**PRE-APFSD YOUTH FORUM 2017**

# Asia – Pacific Youth
# Call to Action

## Sustainable Solutions to Eradicate Poverty & Promote Prosperity

*23-25 March 2017; Bangkok, Thailand*

## WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE BELIEVE IN

We, 60 activists, advocates, and representatives from youth-led, youth-serving, and youth-allied organisations from diverse social movements in Asia and the Pacific region, came together in Bangkok to call for sustainable solutions to eradicate poverty and promote prosperity in the region through an intersectional analysis and participatory approach. A multidimensional perspective on poverty necessitates addressing not only economic concerns, but also environmental sustainability, as well as social dimensions—such as youth leadership and empowerment, gender equality, health, education, freedom from violence, right to information and technology, and human rights, including of young people and women who are poor, people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities and expressions, people with all forms of disability, people living with and affected by HIV, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples, people living in remote, rural and slum areas, sex workers, people who use drugs, migrants, displaced, refugees, and stateless people, people with limited formal education, people of all castes and class, and religious minorities—on the basis of equity.

The unique priorities and dimensions of the region—social, economic, and environmental—must be addressed in order to achieve sustainable and just development. Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development needs to be cognizant of the interlinked and integrated nature of the goals, and should be reflected in the Asia-Pacific Road Map for Implementing the 2030 Agenda, as well as its regional and national implementation.

Young people are at the centre of sustainable development. As equal partners in turning the 2030 Agenda into reality, we reiterate that this ambitious agenda can only be achieved with young people's leadership, meaningful participation and support, and empowering youth-adult partnerships.

It is critical that regional and national action plans to implement the SDGs are coherent with prior commitments to international agreements, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) and its Optional Protocols, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD POA), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY), the 2016 Political Declaration on Ending AIDS, the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health, the Paris Agreement, the Kyoto Protocol,  the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) of Financing for Development (FfD), the Berlin Urban Agenda for Young People, the Yogyakarta Principles, United Nations Security Council (UNSCR) 1325 and subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security, UNSCR 2250 on youth, peace and security, and the World Association for Sexual Health Declaration of Sexual Rights 1999, amongst others.

This call to action is also in line with previous statements made by young people at previous fora, such as the previous Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), the Yangon Declaration of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Youth Forum, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Youth Charter, the Small Islands Developing States Framework on Youth, the ICPD Review: Global Youth Forum Bali, the 6th Asian Pacific Population Council (APPC), and the World Humanitarian Summit Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action.

## WHY THIS CALL

The largest number of young people globally, at about 670 million, lives in the Asia-Pacific region.[1] Children and youth comprise 24% and 16% of its population respectively,[2] while 68% of its people are of working age and 32% are dependents.[3]

Our region is diverse, ranging from small island countries to landlocked countries and populous sub-continents. Despite economic growth, it is riddled with huge inequalities within and in between countries, and income inequality has increased.[2] Despite drastic improvements, 772 million people still live on less than USD1.25 a day in the region (18% of the region's population), while 933 million more (40% of the region's population) live on USD2 a day.[3] Access to social services, such as education, information, health services (including for sexual and reproductive health and rights), is not universally enjoyed by all, particularly the most marginalised. Asia-Pacific remains to have a poor record on gender equality,[4] rooted in structural inequalities, unequal power relations, and control of sexuality.

We face intersecting challenges, including economic, food, fuel, and climate crises; religious extremisms and fundamentalisms; right-wing conservatism and populism; conflict and natural disasters; displacement and forced migration; aggressive trade policies that hinder livelihood and access to affordable and quality medicines, health services, education, nutrition, and healthy food systems; high prevalence of HIV and AIDS, unsafe abortions, early/unintended pregnancies, child marriages, female genital mutilation and other harmful traditional practices, and gender-based and sexual violence and exploitation; lack of understanding and acceptance of persons with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities and expressions; youth unemployment; regressive, unfair and inequitable aid conditionalities; corruption; lack of youth and youth-responsive policies; lack of respect for human rights; and shrinking civil society spaces.

## OUR CALLS

We, young people aged 30 and below, commit to fulfil our roles and responsibilities to ensure a just and equitable world for all. In turn, we urge governments, international organisations, including United Nations agencies, development partners, funding agencies, and other duty bearers to address the following priority issues and take the following actions related to the sustainable development goals.

### Overall Calls
- Acknowledging that the SDGs are the young people's agenda, spaces should be created for young people to meaningfully engage in its implementation, monitoring, and evaluation at all levels—from the local and national levels to the regional and global. Shrinking spaces for civil society need to be addressed, and institutional spaces and funding for youth and women's organisations and marginalised voices must be ensured by the UN and governments.
- Young people must also be able to engage in the reevaluation of indicators to reinforce accountability amongst stakeholders. Youth-centric indicators across all goals should be introduced in the national and local SDGs roadmap.

