



YOUTH CALL TO ACTION VIETNAM

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

According to the Sustainable Development Report 2025, Vietnam ranks 61st out of 167 countries on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index, with a score of 73.35, placing second in Southeast Asia, yet acceleration toward 2030 remains urgent (Sachs et al., 2025; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, 2025).

Under SDG 6, legal and governance reforms in water resource management are underway, but sanitation and flood-related vulnerabilities continue to expose systemic gaps, for example, only 41% of domestic wastewater is safely treated in Vietnam (SDG 6 Data, 2024). SDG 7 is gaining momentum as Vietnam's engagement with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA, 2024) and green finance cooperation with the European Investment Bank (European Investment Bank, 2023) strengthen commitments to renewable expansion and a Just Energy Transition. SDG 9 is advancing through climate innovation

platforms, including USD 4.7 million mobilised for 17 green partnerships under partnership for goals (Vietnam Economic Times, 2025). However, SDG 11 remains fragile, as urban areas, contributing nearly 70% of GDP, face escalating climate and air-quality risks (World Bank, 2022). In 2025, SDG 17 is driven by climate and energy finance partnerships (EIB, 2023; Government of Vietnam, 2023), anchoring energy transition and innovation efforts.

Acceleration before 2030 demands bridging policy ambition with localised execution. Youth leadership in digital innovation, water governance and sanitation investment, climate-smart infrastructure, and cross-sector partnership will contribute meaningfully to the progress to convert vulnerability into actions by 2045.

Co-convended by



In collaboration



In partnership



RECOMMENDATIONS

SDG 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Situational Analysis

Recent SDG 6 evidence points to continued improvement, yet at a pace and distribution that may be insufficient for universal achievement by 2030. As of 2024, an estimated 2.2 billion people were still without safely managed drinking water, 3.4 billion without safely managed sanitation, and 1.7 billion without basic hygiene at home; in addition, 646 million schoolchildren lacked basic hygiene services, highlighting the scale of the remaining service gap (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2025). Structural constraints also remain salient: only 56% of domestic wastewater is safely treated, especially in the Mekong Delta, where saline intrusion and drought increasingly threaten freshwater supply and agricultural livelihoods (World Bank, 2020). Flood variability in central provinces also places additional strain on local water infrastructure. In fact, current projections suggest that sustainable water management may not be fully achieved before 2049. Additionally, although global water-use efficiency increased by 23% during 2015–2022, performance against benchmark levels remains uneven and Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) implementation is moderated by financing limitations (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2025). Within this global context, Viet Nam is assessed as likely to face challenges in meeting SDG 6 by 2030, reflecting persistent disparities in access including WASH, institutional capacity constraints, and resource limitations suggesting the value of accelerated, equity-oriented and system-strengthening approaches (Government of Viet Nam and United Nations in Viet Nam, 2022).

Recommendation

For Government

- » Accelerate “safely managed” WASH services in rural areas and schools to move the projected 2049 completion date forward.
- » Prioritise water infrastructure resilient to Mekong Delta salinity and Central Vietnam

flood variability.

- » Mandate industrial wastewater reporting and use Earth observation to bridge data gaps, aiming to exceed the current 56% treatment rate.
- » Strengthen subnational funding and revenue mechanisms to overcome IWRM implementation barriers.

For Private Sector & NGOs

- » Deploy innovative finance and ESG-aligned “clean-tech” (e.g., salinity sensors) to improve water-use efficiency.
- » Focus digital and physical infrastructure on underserved regions to reduce regional disparities in access.
- » Strengthen public institutional capacity through evidence generation and technical partnerships.

For Communities & Youth Networks

- » Expand community-led water monitoring to provide real-time data and improve local governance accountability.
- » Ensure vulnerable groups have a seat in water management decisions to foster equitable resource distribution.

SDG 7: CLEAN AND AFFORDABLE ENERGY

Situational Analysis

Viet Nam is accelerating its clean energy transition in line with its pledge to reach net-zero emissions by 2050 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2025), including the establishment of a National Steering Committee for COP26 Commitments in 2021 chaired by the Prime Minister, underscoring strong political will (Kim Anh, 2021). The country is piloting a domestic carbon market and allocating emission quotas to major emitters such as thermal power, cement, and steel. Recent policy reforms, including the revised Power Development Plan 8 (2025) and the 2024 Electricity Law, signal stronger commitment to solar and offshore wind expansion and to building a more coherent legal framework for mitigation and

adaptation (Climate Action Tracker, 2025, Policies & action section). However, implementation remains slow. Disbursement bottlenecks, financing gaps, and concerns over transparency and inclusivity persist. Continued reliance on coal beyond 2030 and the planned expansion of liquified natural gas (LNG) as a “transition fuel” risk locking in emissions, increasing import dependence, and undermining long-term energy security (Climate Action Tracker, 2025, Summary section). Young people in Vietnam are increasingly engaged in climate and clean energy action, for example, through the Youth Climate Action Network that empowers youth voices in energy transition advocacy (YNet Viet Nam, 2024).

