

ASIA-PACIFIC YOUTH

# CALL TO ACTION 2025

APFSD Youth Forum | Feb 19-21, 2025

Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science and evidence based solutions for the 2030 agenda and its SDGs for leaving no young person behind in Asia and the Pacific

## WHO ARE WE?

We are an intersectional group of over 549<sup>1</sup> young people, activists, and advocates from 34 countries and territories<sup>2</sup> across Asia and the Pacific region. We represent youth-led, youth-serving and feminist organisations, changemakers, social entrepreneurs, activists, and students who have gathered together for the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) Youth Forum 2025, held in hybrid modality, from 19th - 21st February 2025 in Bangkok, Thailand. 130 young people have joined us in-person. Together, we comprise unique and diverse individuals ranging from age 13-30, across all backgrounds and identities including persons with disabilities, persons with various sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions, youth from ethnic and minority groups, and various socio-economic backgrounds, amongst others. It is our hope that this call to action reflects our collective voice and demands, and that our representation at this forum is indicative of the strength of young people's commitment to the attainment of the sustainable development goals.

This APFSD Youth Call to Action puts forward our recommendations and outlines our demands for sustainable, inclusive, and evidence based solutions, with focus on the SDGs under review for this year— SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), and SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals).

This Call to Action was developed by a dedicated drafting team<sup>3</sup> who worked on behalf of the larger group to capture the key discussion points and demands discussed by participants in the forum. Like previous years, we emphasise that the future we hope to attain, one in which

meaningful progress is made towards the 2030 Agenda, cannot be achieved without a concerted effort to include and uplift young people's voices in all our diversities at all levels of the decision making process.

## BACKGROUND

Young people in Asia-Pacific who comprise of 60% of the world's youths<sup>4</sup> continue to face challenges as Asia sees an increasing number and intensity of conflicts, geopolitical tensions, violence, and a decline in human rights.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, escalating conflicts, and growing climate crisis have severely thrown the achievement of SDGs off track. Of the 117 out of 169 targets with available data, only 16 are on track to be achieved by 2030 and 18 shows a negative trend in need of urgent reversal. The majority of the 18 targets are related to climate-related challenges and disaster risk, showing the climate crisis is real in the region, and will affect all other SDGs.

Young people are not immune to this grim reality and it is through our participation at the APFSD Youth Forum, 2025 that we hope to be recognised as the agents of change who if given the opportunity, skills, and platform, can bring innovative solutions and drive revolutionary changes. It is our hope that the recommendations put forward through this Call to Action is brought to attention at the APFSD intergovernmental fora, High Level Political Forum (HLPF), and ECOSOC Youth Forum in 2025.

Co-convended by:



In collaboration:



In partnership:



# SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## SDG 3- GOOD HEALTH AND WELL BEING

### Situational Analysis

Despite progress in health outcomes across Asia and the Pacific, the region faces unique challenges in achieving health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3). Only 15% of health-related SDGs were on track, and less than one third were likely to reach their 2030 targets. The progress on reducing maternal mortality has stagnated since 2015. We see progress on reducing child mortality, and increased likelihood of premature death from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). Access to health services remains weak with 57% of the global population not being covered by essential health services based on recent data.<sup>5</sup> Significant disparities persist, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas. Rapid urbanization, widening economic inequality, and fragmented healthcare services exacerbate the situation, putting vulnerable populations at greater risk (United Nations [UN], 2023)<sup>6</sup>. Diseases like HIV and the rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and diabetes, highlight the urgency to strengthen health systems in the region. NCDs account for over 50% of deaths in all countries of Asia and the Pacific, and in 24 of 30 countries, they cause more than two thirds of all deaths (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022)<sup>7</sup>. NCDs, such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, now cause 74% of deaths worldwide, putting more pressure on health systems (WHO, 2022)<sup>8</sup>. Harmful use of alcohol is on a rise. Universal health coverage (UHC) is key to making sure everyone can get the healthcare they need (UN, 2023)<sup>9</sup>. Yet about one-third of the population in Asia and the Pacific do not have access to basic healthcare (WHO, 2024)<sup>10</sup>. Household expenditures on health indicators are showing a huge reversal in progress and remain high. Thus, countries need to work together, focus on human rights, and create gender-sensitive solutions that reduce health inequalities and build fairer health systems for all. Vulnerable groups, such as women, children, people living in poverty, the LGBTQIA+ community, older adults, and persons with disabilities (PWDs), are among the most affected.

