

SUB-REGIONAL YOUTH

# CALL TO ACTION 2025

APFSD Youth Forum | Feb 19-21, 2025

Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science and evidence based solutions for the 2030 agenda and its SDGs for leaving no young person behind in Asia and the Pacific

## CENTRAL ASIA



AFGHANISTAN



KAZAKHSTAN



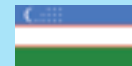
KYRGYZSTAN



TAJIKISTAN



TURKMENISTAN



UZBEKISTAN



MONGOLIA

## Situational Analysis

Central Asia (CA) is a landlocked region at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, consisting of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Mongolia. Historically part of the Silk Road, the region has long been a hub for trade, culture, and geopolitical influence. It is rich in natural resources, including oil, gas, minerals, and water, making it strategically significant. While some countries, like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, are experiencing rapid economic growth, others, like Afghanistan and Tajikistan, face development challenges. With a young and dynamic population, Central Asia has immense potential to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through regional cooperation and youth engagement.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has been steadily implementing measures to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), making significant progress in economic growth, social development, and environmental sustainability. As of 2023, the country has recorded notable achievements across several key areas. In the healthcare sector, child mortality has decreased to 12.3 per 1,000 live births, while 93% of the population now has access to quality medical services. Additionally, over 250 new medical centres have been built to enhance healthcare infrastructure. Regarding gender equality, the representation of women in leadership positions has reached 29.2%, and early marriage rates have significantly declined from 1.83% in

2019 to just 0.05% in 2023. In the field of economic growth and employment, the unemployment rate has fallen to 6.8%, and child labour has been completely eradicated. As part of efforts to strengthen international partnerships, Uzbekistan has committed to 16 national SDGs and 206 specific indicators, while also accelerating its accession process to the World Trade Organisation (WTO).<sup>1</sup> On 14 February 2025, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev chaired a meeting on youth policy, announcing a \$400 million fund to support youth entrepreneurship. Furthermore, a joint initiative with the UAE will launch the “One Million AI Users” programme to enhance digital skills among young people.<sup>2</sup>

Turkmenistan has made significant strides in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, integrating 85% of national strategies and programs with the SDGs. The government collaborates with the United Nations Country Team to monitor progress, ensuring policy alignment. In socio-economic development, Turkmenistan has invested in poverty alleviation, economic diversification, healthcare, education, and food security, strengthening public services and agriculture sustainability. In Turkmenistan, 99.9% of births are attended by qualified medical workers, nearly reaching the 2030 WHO target (100%); 97% of reproductive health offices are equipped with all family planning methods; and the adolescent fertility rate among 15–19-year-old

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girls has declined to 229 births per 1,000 in 2022. As of January 1, 2021, women made up 50.2% of Turkmenistan's population, with increasing participation in the workforce. Their share in large and medium-sized enterprises rose from 40.1% in 2015 to 42.5% in 2021. In 2022, women held 25.7% of seats in the national Parliament and 21.7% in local representative bodies. 22.4% of senior leadership positions were occupied by women. Turkmenistan continues to promote gender equality, women's empowerment, and increased representation in governance and employment.<sup>3</sup> Turkmenistan's dedication to sustainable development, economic resilience, and global cooperation. Continued efforts in environmental sustainability and stakeholder engagement will further accelerate progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Mongolia has made significant progress towards SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) by implementing a nationwide cancer-screening programme, reaching 40% of the population to tackle the country's high cancer mortality rate through early detection and treatment. Additionally, maternal and child healthcare services have expanded, particularly in rural areas, improving access to essential medical care and reducing mortality rates.<sup>4</sup> In advancing SDG 5 (Gender Equality), Mongolia has introduced initiatives such as the Mongolian Women Farmers Association, which supports female-led agricultural enterprises, helping to diversify diets and enhance food security. Furthermore, legal reforms have been enacted to combat domestic violence and strengthen women's participation in governance and decision-making, promoting greater gender equality in society.<sup>5</sup> Regarding SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Mongolia's economy is projected to grow 79% higher than the global average between 2023 and 2025, largely driven by industrial expansion and investment. However, ensuring that this growth translates into widespread employment opportunities remains a challenge. The government is actively working on economic diversification beyond the mining sector to create more inclusive and sustainable jobs, alongside strengthening employment policies and expanding small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to foster long-term economic stability.<sup>6</sup> While substantial progress has been made, sustained efforts are required to bridge healthcare inequalities, further promote gender equality, and ensure inclusive economic development across Mongolia. Mongolia has actively engaged in regional and international partnerships to advance the SDGs, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The government has also launched initiatives to promote public-private partnerships and civil society engagement in the implementation of the SDGs.