[1] UNDP. Asia-Pacific Human Development Report; Shaping the Future: How Changing Demographics Can Power Human Development. New York, 2016. http://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/hdr.html
[2] ESCAP. *Economic and Social Survey 2016*. http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Economic%20and%20Social%20Survey%20of%20Asia%20and%20the%20Pacific%202016_0.pdf
[3] ESCAP. *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2014*. http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAP-SYB2014.pdf
[4] According to UN Women, "While the Asia-Pacific region has closed more than two-thirds of its gender gap, it still ranks second from the bottom in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index (which covers the issues of women's economic participation and opportunity, political empowerment, education, health and survival)." http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2016/03/un-highlights-need-to-close-critical-gender-gaps-in-asia-pacific

- Recognise and reaffirm that human rights, gender equality, equity, social inclusion and justice, and young people's empowerment are central to sustainable development.
- Sign and ratify all relevant international human rights instruments, including optional protocols. Strengthen human rights accountability and application of human rights-based frameworks from the local to the global levels. End the impunity of human rights violators, and put in place grievance and redressal mechanisms.
- Reaffirm and implement international and regional resolutions, including the ESCAP Resolution 70/14 on Enhancing Participation of Youth in Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, the Asian and Pacific Declaration on Population and and Development, and SAMOA Pathway, amongst others. Ensure their nationalisation and localisation.
- Institute inclusive, responsive, transparent, and participatory monitoring, review, and accountability mechanisms at all levels, from local to global. Improve monitoring systems to ensure provision of disaggregated data according to age, gender, disability status, migration and citizenship status, income groups, education, spatial, ethnicity and indigenous status, amongst other variables, across all goals, in order to inform decision-making, budgeting, programming, and monitoring. Obtaining and dissemination of data must conform to rights-based and ethical principles. Alternative reporting from community and civil society, including youth groups, needs to be recognised as part of the monitoring and review process.
- Provide financing for youth issues and youth-led organisations and movements. Conditionalities and bureaucratic processes that hinder access to funding need to be removed. In particular, investment on strengthening capacities of young people on sustainable development goals must be provided to ensure they take ownership.
- Regulate the private sector—including transnational corporations and public-private partnerships—and financial institutions, according to Extra Territorial Obligations (ETOs). Binding accountability mechanisms must be put in place to ensure their compliance with human rights, gender equality, youth-responsiveness, labour and environmental standards. Implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. A binding international human rights instrument for the regulation of transnational corporations (TNCs) must be enacted.
- Abolish global and regional trade and financial policies that perpetuate poverty, social injustice, gender stereotypes, food insecurity, malnutrition, insecure livelihoods, and ill-health.

## SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Poverty can be fundamentally described as the denial of choices and opportunities to improve one's condition. Young people experience poverty in different ways: from hunger and malnutrition and lack of shelter, to restricted/ lack of access to education, health services, and other social services. For young people, life-course events, including transitions into adulthood, marriage, and childbirth often play a significant part in altering a young person's vulnerability to poverty.[5] Chronically poor young people are also not a distinct group, but are usually those who are discriminated against, stigmatised, or 'invisible': socially marginalised ethnic, religious, indigenous and caste groups; migrants, refugees, and the internally displaced; sex workers; and people with disabilities and some illnesses (especially HIV and AIDS). Poor, young people, especially women, lack access to fundamental rights, such as universal access to quality education and health, preventing their escape out of poverty. Young people account for almost half the jobless population in Asia and the Pacific, where for survival, they are forced to work long hours, in poor conditions, and on precarious contracts with not much prospects for the future.[6]

**Recommendations:**
- Governments must consider the multi-dimensional nature of poverty that go beyond daily average income and expenditure, to include for example, universal access to health services (including sexual and reproductive health) and education (especially quality secondary and tertiary education), and basic resources like housing, sanitation, potable water, and nutritious food. This needs to be considered in measurement, policymaking, budgeting, and programming.
- Governments need to address the difficult political process of challenging the layers of discrimination that keep young people trapped in poverty, including addressing the human rights

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[5] Moore, K (2005) Thinking about youth poverty through the lenses of chronic poverty, life-course poverty and intergenerational poverty, CPRC Working Paper 57.
[6] The youth employment challenge in Asia and the Pacific, ILO: http://www.ilo.org/asia/decentwork/adwd/WCMS_098114/lang--en/index.htm?ssSourceSiteId=islamabad

of indigenous, people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, and stateless people.

- Governments need to prioritise livelihood security and decent work for young people to prevent and mitigate poverty that can be caused by the transitions into adulthood, marriage, and childbirth, especially for marginalized young people.
- There must be a multi-stakeholder approach to curb corrupt practices that directly perpetuates poverty and reduces the impact and reach of poverty reduction strategies and programmes.
- Governments must promote policies that remove barriers and create conditions for the participation of poor people, especially of youth, in achieving growth, e.g., increasing access to land, training, employment, entrepreneurship, and capital markets.

## SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

The right to food and nutrition are basic human rights, and yet the Asia-Pacific region has 65.2% of the world's hungry,[7] whereas about two-thirds of all wasted children live in Asia.[8] Globally, 60% of the chronically hungry are women and girls, and it is likely that the proportion is even higher in Asia-Pacific.[9] Thirty percent of children under five years of age in the Asia-Pacific region are stunted due to inadequate nutritional intake.[10] Hunger and malnutrition in all its forms have gender and age dimensions, and is closely linked to health outcomes, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. Corporate capture of the food system and global trade agreements undermine these human rights and food sovereignty. People's control over land, seeds, and water, are threatened, even as women and girls do not have a right to own or control these resources in many contexts. Food wastage is huge problem, with food worth US$8.3 billion (40% of the total value of annual production in the world) wasted, with little or no action taken by the governments in the Asia Pacific region. This further overburdens existing landfills and increases the carbon footprint.