Recommendations

For Government

- » Strengthen regulatory frameworks and fiscal incentives for decentralised renewable energy, including bioenergy, solar, and wind, to accelerate nationwide clean energy deployment.
- » Expand targeted subsidies and concessional financing schemes to enable low-income households to access rooftop solar systems and clean cooking solutions, ensuring a more inclusive and equitable energy transition.

For Private Sector & NGOs

- » Invest in workforce development programs focused on renewable energy technologies and community energy finance to build a skilled youth workforce for the green economy.
- » Develop sustainable biomass value chains in partnership with agricultural cooperatives to connect farmers with renewable energy producers, thereby increasing rural incomes and strengthening local supply chains.

For Communities & Youth Networks

- » Promote community-based renewable energy literacy campaigns to raise public awareness and encourage responsible energy consumption.
- » Establish youth-led pilot energy projects to deliver practical clean energy solutions while empowering young innovators.

SDG 9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Situational Analysis

Viet Nam has demonstrated moderate progress on SDG 9 since 2015, with measurable gains in industrialisation and manufacturing output, though momentum remains insufficient to fully meet the 2030 targets (Government of Viet Nam, 2023; UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, 2023). Manufacturing value added as a share of GDP showed a steady upward trend between 2010 and 2019 (General Statistics Office of Viet Nam, n.d.), while overall SDG 9 advancement accelerated during the 2018–2023 period (United Nations Development Programme, n.d.). In 2025, manufacturing value added grew by 9.97%, accounting for 35.15% of total economic growth, indicating that industrial expansion is broadly on track (Vietnam Briefing, n.d.).

Despite these gains, innovation performance remains a critical bottleneck. Research and development expenditure stagnated at 0.42% of GDP in 2021, well below the global average of 1.22%, signaling persistent underinvestment in innovation systems (Trading Economics, n.d.; The Global Economy, n.d.). Implementation challenges are further compounded by data limitations, particularly in ESG-related analytics, with only 3% of institutions adopting advanced analytical tools despite rising policy emphasis on sustainable finance (Invest Global, n.d.; Vietnam Investment Review, n.d.). Structural gaps persist in rural infrastructure, as only around 65% of the rural population has access to roads meeting basic quality standards (General Statistics Office of Viet Nam, n.d.).

Emerging risks threaten SDG 9 progress, including climate-induced flooding that increases carbon intensity, economic vulnerability linked to fossil fuel dependence, rapid urbanisation placing strain on infrastructure systems, and youth exclusion driven by skills gaps, unequal access to technology, and limited participation in climate and innovation policy processes (Government of Viet Nam, 2023; UNDP, n.d.).

Recommendations

For Government

- » Allocate a budget from the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) to standardise ESG data platforms with the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), addressing reporting gaps for innovation metrics
- » Prioritise MOST-led incentives for domestic R&D tax credits, targeting 0.5% GDP by 2030 to counter historically low spending levels

For Private Sectors/NGOs

- » Invest through Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) and UNIDO partnerships in climate-resilient energy for factories, integrating local SMEs into supply chains for tech transfer
- » Launch Youth Upskill programs (e.g., Youth Co:Lab-style accelerator programs with Hanns Seidel Foundation) for mentoring 1,000 youth annually in green manufacturing skills
- » Collaborate with the UNDP on ESG tool pilots for 100 firms to fill data voids in supply chain resilience

For Communities/Youth Networks

- » Organise Ho Chi Minh Youth Union digital training workshops in 50 rural communes, using free Ministry of Industry and Trade platforms for ICT access
- » Establish community monitoring groups under the National Council on Sustainable Development and Climate Change, reporting infrastructure gaps via apps to local authorities
- » Form youth innovation clubs partnering with the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry to prototype low-cost solutions for urbanisation challenges

SDG 11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Situational analysis

Viet Nam's urban transformation has accelerated under Resolution No. 06-NQ/TW (2022), with urbanisation reaching 43.7% in early 2025 (VNA,

2026). A major milestone was reached as the HCMC Metro Line 1 entered full commercial operation, and Hanoi broke ground on Lines 2 and 5 in late 2025, signaling a shift toward Transit-Oriented Development (Huyen, 2025). The 2025 Vietnam Urban Sustainable Development Summit reaffirmed the shift toward smart, sustainable, and inclusive cities (MOC, 2025).

