To promote education on the health consequences of open defecation to stop it: by educating communities about the health risks associated with open defecation can help to reduce its prevalence and improve sanitation.
- By raising awareness in the community about the importance of preserving and maintaining natural resources, including lakes and rivers (the Mekong and Irrawaddy), etc: by educating the community about the importance of preserving and maintaining natural resources, as well as addressing challenges to the dam infrastructure and how it impacts the lake and river.
- To educate people about hygiene and the importance of health: by ensuring that everyone has access to information and basic resources for good hygiene practices and health care.
- To promote industrial and hospital water treatment and waste management by implementing ESG policies: by collaborating with industries and hospitals to implement environmental, social, and governance (ESG) policies.

SDG7: Affordable and Clean Energy

- To invest in small green energy startups: by investing more in small green energy startups with solar, wind, and innovative energy startups that provide affordable and clean energy for communities., especially in rural areas and periurban areas.
- To educate and provide effective cooking technology: by promoting clean cooking technology that reduces coal usage such as green stoves or biofuel stoves and educating people on their benefits.
- To provide a policy that promotes green energy sources: by advocating renewable energy policies such as solar, wind, and hydropower. This would not only increase access to energy but also reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote sustainable development.

SDG9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

- To establish and implement a robust cyber security system that protects the data of the population, especially vulnerable groups, and prevents online sexual harassment.
- To encourage investment in sustainable infrastructure, especially small and medium-sized enterprises to promote innovation and technology development that focus on renewable energy and efficient transportation systems, to reduce the carbon footprint, and increase access to affordable and clean energy.
- To revise and reconsider investment-friendly policies to attract foreign and domestic investments for sustainable industrial and infrastructure development.
- To develop and implement a rights-based cyber security policy that upholds fundamental human rights and civil liberties while ensuring cyber safety and security.

SDG11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

- To advocate for the design and implementation of disability-friendly cities: to promote inclusivity and gender equality, it is important to advocate for the design and implementation of disability-friendly cities which includes access ramps for wheelchairs, audible pedestrian signals.
- To highlight and provide shelter for the homeless in Laos: homelessness is a problem in Laos, and lack of access to clean water and sanitation facilities exacerbates this issue. Providing shelter to the homeless can help to address this problem, while also improving access to clean water and sanitation
- To increase the number of buses and subsidise public transport fuel at the floating rate: by increasing the number of buses and subsidising public transport fuel, it is possible to reduce reliance on private vehicles and promote more sustainable modes of transportation.
- To educate people for personal hygiene and stop betel spitting in the streets of Myanmar: by educating people about the negative health and environmental impacts of betel spitting, it is possible to reduce this harmful practice and promote more hygienic and sustainable behaviours.

SDG13: Climate Action

- To advocate for new policies for climate action, especially waste management and recycling: Laos and Myanmar face significant environmental challenges such as deforestation and air pollution. By advocating for new policies for waste management and recycling, both countries can reduce its impact on the environment and work towards achieving SDG 13 on Climate Action.
- To educate people for waste management: by educating people about the negative impact of improper waste disposal on public health and the environment, it is possible to promote gender-sensitive waste management practices.

- To enact a policy to stop the burning of leaves and reduce usage of inhouse coal and promote innovate climate friendly cooking behaviour: The burning of fossil fuels results in the emission of pollutants such as PM 2.5, CO₂, CO₂, as well as indoor air pollution, which adversely affects women, especially if gender-sensitive environmental policies are neglected.

SDG17: Partnerships for the Goals

- To create more opportunities for youth networks or advocates to increase communication and knowledge exchange: by establishing platforms, events, and programmes that bring young people together to discuss and share their ideas on SDGs which enables better learning from one another and collaborate toward achieving common goals.
- To invest in education on SDGs for children in and out of school: by creating educational materials and programs that focus on SDGs, especially for children in rural and marginalised areas who have limited access to education.
- To encourage young people's participation in decision-making processes: by creating platforms and opportunities for young people to engage in decision-making, such as youth councils, forums, and consultations.

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 Myanmar and Laos drafting team was led by Hein Minn Tun and Sandar Hlaing, with inputs provided by Arkar Nyan Hein, Aung Tin Myint, Kay Thwe Naing, Latdavanh Keodala, and Zar Ni Thein Htay. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW Call To Action team.