## Recommendations

We are the young people of Central Asia, particularly from Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Mongolia; We put forward the following recommendations for SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 17 (Strengthening Partnerships):

- Promote the initiative with WHO to launch a “Youth as Researchers for Health and Well-being” Project. Inspired by UNESCO’s “Youth as Researchers” programme, this initiative combines WHO’s public health expertise with the development of youth research capacity. In this way, the programme will serve to address the pressing health challenges facing Central Asian youth and engage them in finding solutions through research.
- Launch nationwide health campaigns to address mental health, sexual health, and substance abuse prevention led by youth organisations. In Central Asia, a large portion of the population, including young people, living in rural areas, is still not sufficiently informed about the above mentioned issues. These campaigns can help to reduce stigma around mental health issues and improve overall public health. Engaging young people in these initiatives can encourage peer-to-peer education and help make health information accessible to the communities.
- Develop training programmes aimed at developing young women’s leadership skills and economic opportunities, as well as introducing initiatives aimed at breaking gender stereotypes in education and the labour market. Supporting young women will break the cycle of gender inequality and increase their active participation in the labour market and decision-making processes. This will contribute not only to personal development, but also to accelerating economic growth and social progress.
- Gender-based violence is still a problem in CA countries. It is important to enhance the status of women in society and create conditions for their comprehensive development. Strengthen mechanisms to punish any person who commits violence against women and also focus on preventing measures. Youth parliaments in countries should propose legal changes to their parliaments to strengthen laws protecting women and girls.
- Increase investment and funding for youth friendly, affordable, high-quality medical facilities and services, including mental health, Sexual and reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) information and services, for young people.



- Establish business incubators that provide mentoring, financial support, and resources for youth-led start-ups. It would be appropriate to use the experience of Uzbekistan in this regard. Providing interest-free loans to young entrepreneurs, providing discounts on land rent for land-related business owners, introducing tax incentives or providing a 50 percent tax exemption for a period of 1 to 5 years will lead to their success in business. Supporting youth entrepreneurship will create new jobs and stimulate economic diversification. By supporting innovation, these programs will help find sustainable solutions to local challenges.
- Establish official Central Asian Youth Organisation and other regional networks of youth organisations to promote knowledge sharing, collaboration on joint projects, and carry out joint advocacy work. Currently, there is no single organisation uniting Central Asian youth. One of the main challenges is the lack of a common platform where young people in the region can freely exchange ideas and propose solutions. Building stronger cooperation among Central Asian youth will enable the implementation of effective initiatives to address common challenges. It will also create a platform for youth voices to be heard at local, national, and regional policy discussions. By uniting, young people will contribute to achieving SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) and work together towards the implementation of other Sustainable Development Goals.
- Establish a UN Youth Delegate system from Central Asian countries, as well as Afghanistan and Mongolia. Currently, there are no youth delegates from Central Asian countries at the United Nations. Establishing this system will create an opportunity to express the opinions and needs of young people on international platforms. This amplifies the voice of youth and involves them in global politics.
- Appoint youth delegates for each Central Asian country and encourage their participation in various UN meetings. Engaging youth in decision-making ensures that their perspectives are considered when developing strategies that affect their lives. This increases the accountability of leaders towards the needs of young people. This contributes to ensuring sustainable development in the future and helps make policies that take into account the needs of the young generation.

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*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 19-21 February, 2025. The Central Asia, Afghanistan and Mongolia drafting team consisted of Nurullo RASULOV (Uzbekistan), Kristina KRASNOKUTSKAYA (Turkmenistan), and Nomin Gary (Mongolia).*

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 SDGs (no date). <https://nsdg.stat.uz/uz/publications/28>
- 2 Prezident matbuot kotibi | Sherzod Asadov (no date). [https://t.me/Press\\_Secretary\\_Uz/5412](https://t.me/Press_Secretary_Uz/5412).
- 3 Voluntary National Review of Turkmenistan on the progress of implementation of the Global Agenda for Sustainable Development 2023 (no date). <https://turkmenistan.un.org/en/239049-voluntary-national-review-turkmenistan-progress-implementation-global-agenda-sustainable>.
- 4 Strzy y ska, W. (2024) 'Mongolia's ambitious programme to tackle cancer death rates reaches 40% of population,' The Guardian, 23 August. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/aug/09/mongolia-cancer-death-rates-programme-reaches-almost-half-population-acc>.
- 5 Strzy y ska, W. (2024a) 'Cabbage and potatoes are not the only vegetables: can these female farmers persuade Mongolia to change its diet?,' The Guardian, 33 August. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/aug/13/mongolia-cancer-rates-farmers-trying-to-fix-diets-acc>.
- 6 Mongolia (no date). <https://sdgpush-insights.undp.org/mongolia>.

