



Asia-Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action AHEAD OF THE APFSD 2024 15-17 February

Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Eradicating Poverty in Times of Multiple Crises: The Effective Delivery of Sustainable, Resilient and Innovative Solutions in Asia and the Pacific with Young People at the Forefront

WHO ARE WE?

We are an intersectional group of over 450 young people,¹ activists and advocates from 36 countries² across the Asia and the Pacific region. We represent youth-led and feminist organisations, changemakers, social entrepreneurs, activists, and students who have gathered together for the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) Youth Forum 2024, held in hybrid modality, from 15th - 17th February 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand. Together, we comprise unique and diverse individuals ranging from age 14 - 30, across all backgrounds and identities including persons with disabilities, persons with various sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions, youth from ethnic and minority groups, and various socio-economic backgrounds, amongst others. It is our hope that this call to action reflects our collective voice and demands, and that our representation at this

forum is indicative of the strength of young people's commitment to the attainment of the sustainable development goals.

This APFSD Youth Call to Action puts forward our recommendations and outlines our demands for sustainable, inclusive, and human rights focused solutions, with focus on the SDGs under review for this year— SDG1 (No Poverty), SDG2 (Zero Hunger), SDG13 (Climate Action), SDG16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and SDG17 (Partnerships for the Goals), alongside SDG3 (Health and Well-being) and SDG5 (Gender Equality). The year 2024 means we are now past the halfway point of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Though there has been some development by countries in Asia and the Pacific with regard to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), unfortunately the fact remains that none of the countries in our region are on track to reach the



necessary targets by 2030. On its current trajectory, the region will not meet any of the 17 SDGs by the agreed deadline. Current estimates show these will not be reached before 2062, at least 32 years behind schedule according to the Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2024. As we watch the world grapple with multiple crises, be it climate change, war and conflicts, or economic turmoil, we realise that we are sliding even further behind.

This Call to Action was developed by a dedicated drafting team³ who worked on behalf of the larger group to capture the key discussion points and demands discussed by participants in the forum. We emphasise that the future we hope to attain, one in which meaningful progress is made towards the 2030 Agenda, cannot be achieved without a concerted effort to include and uplift young people's voices in all our diversities at all levels of the decision making process. Through this Call to Action, we present our recommendations and call upon all our Governments to address the issues collectively faced by over 60% of the world's youth who live in Asia and the Pacific.

BACKGROUND

There are almost one billion young people aged 10-24 years living in 32 low- and middle- income countries in Asia and the Pacific, accounting for 60% of the world's young people.⁴ However, young people's sustainable development in the region has been deeply impacted by the lack of decision-making spaces and unavailability of avenues for meaningful participation for our voices to be heard. For marginalised youth, such as young people with disabilities, diverse SOGIESC, youth from lower economic backgrounds, Indigenous youth, and youth from ethnic and minority groups including Dalits, the burden is even heavier and yet they are even further silenced or left behind.

This Call to Action was developed during a time in which the world is dealing with the ramifications of wars, disease, economic decline, high rates of unemployment including among young people, and a burgeoning climate crisis. According to the UNDP, 'climate change poses a 'profound existential threat' for Asia and the Pacific, with the potential to disrupt decades of progress and burden future generations with the costs of unsustainable

economic development.'⁵ Furthermore, though the world's population is attempting to move on from COVID-19, the pandemic has caused a long-reaching multidimensional health and economic crisis, and adversely affected businesses and households everywhere across the region.⁶ Studies show the war in Ukraine also has caused and will continue to cause growing economic instability and shocks across the Asia and the Pacific region.⁷ Finally, 71 million young people aged 15-24 are unemployed worldwide, and at 11% youth unemployment is lowest compared to all other regions of the world.⁸ However, even though the region has one of the world's highest youth labour force participation rates, significant numbers of youth across the region still face a plethora of obstacles in accessing decent, and gainful employment and education. Notably the transition from education to employment is a major obstacle in the region.⁹

It is amidst these varied challenges that youth in the region are struggling to make our voices heard. We, the youth, are who will have to live with the consequences of the decisions that are made today. We emphasise that inclusive and meaningful change cannot happen without centering our voices in the decision-making processes for a brighter future for us all.