### Recommendations:
- Ensure the right to adequate, culturally appropriate, and safe food and nutrition for all, including addressing the specific needs of women, young people, and children. Provide nutrition education at all levels, and promote nutritionally balanced and diverse diets, particularly utilising traditional and local knowledge, practices, and food, along with appropriate supplementation, and especially for adolescent, pregnant, and breastfeeding women. Raise awareness against and regulate Genetically Modified (GM) food, as well as low-quality, ultra-processed, and high-fat/high-sugar food, that perpetuate malnutrition in all its forms. Set a minimum service response package in times of crises and emergencies.
- Raise awareness, enforce strong policies, revise or introduce laws, and build better infrastructure and technology to match food demand with supply, and to reduce food waste throughout the process chain analysis/monitoring (cultivation, storage, processing, distribution, and consumption). This includes promoting ethical processes at the retail level by encouraging private food producers, supermarkets, and sellers to donate their excess food produce. There needs to be balanced redistribution of excess food to the most-in-need members of the society in partnership with youth-led organisations and the establishment of a due diligence mechanism to monitor food quality on a regular basis.
- Advance redistributive agrarian and land reform, and ensure regulation, accountability, and justice in cases of violations, including state and corporate land and other resource grabbing. A grievance mechanism for small scale farmers, indigenous communities, and other marginalised groups need to be in place.
- Establish gender-, culture-, and age-responsive policies for agro-ecology, as well as fishery in the coastal regions. This includes ensuring biodiversity of seeds and plants, and control and ownership of land, water, and other resources by women, girls, and people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity and expressions.
- Encourage more young people to choose agriculture, fishery, food handling, and nutrition as career professions to ensure rapid local growth, innovation, new technology, sustainable solutions, and ensure entrepreneurial and employment opportunities.

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[7] Food and Agriculture Organisation. 2010. *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2010: Addressing Food Insecurity in Protracted Crises.*
[8] *Asia-Pacific Regional Fact Sheet: Closing the Gender Gap for Better Food and Nutrition Security.*
http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/rap/files/Newsletter/150625_gender-fact-sheet.pdf
[9] *Asia-Pacific Regional Fact Sheet: Closing the Gender Gap for Better Food and Nutrition Security.*
http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/rap/files/Newsletter/150625_gender-fact-sheet.pdf
[10] Asia and the Pacific Regional Overview of Food Insecurity. http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6481e.pdf

**SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.**

Health must be understood not only from a bio-medical perspective but from a holistic, rights-based approach in due cognizance of external factors affecting health and well-being, particularly for young people. These include but are not limited to food security and nutrition, climate change, environment, housing, sanitation, and access to potable and drinking water. There is a need to emphasise and strengthen actions taken to address adolescent pregnancies, maternal mortalities and morbidities, abortion, and other issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights; communicable and non-communicable diseases; universal health-care coverage and access to medicines; and environmental pollutants. Health systems that mitigate stigma and discrimination need to be strengthened; institutional mechanisms should be in place to end stigma and discrimination in accessing health services and information for all. Disaggregated data needs to be made available to create evidence around health issues faced by diverse communities, including but not limited to, youth groups, such as marginalised women, LGBTIQ people, people with disabilities, religious and ethnic minorities, people living with and affected by HIV, young sex workers, and marginalised castes. Context-sensitive and equitable technological innovations should be promoted to advance health and well-being of all.

**Recommendations:**
- Review and amend existing laws and policies, enact new ones, and implement these effectively, such that they respond to the realities of young people and uphold human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights. These include those related to stigma and discrimination of the marginalised.
- Provide access to accurate, evidence-based information on health and well-being, including life-skill-based and comprehensive sexuality education for youth and adolescents in formal and non-formal education settings, as well as in out-of-school and workplace settings. This needs to be age-appropriate, scientifically evidence-based, context-specific, gender-responsive, disability-friendly, and acknowledges the evolving capacities of young people.
- Provide and improve access to youth-friendly health services, including for sexual and reproductive health, that are confidential, non-judgmental, non-discriminatory, and are affordable. Sexual and reproductive health must also include access to contraception, safe abortion, reproductive cancer prevention, and gender transition-related services. Programmes need to be based on a human rights framework, including the right to be free from discrimination, coercion, and violence, as well as on principles of bodily integrity, dignity, equality, respect for diversity, and affirmative sexuality.
- Allocate a minimum of 15% of the national budgets for health, with an adequate proportion for young people based on demography, in line with the Maputo Call of Action.
- Ensure contingency planning for health services in emergency settings (such as the minimum initial service package or MISP).

**SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.**

Though the Asia-Pacific region has seen steady progress in literacy,[11] concerns remain on the accessibility, affordability, and quality of education in the region. Young people face several barriers to quality education due to persistent rural-urban disparities; rising socio-economic inequality; continuing exclusion of persons with disabilities, indigenous persons, and people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities; gender inequalities; and language barriers.[12] Girls' access to education remain a concern due to negative social and cultural attitudes, lack of appreciation of the value of female education, the burden of household work, and long journeys to school.[13] This is even worse for girls from poor families, rural areas, urban slums, and ethnic and language minorities who are less likely to complete full education cycles.[14] Additionally, there is lack of trained human resources, especially on issues that are progressive and on human rights-based approaches.

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[11] http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/ED_new/pdf/APA-GEM-2014-ENG.pdf
[12] http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-regional-escap.pdf
[13] https://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/ESCAPFinal5.pdf
[14] https://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/ESCAPFinal5.pdf

These factors contribute to the large number of school dropout rates in the region. In South and West Asia, out of every 100 children who start primary school, 33 will leave before reaching the last grade.[15] There is also a very low enrolment in tertiary education in the region which only reaches 25% in Central Asia, 26% in East Asia and the Pacific, and 13% in South and West Asia.[16]

While governments in the region place greater emphasis on education, educational systems in most countries have failed to evolve and to be relevant to young people of today in terms of its approaches and curriculum. Decisions on education are often made without consultation with young people, and hence fail to cater to their needs. This has made the transition between education and employment as one of the main obstacles facing youth in the region.[17] Moreover, despite the great need for comprehensive sexuality education, a study carried out by UNESCO reports that in Asian countries, the education sector emerges as relatively weak in terms of integration of sexuality education in its legal and policy frameworks.[18] Studies shows that the lack of adequate knowledge leads to adverse health consequences in the form of risky sexual behaviour, inability to cope with violence, and abuse.