Maternal health outcomes, while improving in some regions, still show significant disparities. According to the United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA] (2023)<sup>11</sup>, the global maternal mortality ratio stands at 223 deaths per 100,000 live births, a figure that is much higher in rural and conflict-affected areas. Access to family planning services remains limited for millions of women, particularly in developing regions, with an estimated 270 million women

lacking access to modern contraceptive methods (UNFPA, 2023)<sup>12</sup>. Complications linked to pregnancy and childbirth are the second leading cause of death for 15 to 19 year-old girls globally, and adolescent fertility rate should be addressed<sup>13</sup>.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death especially among female youth in some of the countries in the region. 1 in 7 boys and 1 in 9 girls (ages 10–19) in East Asia and the Pacific have a mental health condition. Early mental health struggles can impair brain development and increase long-term health risks, and poverty, violence, disease, and crises contribute to psychological distress in millions of youth.<sup>14</sup> Mental health disorders are among the leading causes of disability worldwide. Depression and anxiety disorders have risen steadily, with over 300 million people being affected globally (WHO, 2024)<sup>15</sup>. Suicide remains a significant concern, ranking as the fourth leading cause of death among youth aged 15 to 29. Despite efforts to expand mental health services, they remain underfunded in many countries, and stigma continues to prevent people from seeking help.

The impact of climate change on health across Asia and the Pacific has become more evident in recent years. Extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, and heatwaves have led to increased outbreaks of waterborne diseases and worsened food insecurity in vulnerable regions. Climate change is also expanding the range of vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever, with outbreaks reported in new geographic areas (World Bank, 2024)<sup>16</sup>. These challenges highlight the urgent need for climate-resilient health systems to protect vulnerable populations.

To accelerate progress toward SDG 3, countries in Asia and the Pacific must tackle health inequities and integrate climate adaptation strategies into health planning. This requires enhancing collaboration among governments, UN agencies, and civil society to strengthen health systems and improve service delivery. Gender-sensitive and human rights-based approaches are critical to reducing inequalities and building fairer health systems that ensure well-being for all by 2030.



## Recommendations

### Strengthening of Health System

- Ensure universal access to comprehensive gender-affirming health services, including SRHR services such as contraception through public health systems, and tax-free products for menstruation for youth, particularly in rural areas, ensuring confidentiality and inclusivity.
- Promote preconception care programs and enhance newborn healthcare services to improve maternal and child health outcomes.
- Improve maternal healthcare by enhancing emergency medical services, upgrading facilities, and strengthening transport systems to reduce maternal mortality.
- Decriminalise abortion and ensure that funding for safe abortion care is flexible, community-based and inclusive of diverse needs and communities.
- Develop gender-responsive disaster relief frameworks to ensure access to healthcare for women, children, and marginalized groups during emergencies.
- Develop and strengthen national strategies to digitize healthcare services, including telemedicine and online consultations, ensuring accessibility and affordability for all.
- Establish national health data systems for improved patient care coordination, disease tracking, and resource allocation.
- Implement structured monitoring systems with key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess and improve health education programs.
- Improve working conditions for healthcare professionals by ensuring fair wages, social protection, and career progression opportunities.
- Invest in climate-resilient healthcare solutions, focusing on reducing air pollution and promoting sustainable food and energy systems.

### Investing in Health Infrastructure

- Strengthen public-private partnerships and collaborate with international organisations to expand healthcare infrastructure and financing.
- Increase government's investment and funding for youth friendly, affordable, high-quality medical facilities and services, including mental health, Sexual and reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) information and services, for young people particularly in rural, and hard to reach areas, but also in conflict and disaster prone contexts.

### Inclusivity

- Accelerate inclusive public health services including mental health services for marginalized groups such as the young people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+, and those from low-income backgrounds.
- End invisibilisation of Trans and Queer People, their histories and their issues, and universal access to gender-affirming healthcare and policies.

### Access to knowledge and information

- Expand awareness on mental health services by integrating them into community healthcare centers, schools, and institutions. Promote online mental health support, including virtual therapy and hotlines, to improve accessibility for youth and marginalised groups.
- Enhance awareness on infectious disease prevention, including HIV/AIDS, through targeted education, widespread testing, and improved treatment accessibility.
- Collaborate with ministries of education and health across the region to mandate Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) as part of the national curriculum. Partner with educators, health experts, community leaders, and youth to develop a comprehensive curriculum that is evidence-based and upholding bodily autonomy and dignity. Establish robust monitoring systems to assess the impact of CSE programs on student outcomes, ensuring continuous improvement and accountability.

## SDG 5- GENDER EQUALITY

### Situational Analysis

The road to a world where all genders are treated equally is not an easy and short one. What started in the late 19th century as gender equality movement have now transcended into an intersectional movement, with the consciousness to fight for all cross-cutting issues that are impacting women and other gender minorities, highlighting other social identities such as religion, caste, sexuality, expression, social class, disability, etc. in its process.

