



Asia-Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action 2024



Philippines

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 Terms of Poverty and Inequality

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, there has been a slight decrease in the poverty rate in the country from 23.7% in 2021 to 22.4% in 2023, with a corresponding drop in poverty incidence among families from 18% to 16.4% during the same period. However, it's essential to consider that these improvements are compared to the economy under the COVID-19 lockdown, and the poverty situation in 2018 was only marginally better at 16.1% than in 2023. Surprisingly, despite this nominal decrease, there are now 3 million more poor Filipinos, or 370,000 poor families compared to 2018. The fisherfolk and farmer sector remains among the most impoverished in the country, as reported by the National Anti-Poverty Commission of the Philippines. The IBON Foundation has observed an increase of 1.27 million Filipinos identifying as poor in 2023, indicating a

worsening situation. While there have been increases in the Gross National Income and real work output since 2008, the average minimum wage still falls short of a livable standard.

Unemployment and underemployment rates, though slightly decreased, are still concerning at 3.7% and 10.7% respectively in 2023. Despite some improvements in household incomes, profits for corporations and businesses have surged, exacerbating income inequality. There is a stark disparity in bank account ownership and savings among Filipino households, with around 20 million households lacking savings. Alarming, 60% of the money in Philippine banks is owned by only 0.6% of the population from class AB. Even amidst economic challenges, Filipino billionaires managed to increase their profits by 30% during the pandemic, underscoring the existing disparities in wealth distribution. These statistics highlight ongoing issues of poverty and income



inequality in the Philippines, indicating the need for comprehensive and equitable economic reforms to address these systemic problems.

In Terms of Hunger and Food Security

According to the 2023 Global Hunger Index, the Philippines is ranked 66th out of 125 countries with sufficient data, indicating a moderate level of hunger with a score of 14.8. However, the number of hungry families has increased by nearly 500,000 to 3.5 million. The World Food Program (WFP) reported that as of October 2023, one out of 10 households in the Philippines faced food insecurity. Particularly, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Regions 8, and 12 are the most food-insecure, belonging to the seven poorest regions in the country. A survey by the Social Weather Stations in May 2023 found that almost one in 10 Filipinos experienced involuntary hunger, not having anything to eat, at least once in the past three months. Furthermore, data from the latest UN report on global food insecurity revealed that 74% of Filipinos could not afford a healthy diet in 2021. These findings underscore the persistent challenges of food insecurity and hunger in the Philippines, highlighting the need for comprehensive interventions to address these issues.

In Terms of Gender Equality

The Philippines improved its rank from 19th to 16th place out of 143 countries in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index Report 2023, solidifying its position as the most gender-equal country in Asia with a parity score of 79.1%. However, this represents a decline from the 79.9% gender parity achieved in 2018. The Gender and Social Norm Index report of the United Nations Development Programme found that 99.5% of Filipinos hold biases against women, with both men and women displaying biases against their own gender, albeit to varying degrees. Despite consistent voter registration among women at 50%, voter turnout is at 75%, indicating a significant participation in the electoral process. However, the representation of women in elections remains low, with only 20.6% of candidates being women in 2022, a marginal increase from 16.7% in 2010. Moreover, the percentage of women elected to power has increased from 18% in 2010 to 23.3% in 2022, highlighting progress but underscoring the need for further improvement in gender parity in political representation.

In Terms of Climate Action

The Philippines faces severe impacts of climate change, leading to its recognition as the most vulnerable nation to climate-related hazards in the 2019 Global Peace Index. In response, the country has submitted its National Determined Contribution (NDC) to the UNFCCC, aiming to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 75% across various sectors by 2030. However, challenges persist as only a small portion of this reduction target is unconditional, posing risks to meeting the NDC comprehensively. Renewable energy development in the Philippines encounters justice and governance issues, including the absence of a just transition plan and concerns over nuclear and waste-to-energy facilities. Gender disparities also persist in the energy sector, necessitating a gender-responsive approach to the transition to renewable energy.

The labour landscape in the Philippines is undergoing transformation due to technological advancements and the climate movement, with challenges and opportunities emerging in green technologies. Climate anomalies significantly impact traditional job sectors like agriculture, underlining the need for reskilling programs and labour rights education. Legislative efforts like the “Green Jobs Act” aim to merge environmental and employment goals, yet effective implementation remains a challenge. Climate change impacts extend beyond environmental concerns, profoundly affecting socio-economic aspects like labour and employment in the country.