**Recommendations:**
- Invest more in the education sector, with at least 20% of the national budget to be allocated to education. At least up to secondary education should be free and higher education affordable. Equitable budget distribution must take into consideration the need of children and young people who are marginalised, including those from indigenous, rural communities and those with disabilities.
- Focus on improving the quality of education. The pedagogy should be youth-centred; education should be relevant to young people and their lived realities, and cater to their career choices to remove transition barriers between education and employment. The educational system should also consider traditional and cultural knowledge that exists within different communities, provided that they conform to human rights standards. Additionally, promote educational technology approaches, including promotion of online education that should also be made accessible to rural young people, along with optimal access to the internet and information and communications technology (ICT). Undertake multi-sectoral approach through convergence of relevant ministries and flat bureaucracy to deliver and/or complement quality education.
- Prioritise teachers' training to ensure quality education, inclusive of technological advances. This should also include training on human rights, including SRHR.
- Integrate comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) within formal and informal education systems. The curriculum should align with good practices in the region and worldwide, and integrate seven key elements: gender, sexual and reproductive health and rights and HIV, sexual rights, pleasure, freedom from violence, diversity, and relationships.
- Ensure that the infrastructure of all the educational institutions are friendly for people living with all types of disabilities, including physical and psychosocial.
- Promote conducive environments for student unions to form and succeed.

## SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Achieving women's empowerment and gender equality is contingent on breaking down predefined gender roles and realising the full potential of all individuals, regardless of their gender, sexuality, or socio-economic context. Although there has been progress in achieving gender equality in the region, huge gaps still remain. In a review of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2014, regional governments had identified economic empowerment, violence against women and girls, and public leadership as three ongoing challenges to gender equality.[19] Moreover, in the Asia-Pacific region, women and girls are chronically under-represented in economic, political and legal institutions across the region, hence producing deficits in power and voice, which in turn allow inequalities to go unchallenged. The persisting gender gaps in terms of women and girls' wages constitutes between 70-90%, while labour force participation is 25% less than that of men.[20] Millions of girls are coerced into unwanted sex or

[15] http://southasia.oneworld.net/news/unesco-report-signals-to-high-dropout-rates-in-education#.WNU8aGclHIU
[16] https://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/ESCAPFinal5.pdf
[17] https://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/ESCAPFinal5.pdf
[18] http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002150/215091e.pdf
[19] Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Asian and the Pacific: Perspective of Governments on 20 Years of Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (ESCAP, 2015)http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/B20%20Gender%20Equality%20Report%20v10-3-E%20(Final%20for%20web).pdf
[20] Ibid.

marriage, putting them at risk of unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV, and dangerous childbirth.[21] Young people are disproportionately affected by HIV.[22]

Despite inclusion of access to sexual and reproductive health in the 2030 Agenda, 'sexual rights' was excluded during negotiations. Such an omission not only violates the equal rights of young people, but also impedes discussions on altering regressive cultural practices. There needs to be an acknowledgment of women's rights as an issue of social justice and as human rights. There is a need to move beyond the binary understanding of gender and acknowledge the freedom of self-identification of gender for all. SDG 5 must also not be limited as a stand alone goal. A gender-sensitive lens must be integrated as a guiding principle for evaluating and implementing this area of concern within all the SDGs.

**Recommendations:**
- Provide comprehensive sexuality education for all young people through formal and informal channels, and in workplace settings, that will challenge gender norms, as well as harmful cultural norms and barriers such as child marriage, female genital mutilation, ostracisation, shame killing, and discrimination during menstruation (e.g., *chhaupadi*).
- Allocate more resources and enhance budgetary allocation for all youth-led initiatives that promote gender equality.
- Strengthen digital literacy for all young people, especially young women and girls and transgender youth, and enable access to ICT.
- Institute a redressal mechanism that guards against gender-based violence—physical, sexual, psychological, verbal, and virtual—including addressing high rates of murder of transgender persons.[23]
- Women's equal citizenship rights must also include the legal right of mothers to pass their citizenship to children in countries where such legal provisions have not been enacted.
- Promote and ensure more representation of people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities and expressions in social, political, and economic spheres.
- Ensure women's economic empowerment, including their right to control, own, pass on, and inherit property.

**SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.**

Universal access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene is a long-standing development goal.[24] However, in many countries across the Asia and the Pacific, young people aged 15-24 years do not have access to sanitation. Open defecation is still practiced in many rural areas across the region and consequently 80% of wastewater is discharged into region's waterways without being properly treated, leading[25] to increases in water borne diseases. Lack of sanitation and access to clean water is prevalent in slum areas and informal housing settlements in many urban areas in the region, leading to increased risks of health issues in these populations. Droughts and water scarcity have been experienced throughout the region due in part to seasonal dry periods being exacerbated by the different weather phenomenon, climate change and water management problems.[26]

Young women and girls, particularly those living in smaller towns and rural areas, are most adversely affected by lack of access to sanitation.[27] In many countries, increases in dropout rates of girls from schools are linked to lack of sanitation and menstrual hygiene management services. Women and girls in rural areas in many countries often have to travel longer distances to fetch water and face

