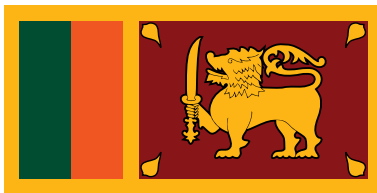


APFSD YOUTH FORUM 2023



Asia-Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action 2023



Sri Lanka

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 COVID-19 pandemic drastically affected people's lives in many ways. Sri Lanka is experiencing severe socio-economic and political failures during the post-pandemic period. It is a huge barrier to the COVID-19 recovery process. A shortage of fuel, waiting long hours in the queues, electricity cuts, a high inflation rate, salaries that do not change according to the inflation, several companies ending their businesses in Sri Lanka, and a lack of funding for the development sector are issues Sri Lankan people are dealing with after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Among all these situations, some plus points were also added to the community. People have started to survive on their own by preparing home gardens and cultivating vegetables, which are beneficial to each other. Furthermore, the concept of distance learning has advanced to the point where children can access and

learn quality education without physically visiting institutions. Lots of learning opportunities were created and youth built their capacities through those opportunities. However, the main issue is that youth have been feeling hopeless when they do not receive any job opportunities within the Sri Lankan context, and especially in the development sector, where job opportunities have disappeared from the job market. This has led to a brain drain. The lack of job opportunities, unfair taxation, and arbitrary political decisions have led to strikes and people protesting which has disturbed the civil environment.

This environment is becoming a huge barrier to achieving the SDGs in Sri Lanka. During the COVID-19 period, people struggled to overcome the pandemic, and after that, they then had to fight to gain their rights and needs. The health sector drastically collapsed without access to cancer medicines, medicines for new-born babies, and others. Public transportation

collapsed without having sufficient fuel and other equipment, which led to overcrowding and long waiting times. School systems and higher educational institutions were again closed because of civil protests and strikes. People who get water from bousers and distant places in remote areas suffered because the bousers do not come on time, but the users who have rainwater harvesting systems in their households did not face this situation. Due to fuel shortages and economic instability, the government could not maintain the power stations, which led to power cuts and created difficulties for many sectors such as education, health, tourism, and the economy. The post-pandemic period also affected the growth of industry, innovation, and infrastructure sectors. People struggle to live; they can't even think about innovations without having a strong funding base for the development sector. All these issues have put huge stress on the youth's shoulders in every way. The recovery period highlights the areas we need to concern ourselves with in the future, and the recommendations offer us a way forward.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

SDG3: Health and Wellbeing

- Reduce the taxation on sanitary products to ensure hygiene standards, especially among schoolgirls.
- Provide quality healthcare facilities in government hospitals that were in place before the COVID pandemic.
- Raise awareness about health issues that can prevent people from developing certain health problems, especially in rural areas.
- Raise awareness about the issue of mental health.
- Strengthen the home gardening practices that were spread among people during the COVID-19 pandemic on a larger scale.

SDG5: Gender Equality

- Increase the participation of women in decision-making. Although Sri Lanka has ensured more women's participation in high-level positions, there is still a big gap when compared to men's participation.
- Prevent women from violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and rape, especially in rural areas of Sri Lanka and in Muslim and Tamil cultures. This can limit women's freedom of movement, their ability to participate in public life, and their economic opportunities.
- Educate people about the value of women's education, the opportunities available to women and girls, and women's rights, particularly in rural regions.
- Raise awareness to break the stereotypes pertaining to several jobs in Sri Lanka.
- Raise awareness among people to respect and expect all kinds of gender and sexual orientations and expressions from people. There is still a misunderstanding about the LGBTIQ community in Sri Lankan society, which is misused within society.
- 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

- The youth must come first for water and sanitation-related projects and implementation works, with the supervision and consultation of senior professionals.
- Promote youth-led organisations and the need to connect like-minded groups for project work, project implementations, and research initiatives.
- Encourage awareness and capacity-building programmes that connect interesting youth groups with professionals in the water sector, particularly in remote areas.
- People in the industrial sector should be aware of programmes that promote the use of rainwater harvesting technology, water resource management, and the efficient use of water.

- Ensure that funding and development work is distributed evenly and transparently throughout the country.
- Rainwater harvesting needs to be promoted as a safe water source because it will reduce the cost of water bills and make effective use of natural resources.

SDG7: Affordable and Clean Energy

- Promote solar power at the household level to cover household energy consumption.
- Ensure public access to a 24-hour electricity supply.

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

- We must strengthen the ties between industry, innovation, and research and integrate research findings to industrial outputs.
- The physical infrastructure developments in Sri Lanka's rural districts require more financing and attention.
- There is a need to conduct knowledge-sharing seminars and workshops to force innovations and infrastructure developments in urban and rural areas.
- There is a need to promote area-specific development and industry to give new opportunities to the youth in Sri Lanka and reduce the brain drain.

SDG11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

- Establish opportunities for urban planning graduates to work on sustainable cities and communities.
- Promote a public transportation system to ensure a low-carbon, sustainable community.
- Practice good behavioural ethics for keeping cities and public places clean and pleasant for the people.
- Upgrade the living conditions of people who are living in rural communities to give easy access to goods and services.

SDG17: Partnership for the Goals

- SDG 17 implementation in Sri Lanka is much better for all SDGs and achieving the targets. All project work falling under CSR activities, and other work needs to follow a strong monitoring and evaluation process.
- Urge the government to minimise the levies and governmental regulations on organisations working on SDGs in a partnership that might decelerate the implementation of SDGs in the nation. In the Sri Lankan context, a considerable amount of time is taken for the approval process, letter exchanges, explaining project activities, and the need to get approval from several levels of administration. It must be organised as a simple process.
- Ensure the integrity of the partnering bodies to be balanced organisationally and economically.
- Emphasise the outcome of the SDGs in a country to the government to have partnerships with the governmental bodies directly.
- Ensure the support for any and all partnering organisations, governmental and non-governmental, by the UN bodies and emphasise the need of partnering with new non-governmental organisations to achieve the SDGs.
- Enhance the need for governmental support in achieving SDGs by 2030 and the noble outcomes it would have in all aspects of the world.

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 Sri Lanka drafting team was led by Sithara Kumarasinghe, with input provided by Kasuni Ganga, Malsha Gunasinghe, Manith Dulnim, Ram Dulip, Suramyah Yesurajah, and Zamreen Zaroook. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW Call To Action team.
