asia-pacific youth

call to action

"Empowering Young People and Ensuring Inclusivity and Equality in the Asia Pacific"

Who We Are and Why This *Call To Action*?

We are a unique group of 80 young individuals, activists and advocates. Our presence at the 2019 Asia Pacific Youth Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) Youth Forum in Bangkok, Thailand, represents diversity as we not only come from different age groups, with the youngest among us being 17 years of age, but we also embody youth living in this region coming from various backgrounds and identities as we consist of persons with disabilities, children with learning disabilities, victims of gender-based violence (GBV), transgender persons and persons living with HIV. Some of us also come from youth led, youth-serving, and youth-allied organisations and our participation in the forum is a representation of our place in diverse social movements in countries in Asia and the Pacific.

We have gathered here to call for sustainable solutions, through this call to action, to empower young people and guarantee our inclusiveness by eradicating poverty, promoting equality and encouraging prosperity in the region using an intersectional, non-discriminatory and participatory approach. These approaches also consist of building youth leadership and empowerment, addressing gender inequality, upholding human rights and providing unrestricted access to health, education, information and technology in a way

that benefits young people - especially poor women and girls, persons discriminated on the basis of caste and class, persons with limited formal education, persons of diverse sexual orientation, gender identities, expressions, and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC); persons with all forms of disabilities; persons living with and affected by HIV; persons from ethnic, indigenous and religious minorities; persons living in remote, rural, and slum areas; sex workers; drug users; and individuals from marginalised groups such as migrants and refugees, and those who are stateless or displaced.

This call to action echoes our voice, our concerns and our demands which we discussed over three days during the 2019 APFSD Youth Forum. While we acknowledge that there have been some developments by countries in the Asia and the Pacific to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the recommendations presented in this call address the key gaps that leave out young people from the overall progress and neglects their needs. Our discussions shed light on disparities where young people from rural and remote areas were reportedly understood to be more vulnerable as individuals, and for countries in the Pacific, the inequality was noticeable among young people living in islands who were excluded from enjoying the same opportunities and facilities than young people living in the mainland.

We feel that most of the issues concerning youth are common in most countries in the Asia and the Pacific and therefore we call for an inter-regional and collaborative effort to be put in by all actors including the State as it will collectively eradicate the barriers that prevent youth from being part of the larger SDG related developments. 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 across the region. 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, amongst others.

The call to action was developed by a dedicated drafting team[1] who worked on behalf of the larger group to capture the key discussion points and demands put forward by participants in the forum mostly derived from their personal experiences. This document also took into account previous statements made by young people at previous fora, such as the past APFSDs in 2016 and 2017, the Yangon Declaration of the 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 Conference (APPC) Youth and CSO Statements, and the World Humanitarian Summit Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action.

How Are We Left Behind?

The Asia Pacific region is home to the largest number of young people globally, about 670 million, who face intersecting challenges and marginalisations. The region is the fulcrum for international migration and is home to the world's largest and most important countries of origin and destination.[2] Majority of the migrants in the region are of younger working age, and 13 percent of all migrants in the region are younger than 20.[3] According to recent estimates, extreme poverty in the region has decreased. However, more than 900 million people in the region are still impoverished when seen through multidimensional poverty measures[4], and the majority of them are young, living in rural areas, and engaged in low-income agriculture-related workforce.[5] The region is also experiencing rapid urbanisation and almost half of the region's population is residing in urban towns and cities.[6] The structural dimensions of marginalisation, combined with poor urban planning, has resulted in wider inequalities in relation to healthcare access, education, and employment, leaving young people, women, migrants, older people at the margins.[7] At the same time, a large percentage of the population still resides in rural areas that remain impoverished and continue to face inequalities of opportunities when it comes to health, education, and employment.

