

COUNTRY YOUTH

CALL TO ACTION 2025

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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



TIMOR LESTE

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being

Situational Analysis

Following its independence Timor-Leste continues to face significant challenges across various sectors, particularly in healthcare. The country has the highest maternal mortality rate in Southeast Asia. According to UNFPA Timor-Leste, the rate stands at 195 per 100,000 live births. Additionally, the mortality rate for children under five is 19 per 1,000 live births, significantly higher than the rate in developed countries, which is only 2 per 1,000 live births (WHO, 2020).

Moreover, both communicable and non-communicable diseases require urgent attention. Timor-Leste ranks second in Southeast Asia for tuberculosis, with 6,171 cases reported in 2023. According to WHO (2020), hypertension accounts for 156 deaths or 2.21% of total deaths in the country, ranking Timor-Leste 60th worldwide in hypertension-related fatalities.

Recommendations

- Reduce maternal, infant, and under-five mortality rates by improving healthcare services and increasing the number of qualified health professionals.
- Address communicable and non-communicable diseases by promoting healthier lifestyles within communities.
- Ensure equitable distribution of healthcare supplies between urban and rural areas.
- Enhance healthcare professionals' skills through targeted training programs.

- 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 particularly in rural, and hard to reach areas.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

Situational Analysis

Timor-Leste has made progress in gender equality, particularly in education and women's participation in politics. According to the 2015 Census, women's representation in parliament stands at 38%. However, participation remains significantly lower at the local level (CARE Timor-Leste). Additionally, there is a sharp disparity in labor force participation, with 24.2% of women engaged in the workforce compared to 36.9% of men (Labour Force Survey 2021 Summary Report). The International Women's Development Agency also reports that only 20% of women receive financial compensation for their work.

UNFPA data indicates that 59% of girls and women aged 15-49 have experienced physical and sexual violence from their partners. Due to social stigma and economic consequences, many survivors remain silent and trapped in abusive situations (Tatoli, 2024).

Co-convended by:



Youth LEAD



In collaboration:



In partnership:



Recommendations

- Educate communities regarding gender equality and gender based violence.
- Promote women's rights to fully participate in decision-making at all levels.
- Promote equal opportunities for men and women.
- Eliminate all kinds of violence in the community including gender based violence.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Situational Analysis

Timor-Leste's economy is heavily reliant on oil exports, making it vulnerable to economic instability. Approximately 40% of the population lives below the poverty line due to limited job opportunities. Youth unemployment is particularly high, standing at 12.3%, compared to the national average of 4.8% (Timor-Leste Population and Housing Census, 2015). Furthermore, wages remain low and fail to keep up with rising living costs (Tatoli, 2024).

Recommendations

- Develop agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing industries while improving vocational training in these sectors.
- Establish local and international partnerships to create more job opportunities.
- Implement fair wage policies based on skills and working hours.

SDG 14: Life Below Water

Situational Analysis

Timor-Leste is located within the Coral Triangle, which is renowned for its marine biodiversity and home to 76% of the world's coral species. The country also hosts six of the seven marine turtle species and the world's largest blue whale migration (Benar News, 2023). However, marine biodiversity faces significant threats due to climate change and human activities. According to Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (2022), 92% of the region's coral reefs are at high risk due to overfishing, pollution, coastal development, and marine activities such as shipping and oil extraction.

Recommendations

- Strengthen marine conservation programs and advocacy efforts.
- Promote and ensure fishing regulations, marine activities and coastal development.
- Reduce watershed-based pollution.
- Promote climate change resilience.

SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals

Situational Analysis

Timor-Leste faces challenges in capacity building across all government sectors due to low education and inadequate training. Many public servants lack experience in public administration and decision-making (Asian Development Bank, 2008). Additionally, UNESCO (2023) notes weak inter ministerial coordination in education, training, and capacity-building, leading to an absence of science and technology policies. Digital transformation remains a challenge, as 96% of the population uses mobile phones, but only 29% have internet access (Safenet, 2023).

The country's heavy reliance on oil and gas exports poses economic risks, as resource depletion could lead to macroeconomic instability (East Asia Forum, 2025). While Timor-Leste has made progress in multi-stakeholder engagement, grassroots-level organizations remain underrepresented. According to Safenet (2023), a national civil society network comprises 267 members, including 27 international organizations, 147 national-level organizations, and 93 city-level organizations, but lacks grassroots representation.

Recommendations

- Improve training and capacity building for public servants to enhance administration and decision-making skills.
- Strengthen interministerial coordination for effective communication between government agencies involved in education and training.
- Develop policies that promote innovation, STEM education, and digital transformation.
- Foster collaboration between international donors and communication companies to enhance digital infrastructure.
- Enhance the macroeconomic stability by the agricultural and tourism sectors.
- Encourage grassroots engagement in policymaking and decision-making processes.



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 Timor-Leste Call to Action was drafted by Cesaltina Pereira de Carvalho. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW Call To Action team.