Structurally, urban planning remains fragmented. Despite the 2025 administrative reforms to streamline governance and decision-making, challenges remain due to rising populations, demanding services and a persistent lack of a unified national urban data platform (Dinh, 2026). While the proportion of slum dwellers has declined, "informal" housing quality in peri-urban areas remains low (VNA, 2026). Additionally, while social housing delivery hit a record 102,633 units in 2025, a critical affordability gap has emerged: primary market prices in Hanoi averaged 95 million VND/sqm, rendering even "affordable" segments out of reach for average earners (VNS, 2026). Coordination across planning levels and urban data scarcity further limits evidence-based governance. Furthermore, PM2.5 levels in Hanoi continue to exceed WHO guidelines by over 10 times during winter peaks (OECD, 2025), while climate vulnerability and infrastructure financing needs continue to strain fiscal capacity (World Bank, 2025; Ramla, 2025).

Recommendation

For Government

- » Institutionalise community and environmental participation in planning councils so residents benefit from people-centered, resilient urban growth.
- » Establish a unified National Urban Data Platform to enable evidence-based planning for local authorities and residents.
- » Allocate dedicated green infrastructure and air-quality funds for PM2.5 mitigation (e.g. urban trees, public transport electrification).
- » Strengthen inter-provincial coordination in peri-urban zones so low-income households benefit from higher housing quality and service equity.

For Private Sector / NGOs

- » Develop finance models for affordable

housing and green infrastructure to reduce fiscal pressure, benefiting low-income urban residents.

- » Facilitate youth training on data literacy and ESG through university partnerships so future professionals benefit from smart-city and clean-air innovations.
- » Support climate-resilient pilot projects in informal settlements so at-risk communities benefit from safer, durable living conditions.

For Communities / Youth Networks

- » Participate in neighborhood air-quality monitoring via accessible apps (e.g., IQAir) to support compilation of real-time environmental data.
- » Promote mapping of peri-urban living conditions to increase policy visibility.

SDG 17: PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Situational Analysis

To achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Vietnam has strengthened collaboration with various stakeholders, particularly through international cooperation. The country has partnered with organisations, notably the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) to advance initiatives on sustainable development, especially clean water provision, renewable energy transition, and climate adaptation. At the domestic level, strategic frameworks including the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) primarily function as national action plans and guiding documents for implementation at national levels. However, there are challenges. Despite strong international engagement, SDG implementation remains largely state-led. Regulatory mechanisms and financial incentives to mobilise private sector participation remain limited, constraining diversified financing and technological innovation (Trung et al., 2020). Additionally, youth involvement in policymaking processes remains limited. According to a special report by UNDP (2021), 40% of 387 surveyed youths had never

engaged in policy advocacy, while 36.7% believed that their voices had little influence on decision-making processes. In Vietnam, a formal Youth Policy Working Group (YPWG) has been established to promote youth participation in public policymaking on sustainable development, directly coordinated by the UNDP and working closely with the Department of Climate Change (DCC) under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE). However, this remains the only structured youth policy platform at the national level and is primarily focused on climate and energy, with yet an equivalent formal mechanism addressing other SDG areas.

Recommendations

For Government

- » Institutionalise multi-stakeholder SDG coordination platforms that meaningfully include more technical experts and youth to enhance policy coherence and inclusive governance.
- » Mobilise blended finance mechanisms that combine public funds, ODA, and private capital to advance national development goals.
- » Enhance coordination with UNDP to strengthen the YPWG, expanding its mandate to facilitate systematic youth participation across all SDGs.

For Private Sector & NGOs

- » Promote climate adaptation solutions that support local communities and strengthen the green innovation ecosystem.
- » Facilitate cross-border cooperation on technology transfer and capacity-building to promote regional integration and shared expertise.

For Communities & Youth Networks

- » Establish knowledge-exchange programs and capacity-building initiatives on sustainable development to strengthen technical expertise and policy literacy.
- » Build transnational youth networks to exchange best practices on sustainable development, strengthening the regional youth community and accelerating SDG implementation.

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 Southeast Asia Sub-Regional Brief drafting team

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