Approximately 60% of all countries affected by extreme weather events in the past two decades are in the Asia Pacific, accounting for huge human and economic costs. In addition, the Asia Pacific is also one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world. The effects of climate related crises and disasters are experienced by everyone. However, it is most damaging for people who are least able to adapt, i.e. the poor, young people, women, people with disabilities, children with learning disabilities, and people living in rural areas. Furthermore, the region has been experiencing religious extremism and fundamentalism, right-wing conservatism and populism, conflict and natural disasters, and aggressive trade policies. The region also continues to have a poor record on gender equality, which is rooted in structural inequalities, unequal power relations, and the control of sexuality. Majority of the countries do not recognise the rights of persons with diverse sexual orientations and same-sex marriage and relationships are criminalised in most countries in the region. Gender-based violence and violence against people with non-binary gender identities is alarmingly high. These intersecting challenges hinder livelihoods 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 non-normative SOGIESC; 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.

This call to action is a manifestation of our commitment to fulfil our roles and responsibilities to ensure a just, equitable and inclusive society for all. In turn, we urge governments, international organisations, United Nations agencies, development partners, funding agencies, and other duty bearers to address the following priority issues.

Young People and Their Right To Education

Situational Analysis

- The majority of economies in the region are achieving near universal enrolment rates at the primary level. Primary school enrolment rates were above 80% for all economies in 2011 except Pakistan where only 65% of girls and 70% of boys were enrolled in primary school, compared to 85% of girls and boys in other economies in the Asia Pacific region.[8]

- While the regional net enrolment rates remain decent for primary education, inequalities emerge at the secondary level, with varied access and outcomes related to national and household income, sex, dis/ability and geographic location (among other variables). Geographically, across Asia and the Pacific, net secondary school enrolment rates range from a low of 38 per cent in Pakistan, to more than 90 per cent in such countries as New Zealand and the Republic of Korea. In the region, and for countries for which data are available, of the students' enrolled in secondary schools, approximately half are female and half male. The exceptions are Afghanistan and Pakistan, where there are significantly fewer girls than boys.[9]

- In terms of out-of-schools numbers, very little progress has been noticed in the last decade for primary education. For secondary education, the number improved to some extent, but the progress is limited in recent years. Upper secondary school-age youth are four times as likely to be out of school as children of primary school age. The higher out-of-schools rate in upper secondary schools can be attributed to poverty, non-compulsory upper secondary education, and young people's preference for employment over education due to financial responsibilities.

- Considerable disparities remain in primary school enrolment rates in rural vs. urban areas. Lower enrolment rates in rural areas can be attributed to the fact that there are fewer schools serving a large geographical areas, and children have to walk long distances to get to the school. Additionally, in rural and remote areas school infrastructure is poorer and the schools are more understaffed than those in urban settings.[10]

- While globally, gender disparities in net enrolment rate and the number of out-of-school children and youth have improved, considerable differences remain at the regional level and country level.[11] Factors such as early marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence, and traditional attitudes about the role of women, are among the many obstacles. Poor households tend to prioritise the education of boys over that of girls and invest in their male children, assuming that the economic dividends would be greater. Girls are also expected to help with household chores and look after younger siblings.[12] At the same time, many countries have observed an increase in women's enrolment in tertiary education which demonstrates that gender roles and traditional attitudes about women's roles are changing.

- While we in the Asia Pacific have made enormous strides in increasing primary education and working on secondary education, all is not well in our schools. Bullying is very prevalent - in some countries over 40% of students were bullied in the last month. Even more concerning, up to 25% of students had seriously considered suicide in the last 12 months.[13]

- In pursuit of academic subjects, the school curricula is missing the soft skills, the social and emotional skills which are essential for student's intellectual and emotional well-being. The core of these skills are relationship skills, decision making, self management and self and social awareness. These are included in the whole package of comprehensive sexuality education – which also includes gender education. These social and emotional skills can help us achieve many of the SDGs beyond SDG 4, including 3 (healthy lives), 5 (gender), 10 (reduced inequalities), as well as having positive influence on the individual's

employability.[14]

- Current budget allocations of countries in the Asia-Pacific Region are not enough to achieve SDG4. Although funding for education has grown in the past few years, challenges that have yet to be addressed include ensuring that all learners complete primary education level and make the transition to secondary and tertiary education as well as addressing the gap in access to quality education for the most marginalised and vulnerable groups.[15]

- Young people in all their diversity continue to share significant barriers when it comes to ensuring their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Along with highly restrictive laws, pervasive cultural and social norms as well as stigma, impedes access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) that is both rights-based and user-centric.

