

COUNTRY 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



SINGAPORE

## BACKGROUND

Singapore is widely considered a developed country and a high-income economy built on a business-friendly regulatory environment and strong investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and public services. However, Singapore's commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must be judged by its tangible impact on the lives of all residents, especially the marginalized. While Singapore boasts a high Gross Domestic Product (GDP), this wealth masks deep inequalities and unsustainable practices. This Call to Action demands accountability, transparency, and a fundamental shift in priorities. We challenge systemic issues and prioritize people and the planet over unchecked economic growth.

### SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being

#### Situational Analysis

Singapore's healthcare system is often lauded, but genuine well-being requires more than just medical access. Mental health stigma, underfunded preventative care, and rising healthcare costs disproportionately affect vulnerable populations.

Mental health services remain under-resourced and stigmatized. Public expenditure on mental health was estimated to be only 0.45% of the total health budget in 2020, indicating a need for increased investment. Preventative care programs, while present, often lack

targeted outreach to vulnerable communities. Out-of-pocket healthcare costs can be a significant burden, especially for low-income families and the elderly. At the same time, undocumented poverty data hides the true scope of need for mental health services and social support.

#### Recommendations

- Decriminalize suicide and prioritize community-based mental healthcare. Immediately repeal Section 309 of the Penal Code, recognizing attempted suicide as a mental health crisis, not a crime. Dramatically increase funding for community-based services, including crisis hotlines, peer support groups, and affordable therapy.
- Ensure universal access to preventative healthcare, prioritizing marginalized communities and addressing intersectional social determinants of health (housing, food security, green spaces).
- Implement a progressive healthcare financing system shifting from the medisave-based system towards a universal healthcare model guaranteeing affordable access for all. Explore options like a single-payer system or expanded government subsidies.
- Invest in 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.

Co-convended by:



Youth LEAD



In collaboration:



In partnership:



## SDG 5: Gender Equality

### Situational Analysis

While Singapore has made strides in female education and workforce participation, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions across sectors. According to the Council for Board Diversity, in 2023, women held only 19.7% of board seats in Singapore's top 100 listed companies. Gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment and female genital mutilation (FGM), remains a significant concern. Societal norms and expectations continue to reinforce traditional gender roles, placing a disproportionate burden of caregiving on women.

### Recommendations

- Enact comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation ensuring the Workplace Fairness Act explicitly prohibits all forms of discrimination, especially discrimination based on sexual orientation. Provide accessible reporting and resolution channels.
- Mandate equal parental leave and invest in affordable childcare. Implement equal, fully paid parental leave for mothers and fathers, challenging traditional gender roles.
- Significantly increase public investment in high-quality, affordable childcare, especially for low-income families.
- Address gender-based violence through education and systemic change. Implement comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) from primary school, promoting healthy relationships, consent, and equality. Increase funding for shelters and survivor support services.

## SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

### Situational Analysis

Singapore's economic success has not benefited all equally. Income inequality is widening (Singapore's Gini coefficient was 0.444 in 2022), precarious employment is rising, and migrant workers face exploitation and abuse. Wage stagnation for low-skilled workers and the rising cost of living contribute to economic hardship for many families. Migrant workers often face exploitative conditions, including low wages, long hours, and limited access to healthcare and legal protection. There is a critical need for fair and standardized wage policies to mitigate pay disparities.

## Recommendations

Implement a living wage and strengthen labor protections by mandating a minimum wage policy, reflecting Singapore's cost of living, ensuring all workers can afford basic necessities. Strengthen labor laws protecting workers' rights (right to organize, collective bargaining, fair overtime pay).

End migrant workers' exploitation and guarantee equal rights. Ensure equal access to healthcare, housing, and legal protection regardless of immigration status. Ratify and implement the ILO Domestic Workers Convention

Promote the social and solidarity economy by supporting social enterprises, cooperatives, and solidarity economy initiatives prioritizing social and environmental impact. Provide funding, training, and market access.

## SDG 14: Life Below Water

### Situational Analysis

As an island nation, Singapore's well-being depends on healthy oceans. Singapore's marine environment faces threats from pollution, coastal development, and climate change. While some marine conservation efforts exist, they are often insufficient to address the scale of the problem. The country's reliance on imported food also places pressure on marine resources in other regions. Singapore's coral reefs have declined by approximately 60% in the last few decades.

### Recommendations

Establish a network of fully protected marine reserves and designate a significant percentage of Singapore's waters as fully protected, prohibiting extractive activities (fishing, dredging, mining).

Reduce plastic pollution at the source. Ban single-use plastics (bags, straws, containers). Invest in waste reduction, reuse, and recycling infrastructure. Hold corporations accountable for their plastic footprint through Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes.

Actively pursue legal mechanisms to hold big oil companies accountable for oil spills and other harmful activities at sea, ensuring they pay for the full environmental and social costs of their operations. This includes advocating for international legal frameworks that enable affected nations to seek compensation for damages caused by multinational corporations operating in international waters.



## SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

### Situational Analysis

Achieving the SDGs requires genuine partnerships built on trust, transparency, and accountability. Singapore must empower civil society organizations to play a meaningful role and challenge the status quo. While Singapore promotes partnerships for sustainable development, these collaborations often lack transparency and meaningful participation from civil society organizations. The government's control over information and restrictions on freedom of assembly can hinder the development of a vibrant and independent civil society. According to a 2022 CIVICUS Monitor report, Singapore is rated as "obstructed" in terms of civic space, indicating significant restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly. Singapore's self-identification as a developing nation in the UN raises questions about its role in international development cooperation.

### Recommendations

Reform laws restricting civic space and end the persecution of activists. Amend or repeal laws such as the Public Order Act, POFMA (Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act), and FICA (Foreign Interference (Countermeasures) Act) to ensure they are not used to stifle dissent or restrict peaceful assembly and freedom of expression. End the clampdown on activists and drop politically motivated court cases against them, fostering an environment where civil society can operate freely and hold the government accountable. Amnesty International has expressed concerns about the use of these laws to suppress dissent in Singapore.

Increase transparency and access to information: Enact freedom of information legislation guaranteeing public access to government data and decision-making. Promote open data initiatives.

Challenge Singapore's self-designation as a "Developing Country" and acknowledge its privileged position and commit to greater financial and technical assistance to developing countries. Advocate for a more equitable global economic system.

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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 Singapore Call to Action was drafted by Saza Faradilla. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW Call To Action team.*

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