Additionally, the United Nations Summit of the Future will be held on 22th - 23rd September 2024. The aim of the Summit is to build upon the SDG Summit and deliver an action-oriented Pact for the Future to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. We realise that the Summit of the Future is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to enhance cooperation on critical challenges and address gaps in global governance. It is our hope that young people are engaged actively in the process and the recommendations put forward through this call to action will be further amplified at the Summit of the Future.

We urge Member States to address the following priority issues.

SDG 1 - NO POVERTY

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

SDG 1, No Poverty, stands as a pivotal objective aimed at eradicating poverty in all its forms and serves as a beacon of hope for the global community's collective efforts toward socio-economic equity and dignity. Within the vast expanse of the Asia and Pacific region, with almost half of the world's population, considerable strides have been made towards progressing this goal.¹⁰ The region's trajectory towards poverty alleviation has witnessed significant milestones, evidenced by a marked reduction in extreme poverty over recent decades. From 1990 to 2017, the number of individuals living in extreme poverty (defined as living on less than purchasing power parity (PPP) of \$1.9 a day) has significantly decreased from 1.9 billion to roughly 689 million, underscoring a commendable achievement in the region.¹¹

However, amidst the progress lie persistent challenges of regional disparities, casting a light on the multifaceted nature of the poverty paradigm. Despite all the progress, an estimated 47 million people in the region have been pushed into extreme poverty.¹² The extent of poverty differs significantly across the region, ranging from 38.2% in the Pacific (excluding Australia and New Zealand and largely due to Papua New Guinea) to a mere 1.8% in East and North-East Asia.¹³ These disparities highlight the need for targeted interventions and policies addressing the specific challenges different subregions face.

Challenges continue to persist in the progress towards poverty eradication. These challenges include inadequate coverage of social protection, economic suffering from disasters and insufficient investment allocated to this critical area. Alarming, over half of the Asia-Pacific populace remains deprived of access to any form of social protection scheme leaving a significant proportion of the population vulnerable to economic shocks and can lead to increased poverty.¹⁴ Moreover, the region's susceptibility to natural disasters exacerbates socio-economic vulnerabilities, leaving a heavy toll on communities and obstructing progress towards poverty alleviation. The lack of investment in human capital and capacity-

strengthening initiatives further compounds the challenge, constraining individuals' ability to uplift themselves from impoverished circumstances and hindering socio-economic advancement.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure **accessible, quality education, and access to health information and services that caters to all**, including marginalised communities such as youth with disabilities and indigenous youth.
2. Prioritise practical knowledge and life skills alongside formal education to enhance employability, especially for vulnerable groups and establish vocational training programmes to equip young people with marketable skills, fostering entrepreneurship and job opportunities. Ensure the **promotion of employment opportunities and fair wages for all**, with a focus on marginalised groups, including women, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ individuals.
3. Implement **universal and sustainable social protection systems** to prevent individuals from falling into poverty. This includes advocating for the establishment and enhancement of social safety nets to ensure income security for all, particularly for the elderly and children and establishing inclusive policies and affirmative action measures to ensure equitable access to opportunities for historically marginalised and discriminated groups.
4. Support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through microfinance, business development services, blended financing and access to markets and foster international cooperation and partnerships to bring in resources, expertise, and investments for poverty reduction initiatives. **Access to financial services for low-income individuals and support for small-scale farmers** through targeted initiatives must be ensured.
5. Combat corruption and ensure fair labour practices to **protect the rights of workers**, including migrant labourers and displaced families.
6. Empower local communities through skill development programmes, promoting inclusive **economic growth tailored to each locality's unique needs**.
7. Establish **incentive systems and allowances inclusive of all gender-diverse individuals**, including the queer community, to promote social inclusion and economic empowerment.

8. Advocate for **policy reforms to address systemic issues** such as child marriage, gender inequality, and labour exploitation.
9. Ensure that basic quality healthcare services and financial assistance are provided to vulnerable populations without charge and increase coverage of national health insurance programmes, with subsidies for impoverished households, **to ensure access to essential healthcare services.**
10. Promote **climate conservation and sustainable agriculture practices** to build resilience against economic shocks and environmental degradation.
11. Encourage **collaboration between government, civil society, private sector, and international organisations** to effectively tackle poverty. This also means actively engaging with youth-led organisations and including their voices in policy-making processes to ensure inclusive decision-making. Youth must be included in decision-making processes and policy formulation, leveraging their influence on social media to spread awareness and drive positive change.

