



# YOUTH CALL TO ACTION INDIA

*Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs for a sustainable future for young people in all their diversity.*

## Situational Analysis

India is home to one of the largest youth populations in the world. Despite producing millions of graduates annually, youth unemployment remains high, while youth voices are largely absent from policy design, implementation, and monitoring— weakening the relevance and effectiveness of development strategies. This failure is compounded by the absence of updated census and disaggregated population data, repeatedly flagged as a major barrier to tracking SDG progress.

Persistent gaps in equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation (SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation), especially in marginalised communities, continue to affect health, dignity, and educational outcomes. Open defecation and non-inclusive sanitation infrastructure further exposes women and vulnerable groups to safety risks and reinforce existing social inequalities, including caste-based discrimination that continues to influence access to water sources and

sanitation-related livelihoods. Climate stress further compounds these challenges. Floods, groundwater depletion, urban heat, and extreme rainfall expose the vulnerability of infrastructure designed without ecosystem integration or climate risk assessment.

India, as a rapidly developing nation, plays a critical role in global efforts to meet energy-related targets as it transitions toward a low-carbon economy (SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy). However, the analysis also uncovers persistent challenges, regional disparities, unreliable rural supply, financial stress in distribution companies, and slow uptake of rooftop solar. These challenges are interconnected with gaps in resilient infrastructure and innovation (SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), as well as weak local implementation capacity, limited technical expertise, inadequate budgeting, and poor inter-departmental coordination.

For millions of young Indians growing up in informal

Co-convended by



In collaboration



In partnership



settlements, remote rural areas, forest communities and conflict areas, the promise of sustainable cities feels distant (SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities). Despite formal policies, many urban households still lack reliable access to basic services, and slum communities often receive far less while also enduring poorly serviced and overcrowded living conditions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### SDG 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

- » Integrate the construction of safe, inclusive, disability-friendly toilets with privacy and reliable clean water under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, so women and girls can manage menstruation safely and avoid gender-based violence and health risks.
- » Promote menstrual health awareness and ensure affordable, sustainable menstrual products reach marginalised caste communities, persons with disabilities, migrant, displaced and conflict-affected populations through targeted support.
- » Formalise sanitation work and ensure social security benefits and dignity of labour.
- » Fully mechanise sanitation work and upgrade sewage systems while strictly enforcing safety standards and ensuring dignified rehabilitation through skilling and alternative livelihoods.
- » Mandate rainwater harvesting systems and piped water infrastructure and promote innovative water reuse solutions like reusing household waste water.
- » Adopt a polluter-pays principle for river cleaning, holding industries accountable while ensuring meaningful participation and fair compensation for local communities.
- » Require every city to develop and implement a flood management plan to tackle water logging during monsoons, with clear government accountability mechanisms.
- » Strengthen R&D and IT-driven innovation to support affordable organic farming, and transparent groundwater monitoring..

True progress toward SDGs 6, 7, 9, and 11 depends on revitalising through multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilise knowledge, resources, and expertise (SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals) by harnessing India's unparalleled demographic dividend. Empowering young voices as equal partners in shaping solutions is essential to reflect our realities and secure a sustainable future.

### SDG 7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

- » Off-grid and decentralised renewable energy systems such as mini-grids, solar home systems, and biomass gasifiers must be incentivised particularly in hilly and remote areas.
- » Community ownership models and local capacity building should be emphasised to ensure that big corporation companies aren't the sole decision makers of the community.
- » To address the intermittency of renewable energy sources like solar and wind, India needs to invest heavily in grid-scale storage solutions. Battery storage technologies and pumped hydro projects are essential for maintaining grid stability, ensuring round-the-clock power, and reducing curtailment of renewable energy.
- » Schemes like the National Green Hydrogen Mission, Saubhagya scheme, PM Ujjwala Yojana, National Solar Mission and Green Energy Corridor must be fast-tracked with clear regulatory frameworks and financial support.

### SDG 9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- » Infrastructure planning should incorporate climate risk modeling, lifecycle audits, and maintenance financing frameworks to ensure durability and environmental compliance.
- » Industrial growth strategies must explicitly integrate the informal sector, where a majority of Dalit, Adivasi, Bahujan, migrant, and women workers are concentrated, by embedding enforceable labour

protections, occupational safety standards and social security.

- » Intelligent urban planning should prioritise parks, playgrounds, sports facilities, and community spaces to address rising mental health challenges and social isolation, thereby mitigating risks of non-communicable diseases.
- » Digital tools should be used to support infrastructure monitoring, transparent procurement, citizen reporting, and service delivery, reducing inefficiencies that drain public resources and limit job creation.
- » Digital governance, including the use of AI, must be clearly regulated to prevent exclusion, algorithmic bias, and job displacement, and instead be harnessed to expand equitable access to skills, information, and decent work.

## SDG 11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

- » We demand urgent, evidence-based action on clean air from expanding green public transport to stricter emissions standards.
- » We call for inclusive, resilient city planning that guarantees affordable housing, equitable public services, and safe mobility for all. Connectivity to rural areas should be strengthened, especially to make healthcare facilities accessible by public transport.
- » Inclusive design must address climate disasters, healthcare accessibility, disability-friendly infrastructure, and gender safety.
- » India also has a large population of homeless individuals, which highlights the need for shelter homes that provide holistic rehabilitation opportunities.
- » Unequal loads of unpaid care work is a direct consequence of poor urban infrastructure and weak public services, undermining girls' education, health, safety, and livelihoods.
- » Investing in sustainable cities means strengthening social and physical infrastructure, breaking cycles of poverty, and building inclusive, resilient communities.

## SDG 17: PARTNERSHIPS AND GOVERNANCE

- » Effective partnerships for sustainable development must be grounded in credible, timely, and disaggregated data. India urgently needs a comprehensive and regular population census, along with strengthened administrative and survey data systems, to ensure governance, budgeting, and SDG implementation.
- » Blended financing mechanisms should incorporate lifecycle budgeting and climate adaptation funds.
- » Data governance must include third-party audits, interoperable systems, and citizen reporting platforms. Equity impact safeguards should guide funding allocation.
- » Global South cooperation should be strengthened to enhance knowledge transfer, technology exchange, climate partnerships and form cross-border healthcare alliances.
- » Invest in social infrastructure, renewable energy, and urban services using inclusive regulatory frameworks to ensure equitable benefits.
- » Create long-term collaboration mechanisms beyond annual conferences, including joint innovation funds, pilot incubation programs, and policy feedback channels.
- » Support regional replication of climate coordination models across Asia-Pacific, strengthening South-South cooperation.

*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 18-20 February, 2026. The India drafting team consisted of Sonali Bhosale and Nirmal Singh (Country Facilitators), Ritika Sharma, Muskan Tibrewala, Santhiya M., Puja Mahato, Aastha Khursija, Shaini Jacob, Hanika K., Apratim Dev, Anagha C. S., Devishi Sood, Meena C., and Kritika Rai. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW Call To Action team.*