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[21] Asia Regional Profile on Universal Access to SRHR (ARROW, 2016) )http://arrow.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Regional-Profile-Universal-Access-to-SRHR_Asia.pdf
[22] Switched on: Youth at the Centre of Sustainable Development in Asia Pacific (AP Thematic Working Group on Youth, 2015). http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Switched%20On.pdf
[23] http://transrespect.org/en/research/trans-murder-monitoring/
[24] It is enshrined in the New Delhi Statement of 1990 adopted by 115 Member States at the Global Consultation on Safe Water and Sanitation and the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions on the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation (HRTWS). It is also widely referenced in existing agreements on poverty reduction (Millennium Declaration, 2000) and sustainable development (Agenda 21, 1992; Earth Summit, 2002; and Rio+20, 2012).
[25] Youth and Climate Change: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/WYR2010Final%20online%20version.pdf
[26] El Nino, Poor Water Management and Climate Change bringing Droughts to Asia and the Pacific: https://www.adb.org/news/features/el-nino-poor-water-management-and-climate-change-bringing-droughts-asia-and-pacific
[27] Switched On: Youth at the Heart of Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Switched%20On.pdf

higher risks of gender-based violence, assault, and harassment.[28,29]

**Recommendations:**
- Ensure universal access to potable water and sanitation in urban, rural, and remote areas through sustainable infrastructure, including the recycling of wastewater.
- Ensure adequate sanitation facilities in adolescent- and youth-frequented spaces in rural, remote and slum areas, especially in schools, supplemented by proper maintenance facilities.
- Ensure proper water infrastructure and climate change planning systems to promote sustainable use of water resources, limit water-borne diseases, address water scarcity, and enhance monitoring capabilities.
- Ensure proper management of water waste systems as part of disaster risk reduction and management, to prevent flood-related disasters and health risks.
- Encourage youth-centred initiatives and use of appropriate technologies on water conservation and management.
- Implement gender-, age- and culture-responsive awareness approaches to address stereotyping in water access and management, including consideration of gender-based violence.

**SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.**

In order to achieve universal access to modern energy services, improve efficiency and increase use of renewable sources, it is important that there is awareness about modern, affordable and sustainable energy among young people. for young people in the region The general public, particularly young people, is unaware of most of the renewable and sustainable energy sources and the importance of developing sustainable resources. Energy is the dominant contributor to climate change, accounting for around 60 per cent[30] of total global greenhouse gas emissions, and reducing the carbon intensity of energy is a key objective in long-term climate goals. The involvement of the private sector in the generation of energy has made energy sources less affordable. In the recent past, due to blockades on export of fuel to the Asia-Pacific region some countries are looking for sustainable and renewable modes of energy such as solar panels but the initiative is still in its infancy. Many countries in the region have high potential for renewable energy resources like hydro, solar, wind and biomass however they are unable to harness this potential full to generate useful energy.

**Recommendations:**
- Develop effective youth-adult partnerships to facilitate research in increasing access to clean energy and technology, including renewable energy.
- Prioritise investment in low-carbon, renewable, and clean energy infrastructure and technology over fossil fuels, while ensuring compliance with ethical and human rights guidelines.
- Perform environmental impact assessments and social impact assessments while designing and implementing energy projects.
- Ensure meaningful engagement of the youth in awareness, education, development, and use of clean energy, and enable youth-driven action and ownership.

**SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.**

Young people continue to face lack of decent work opportunities, full and productive employment. The Millennium Development Goals Report indicates 74 million young people were unemployed in 2015.[31] Promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, decent work, and enterprises for young people should be a priority of governments. This should also be seamlessly integrated with guaranteeing rights at work and social protection for young people. In Asia and the Pacific region, forced labour, human trafficking and modern slavery remain a significant problem. Estimates from ILO point to more than 11 million people in Asia-Pacific region as victims of forced labour, which is almost over half of the global estimated number of 21 million victims.[32] Young people are most vulnerable to forced labour, trapped in jobs into which they were coerced or deceived and which they cannot leave,

[28] Ibid.
[29] ARROW, 2016, Women's Stories from the Climate Frontiers, http://arrow.org.my/womens-stories-from-the-climate-frontlines/.
[30] http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/energy/
[31] http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf
[32] http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_182004.pdf

such as domestic work, agriculture, construction, manufacturing and entertainment.[33]

**Recommendations:**
- Foster conducive environments for Small and Medium Enterprises and entrepreneurial opportunities through gender-, age-, and culture-responsive legal structures, towards the encouragement of young people and marginalised communities to start businesses, preferably using local industries and resources.
- Introduce better systems to curb unfair and unethical industry practices and empower workers with protected whistleblowing mechanisms to raise issues, including minimum wage standards.
- Promote green jobs[34] and implement adequate policies and develop programmes and measures that not only create green jobs, but also make them equitable in terms of access and wages, especially for youth.  Further, promote local industries jobs in rural areas, both farm and non-farm, through formulation and implementation of rural development policies, and other strategies and programmes that adequately reflect decent work principles, extending the application of international labour standards to rural areas.
- Implement regular skills development and life skills training for young people during early and mid-education levels, in addition to ensuring decent work and career opportunities and individual growth. Monitor education and employment trends to avoid mismatches on skills and employment availability that causes youth unemployment and work migration.

## SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.

Young people are critical agents and champions for industry, innovation, and infrastructure, such as transportation, water and sanitation, electrification, and communication technologies. Improvements in food security, health, and education require investments in such sustainable and innovative infrastructure. A key barrier in achieving the goal is a huge digital divide, especially in the rural areas which needs to be mitigated. This calls for enhanced international and domestic financial, and technical support, research and innovation, and increased access to information and communication technology. In addition, resources need to be equitably distributed amongst rural and urban areas.