SDG 2 - ZERO HUNGER

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

It is clear to see that the Asia and the Pacific region is struggling deeply and will not be able to achieve its 2030 target indicators of zero hunger and access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food for all. The 2020 Asia and Pacific Regional Overview of food security and Nutrition found that 350.6 million people in the Asia and the Pacific region are estimated to have been undernourished in 2019.¹⁵ This is almost 51% of the global total alone. Furthermore, an estimated 74.5 million children under five years of age were stunted, and a total of 31.5 million were wasted in the Asia and Pacific region, with a majority of them living in South Asia. According to the FAO, in 2021,¹⁶ the world's most undernourished people live in Asia, with women and girls being disproportionately affected.

The Asia and the Pacific region faces particular challenges when it comes to SDG2 that are primarily related to economic growth, rapid urbanisation and globalisation, climate change, increasing risk of disasters, conflicts, and growing inequity.¹⁷ Changes in the oceans are particularly critical in the region. The Indo-Asia Pacific's coasts are highly vulnerable to sea level rise, and saltwater intrusion into freshwater aquifers.¹⁸ The rapid depletion of fish stocks has impacted food security across the region, which is being further exacerbated by rising temperatures. Climate change has further affected agricultural productivity and food security in the region. The environmental impact of the pervasive use of chemicals poses a severe threat to ecosystems, alongside soil contamination and depletion of natural resources. There are many obstacles faced in transitioning from conventional to sustainable farming including financial constraints, knowledge gaps, and systemic challenges that demand strategic solutions.¹⁹

Gender discrimination is a critical, but often overlooked, element in access to adequate nutrition and food. For women and adolescents living in rural areas, access to quality food and nutrition face barriers that are intertwined with intrinsic patriarchal norms and practices that discriminate against women and girls. We see this in the way that food is distributed and consumed at the household level, especially with girls and women eating last in poorer households.

Furthermore, in times of economic crisis, exacerbated by COVID-19, cuts in spending have further aggravated rural women's access to food and increased gender inequalities. Detrimentially, COVID-19 has undone years of progress on SDG2, with an assessment of regional food system risk suggests rising risk in all six dimensions of food security namely availability, access, utilisation, stability, agency and sustainability.²⁰ At its current rate, all the target indicators would need an additional 35 years to all be achieved.²¹

SDG2 cannot be discussed in isolation. It is a complex issue that relies on several factors including: food systems, nutrition systems, healthcare, education, sanitation, infrastructure, marketing, and the economy.²² Therefore, comprehensive strategies with a multi-pronged approach are crucial when thinking about ways in which to achieve SDG2.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen agricultural systems and **promote sustainable farming practices** to increase food production and ensure food security. Nutrition education and food assistance programmes must also be promoted to combat malnutrition and food insecurity, particularly amongst marginalised communities.
2. Develop and **implement policies that address the impact of climate change on agriculture**, such as drought-resistant crops and sustainable water management practices.
3. Promote **urban agriculture initiatives led by young entrepreneurs to enhance local food production, contribute to food security, and create sustainable livelihoods and establish food innovation** hubs that bring together young researchers, entrepreneurs, and farmers to explore innovative solutions for sustainable agriculture and food security.
4. Ensure the **implementation of innovative solutions**, such as precision farming and community-led agricultural initiatives. Such solutions will be able to boost productivity while simultaneously fostering resilience in the face of external crises.
5. Guarantee **women producers living in rural area's access, control, management and ownership of all natural and productive resources** on which they depend by recognising and upholding the centrality of people, particularly small-scale food producers as well as those most affected by challenges of malnutrition in all its forms.
6. Ensure the integration of **sustainable indigenous fishing practices and modern preservation**, and utilise natural resources to achieve employment and avoid export on raw products.
7. **Strengthen urban food systems**, rural-urban linkages and leverage technology and innovation can significantly improve food availability and accessibility, particularly for marginalised groups.
8. Ensure **active participation in the technological, legal, policy, and social implementation steps to build appropriate agricultural production systems** through agile land use and reclamation that can promote a comprehensive and sustainable transformation of food self-sufficiency and food production system.