- Lack of teacher sensitisation has detrimental effects on the performance of students as well as their mental health. Lack of perspectives around gender and sexualities or issues of power and privilege can lead to the loss of narratives and nuances relevant for young people and a dilution and of learning outcomes.

- Moreover, an estimated 246 million children are subjected to forms of GBV, including corporal punishment by teachers[16], mistreatment, bullying, psychological abuse and sexual harassment in or on the way to school every year. Physical violence is experienced by 25 per cent of children and emotional violence by 36 per cent. Children with learning disability disorders such as dyslexia are often considered stupid and get bullied from teachers and friends at school.

- Countries in the Asia-Pacific region are struggling to meet their SDG 4 monitoring requirements (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2018). Furthermore, the suitability of assessment systems that ensure the needs of learners are met remain questionable (Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia Pacific (NEQMAP), UNESCO). Implementation of policies on education are disparate across the region. However with almost no indicators of disaggregated data beyond sex, policy reform will miss out key factors that affect access to education for young people.

- Penetration of technology and internet remains low in the Asia Pacific region. Furthermore there is a lack of educators' training especially

in local languages on the use of technology to supplement educational needs. There is little data on the cost-effectiveness of using technology in education initiatives and this lack of evidence may play a role in skewing away priorities of government to invest in these matters. The technological infrastructure are mostly urban centric and limited efforts have been made to expand the usage of technology in hard to reach areas.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

We urge the government to take the following measures:

1. Ensure, through the **enactment of legislation**, that necessitates that access to education and information should maintain the values of equality and non-discrimination for young people who identify with diverse gender identities, persons with physical and mental disabilities and other marginalised groups. Ensuring equal access to education includes making education infrastructures more disability friendly.

2. Invest and increase **budget allocation** to at least 5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to education and monitoring of schools in primary, secondary and tertiary, especially in rural and remote areas, ensuring every child and young person has **access to affordable and quality education**.

3. Budget should also be allocated to increase the salary of teachers, especially those teaching in rural areas, and to continue **sensitisation of teachers and gatekeepers** on the diverse needs and identities of young people towards creation of an enabling environment; in making schools more **inclusive and gender balanced**; and encouraging **extra-curricular activities and creativeness amongst pupils**. Teacher's training curricula should also include sensitisation on the **harmful effects of corporal punishment and understanding the diverse needs and identities of young people** towards creation of an enabling environment and better emotional development of the pupils from the grassroots level.

4. Ensure policy level integration of rights based, age appropriate, contextualized and evidence based **comprehensive sexuality education** (CSE) within formal and informal education systems and other community based platforms

which are accessible, relevant and affordable for young people with diverse sexual and gender identities, people living with HIV and people with disabilities. Each school conducts a screening test for children who will enter primary school to find out the possibility of whether a child has the potential for learning disabilities causes.

5. The government provides an opportunity for girls who are victims of rape and children who are pregnant before marriage to continue their education after giving birth.

6. Encourage **peer-to-peer education** and recognition of certified courses for peer-to-peer educators.

7. Ensure through the creation of **Youth Commissions or Youth Advisory Boards** that policies and programmes around education and CSE are youth-centric and involve young people meaningfully at every stage.

8. The government provides facilities for children with disabilities and dyslexic children to develop their creativity.

9. Collaborate with more youth based organisations to ensure formal and informal education systems are **safe spaces** for young people regardless of their identities such as LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual), disabilities, children living with HIV, class, caste, and religion towards lowering the rate of dropouts.

10. Increase the salary of teachers, especially those teaching in rural areas and continue **sensitisation of teachers and gatekeepers** on the harmful effects of corporal punishment and the diverse needs and identities of young people towards creation of an enabling environment and better emotional development of the pupils.

11. Furthermore, we recommend that governments establish sustainable, evidence-based and disaggregated data management and **monitoring frameworks**. We also encourage technology based monitoring of teacher quality and school services.

12. Initiate a government led publicly accessible database that provides access to contextualised, **creative and youth-friendly**

resources on education that are representative of the various identities of young people.