**Recommendations:**
- Ensure universal and affordable access to information and communication technologies for young people in the region.
- Ensure equitable access to financial services, including affordable credit, and integration into value chains and markets for youth-led small-scale industrial and other enterprises.
- Provide incentives to industrial development that prioritises youth-led and youth-responsive innovation.
- Allocate resources to strengthen the capacity of young people in scientific research and industrial technological capacities, and encourage innovation through incentives.
- Ensure labour standards and more safeguards are in place when it comes to extractive industries and ensure that exploration and extraction operations are environmentally and socially sustainable.
- Revise education curricula to include relevant.
- Set up a national commission to monitor sustainable industry practices, and allow for youth representation.

## SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries.

With the largest global youth population ever, millions of today's youth are being left behind due to the burden of multiple and intersecting inequalities in the social, economic, and political arenas. These intersecting inequalities have adverse affects on young women, ethnic minorities, young people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities and expressions, young persons with disabilities, and other marginalised youth.

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[33] Ibid.
[34] The ILO defines green jobs as "the transformation of economies, enterprises, workplaces and labour markets into a sustainable, low-carbon economy providing decent work."

Growing income and wealth inequalities has heightened wage gaps and income gaps between young and old. In many countries hit by economic crises, a growing number of older people (aged over 65) are staying in the workforce, which reduces opportunities for young people.[35] Gender brings another dimension to income and economic inequalities; according to a study, young girls are less likely to escape the poverty of their parents than young boys.[36] Income and economic inequality also affects and restricts their access to education, health, and other services, and consequently leads to persistence of poverty throughout their adult life. Increasing privatisation of basic social services such as health and education has further limited access and affordability of these basic services for people living in poverty.[37] Criminalisation and social stigmatisation of LGBTIQ and sex workers further exacerbates the situation for these populations. Refugees, migrant workers, indigenous communities and LGBTIQ populations, who not able to secure citizenship status due to discriminatory laws and policies, face even greater barriers to access basic healthcare and education opportunities.

The cycle of poverty and the resulting "traps of disadvantages" keep pushing young people, especially young girls, young LGBTIQ, sex workers, and refugees living in poverty, to the bottom and margins and keep them there, unless concrete programmes and policies are implemented to ensure meaningful structural changes and uplifting of social and economic positions of marginalised people.

Social inequalities, often stemming from religious and cultural traditions, also contribute to continuous traps of disadvantages. For example, social barriers, such restricted mobility of young girls, limit their access to education and women's access to employment opportunities. Restricted social barriers also hinder young girls and women's access to basic health services including SRH and hence endangering their lives. Lack of access to education eventually reduces employment opportunities for young women and increases high rates of unpaid domestic work, which further truncates their ability to claim their rights to uplift themselves from poverty.

Resources allocation between developing and developed countries and trade agreements in the era of globalisation is further contributing to inequalities in income and human development in developing and low-income countries.

**Recommendations:**
- Effectively implement existing policy and programmatic actions towards structural changes, with special focus on the most marginalised, including young people, particularly, young girls, young people from low-income communities, young people with disabilities, young persons of diverse sexuality and gender orientation, to end the cycle of disadvantages.
- Private-partner partnership should not alleviate the fundamental responsibilities of governments to provide protection to the most vulnerable and to ensure that social services like education, health and housing remains equitably accessible to all, including the most marginalied communities.
- Governments should ensure taxation that redistributes wealth from individuals, corporations, and religious institutions which can be utilised to promote programmes targeting youth.
- Governments must recognise that developing countries need special and differential treatment that allows them to adopt flexible intellectual property legislation that excludes essential services such as health and education from liberalisation commitments.
- Effectively capture and assess data on inequalities and how they impact young people, and robust measures to address these trends be taken by governments.

**SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.**

It is estimated that by 2030, as many as 60% of urban dwellers will be under the age of 18.[38] Much of the urbanisation in the Asia-Pacific region has been rapid and unplanned, with inadequate provision of infrastructure and basic services (including health care, housing, and education) relative to the demand of expanding populations.[39] Moreover, 2016 has also seen some of Asia's worst urban smog as a result of high levels of air pollution.[40] Lack of urban planning makes these cities unsustainable as

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[35] https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp-youth-inequality-global-120816-en_0.pdf
[36] ibid.
[37] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC153481/
[38] https://unhabitat.org/urban-themes/youth/
[39] *Switched On: Youth at the Heart of Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific*. http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Switched%20On.pdf
[40] http://web.unep.org/asiapacific/regional-initiatives/air-quality

they expand far beyond their formal administrative boundaries. As more people migrate to cities in search of a better life and urban populations grow, housing issues intensify. Globally, more than 880 million people were living in slums in 2014.[41] Unplanned urban sprawl undermines other determinants of sustainable development. For example, for every 10% increase in sprawl, there is a 5.7% increase in per capita carbon dioxide emissions and a 9.6% increase in per capita hazardous pollution. This illustrates the important interlinkages across the goals and targets.[42]

**Recommendations:**
- Institutionalise active youth engagement in democratic, transparent, and result-oriented urban decision-making at all levels, especially for most vulnerable and marginalised youth.
- Promote age- and gender-responsive budgeting to promote youth-led urban initiatives and to build medium- to long-term administrative and technical capacity.
- Meaningfully engage young people from the region in the building of inclusive and resilient infrastructures, including creation of open public spaces.
- Improve and expand protection for children and young people through the development of safe zones with access to basic facilities in cases of disaster or internal conflict.
- Ensure the implementation of Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP), which are crucial actions to respond to sexual and reproductive health needs at the onset of every humanitarian crisis. Integrate and train young people in the implementation of MISP in crises situations.
- Adopt specific recommendations from the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction taking into account that children and youth are agents of change and should be given the space and modalities to contribute to disaster risk reduction, in accordance with legislation, national practice and educational curricula.[43]
- Foster the potential of youth and their engagement at all levels of governance to counter and prevent radical polarisation, violence, and extremism, and to maintain peace and resolve conflict.[44]

### SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

The Asia-Pacific region is a region of high economic growth, and yet corporations across all sectors, including manufacturing and agricultural production, do not consider sustainable processes and practices. Increased toxic wastes and chemicals are continuously contributing to pollution and carbon footprint. Improved awareness of the need for sustainable production and consumption patterns and management of natural resources is crucial.