9. Integrate SDG 2 into broader national development plans and policies, **recognising its interconnectedness with other goals** such as poverty eradication, gender equality, and environmental sustainability.

SDG 5 - GENDER EQUALITY

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

SDG 5 on achieving gender equality stands crucial for the Asia and Pacific region, where significant disparities and challenges continue to persist. In Asia and the Pacific region, progress has been made towards the goal but has lagged behind the global average, signalling the need for intensified efforts.²³ The region has made progress in education and health sectors, alongside modest gains in women's participation in formal employment and policymaking, but they continue to face discriminatory policies and social cultural barriers that restrict their economic and civic participation.²⁴ The population group from the LGBTQIA+ community also continues to face discrimination and has been stigmatised despite all this progress. These challenges continue to obstruct the full realisation of gender equality in the region.

The region has high levels of violence against women, coupled with inadequate access to quality sexual and reproductive health services.²⁵ This underscores the urgency of addressing negative societal norms and systemic inequalities. Moreover, the underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles, coupled with the disproportionate burden of vulnerable and unpaid care work, further exacerbates gender disparities. The backdrop of technological transformations and climate crisis, together with widening income and wealth disparities, pose additional hurdles in the progress, disproportionately impacting women and people from the LGBTQIA+ community across the region.²⁶

In charting the course forward, a multifaceted approach underscored by transformative action and innovative solutions emerges as imperative to accelerate progress towards gender equality. While progress may appear incremental, pockets of success and commendable practices within individual countries

offer beacons of hope, underscoring the transformative potential of data-driven policy interventions and targeted initiatives. These success stories, ranging from climate change adaptation and biodiversity conservation to digital skills enhancement and child welfare, underscore the catalytic role of robust data systems and evidence-based policymaking in driving meaningful change.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Adopt and implement **gender-inclusive and affirming policies and laws** across all sectors to eliminate discrimination against women and marginalised gender identities.
2. Enforce **legislation to prevent child marriage, gender-based violence, and discrimination in the workplace.**
3. Integrate **comprehensive sexuality education into formal education systems and community outreach programmes** to promote gender equality and reproductive health rights.
4. Foster inclusive learning environments by **challenging traditional gender norms** in schools, workplaces, and communities and providing gender-responsive safeguarding policies.
5. Provide educational opportunities and reform work environments to **promote equal opportunities and eliminate gender disparities** in economic and political spheres.
6. Ensure **universal access to quality healthcare services**, including sexual and reproductive health services, for all individuals regardless of gender identity or orientation, and provide specialised health services for transgender and non-binary individuals, addressing their specific needs and rights.
7. Promote **equal access to economic opportunities**, including entrepreneurship, employment, and financial resources, for women and marginalised genders and support work-life balance initiatives, such as childcare facilities at workplaces, to enable women's participation in the workforce.
8. Allocate resources and technical support to **develop and implement national plans and policies that prioritise gender equality** and women's empowerment.
9. Encourage media outlets to portray diverse gender roles and challenge stereotypes, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. By doing so, this

will **utilise social behaviour change communication strategies to eradicate cultural norms and practices** that perpetuate gender inequalities.

10. Strengthen **partnerships between government agencies, civil society organisations, and international partners** to collectively address gender inequalities and promote empowerment
11. Empower youth, including LGBTQIA+ youth, to **actively participate in decision-making processes** and advocate for gender equality at all levels of society.

SDG 13 - CLIMATE ACTION

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The Asia-Pacific is the most disaster-prone region in the world. Due to its geography of extensive coastlines, low-lying territories, and many small island states, the region is highly susceptible to rising sea levels and extreme weather. SDG 13 focuses on urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. A situational analysis based on the details provided in the call to action reveals a comprehensive approach encompassing various aspects such as youth engagement, education, circular economy, resilience programmes, legislation, sustainability, and international collaboration. In the Asia-Pacific region, there is a consensus on prioritising localised skills training to enhance resilience and adaptation to climate change. The emphasis is on tailoring programmes to specific regional characteristics, empowering local youth to actively contribute to climate initiatives.

Youth engagement is a key theme, emphasising the active participation of young individuals in climate resilience projects. The approach recognises youth as agents of change, promoting their involvement in decision-making processes and encouraging their contributions to sustainable practices and circular economic development. Efforts are underway to integrate climate change education into formal school curricula, fostering awareness through public campaigns, and providing training for disaster preparedness. This reflects a commitment to building a knowledgeable and prepared community capable of addressing climate challenges.