Filipino youth advocate for inclusive, equitable, and resilient employment practices alongside sustainable environmental initiatives. The Second National Communication (SNC) to the UNFCCC identified agriculture, water resources, infrastructure, and human health as highly vulnerable sectors in the Philippines. Climate change exacerbates strains on urban environments, impacting waste management, infrastructure, water availability, and health services.

Mental health disorders, particularly among young people, are further affected by climate change, with Filipino youth exhibiting the highest levels of climate anxiety globally. Urgent action from global and national leaders is necessary to address climate change impacts on vulnerable sectors and populations in the Philippines. Despite efforts, the country faces the prospect of

greater losses as global temperatures rise, resulting in significant financial burdens and challenges in accessing international climate finance mechanisms.

In Terms of Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

Political dynasties wield considerable power across various regions of the Philippines, despite constitutional restrictions against them. The country's political landscape is often characterised as a dynastic democracy, allowing certain families to maintain control over extended periods. Corruption remains rampant, with the Philippines ranking 115th out of 180 countries in the corruption perception index, scoring 34 out of 100 in the 2023 CPI. Indigenous communities face frequent displacement due to issues like land grabbing and armed conflict, often exacerbated by government-backed projects. Activists and leaders who oppose such projects may be subjected to red-tagging, further endangering their rights and safety. Press freedom is also under threat, with journalists frequently encountering harassment and violence. Data from the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) indicates that 199 Filipino journalists have been killed since 1986, highlighting the dangers associated with reporting in the country.

In Terms of Partnership for the Goals

According to the 2023 SDG Report, the Philippines is confronted with substantial challenges regarding government revenue, which has remained at a low value of 15.9 since 2020. While the country exhibits efficiency in corporate tax havens and the statistical performance index, the lack of specific output from government-presented sources is notable. Notably, there needs to be more research and sources detailing the Philippines' efforts in concessional public finance. In 2023, the incumbent Philippine President emphasised the importance of municipal mayors seeking international partnerships in a speech. The United Nations Philippines has identified twenty-one specific activities for SDG 17 out of 154 activities. However, the National Economic and Development Authority's 2022 publication only provided preliminary data. This lack of comprehensive information suggests gaps in tracking progress towards sustainable development goals. It underscores the need for more transparent and detailed reporting mechanisms to accurately assess the country's performance. Collaboration between government agencies,

international organisations, and civil society is essential to address these challenges effectively. The Philippines must prioritise enhancing revenue streams to support sustainable development initiatives comprehensively. Strengthening international partnerships can facilitate access to resources and expertise crucial for achieving SDGs.

Additionally, greater transparency and accountability in public finance management are imperative to foster stakeholder trust and confidence. Efforts to bolster research and data collection on concessional public finance will enable better-informed policymaking and resource allocation decisions. Municipal Mayors are vital in promoting local and international cooperation for sustainable development. Encouraging their engagement in global partnerships can enhance the effectiveness of SDG implementation at the grassroots level. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders to drive progress towards sustainable development in the Philippines.

OUR KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

SDG 1: No Poverty

- Complete Implementation of Local Poverty Reduction Action Committee in cities and provinces in the Philippines.
- Youth and youth organisations from the provinces, cities, and municipalities with high poverty incidence must not only be the beneficiaries of government programmes, but also be included in decision-making in all levels.
- Include an anti-poverty framework approach in monitoring and evaluating the Philippine Youth Development Plan 2023-2028.
- Ensure the integration of a poverty lens in the indicators of Philippine Youth Development Index.

SDG 2: Zero Hunger

- Focus on improving the agriculture sector by providing small-scale farmers with access to loans, effective irrigation systems, and better farming methods.
- Reduce dependence on food imports and strengthen local food production.
- Increase social protection programs to ensure that the poor have access to safety nets such as food assistance, and job opportunities.