**Recommendations:**
- Put in place national policies and guidelines to regulate sustainable consumption and production, including of governments and private sector, with appropriate incentives and sanctions.
- Incorporate and prioritise sustainable consumption and production issues in national curricula in different languages and accessible formats for raising awareness on this issue amongst young people.
- Promote and incentivize ethical production practices for all corporations, as well as provide employment in green jobs.
- Emphasise waste management as a sustainable production practice and incentivize waste management for corporations, governments and individuals.
- Enable young people to play key roles in decision-making, monitoring, and accountability about natural resources and consumption and production patterns at all levels.

### SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

The Asia-Pacific region is the most disaster-prone regions in the world,[45] and is at the forefront of experiencing the impact of climate change, which could drive more than 100 million people into extreme poverty by 2030 annually.[46] Climate change affects everyone, but it impacts men, women, girls, boys, transgender people, differently. Differences are rooted in unequal power relations and

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[41] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/goal-11/

[42] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg11

[43] http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework

[44] Recommendations 1, 2, & 7 are extracted from the Berlin Agenda for Urban Youth: https://unhabitatyab.files.wordpress.com/2017/02/hipervinculos2.pdf

[45] http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/2015_Year%20in%20Review_final_PDF_1.pdf

[46] UNESCAP, 2016, The Economics of Climate Change in the Region, http://www.unescap.org/resources/economics-climate-change-asia-pacific-region.

harmful gender norms; and age is a factor. While there is a recognition that climate change, gender, and other factors are linked, this is not translated to policies and programme.

**Recommendations:**
- Create legally binding commitments to reduce greenhouse gases emissions by at least 40% by 2020 compared to 1990 levels, excluding offsets.
- Recognise detrimental effects of climate change in relation to health and human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, especially among young people, women, and children.
- Climate-related funds and mechanisms should be redirected from false solutions like industrial bioenergy and carbon markers to rights-based, holistic, safe, environmentally sustainable, energy-efficient policies and technologies, that would benefit young people and enhance their resilience, while at the same time reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Good practices on how to develop age- and gender-responsive mitigation and adaptation policies, technologies, and initiatives need to be promoted. Regulate private sector to be accountable for contributing to climate change.
- Advocate for the efficient and effective use of national and local budgets for climate change and disasters to include transparency, monitoring and evaluation, and effective implementation and sustainability of climate change adaptation plans. Developed countries should be held accountable and effectively compensate climate change-affected countries.
- Empower all sectors, especially the young people, to increase awareness on climate change and disasters, build their resilience, and increase their involvement in policy-making. Organise a government-supported youth climate action network that will ensure governments are held accountable and young people's innovative ideas are taken into consideration.

**SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.**
**SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.**

The Asia-Pacific is one of the most ecologically diverse and rich regions in the world, but is threatened by environmental degradation, due to increased urbanisation, overfishing, extractive industries, and other harmful human activities. Impacts include desertification, deforestation, ocean acidification, and loss of biodiversity.

**Recommendations:**
- Put in place policies to preserve bio-diversity, in both water and land, take special measures to protect endangered species, restore forests, and combat desertification and land degradation.
- Increase youth awareness and leadership on issues related to conservation and restoration of the ecosystem.
- Mobilise youth to actively engage with policy formation and implementation related to environmental issues.
- Promote eco-friendly tourism that will protect and preserve bio-diversity and manage mainstream tourism.

**SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.**

Asia-Pacific is a home to number of long-running conflicts,[47] and a number of its countries experience protracted crises, long-term instability, and armed conflict.[48] Moreover, almost half (46%) of the world's arms import was bought by the region from 2011-2015.[49] The region is diverse in terms of cultural, linguistic, sexual, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. Failing to be inclusive and representational for all in policies and programmes have been one of the root causes of the conflict in the region. Over half of the world's refugee population is located in the Asia-Pacific region,[50] whereby refugees suffer from statelessness and issues with rehabilitation. Young people in these conflict-

[47] http://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/FINAL%20-%20UNFPA%20Responding%20to%20Emergencies%20%28Aug%202016%29_0.pdf
[48] http://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/FINAL%20-%20UNFPA%20Responding%20to%20Emergencies%20%28Aug%202016%29_0.pdf
[49] Taking Arms, *The Economist*, 26 February 2016, http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21693619-asia-pacific-region-peacebut-it-buying-lot-weapons-taking-arms
[50] http://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/FINAL%20-%20UNFPA%20Responding%20to%20Emergencies%20%28Aug%202016%29_0.pdf

stricken areas are further exploited by political parties and militant organisations, and do not have safe spaces to express themselves with instances of bloggers and journalists going missing and being killed. Such practices further suppress the voices of the youth in developmental procedures. Violation against young girls that already exist in our societies gets escalated in the onset of conflict, and women's bodies continue to be weapon of war. Early, forced, and child marriage is another form of violence that takes its worst form in situations of conflict. Mass displacements and a breakdown of infrastructure, law and order and basic services, including for health, put the safety and lives of young people, women, and girls at more risk.[51]

Despite their distinct experiences of conflict and their contributions to peace, young people are excluded from peace negotiations and peace-building processes.[52] The SDGs aim to significantly reduce all forms of violence, and work with governments and communities to find lasting solutions to conflict and insecurity. Those with the least voice are the most likely to be left out and left behind by growth-enhancing policies. Without specific attention to political and legal inclusion, it will be impossible to realise the aspirations of the SDGs. Taken together, justice, rule of law, and accountable and inclusive institutions are the lynchpin of shared social progress.