Capacity-building programmes for youth in circular economic development underscore a commitment to sustainable practices. The emphasis on green jobs, entrepreneurship, and sustainability measures reflects a broader goal of transitioning towards a low-carbon economy. Recognising the global nature of climate change, the situational analysis emphasises the need for international collaboration. Knowledge exchange, technological transfer, and financial support are identified as crucial elements to strengthen climate initiatives across borders.

Attention is directed towards vulnerable communities, including persons with disabilities, sexual and gender minorities, and indigenous populations. Inclusive early warning systems, nature-based solutions, and capacity-building initiatives are proposed to address the specific needs of these groups. The integration of climate justice principles into policies and the enactment of laws promoting a low-carbon economy demonstrate a commitment to creating a regulatory environment that aligns with sustainable practices.

The situational analysis also highlights challenges such as gender disparities, mental health concerns among youth, and the need for inclusive policies. However, it identifies opportunities, such as leveraging technology, promoting green transportation, and encouraging sustainable consumption practices.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Prioritise Local-Level Skills Training:** Implement region-specific skills training programmes focused on both technical expertise and soft skills for youth. Empower them to actively contribute to climate adaptation initiatives tailored to the specific characteristics of each region.
2. **Climate Resilience Programmes:** Implement comprehensive climate resilience programmes for post-disaster recovery, with a focus on rehabilitating sectors like agriculture impacted by climate-related events.
3. **Youth Engagement in Climate Resilience:** Foster greater participation of local youth in climate resilience projects. Actively involve them in existing initiatives to amplify impact and cultivate a culture of proactive engagement in addressing climate challenges.
4. **Education and Awareness:** Continue and expand efforts to integrate climate change education into formal school curricula. Organise public awareness campaigns and provide training for local authorities and communities on disaster preparedness.
5. **Climate Education Integration:** Integrate climate education into school curricula at all levels. Engage youth in data collection, research, and decision-making processes related to climate policies.
6. **Circular Economy Capacity-Building:** Develop capacity-building programmes tailored to youth involvement in climate adaptation and circular economic development. Inspire and equip youth with practical guidance and tools for implementing circular economy models in ongoing projects.
7. **Legislation for Low Carbon Economy:** Enact and enforce legislation, such as the Low Carbon Economy Act, to promote sustainable practices, reduce carbon emissions, and transition towards cleaner and renewable energy sources.
8. **Climate Justice Integration:** Integrate climate justice principles into policies and programmes to address the disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable communities, ensuring an inclusive and equitable approach.
9. **International Collaboration:** Strengthen international cooperation for knowledge exchange, technological transfer, and financial support. Collaborate on climate initiatives to share expertise and resources.
10. **Green Economy Transition:** Facilitate the transition to a green economy by promoting green job opportunities and entrepreneurship for youth. Support sustainable businesses and allocate resources for youth-led projects focused on climate action.
11. **Nature-Based Solutions:** Promote nature-based solutions as adaptation and mitigation measures to climate change. Recognise and integrate Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and practices in sustainable land management and climate resilience.
12. **Inclusive Early Warning Systems:** Establish inclusive early warning systems to minimise the impact of climate-related disasters on vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities and sexual and gender minorities.
13. **Capacity Building for Disaster Management:** Strengthen the capacity of governmental institutions and local Disaster Management Committees for proactive initiatives in disaster

management, policy development, and budget allocation.

14. Accessible and Inclusive Climate Awareness:

Develop climate change awareness and educational materials in accessible and inclusive formats.

Ensure that everyone, regardless of caste, gender, disability, or ethnicity, is aware and can take proactive initiatives to address the impact of climate change.