- Allocate funds for education and healthcare services to improve nutrition knowledge and access to healthcare, especially for children and pregnant women.
- Implement climate-resilient farming practices and strengthen disaster preparedness to reduce the impact of climate change and natural disasters on food security.
- Raise public awareness about nutrition and proper dietary habits to improve food utilisation and reduce malnutrition.
- Address the root causes of poverty and inequality through economic growth, job creation, and improving access to quality education and healthcare to reduce poverty and inequality.
- Improve data collection and analysis to better understand the causes of hunger and food insecurity and to effectively target interventions.
- Partner with international organisations to share best practices, resources, and knowledge in addressing hunger and food insecurity.
- Empower local communities to develop and implement their solutions to hunger and food insecurity through community-led initiatives and capacity-building programmes.
- Regulate the commercial fishing industry to prevent overfishing, reduce bycatch, and maintain healthy marine ecosystems.
- Enforce community-supported agriculture (CSA model) in agricultural communities to allow consumers and farmers to mutually support the food system through affordable local markets and open-farm events.
- Implement sustainable aquaculture practices and terminate illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing through proper law enforcement and ensure non-cultured food systems are not depleted.
- Establish an efficient food waste management program that minimises food waste and directs market and household organic waste to facilities that reuse them for composting or bioenergy production.
- Veto House Bill 7853 and halt the expansion of allowable fishing areas for commercial fishing vessels in municipal waters. Enacting the bill would deplete remaining fish stock and only induce hunger for the fisherfolk community.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

- Urge Congress representatives to pass the SOGIESC Bill to eradicate discrimination, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Integrate relevant, evidence-based, rights-centric age-appropriate, and engaging methods of educating youth as well as parents regarding SRHR (i.e., CSE) both in the school and non-formal education settings such as households and community-led programmes.
- Encourage open, innovative, and fruitful cooperation with the news, media, and information sector to ensure proper representation of all genders, eliminate gender stereotypes, stigma, and biases as well as contribute to effective education and information dissemination of gender equality to the general public.
- Engage the private sector to uphold and update corporate policies and frameworks that are gender inclusive promoting workplace gender equality involving the following:
 - Regardless of gender, provide equal pay for work of equal or comparable value
 - Removal of barriers to the full and equal participation of all genders in the workforce
 - Access to all occupations and industries, including leadership roles, regardless of gender and;
 - Elimination of discrimination on the basis of gender, particularly in relation to family and caring responsibilities.
- Urge the Department of Health to promote gender-appropriate and inclusive healthcare services including protecting the rights and wellbeing of the LGBTQIA+ individuals.

SDG 13: Climate Action

- Institutionalise the Just Transition Community Rollout in Philippine Youth Development Plan to mandate the Sangguniang Kabataan and Local Youth Development Council to create programmes that will raise the awareness of the youth in Just Transition.
- Uphold our constitutional right (1987 Constitution, Art. II, Sec. 16) to a balanced and healthful ecology and issue a Writ of Kalikasan to rectify environmental damages and compel the government to take action towards resolving it.
- Develop and implement Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCCAP) as mandated by the Climate Change Act of 2009 (RA 9729). Local government units