**Recommendations:**
- Review, amend, and repeal all laws and policies that are against the basic principles of democracy and human rights of young people, and promote free, fair, and peaceful elections, free and independent media, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, transparency, accountability, and access to information.
- Localise and implement relevant international instruments on peace and security, such as the Youth Compact, UNSCR 2250 on Youth Peace and Security, and UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and its subsequent resolutions. These instruments should be made binding. They should also be implemented by regional mechanisms, such as regional inter-governmental bodies like ASEAN, SAARC, and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) to improve cross-country relations.
- Adopt a multi-sectoral approach for ensuring peaceful and inclusive societies. A collaboration between the private sector, CSOs, and states must be present which should also be incorporated in a reporting mechanism to ensure effectiveness and accountability on the progress of SDGs.
- Digital security for each individual should be institutionalised by the states and encourage the use of technology to increase access to justice and support online activism.
- Access to sexual and reproductive health services should be prioritised by all humanitarian efforts. However, the existing humanitarian efforts need to go beyond services and uphold the sexual and reproductive rights of young people, especially young girls and their bodily integrity.
- Ensure meaningful participation of young people in all conflict resolution and peace-building processes. Encourage youth political participation through investing in capacity building in leadership, providing opportunities, establishing platforms, and affirmative action.

**SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.**

Young people call on the governments to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development. The youth are integral stakeholders in multi-stakeholder partnerships that will engage the public and private sectors, workers' and employers' organisations, academia and civil society entities to realise the Sustainable Development Goals. Meaningful youth participation must be ensured, including in resource generation and allocation, building capacities, ICT, and monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

**Recommendations:**
- Build capacities of young people to meaningfully engage with national, regional, and global SDG implementation, monitoring and review mechanisms.
- Make high-quality, timely, reliable data available, disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location, and other characteristics relevant in national and local contexts.
- Promote the development, transfer, dissemination, diffusion of environmentally-sound

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[51] http://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/FINAL%20-%20UNFPA%20Responding%20to%20Emergencies%20%28Aug%202016%29_0.pdf
[52] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joel-davis/youth-are-key-to-ending-s_b_6276282.html

technologies engaging young people to reduce the digital gap.

- Ensure that youth groups are meaningfully engaged at all levels of the implementation, follow up, and review of the SDG roadmap and related agreements, including existing partnerships networks such as "Every Woman, Every Child," "Higher Education Sustainability Initiative," "Sustainable Development Goals Funds (SDGF)," and others.
- Ensure that public-private partnerships, South-South/North-South and Triangular collaborations, which are used to secure resources for youth to continuously engage in SDG processes, follow rights-based, ethical guidelines and labour standards.

## ABOUT THIS CALL

This call was an outcome of the meeting, *Young People in the SDGs: Sustainable Solutions to Eradicate Poverty and Promote Prosperity*, which was organised in preparation for the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) on 23-25 March 2017 in Bangkok, Thailand. The Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), and AP-RCEM Youth Constituency co-convened the meeting. The meeting was organised with the support of the Right Here Right Now partnership, MacArthur Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, as well as participant's self-funding.

## ENDORSED BY:

1. Act 2030 Alliance – Philippines
2. Aliansi Remaja Independent (ARI) – Indonesia
3. Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma
4. Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR)
5. Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW)
6. Bargad – Pakistan
7. Blue Diamond Society (BDS) – Nepal
8. Blue Veins – Pakistan
9. Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC) – Nepal
10. Channan Development Association – Pakistan
11. Centre for Youth and Social Harmony – Burma
12. CREA – India
13. Durbin Foundation – Bangladesh
14. Family Planning Association Pakistan (FPAP)-Pakistan
15. Feeding India
16. Handicap International – Cambodia
17. Mahidol University – Thailand
18. Mekong Youth Assembly (MSY)
19. Indonesia Planned Parenthood Association (PKBI) Indonesia
20. Khan Foundation – Bangladesh
21. Kunming Medical University – China
22. Likhaan (Center for Women's Health Inc.) – Philippines
23. One Million Lights – Philippines
24. Pravah – India
25. Pusat Kajian Gender and Seksualitas, University-Indonesia
26. Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC) – Cambodia
27. SAMA Resource Group for Women and Health – India
28. Samaa National Youth Council (SNYC) – Samoa
29. Sangar Swara – Indonesia
30. SERAC – Bangladesh
31. United Nations Youth Advisory Panel – Pakistan
32. University of Health Science – Lao
33. Women for Change – Mongolia
34. Y-PEER (Youth Peer Education Network)
35. Youth Action Nepal (YAN)
36. Youth Advocacy Network (YAN) – Pakistan
37. Youth Advocacy Network – Sri Lanka
38. Youth Development Centre – Nepal
39. Youth Forum Papua (YFP) – Papua
40. Youth Lead
41. YUWA – Nepal
42. Right Here Right Now – Pakistan
43. Right Here Right Now- Nepal
44. Right Here Right Now – Bangladesh
45. Right Here Right Now – Indonesia
46. Right Here Right Now – Asia