15. Meaningful Engagement of Marginalised Youth in Decision-Making Spaces:

Ensure the inclusion of young women, rural and indigenous youth, LGBTQ+ youth, and youth with disabilities in policy, decision-making and monitoring related to climate change. This can be achieved by investing in their capacity building and ensuring representation of their voices at the local and national level or by creating youth councils or youth parliament committees for climate change.

disabilities, and people who are economically and socially marginalised are one of the most vulnerable groups who are affected disproportionately in emergency, disaster, and crisis situations. Different forms of sexual and gender-based violence (GBV), including domestic violence and child marriages, increase in emergency situations. Big data analysis of Google searches in Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Tonga reveal an increase in violence against women (VAW) related informational searches during or shortly after periods of crises.²⁸ Our institutions lack the capacity to provide timely and fair justice to the survivors of GBV due to the normalisation of impunity and lack of gender friendly support mechanisms. Our health institutions are not robust enough to aid services required during emergency situations. This was witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic in almost all parts of the world and it's a reality in the war hit areas in some parts of the region. Sexual and reproductive health is sidelined during such times, putting young people further at risk.

SDG 16 - PEACE, JUSTICE, AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

New forms of threats and opportunities have emerged in the region and the world due to the effects of globalisation. The threat to democracy, particularly in the Asia Pacific region, is concerning, especially with the number of conflicts rising, and the violations of human rights, right to freedom of speech and right to information. The increasing use of technology and the internet has been encouraging but at the same time threatening. Evidence suggests the use of technology by the state and non-state actors to spread misinformation and propaganda compromising transparency and state accountability. We have also seen shrinking of civic spaces in the past few years with restrictions on freedom of speech both online and offline.

The Asia and the Pacific with more than 80% of the world's disasters remains the most disaster prone region in the world.²⁷ Most developing and underdeveloped countries in the region have less resilience to deal with the effects of climate change. Crisis exacerbates the vulnerabilities of women and the marginalised. Women, children, people with

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen legal frameworks to combat gender-based violence, including **laws and policies that criminalise domestic violence, sexual harassment, and harmful practices** such as child marriage and female genital mutilation.
2. Compile confidential information for further investigation and references, avoid public disclosure and **integrate technology and innovative tools into the justice system** to streamline and expedite the justice process.
3. Enhance **transparency, accountability, and integrity within institutions**, including government agencies, law enforcement bodies, and judicial systems.
4. Improve the **capacity and responsiveness of public institutions** to deliver services efficiently and equitably.
5. Protect and promote **the rights of civil society organisations and independent media** in promoting accountability, transparency, and good governance.
6. Invest in and **strengthen adolescent-responsive health systems**, including a specific focus on adolescent SRH within universal health coverage policy, plans and financing mechanisms. In doing

so, address adolescents' and young people's unique needs and supplies as part of disaster responses and preparedness plans.

7. Provide **inclusive and non-discriminatory national and regional policies on disaster response relief measures/plans** which include, inter alia, the special health and reproductive needs along with safety needs of marginalised women and young girls as well as sexual and gender minorities.
8. Introduce **progressive digital policies with an emphasis on equity**. Even within authoritarian contexts, there is room for policies that address the digital divide and protect digital labour. This could involve targeted initiatives to provide affordable or free internet access in underserved areas, supporting digital skills training to empower citizens economically, and enacting labour protections for the growing number of gig economy workers.
9. Make digital rules clear by **untangling the web of regulatory complexities**. In doing so, we liberate businesses and individuals to explore the full potential of digital technologies. Moreover, training the population to harness technology for everyday tasks not only enhances efficiency but also nurtures digital literacy.
10. Develop national cybersecurity strategies with civil society input. To **ensure that cybersecurity measures do not merely serve as a guise for increased surveillance and control**, governments could be encouraged to include input from civil society organisations in the development of national cybersecurity strategies.
11. Support youth and startups by **investing in youth initiatives and startup ideas** not only stimulates economic growth but also cultivates a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. By actively supporting these ventures, we foster a demand for localised data, driving the creation and utilisation of valuable datasets.
12. Establish a **dedicated research and advocacy centre to focus on legal issues, policy analysis, and justice sector improvement** and provide scholarships to individuals aspiring to study law, ensuring inclusivity in the legal profession.
13. Increase the **leadership building skills of all youth and youth with disabilities**. All public and private institutions including workplaces, educational

institutions, judiciaries should be made disability friendly. Youth in all their diversities that include youth with disabilities should be included in policy making at all levels of the decision-making process.

14. Ensure **inclusive and affordable health access** for SOGIESC, YKPs and other marginalised caste groups and young people with disabilities.

