



APFSD Youth Forum and Regional ECOSOC Youth Forum Call to Action 2022



Kazakhstan, Laos,
Myanmar, Thailand,
and Timor Leste

Building Back Better from COVID-19 While Advancing the Full Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the strict control and prevention measures brought our regular offline educational methods to a halt, and in most cases, educational platforms were shifted toward online learnings such as virtual peer education seminars. Livelihood and income decreased for large parts of the population in all parts of the economy and unemployment figures rose up, leading to poverty. Mental health problems increased and a huge number of isolated youth and children resulted in higher rates of depression. There were also numerous information gaps, especially in the countries where the government fails to provide opportunities for quality education. In certain countries, there was a lower rate of political engagement by youth especially during the pandemic. This is also connected to political powers making moves to decrease youth engagement in politics and silencing people's voices under the guise of the pandemic.

Also, the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing gender gaps, resulting in the emergence of the "she-cession". In

contrast to previous economic recessions, such as the 2008 financial crisis, the service sector – where women are disproportionately employed – has been hardest hit by lockdown and social distancing measures. Moreover, living conditions and work-life balance have been seriously affected, since housework and childcare have increased during the pandemic. In the subregion, rapid economic growth followed by urbanisation has resulted in drastic change in the use of land.

With that said, we are capable of and in need of developing stronger partnerships to tackle challenges that should be addressed urgently, which include vaccine inequity, gender inequality, and climate change. In regards to vaccine distribution, we see a huge disparity around the world, and our subregion is no exception. The numbers of people vaccinated against COVID-19 largely varies within the subregion, and more subregional, regional, and global coordination is the key to achieve vaccine equity. Even within each country in the subregion, people are affected differently by the pandemic. The needs of those in vulnerable groups, such as women, children, persons with disabilities, etc. are not fully met. To address this, public-

private partnerships within countries are crucial in the efforts to leave no one behind in the COVID-19 recovery.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- Digital learning opportunities need to be improved especially for people who have less access. Internet access, technological devices and other needs of students and teachers need to be fulfilled to ensure that nobody is left behind. Also, protect and secure the online community and environment for the safety of children. Educators need to be trained on how to educate digitally.
- Online environments are a tool for political and advocacy engagement of the youth in the region. It can make advocacy more inclusive than ever. Thus, a free media and internet environment needs to be protected in the region, where more and more countries are leaning towards authoritarian regimes
- More quality SRHR and gender education needs to be implemented. SRHR education should be incorporated into school curricula and be funded and should address comprehensive topics in a more open, free manner especially to prevent STI or early pregnancy.
- Include civic education and political participation as part of educational curricula. Insufficient civic education has resulted in low voting rate and political participation of youth in certain countries like Japan.
- Develop more collaborative work in educational settings on global and cross-regional levels: connecting schools across regions and sharing facilities and knowledge will improve the quality of education.
- Develop and support two dimensional quality assessment; the internal reviews or self-assessments by schools and the external reviews through mechanisms such as school inspections.
- These recommendations will be made possible and could benefit young people and youth only when they feel safe in educational spaces. To ensure that, more efforts to create safe and friendly environment at schools, such as anti bullying campaigns and serious monitoring and evaluation measures, are needed.
- One of the long term solutions for gender equality, including the SOGIESC community, is to start making a change by educating young people and youth about the topic.
- Special attention needs to be given to the health and psychological care for all frontline healthcare workers, like nurses, community health assistants and support staff.
- Unpaid labor at home should also be recognised. The unpaid labor done at home is a pillar of the society and should receive more recognition and support.
- The governments should invest in technologies and corporations that develop more affordable solutions and alternatives for plastic products. Coordinate better with major global, regional, and national corporations and develop common regulations and understanding for water and marine environments.
- Build more renewable energy sources. Sustainable ways of transportation (cycling, walking and e-scooters) need to be promoted.
- More awareness raising efforts are needed to convince people that climate change and its consequences are real and to change the mindset for many.
- Include diverse stakeholders and networks, including vulnerable groups, faith actors, etc., to the discussion at the decision-making table. These partnerships and cooperation will make it possible to widely and effectively share the accumulated knowledge, experiences, know-how, harm mitigation methods and innovation.
- Support developing countries in their efforts to become less dependent on donors or developed countries – this should be applied to equal vaccine distribution.
- Develop effective partnerships amongst the private sector and civil society and governments in their efforts to achieve climate goals.
- Take sufficient actions to solve the dust pollution besides air pollution. One of the main reasons for the dust pollution in northern China, Mongolia, and Central Asia is deforestation in these regions.
- Support academics and young researchers working or studying sustainable development and environmental science who need to be financially incentivised in order to bring about valuable change to the region's stability and preserving the natural environment.

The APFSD country and sub-regional briefs were developed through collective discussions and engagements between youth advocates at the APFSD Youth Forum and ECOSOC Regional Youth Forum on March 19-21, 2022 on SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), SDG 15 (Life on Land) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). This sub-regional drafting team consists of Munkh Erdene and Harumi Endo. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW, YouthLead, and Y-Peer Call To Action team.
