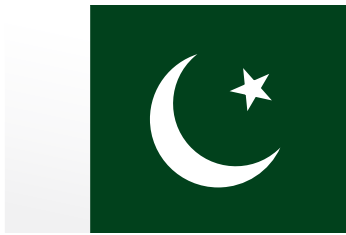




# APFSD Youth Call to Action 2021: Pakistan<sup>1</sup>



## INTRODUCTION

Pakistan's main problem dealt with the economic aspect of daily wage labourers. The shutting down of small-scale businesses had a large impact on youth and there was an absence of mechanisms to build digitised businesses. There were no social protection programmes for gender and ethnic minorities initiated by the government as well as a lack of student friendly digital resources once education had to move to the online sphere. Nearly 60% of the Pakistani population is under the age of 30 and this Youth Bulge comes with major challenges of unemployment and limited engagement for these young people. Formal education does not provide the necessary skills for employment and young people face a huge barrier after completing their education. This further leads to isolation, dejection and depression among young people. The issue is only magnified for youth belonging to sexual and gender minorities.

Due to COVID-19, other areas of the healthcare sector took a backseat as all priorities were shifted to combating the pandemic, and therefore proper treatment for various other health issues could not take place. Universal health care and physical health has been the top issue during this pandemic. Furthermore, mental health issues, gender-based violence, absence of psychosocial support and problems in accessing services related to sexual reproductive health have all been major hurdles. According to the Global climate risk index 2017 ranks Pakistan at number 7 in the list of most vulnerable nations, due to its geographical and climatic features.

Variability in the monsoon rains, massive floods and droughts further add to its vulnerability. The cumulative effect of all these climate peculiarities puts the country in a severe threat of food, water, and energy security. In Pakistan there is Lack of awareness among the community, even the Government regarding the Climate Change crises and Climate Actions. Ad hoc measures have been implemented by the government over the years which have not contributed effectively such as the Billion Trees project of banning the use of plastic bags without an alternative.

## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- Human lives need to be prioritised over economic advantages.
- The education system should be improved by the government in terms of COVID-19 this would include improving the curriculum and implementing a proper virtual system of education.
- There should be more learning platforms to help young people be the change agents in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. There should be training sessions for youth to use digital devices and raise donations to provide internet devices/laptops for students. Digital spaces should be improved at the mass level, including awareness of digital platforms, and speed of the internet.

- The government should adopt various fiscal and monetary measures to revive and sustain economic activity. Programmes like cash transfers to households, extending unemployment or social security benefits and loans to business will aid in reviving the economy. Social welfare programmes should also be put in place so that people can afford to quarantine and students can afford to attend online classes.
- There should be psycho-social training, collective voice and group formation and coping mechanisms for women suffering from domestic abuse or other forms of violence.
- There should be mental health initiatives put in place for sustainable and resilient recovery from COVID-19 which make sure gender and ethnic minorities are not left behind. The prioritisation of the mental health of students and frontline doctors is crucial.
- Mass level awareness campaigns should be initiated to address the rumours and superstitions regarding vaccines.
- Equal opportunities need to be given for all in terms of rural and urban areas, caste, and social status.
- The government must strategize and institutionalize focus on improved SRHR for young people including the transgender and differently abled community. This can be done through setting up clinics specifically designated for SRHR services.
- Stigma free Youth Friendly Health Services Centers and information counters should be developed to increase young people's access to healthcare services.
- Mobile applications should be developed by the Government at the national level to facilitate access of the right information.
- Labour force participation and decent work for all young people can be enhanced by increasing access to the right skills, more platforms, capacity including entrepreneurial skills and linking them with technical and vocational training institutes (e.g. TVET).
- A mechanism must be built to address the rise in Gender Based Violence during the pandemic through virtual courts to combat the already existing systemic delays in justice.
- Taking the example of Sindh, all other provinces' governments need to work on a LSBE curriculum for schools to address SRHR.
- Youth Policies must be implemented in the country that already address the need for entrepreneurship, small loans and skills building in youth to prepare them for employment.
- Strict action must be taken against Child Marriages which have again risen during the pandemic. The law must be revised to increase the legal age of marriage to 18 years of age for girls (currently 16) and boys.
- The government must develop a pro youth employment strategy to promote entrepreneurship and facilitate youth initiatives through tax incentives.
- The government must implement the National SDGs tracker to measure the country's progress according to the 2030 agenda. This will also ensure data gathering against all indicators.
- Youth networks should be developed at provincial and district levels by Government so that these networks can work in their communities/areas on Climate Action to achieve the Global Commitments and Sustainable environment at the grass root level.
- Young people should be engaged at all levels of decision making regarding Climate Change initiatives taken by government and Climate Change Policies. Implementation strategy should be made in collaboration with Youth networks and government.
- Awareness on recycling of the waste should be initiated at a mass level. Awareness sessions, public service messages through national channels and radio campaigns should be generated in order to aware people about recycling of waste and disposable mechanisms.

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1. The APFSD country and sub-regional briefs were developed through collective discussions and engagements between youth advocates at the APFSD Youth Forum on March 14-16, 2021. The Pakistan drafting team consists of: Danish Tariq, Joshua Dilawar, Nasir Sajjad, Noor Imran, Qandeel Naeem, and Zoha Jamshaid. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW team.