



# Asia-Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action 2024



## Papua New Guinea

### 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

Papua New Guinea is located at the forefront of the Asia-Pacific Region. The country has gone through massive transitions within the last 47 years. It has established excellent international relationships with neighbouring developed countries, which has provided international aid through millions of Kinas to see through the progress of proposed SDG Goals. The country itself is divided into four regions; Momase, Highlands, New Guinea Islands and Southern Regions, that have diverse cultures with 800+ languages. The geographical aspects of the regions is a challenge in PNG when measuring the progress of SDGs.

Papua New Guinea is rich in natural resources and also has the potential to produce agriculturally. However, it failed as a country to eradicate poverty and hunger. It is sad reality that the hollowness of governance has failed to meet public needs, thus risking deeper violence and instability. The recent January riots in PNG<sup>1</sup> in the nation's capital on January 10 2024, have put the country in the global spotlight. Donor agencies in the country have analysed the "Black Wednesday" event differently, but the riot was a good example of poor governance in the country. Corruption is an issue in Papua New Guinea, where public funds are not allocated to and used properly towards enhancing the development of health, education, law and order to name a few. In general, the progress of achieving Agenda 2030 has improved over the years with financial and educational support from international agencies. Sustainable Development



Goals 1, 2, 5, 13, 16 and 17 have progressed with assistance from FAO, WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women, and UNOPS<sup>2</sup> in the form of grants, aids and voluntary programmes.

In our analysis of Sustainable Development Goal 1, No Poverty, progress has been made to eradicate poverty in PNG. However, it is yet to address this goal in all its forms and dimensions by ensuring that all individuals have access to basic resources such as food, shelter, and education. Some of the approaches taken so far include promoting inclusive economic growth, providing social safety nets for the most vulnerable populations, and investing in education and skills training. In the recent PNG team discussions within the APFSD Forum 2024, youths have identified climate change, untapped agriculture and child displacement as barriers towards achieving SDG1.

For Sustainable Development Goal 2, Zero Hunger, aims to end all forms of hunger and malnutrition by 2030. In Papua New Guinea, efforts have also been made towards promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns. However, progress towards achieving this goal has been slow. Barriers such as conflicts, climate change, and unequal distribution of resources continue to hinder the achievement of Zero Hunger. Therefore, it is crucial to continue implementing comprehensive and coordinated strategies to ensure that everyone has access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food.

In relation to SDG 5, progress towards gender equality has been slow. Papua New Guinea is ranked 160 out of 161 countries on the United Nations Development Programme's 2021 Gender Inequality Index. The Asian Development Bank in 2021 estimated that 37.5% of the people live below the poverty line, many of them in rural areas where; women, children and people living with disabilities are the groups most vulnerable to poverty, insecurity, and violence. The PNG Government has made progress in developing policies on women's rights.<sup>3</sup> The National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment recently implemented recognises the importance of women's leadership, as a right and as a development imperative.

Climate Change Action (SDG 13), is a significant challenge that Papua New Guinea is facing on an unprecedented level. Due to PNG's geographical location, it is highly susceptible to climate change, whereby coastal areas are at a high risk of experiencing sea-level rise and extreme weather patterns, while the Highlands areas are threatened by temperature fluctuations. A recent report by Asia and the Pacific: El Niño<sup>4</sup> highlighted that Papua New Guinea has heightened signs of El-Niño as indicated by the rainfall patterns, thus has a high probability of experiencing drier conditions in the following three months (December, January and February 2024). The issue at hand has had a significant impact on the lives and livelihoods of countless individuals in Papua New Guinea. Despite the immense effort and strategies put in place to address climate change in the country, some gaps require bridging to advance toward a sustainable climate solution, these gaps include the lack of local, national, or regional (Pacific Island) cooperation.

Achieving SDG 16 is still in progress in Papua New Guinea. There is an urgent need to accelerate the fight against corruption if we are to halt human rights abuses and democratic decline across the globe. The looting or Riot termed "Black Wednesday"<sup>5</sup> highlights both Internal and external challenges for PNG's progress towards the UN Agenda 2030. The U.S.' attention to the Pacific Islands' largest and most populous nation is increasing, partly because it is an arena for geopolitical competition with China. While Papua New Guinea's leaders are good at rolling out the red carpet for visiting partners, the state fails lamentably in providing basic services for its people. This week's violence is a wake-up call for U.S. and international policymakers to re-focus on the root of the country's instability. The violence reveals an obvious truth, one particularly inconvenient for outsiders engaging in the country. Papua New Guinea is effectively two worlds.

