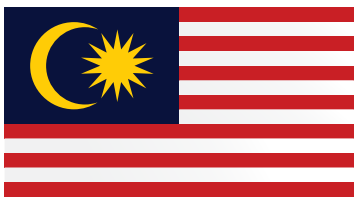




Asia-Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action 2024



Malaysia and Singapore

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

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

In the pursuit of the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Malaysia and Singapore have demonstrated commendable progress, navigating various challenges including the unprecedented disruptions over the momentum gained post-COVID-19. As climate change has become a present-day reality with both countries experiencing rising temperatures and increasing intensity and frequency of heavy rainfall events, it is paramount that Singapore and Malaysia engage proactively in climate mitigation and adaptation measures. This is especially since the impacts of climate change will only exacerbate existing inequalities. In alignment with the 11th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) and the 2024 High-level Political Forum (HLPF), we focus on the situational

analysis and recommendations related to SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 13 (Climate Change), SDG16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

SDG 1: NO POVERTY

While the Sustainable Development Report 2023 indicates that Malaysia is on track to achieve SDG 1, the unequal mobilisation of resources between urban and rural areas, regional wage discrepancies between East and Peninsular Malaysia, and the improper management of stateless and undocumented children pose a barrier to access to education, healthcare, and social services. The overarching challenge of corruption also hinders the fair distribution of resources and the effectiveness of poverty alleviation efforts. In Singapore, the absence of comprehensive



poverty data poses a significant hurdle, obscuring the reality of poverty and impeding targeted interventions. Other concerns include migrant workers facing vulnerability and limited support, and the prevalence of elderly poverty in the country.

Our SDG 1 Recommendations:

1. Ensure equitable distribution of resources taking into consideration both relative and absolute poverty.
2. Advocate for fair and standardised wage policies to mitigate the disparities in pay rates, ensuring that workers receive remuneration commensurate with the cost of living.
3. Enhance social protection mechanisms to support and safeguard the rights of vulnerable populations.
4. Strengthen data readiness and capacity to enable evidence-based policy formulation and targeted interventions based on publicly available information.

SDG 2: ZERO HUNGER

Both Malaysia and Singapore urgently need to tackle the issue of food waste, especially since a significant percentage of said waste is avoidable. In Malaysia, a lack of access to affordable and high quality nutritious food also continues to perpetuate issues of wasting and stunting amongst children, as well as food insecurity amongst poor and rural populations. These issues are exacerbated by the lack of coordination amongst civil society organisations (CSOs) working on food issues in the country, as well as the lack of sustainable job opportunities and those working in the agriculture and fisheries sectors. In Singapore, achieving food security remains a challenge, with over 90% of our food supply being sourced internationally and locally produced food struggling to be competitive with imported foods.

Our SDG 2 Recommendations:

1. Enhance food waste campaigns, policies, and other related food waste interventions to engage both civil society and private institutions, utilising creative and targeted methods to appeal to different audiences.
2. Improve monitoring mechanisms on free food initiatives in Malaysian schools, ensuring that food provided promotes a varied and balanced diet using high quality ingredients.
3. Ensure that affordable and high quality nutritious food is accessible to all members of society, with additional subsidy and proliferation measures being taken to increase this access for poor and rural communities.

SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY

Both Malaysia and Singapore share several overlapping challenges in achieving gender equity. Both parliaments have a persistent underrepresentation of women, highlighting a need for increased opportunities and support for aspiring female politicians. Both societies also burden women with a disproportionate share of housework and childcare despite more women entering the workforce, thus creating an imbalanced division of labour. Finally, both grapple with the concerning issue of gender-based violence, occurring tragically in homes, schools, and workplaces alike. Tackling these interconnected issues requires sustained effort from both governments and societies, with more men acting as allies, dismantling discriminatory structures, and fostering a culture of respect and equal opportunity for all.

Our SDG 5 Recommendations:

1. In place of maternity and paternity leave whereby fathers receive less time off than mothers, implement a system of equal parental leave in workplaces to encourage a more even distribution of childcare responsibilities between both parents.
2. Compulsory anti-discrimination training for all members in the public service and for all Human Resource practitioners.