13. Ensure **technological infrastructure and approaches in education including promotion of online education** with optimal access to the internet and information and communications technology (ICT) to young people.

Employment and Decent Work for Young People

Situational Analysis

- In terms of employment rates, the Asia Pacific region is faring well compared to other regions of the world. The youth bulge has also resulted in a demographic dividend, where those in the labour force outnumber those living outside of the working-age population.[17]

- But despite the incredible progress the region has made in the last decade, noteable percentage of those employed are in working poverty, earning less than USD 2 a day, though with significant subregion variation.[18] Furthermore, the region is experiencing smaller employment growth rate due to a reduction in economic growth, making it difficult for young people to enter the labour force. Unemployment rates are higher among the young labour force compared to adults.[19] Lastly, a large percentage of young people (1 in 5) are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), which is becoming a policy concern.[2021]

- Globally, 61 per cent of all workers were engaged in informal employment in 2016. Excluding the agricultural sector, 51 per cent of all workers fell into this employment category.[22] Currently, people from the SOGIE group are discriminated against with the lack of working opportunities available to them. There is a gap that exists between the labour market and education institutions. Each year young people are entering the job market with unmatched skills. There is a need to develop technical skills but the desire for white collar jobs makes it harder to increase acceptability for technical skills.

- There are pronounced gender-related disparities in relation to employment opportunities. According to a recent study by the Asian Development Bank, women in Asia

are on average 70% less likely than men to be in the labor force, with the country-to-country percentage varying anywhere from 3% to 80%. This gender gap persists despite economic growth, decreasing fertility rates, and increasing education.[23] According to sub-regional estimates in South Asia, more women are not in participating employment, education, or training (NEET).[24] Factors contributing to women's lower percentage in the labour force include lower wages and lower quality jobs than those for their male counterparts; prevailing perception that women have lower skills for the market; social norms that emphasise domestic work as women's primary responsibility; social and cultural codes that restrict women's spatial mobility, their marital status and pregnancy status. More progress is therefore needed to increase employment opportunities, especially for young people, reduce informal employment and labour market inequality (particularly in terms of the gender pay gap), promote safe and secure working environments, and improve access to financial services to ensure sustained and inclusive economic growth.

- Persons with non-binary sexual orientations and gender identities face greater discrimination in accessing decent work and employment opportunities. According to a study conducted by Being LGBTIQ in Asia initiative, SOGIESC-based discriminations include denial of jobs, hostile work environment, and workplace bullying and harassment.[25]

- People living with HIV and persons with disabilities also face pronounced discrimination in relation to employment opportunities. According to a global estimate, people living with HIV experience three times higher unemployment rates than their national unemployment estimates.[26] Barriers to the employment of persons with disabilities range from lack of adequate and accessible infrastructure, including information and communication services; lack of accessible transportation; and employer's preference for candidates without disabilities.[27]

- Migrant workers in host countries are subjected to various forms of discriminations due to their migratory and citizenship status. Often migrant workers receive short-term contractual jobs, which has implications on recognition of their rights and integration in the social and economic landscape of host countries. Undocumented migrants workers who often face abuse and discrimination by their employers due to their "illegal" status and lack of recognition in the host country's legal landscape are growing exponentially. Women migrant workers face the double burden of discrimination due to their gender, and are the most vulnerable group in the migrant constituency in all countries in the region. Brain drain due to high migration rates is becoming a policy concern in some of the countries in the region.

- Other trends in relation to unemployment in the region include job losses due to climate change-induced crises; increased financial support burden on young people due to demographic shifts (1 in 2 youth will need to support an elderly person by 2030); high risk of automation and resulting reduction in the job market.[28]

- Policy, programming, and budgetary interventions are not keeping up with the rapidly changing contexts of the region, and often neglect the most marginalised and affected populations, including young women, persons with non-binary SOGIE, people living with HIV, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees.

- There is a critical lack of data especially regarding unemployment rates and trends in marginalised groups such as women, people living in rural areas, people living with HIV, persons with non-binary SOGIE, persons with disabilities, and migrant workers and refugees. The lack of data is a barrier to informed policy making and programming and hence these disparities remain unaddressed. Furthermore, existing accountability mechanisms are weak and do not offer opportunities for young people to engage meaningfully.