SDG 17 - PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Young people are the equal partners who play a pivotal role in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Although the inclusion and substantial engagements of young people have increased in recent years in discussions and policy making spaces, more could be done to make the spaces more accessible and youth friendly. Their agencies are yet to be recognised fully by acknowledging them as the drivers of change rather than the recipients of change. Inclusion and meaningful participation of young people in all their diversity have to be ensured for making progress in achieving the SDGs.

As multiple actors are simultaneously playing key roles in influencing and implementing the development agenda, multi-stakeholder collaboration is strongly needed. Strengthened partnerships between and within governments, UN agencies, private sectors, CSOs, and researchers are required for accelerating the implementation of SDGs and finding innovative solutions to the challenges.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Foster **collaboration and partnerships between governments, civil society organisations, and international development agencies** to enhance access to healthcare services and promote gender equality.
2. Where **public-private partnerships are in place, they need to be regulated** to support programme implementation and financing for young people's health and development, tapping into digital technologies to co-create youth-led solutions to meet the SDGs.

3. Establish robust partnerships between governments, private sectors, and educational institutions facilitating the **sharing of resources, expertise, and data**. By leveraging collective strengths, we can tackle data challenges more effectively and drive meaningful progress.
4. Prioritise investments in education and training for health professionals, policymakers, and community leaders on **gender-responsive healthcare delivery**, including addressing gender-based violence and discrimination in healthcare settings.
5. Leverage **international development assistance and aid coordination mechanisms** to ensure that funding for health and gender equality programmes is aligned with national priorities and promotes sustainable outcomes.
6. Provide capacity building support for **implementing effective technology and targeted capacity building in developing countries** to support national plans to implement all the sustainable development goals including through North South cooperation.
7. Explore opportunities to diversify revenue sources, including the **development of eco-tourism, technology services**, and niche industries aligned with sustainable development principles.
8. Encourage **private investment in sustainable development projects** through well-structured PPPs, ensuring that both economic and environmental goals are met.
9. Foster a **decentralised approach to development**, ensuring diverse regions benefit from sustainable practices.
10. Encourage the **development of indigenous solutions** and attract international collaboration, fostering a culture of innovation.
11. Encourage and **fund projects led by young people** focused on conservation, sustainable agriculture, and climate action, integrating their ideas into policy decisions.

CONCLUSION

The above document brings in a youth perspective to the status of progress in achieving the SDGs and highlights areas in need of attention in relation to SDGs 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 5 (gender equality), 13 (climate action), 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions), and 17 (partnerships for the goals). Each of these SDGs have been analysed through the lens of other related and crosscutting SDGs especially SDG 1 (poverty), SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing), and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities).

We, the youth represented at this forum, understand that we are at a crucial juncture in this point in time, more than halfway through the timeframe set for Agenda 2030. Youth in the Asia and the Pacific region face insurmountable disadvantages but it is our hope that the recommendations outlined above provide a substantial platform for uplifting young people's voices and agency in future decision-making processes. To achieve true meaningful inclusion, young people cannot be silenced or left behind. The future is ours to inherit and we call on Member States to adopt an equitable, non-discriminatory and participatory approach that fosters youth empowerment and leadership, human rights and gender equity.

With 2024 being the year of the once in a generation Summit of the Future, we hope that our voices and our demands can be elevated at this meaningful space. We believe that this regional call to action, and the national level call to action briefs, will enable our governments to strengthen their political commitments in enabling us, the youth of the Asia and the Pacific, to be able to drive positive change not only in our region, but across the globe.

ABBREVIATIONS

APFSD	Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GBV	Gender-based Violence
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sexual Characteristics
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VAW	Violence Against Women

ENDNOTES

- The organisers of the APFSD Youth Forum were able to provide access to 450 young people from across 36 countries in the Asia and the Pacific region. 120 young people attended the Youth Forum in person and over 200 young people actively engaged virtually through Zoom.
- The countries represented in this Youth Call to Action are as follows: Afghanistan, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.
- The Call to Action consists of recommendations brought together by participants during the Youth Forum and was drafted and compiled by a dedicated drafting team. The development, editing, and finalisation of the document was led by Evelynne Gomez (ARROW), with support from Shiva Karmacharya (ARROW), Palden Dorji (Y-PEER AP), and Maria Iqbal Shah (Y-PEER AP). Overall supervision was given by Sai Jyothirmai Racherla (ARROW).
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