3. Teach SRHR and other gender equity topics (e.g. gender-responsive violence prevention mechanisms and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in secondary school curriculums.

SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION

A lack of political will in Malaysia is a considerable barrier to achieving goals stated in SDG 13. A major concern is the rapid development of palm oil plantations, which has driven unparalleled rates of deforestation across the country. Malaysia – like Singapore – is heavily reliant on fossil fuels for energy, and plans to transition away from fossil fuels, especially natural gas, are not ambitious enough in scale and urgency. Surveys conducted in both countries also suggest that a significant proportion of Malaysians and Singaporeans are not very concerned about climate change, and thus do not see the need to invest in climate action. While the Singaporean government has made significant strides in climate action in recent years, climate ambitions remain too conservative for a nation with such a high GDP per capita and relatively high CO₂ emissions per capita.

Our SDG 13 Recommendations:

1. Mainstream climate education in primary and secondary school curriculums, with topics spanning climate science, climate solutions, and climate policy.
2. Enable greater participation of climate action and biodiversity conservation CSOs in policy discussions and decision-making processes.
3. Gradually reduce and eventually stop providing fossil fuel subsidies.
4. Assist communities reliant on unsustainable agricultural practices to transition towards sustainable agriculture and income generation opportunities in nature-based solutions.
5. Increase transparency and traceability in the palm oil supply chain through mandatory reporting mechanisms.

SDG 16: PEACE, JUSTICE, AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Malaysia faces hurdles in promoting transparency due to limitations on freedom of information, particularly concerning public bodies and government operations. Issues like corruption and ineffective complaint mechanisms further exacerbate challenges in ensuring the accountability of institutions. Besides, the struggle for a legal identity and documentation faced by stateless and undocumented individuals also affects their access to justice and poses a barrier to their participation in civic processes. Meanwhile, Singapore confronts concerns about press freedom, raising questions about the diversity of voices and perspectives in the public sphere. Political apathy among Singaporeans, especially young Singaporeans, adds another layer of complexity, hindering the development of an actively engaged citizenry.

Our SDG 16 Recommendations:

1. Advocate for legal reforms by enacting laws that enhance the disclosure of information for the public's benefit as well as safeguard press freedom.
2. Implement measures to ensure the consistent application of the rule of law and comprehensive human rights protections for all, addressing any disparities in its enforcement.
3. Implement civic education programs to promote political literacy and engagement from a young age.

SDG 17: PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Despite having one of the highest GDP per capita globally, Singapore's self-identification as a developing nation in the UN raises a unique challenge. This impacts the dynamics of international partnerships and necessitates a reevaluation of how Singapore positions itself in global development discourse. The apolitical environment also presents hurdles in fostering a diverse range of voices and perspectives in the sustainable development discourse. Similar to Malaysia, coordination challenges among stakeholders persist, calling for streamlined communication and collaboration. In Malaysia, the weak institutional capacity to support partnerships and the lack of effective resource mobilisation between states and parliamentary constituencies further hamper the equitable distribution of resources for sustainable development projects.

Our SDG 17 Recommendations:

1. Establish a centralised platform or network for collaborative planning, information-sharing, and joint initiatives involving multiple stakeholders to identify priority areas for resource allocation and to prevent duplication of efforts.
2. Invest in capacity-building programs for governmental institutions to enhance their ability to support partnerships with various stakeholders and contribute meaningfully to sustainable development initiatives.
3. Collaborate with regional partners to establish a framework for resource mobilisation that promotes cross-border collaboration and addresses regional disparities such as providing monetary support to other countries for developmental assistance.
4. Encourage financial institutions to integrate sustainability criteria into their investment decisions and provide incentives for businesses that engage in sustainable development initiatives.
5. Reconsider Singapore's status as a developing country in the UN.

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 February 15-17, 2024. The Malaysia and Singapore drafting team was led by Nur Marsya Amani binti Mohd Jamil (Malaysia) and Beverley Choo Jia Ying (Singapore), with inputs provided by Alex Lew Wen Jie (Singapore), Wong Li Xin (Malaysia), Toh Jia Yee (Malaysia), Herry Fung Ah Chon (Malaysia), and Liew Xin Qi (Malaysia). Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW Call To Action team.