Partnerships for the goals (SDG 17) is in 50% progress for Papua New Guinea, in the sense that partners sometimes have different interests. In the recent Forum, youths have identified; lack of coordination,

information sharing, and tech capacity as the main barriers towards Achieving SDG17.

## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS:

With the current situation in PNG, through the Asia Pacific Sustainable Development Youth Forum, we recommend greater efforts and collaboration from the Government (National, Provincial & Local Level), Stakeholders, Citizens and the international partners in Papua New Guinea to support our Youth Call to Action for progress of the following SDGs:

### SDG 1: No Poverty

- Address climate change issues affecting agricultural productivity and provide reliable domestic and global markets where surplus food can be sold or exchanged for a variety.
- Efforts must be made to improve access and financial support to youths in PNG through education, skills and opportunities that will grant them access to the availability of nutritional food supply.
- Encourage youths to participate in agricultural activities, and create domestic and international markets for fresh products.

### SDG 2: Zero Hunger

- Improve and support youths in investing in agricultural activities in rural areas for some and others through innovative solutions to address zero hunger through sustainable and resilient agricultural practices
- Enhance social protection measures, and address the root causes of hunger such as poverty and inequality from the youth level up.

### SDG 5: Gender Equality

- Enable youths to partake in discussions and have access to equal rights and opportunities regardless of their gender or disability.
- The PNG Government must uphold its commitments to international frameworks; including the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, Convention on the Elimination

of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) down to the youth level in rural communities where women and people with special needs (age 12-25) are sometimes left out or abused.

### SDG 13: Climate Action

- Support and ensure that youth forums/awareness/campaigns be held more often at the local and country level which will spike interest in young people to actively engage in addressing the SDGs.
- Investing in science, research and technology where better knowledge and information can be shared and implemented for sustainable innovations, climate finance and climate policies across the Asia and Pacific region is critical for progress of the SDGs, especially goal 13.
- Climate education should be implemented in the education syllabus so everyone will be responsible and accountable for their actions towards climate change mitigation.

### SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

- Provincial Governments should work collaboratively with relevant government ministries to increase employment opportunities and meaningful participation of youth.
- Encourage local SMEs, and empower youths through awareness to be entrepreneurs

### SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

- Identify the right partners with the same interests who can collaborate to meet goals that are put in place.
- Seek funding from donors through grants that can support goals put forward by the partners.
- Increase youth participation and awareness of the proposed SDGs, such as conducting local youth campaigns, in-country forums or platforms.
- Invest/prioritise in research technologies, and research education and skills to develop software that can help to achieve the proposed SDGs. For example promote science fairs, debates or local youth competitions in relation to achieving SDGs.

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ENDNOTES:

- 1 Mako, Andrew Anton. "January riots in PNG: underlying causes, implications and the future." DevPolicy Blog. 19 Jan 2024. <https://devpolicy.org/january-riots-in-png-underlying-causes-implications-and-the-future-20240119/>.
- 2 Papua New Guinea. UN Development Coordination Office (UNDCO). <https://uninfo.org/location/86/funding>.
- 3 UN Women Asia and the Pacific. "Youth in Papua New Guinea Stand Together as advocates against gender-based violence." 10 February 2024. <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/stories/feature-story/2024/02/youth-in-png-stand-together-as-advocates-against-gbv>.
- 4 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). "Asia and the Pacific: El Niño Humanitarian Snapshot - Focus on Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and the Philippines (as of 31 October 2023)". 3 November 2023. <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/philippines/asia-and-pacific-el-nino-humanitarian-snapshot-focus-timor-leste-indonesia-papua-new-guinea-and-philippines-31-october-2023>.
- 5 LOOP Author. "Black Wednesday." LOOPPNG. 31 January 2024. <https://www.looppng.com/tags/black-wednesday>.

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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 February 15-17, 2024. The Papua New Guinea drafting team was led by Marisha Kawas, Naomi Inowor, Edwin T. Ningal (Y PEER PNG Focal Point), and Shianne Kusunan, with inputs provided by PNG National APFSD Participants. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW Call To Action team.*

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