

APFSD YOUTH FORUM 2023



Asia-Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action 2023



Oceania

Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands

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

The Pacific region is home to 17 countries. It is diverse in culture, geographical makeup, languages and tradition. However, considering how scattered and remote the island countries are, this along with limited resources continues to remain a hindrance and challenge to the progression of many Pacific island countries.

According to recent discussions with the United Nations Office in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, the Pacific is said to not even achieve 75% of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) further exacerbating the region from more developed countries.

Since the recovery post-COVID-19, the Pacific has steadily begun to build itself back up in trying to achieve the SDGs. However, the current impacts of climate

change, geopolitics and economic situations continues to leave the Pacific at the forefront of global inequalities. Government systems also continue to breed corruption in some Pacific countries, increasing missed opportunities for development. Coupled with tribal fights and land ownership where majority of the land is customary owned. The Pacific also is exploited by major construction companies from the North providing cheap labour and long working hours. Geopolitics in the Solomon Islands also co-exists with nepotism contributing to unethical practices and abuse of funds by those in power. Additionally, many Pacific countries remain strongly patriarchal, disallowing youths from engaging in community meetings and creating a barrier for progress by including all voices. Marginalised groups such as persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ persons, and people living with HIV also face numerous forms of discrimination and stigma.

During the pandemic, many countries in the Pacific were faced with the “no job, no job” policy leaving many people either unemployed or redundant. The airline company in Fiji issued the largest termination the Pacific has ever seen, further contributing to the many that had lost their jobs.

However, this does not mean the Pacific is not pushing back, each country is progressively working to achieve the goals through collaborating with partners, working at grassroot level, awareness and advocacy.

When looking at the goals under review, SDG 6 on water and sanitation, access to water and sanitation continues to be an issue in many Pacific countries. Whilst urban areas enjoy utility water and have access to good sanitation, rural or remote areas on the other hand rely heavily on rain water, water from boreholes and streams or desalinated water. This also means the quality of water decreases, and therefore affects women and girls’ menstrual hygiene, food preparation and so forth. SDG 7 on affordable clean energy has slowly progressed in some countries in the Pacific. In the Solomon Islands, there has been an increase of investments in solar power in remote areas along with hydro-power. These have been made possible through partnerships with ADB, World Bank, International Finance Corporation, Korea Water Resources, other corporations, etc. justifying the importance for SDG 17 in promoting partnerships for the goals. Papua New Guinea (PNG) has also made some progress in improving energy efficiency, particularly in the transport sector. The government has implemented a fuel efficiency standard for vehicles, and there has been a shift towards using cleaner fuels such as liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and compressed natural gas (CNG) in vehicles. The government has developed a National Energy Policy, which provides a framework for promoting sustainable energy development in the country. The policy emphasises the need to develop renewable energy and increase energy efficiency, as well as the importance of energy access for economic development.

In Fiji, partners such as the United Nations, Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC), Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and others have begun to work with organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) around the region and gain their insight and knowledge on building accessible infrastructure for

persons with disabilities. Emergency evacuation centres have been retrofitted with accessible washrooms and service providers such as APTC have audited their premises to ensure that students with disabilities can also access their courses. Additionally, the United Nations in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu have audited their work spaces to pilot the hiring of persons with disabilities to be employed at the UN.

The Pacific understands that though Agenda 2030 is nearing its conclusion, this does not mean that regression of certain goals will discourage the Pacific from remaining a contributor to sustainable development. Instead, this drives and empowers the Pacific to still champion in promoting the Agenda 2030.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering this situation, we, the diverse youth of the Oceania subregion of the APFSD Youth Forum 2023, call on all stakeholders, including governments, international organisations, corporations, civil society organisations, and public organisations to:

- Ensure young people of all diversities in the Pacific are to be included at the table to be able to speak and voice out their concerns. When youths, youths with disabilities and other marginalised groups such as women and children, and LGBTIQ+ people are not included, it takes a toll on the development of the community as a whole. Without all social lenses within communities, we cannot develop further.
- Young people in the Pacific need to be better resourced and equipped to engage with governments, NGOs, CSOs, etc. Often, young people cannot engage due to their geographical make-up, or due to the lack of financial support. Youths in the Pacific are to be given the same opportunities to also engage as other youths around the world irrespective of their geographical distance. We can’t say, leave no one behind but continue to exclude youths from the Pacific in discussions for the Asia Pacific region.
- Inclusive youth participation is key especially in decision making processes. This needs to be advised to community leaders in rural areas who continue to exclude the participation of youths and youths with disabilities from voicing their issues.

- **Include youths with disabilities! Engage youths with disabilities, don't assume.** Increase equitable representation, visibility, voice and meaningful engagement of all youths with disabilities. Engaging youths with disabilities themselves to better understand their support needs and what innovation and accessibility looks like to them. The diversity of impairment groups allows you to have a more comprehensive and broader perspective of the challenges and barriers youths with disabilities experience per their impairment group.
- **Youths with disabilities can be agents of change too!** Partners and stakeholders must collaborate with organisations of persons with disabilities in their programmes and activities that will give youths with disabilities opportunities, resources and platforms for empowerment, engagement and participation. This contributes to capacity building, drives leadership and contributes to skills building.

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 Oceania drafting team was led by Telesia Kobiti (Fiji) with inputs provided by Gardner Kagovai (Solomon Islands), Edwin Ningal (Papua New Guinea), Pita Temo (Fiji), Taita Ikupu (Papua New Guinea), Marisha Kawas (Papua New Guinea), and Jimmy Tobe (Papua New Guinea). Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW Call To Action team.