- Nearly 21 million people - three out of every 1,000 people worldwide - are victims of forced labour across the world, trapped in jobs which they were coerced or deceived into and which they cannot leave. 1 in 4 victims of modern slavery are children. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by forced labour, accounting for 99% of victims in the commercial sex industry, and 58% in other sectors.[29]

- Child labour continues to be an issue. Children around the world are routinely engaged in paid and unpaid forms of work that are not harmful

to them. However, they are classified as child labourers when they are either too young to work or are involved in hazardous activities that may compromise their physical, mental, social or educational development. In the least developed countries, around one in four children (ages 5 to 17) are engaged in labour that is considered detrimental to their health and development.[30]

• Technology has played a positive role to support jobs for people who experience limited spatial mobility (such as housewives, persons with disabilities) by making it easier to work remotely. However, many countries in Asia Pacific are slow in adopting these technological developments and fully harnessing them to support job market growth. It is an untapped pool with promising potential and should be explored by local governments on priority basis.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

State should:

1. Prioritise **jobs in macroeconomic policies; invest in active and affirmative labour market job policies** with a special focus to the most marginalised and vulnerable young people.

2. Invest in youth skill development including soft skills, technical and vocational training and education for the future.

3. Provide **legal protection for all workers against workplace discrimination and abuse** on the grounds of SOGIE, gender, disability, and migratory status. Laws and policies should undergo reform where necessary to put in place labour protection law and legal actions to **stop child labour and forced labour and exploitation of children** in all sectors.

4. Invest in **quotas, tax reduction incentives and sensitisation and awareness raising** among employers to encourage equal opportunity, safe, and inclusive work environment for marginalised populations.

5. Government should focus more in the **capacity strengthening of all young people including the ones who want to work abroad**, provide free basic education including the technical education and , strengthening social safety and social security of migrant

workers and all young people working in country, especially the ones involved in the high risk works.

6. Invest in **research and collection of disaggregated data** to make sure that policymaking and programmatic interventions are informed and address the intersectionalities and marginalisation effectively.

7. Strategise and allocate sufficient budget to enable **uniform development throughout the country to reduce rural to urban migration** by creating opportunities for decent work within rural areas.

8. Acknowledge the **intersectionality of stakeholders and adopt an evidence based approach** to involve Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), youth groups, education institutes to develop, implement and monitor policies pertaining to decent and equitable work and enable monitoring and accountability of such policies through inclusion of youth, CSOs and other relevant stakeholders to make sure that policies are implemented uniformly across the sector.

9. Regulate or reform **discriminatory laws or policies** that currently allow for child labour or allow for unlawful termination of workers who become disabled in the course of employment. We urge the government to invest in the national level social security net programmes, so that vulnerable families don't send their children to work. Also State should take care to ensure that labour laws are compliant with the International Labor Organisation (ILO) Conventions.

10. Enable State led plan/schemes that allows for subsidy for loans for unemployed youth who want to start their own business/ventures. The private sector should also **foster youth entrepreneurships and increase financial investment** in youth-led and small businesses and enterprises. Our recommendation is for the private sector to work closely with the Government to encourage an active labour market.

Young People and Climate Change

Situational Analysis

• The Asia-Pacific continues to be the world's most disaster-prone region. In 2018 alone,

several unexpected natural disasters affected millions of people.[31] Extreme weather conditions will result in an estimated 19 million people being displaced ; and half of this population lives in Asia and the Pacific.[32]

- According to the UN report prepared for the APFSD 2019, the SDG 13 (Climate Action) is unlikely to be met in Asia. In fact, all the sub-regions in Asia are off track in Goal 13. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report on the impact of global warming of 1.5 degree celsius released prior to the Conference of Parties 24 (COP) last year gave the world a reality check. It underscores that if we want to reach the objectives laid out in the Paris Agreement, we have to act fast and ambitiously with the right solutions.