- (LGUs) down to the barangay level must be advised by panels of technical experts in crafting their LCCAPs.
- Improve the coordination between national government agencies, such as the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC), the CCC, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and the House Representatives Committee on Climate Change for more effective climate adaptation and mitigation, and disaster risk reduction solutions.
 - Urgently pass and implement the Bill of Environmental Rights (HB 8170) which safely sets the parameters of our environmental rights and duties.
 - Review and amend the Low Carbon Economy Act (HB 2184) to provide tax incentives to private companies and corporations that can consistently comply with low-carbon emission regulations.
 - Fund climate science-related research, support the development of technologies for climate change adaptation and mitigation, and contextualise research and development activities to provide locally specific solutions to each region and its local communities
 - Reinforce the enactment of the Renewable Energy Act of 2008 (RA 9513) and allot appropriate funding for the transition from fossil fuel-based technology utilisation to cleaner energy sources to mitigate the effects of harmful industrialization and enact recovery from the climate crisis.
 - Improve disaster risk reduction and management research, implementation, and its related projects as prescribed in the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 (RA 10121) through the regulation of infrastructure stability and advancement of calamity-proof buildings for disaster resiliency.
 - Uphold the fundamental rights of vulnerable groups and indigenous communities who are directly affected by the climate injustices by:
 - Promoting inclusivity all throughout the decision and policy-making process by consulting grassroots communities and granting environmental defenders and experts a seat in environmental planning, legislation, and management.
 - Endorsing the immediate granting of Certificate of Ancestral Domains (CADCs) to indigenous (IP) communities to advance their right to self-determination, ecosystem preservation, and forestlands protection.
 - Immediately terminating human rights violence, red-tagging, and state aggression incidents among environmental defenders.
 - Foster partnerships with international and/or regional non-governmental organisations to provide green jobs and employment opportunities as outlined in the Philippine Green Jobs Act (RA 10771).
 - Exact a permanent closure plan for environmentally damaging operations such as, but not limited to, reclamation projects, dredging, mining, and logging, which greatly impact the welfare and property of affected communities through the issuance of an Environmental Protection Order (EPO).
 - Improve public transport by shifting away from carbon-exhaustive systems, making transportation more accessible, and granting more spaces for low-carbon mobilisation such as pedestrian and bicycle lanes.
 - Instruct the Department of Transportation and National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council to advance green architecture and infrastructures, especially in urban areas, laws such as the National Building Code (PD 1096), and the Advance Energy and Green Building Technologies Curriculum Act (RA 11393).
 - Establish clear and concise regulations for terrestrial and marine reforestation activities. The DENR should work closely with experts and the Environment & Natural Resources Office (ENRO) from each locality to develop and implement these regulations.
 - Require the approval of environmental experts and affected communities in every land conversion and reclamation project through public participation and environmental impact assessment, as provided in Presidential Decree 1586.
 - Impose strict restrictions on the conversion of forested and agricultural lands into public infrastructure and commercial buildings.
 - Impose stricter localised regulations and implementations of the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004 (RA 9275), by requiring the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) and the DENR to strengthen the protection of bodies of water against pollution and overexploitation.

- Further the implementation of the National Environmental Awareness and Education Act of 2008 (RA 9512) across different sectors such as the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).
- Increase support and funding for planetary health and one health approaches as solutions to the climate and health crises.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

- Prioritise legislative reforms that protect the rights of the press and the journalists.
- Prioritise the protection of indigenous communities by strengthening Republic Act No. 8371, otherwise known as an act to recognise, protect, and promote the rights of indigenous cultural communities/ indigenous people, establishing implementing mechanisms, and appropriating funds.
- Implement and strengthen the existing provisions that prohibit political dynasties.
- Strengthen measures against impunity in a judicial level, by prioritising cases of attacks against press freedoms.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

- Prioritise inputs from vulnerable groups: improving multi-stakeholder partnerships from all sectors should start with rigorous focus group discussions, ensuring inclusive yet genuine representation of indigenous people, women, youth, and other disadvantaged sectors.
- Youth Engagement Exemplified: Place a strong emphasis on youth engagement and participation in developing and implementing policies and programmes. There should be an emphasis on creating more spaces for youth input, such as town hall meetings with relevant government agencies like the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the National Youth Commission (NYC), and the Department of Education (DepEd). Additionally, ensure that the 2023-2028 Philippine Youth Development Plan is developed with the entire accountability and input from youth representatives.
- Streamline Development Plan Alignment: Streamline efforts to align the Philippine Youth Development Plan with the Regional Development Plan and other relevant policies. This can be achieved by involving Youth Councils (SKs) in the process, as they can play a crucial role in leading the streamlining of localised policy efforts. Additionally, ensure that the alignment process is transparent and inclusive, with opportunities for input from all stakeholders.
- One ASEAN Identity: The Philippines should capitalise on the ASEAN region's geopolitical challenges and aspirations to bolster its economy. Leveraging technology and innovation in the ASEAN region offers boundless opportunities for foreign investments, provided they are executed with due diligence and collaborative efforts. Given their established agenda, the six ASEAN member states that are also part of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) should spearhead the region's development.

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 Philippines drafting team was led by Chinito Reel Casicas, with inputs provided by Emmanuel Mirus Ponon, Sophia Valencia, Alfredo Lorenzo Sablay, Izza Mae De Guzman, Jetro Rosenar, Jose Fernando Magno, and Cromwell T. Cruz. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW Call To Action team.