- The inclusion of human rights, gender responsiveness and public participations are still very contentious in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations and documents. We hope the day will come soon that these principles are incorporated without any Parties questioning its rationale and appropriateness.

- Onset of conflict and natural disasters create additional economic constraints for families, increases the risk of sexual violence towards girls and women,[33] and weakens social institutions designed to protect them. The culmination of these factors increases the risk of child marriage for girls as families cope to provide and economic stability for their daughters.[34]

- Collectively, climate change impacts have caused an increase in human migration, making people more vulnerable to trafficking as they find themselves desperate for security and work. Extreme flooding, droughts, and deforestation are some examples of the push factors that galvanise people to move. Sea-levels rising, too, forces populations to abandon their land when it starts to go underwater. Women and girls are the most vulnerable among these 'climate migrants' as they are often trafficked into brothels in neighbouring countries.[35]

- Populations affected by climate change have diverse needs and deserve differential responses. The ability of the countries in the region vary significantly, with some of them being more prone and less prepared to deal with the impact of climate change.[36]

- Often, "renewable" and "clean energy" solutions come at a high cost for the communities, and often result in land grabbing. Communities, especially in rural areas, are not involved in the consultation and decision-making process.

- The lives of climate justice defenders are often threatened and at risk of being killed. According to Global Witness, 207 environmental human rights defenders were killed in 2017. Thousands more were harassed, attacked and arbitrarily arrested by authorities who view them as a threat to their economic and development interests.[37]

- The Asia-Pacific is home to 60% of the world's youth population. Though they form the biggest demographic to be impacted by climate change, however, there is a lack of youth-participation at various levels, in the process of formulating, implementing and monitoring policies addressing climate change.[38] The opportunity to put people, including young people, at the center of this vital climate action, which is embedded in the principles stated in the Paris Agreement preamble[39] is still an uphill battle.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

We urge the State and Non-State actors including the civil society to take action through:

1. Building **community resilience/youth participation by investing in community empowerment programmes** focused on community protection and welfare to combat climate change by using the following methods:

    1.1. Build their capacity and responsiveness to deal with the impact of climate change as a community.
    1.2. Hold governments accountable to the promises made with regards to combating climate change.
    1.3. Ensure meaningful engagement of marginalised youth, especially young women, in policy, decision-making and monitoring related to climate change (for example, nations which are still in the process of developing their National Adaptation Plan must ensure youth participation in this process) by investing in their capacity building and ensuring representation of their voices.

1.4. Community networks and programmes that addressed gender-based violence before the disaster should be identified, revitalised and strengthened through training and support.

1.5. Sensitise community members on their rights including their rights to land and property. This will allow communities vulnerable to climate change (such as the indigenous peoples) to take action if their land is used for any purpose without their free, prior and informed consent.

2. Creating wider **awareness about climate change**, including with the more privileged sections of society and youth so that they can hold themselves accountable to the impact they have on climate change and use their privilege responsibly in that context. Contextualised education and integration of awareness on climate change and sustainable development into the existing curriculum in education and creating more platforms for youth to take climate action is integral to this.

3. Encouraging and investing 2% of the nation's budget on **youth-led research and technological innovation** — ensuring that such investments are equitable and inclusive of rural communities and marginalised groups. In many cases, existing, organic and community-owned solutions may be the most effective, and therefore, we must invest in scaling up and supporting these practices.

4. Scaling up **disaster risk management systems** by allocating an additional 5% on top of the existing national budget allocated for disaster risk management to enable more participation from youth in emergency response systems through use of available technology and associated policies and procedures of the early warning system (EWS)..

5. Funding **organisations, especially youth-led and youth-alliance organisations, and NGOs that work on environment and climate change**. While governments and the private sector are beginning to take action on some of these issues, there are many gaps.[40]

6. Recognising **diversity of people affected by disasters, including disability, sexuality,** **gender identity and expression, age, livelihood and so on** as per the context of the region affected, and hence tailor and integrate appropriate response and service delivery in disaster relief and disaster risk reduction (DRR) plans and policies. For example, SRHR services need to be ensured in the disaster relief camps or capacity building of service-providers to address differential needs of the affected populations. This also includes the need to address the inaccessibility issues prevalent in most emergency shelters which affects persons with disabilities.

7. Ensuring **protection of climate change defenders** (Protection, Implementation of Legislation & Practice Legal & Social Protection) by strengthening and putting in place specific policy mechanisms to enable adequate social and legal protection through government-supported action networks to climate change defenders.

8. Collaborating **with the private sector and local communities** to leverage on technology, resources, knowledge, capacity and research in the development of sustainable and eco-friendly alternatives.

9. Ensure **private sector accountability-building be strengthened** through regulated policies and regulations to hold them accountable in addressing the environmental impacts of their products, practices and services, including production methods and waste management. Here, it is essential to use opportunities for collaboration among communities, government and the private companies that are using and researching sustainable and eco-friendly technologies.

10. Combating and monitoring **discriminatory practices arising out of natural disaster related contexts** such as trafficking, child abuse, early and forced marriages of girl children, and address gender-based violence, especially sexual violence faced by children and young people by taking the following steps[41]:

10.1. Health service delivery must include care for survivors of rape. This care should include, at a minimum, treatment, of physical injuries, pregnancy prevention, treatment for sexually transmitted infections, and, where appropriate, HIV postexposure prophylaxis. Health workers should be trained to identify

victims of gender-based violence and provide care that ensures their safety, privacy, confidentiality and dignity, and victims should be referred for counselling and other services.

10.2. Displaced children should be registered so that children separated from their families and possibly orphaned can be identified and offered special care and protection, preferably with family members in their local communities.

10.3. Efforts to address gender-based violence must engage men, women and children of the affected community in the planning phase, taking care to get input from groups who tend to be overlooked in programme development, such as abused women and persons with disabilities.

10.4. Young women's access to resources and assistance should be ensured and young people in general must be made part of the response and distribution networks.

CONCLUSION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a universal, integrated, transformative agenda of the people, by the people, and for the people. In the 2030 Agenda, it is recognised that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions and ensuring that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity, equality and in a healthy environment are the greatest challenges to and indispensable requirements for sustainable development. Member States are therefore committed to achieving balanced and integrated sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental dimensions.[42] Although the Asia-Pacific region has made significant achievements in socioeconomic development, the progress has been uneven across and within countries and across the dimensions of development. The above document brings in a youth perspective to the status of progress in achieving the SDGs and highlights areas in need of attention in relation to SDGs 4, 8 and 13 (education, employment and climate change). Each of these SDGs have been analysed through the lens of other related and cross-cutting SDGs especially SDG 1 (poverty), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), and SDG 17 (partnership and goals). We also zoomed in on SDG 8 (good jobs and economic growth for employment) and SDG 7 (renewable energy) and SDG 12 (responsible consumption) to draft recommendations for climate change. We believe that through this call to action, our government will strengthen their political commitment and allocate

adequate resources, to enable us, the youth of the Asia and the Pacific, to make the most effective transformation of the world into a better place for all.

Abbreviations

AAAA – Addis Ababa Action Agenda

APFSD – Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

APPC – Asian Pacific Population Conference

ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations

BPFA – Beijing Platform for Action

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

COP – Conference of the Parties

CRPD – Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

CSE – Comprehensive Sexuality Education

CSO – Civil Society Organisations

DRR – Disaster Risk Reduction

EWS – Early Warning System

FfD – Financing for Development

GBV – Gender-Based Violence

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

ICCPR – International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICESCR – International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

ICPD – International Conference on Population and Development

ICPD POA – International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action

ILO – International Labour Organisation

IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

LGBTQIA+ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual

NEET – Not in Education, Employment, or Training

NEQMAP – Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia Pacific

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

SAARC – South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

SDG – Sustainable Development Goal

SDG 1 – End poverty in all its forms everywhere

SDG 4 – Ensure inclusive & equitable quality

education & promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

SDG 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

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

SDG 10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries

SDG 13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

SDG 17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

SOGIE – Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression

SOGIESC – Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics

SRHR – Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights

UAE – United Arab Emirates

UNCRC – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

UNSCR – United Nations Security Council

WPAY – World Programme of Action for Youth

Notes & References

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