Asia Pacific is the home to 60% of the world population, and includes two of the most populous countries in the world; China and India<sup>17</sup>, with most countries in the Asia Pacific having female-to-male ratios of less than 0.5<sup>18</sup>. Sadly, same as the global movement, the road towards gender equality in Asia Pacific is still a long road. Most recent data shows significant data gaps exist in regards to the indicators on



gender equality, especially in the areas of women's economic empowerment, unpaid care work, violence against women and girls, FGMC, and early marriage.

An estimated 640 million girls and women alive today were married in childhood. In Asia, over 80 million girls and women have undergone #FemaleGenitalMutilation/Cutting. Nearly half of child brides live in South Asia (45%) with the next largest share in sub-Saharan Africa (20%), followed by East Asia and the Pacific (15%) with 95 million girls. This shows the high continued prevalence of harmful practices such as child marriages. One in two 15-24-year-old women in the Pacific; 1 in 4 15-24-year-old women in South Asia; 1 in 6 15-24-year-old women in

Southeast Asia has experienced physical, and/or sexual intimate partner violence.<sup>19</sup>

Equal Measures 2030's SDG Gender Index report shows that there has been some progress in gender equality since 2015 in the Asia Pacific but the progress is far too slow with the overall score rated as 'poor'. The Highest index score of progress was for SDG 6 on water while the lowest index score was for SDG 10 on inequalities<sup>20</sup>. Proportion of women in managerial positions; Seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments; gender parity in labour force participation all remain far from the goalpost in 2024. Data is unavailable by age disaggregation, limiting the assessment of young people data on gender equality.

The pandemic has amplified the impacts of longstanding gender inequalities. Rapid gender assessments indicate that violence against women has risen globally since the onset of the pandemic: one in three women was a victim of violence in her lifetime prior to the crisis, and the figure has now risen to one in two. Additionally, women in particular, young women are disproportionately affected by the unprecedented employment losses caused by the pandemic, due to their overrepresentation in the hardest hit sectors and in vulnerable and informal employment. The pandemic, which has overlapped with recent environmental crises and civil unrests in some countries, also emphasises the need for risk-informed development approaches to sustain progress towards the 2030 agenda, including on SDG 5<sup>21</sup>.

## Recommendations

### Laws and Policies

- Eliminate gender-based discriminatory policies in the school, university, and workplace. In the process, from designing to monitoring & evaluation, the

governments shall collaborate with community and relevant stakeholders ensuring diverse inputs into the new policies.

- Integrate youth and gender-sensitive values into national development strategies.
- Implement gender quotas in political parties and government institutions to ensure young women's participation in leadership roles.
- Eliminate all discriminatory laws and policies that allows the exploitation of women, girls, and other groups of vulnerable people under various contexts, such as child-marriage, FGM (Female Genital Mutilation), violence among women and girls, labor and employment, health, education, and others as well.

### Violence against Women (VAW)

- Implement CSE, for reducing adolescent pregnancy, and VAW that disproportionately impacts the lives of women and girls in Asia Pacific.
- Protect the work and lives of Women Human Rights Defenders from intimidation, exploitation, violence, pressure, and murders.

### Climate Change

- Prioritise gender-responsive planning and budgeting, recognising the transformative potential of gender equity in addressing climate change.
- Use disaggregated data and needs analysis to understand the gendered impacts of climate change, as well as the identification and mapping of vulnerable communities with a focus on centering gender-diverse leaders in shaping climate strategies.

## SDG 8- DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

### Situational Analysis

As of 2024, the global economy has faced significant challenges, including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising inflation, and geopolitical tensions. These factors have affected employment rates, particularly in developing countries where informal employment is prevalent.

Most economies in Asia and the Pacific are expected to experience further setbacks with rising inflation due to high energy and food prices. ADB forecasts regional inflation to average 4.2 per cent in 2023 with varying degrees of





inflationary pressure to be felt across all subregions<sup>22</sup>. Despite the winding down of the pandemic, the region is expected to face new challenges from depreciating exchange rates, slowing demand for exports, and effects of the conflicts, particularly on global commodity markets. With inflation outpacing nominal income growth, ILO expects a fall in real wages in most countries globally, threatening the livelihoods of low-income households and vulnerable populations<sup>23</sup>

Youth unemployment rates in the Asia Pacific region are comparably high. The region is home to more than half of all unemployed youths (nearly 37 million or 57% of the global population). Based on the statistics from International Labour Organisation (ILO), In Asia and the Pacific, around 20% of all youth are NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). Rate of NEET among youth is particularly elevated for young women, at 30.4% compared with 11.3 per cent for young men. Young women face greater obstacles to access to employment, and in education and training than do young men in the region. Youth in the region remain concentrated in low productivity sectors, e.g., agriculture (34.9% in South Asia, 23.9% in South-East Asia and the Pacific and 21.8% in East Asia).

Labour markets in most countries in Asia and the Pacific continue to be in crisis mode, with an incomplete recovery of employment following the pandemic, declining real wages, and a severe cost-of-living crisis. The pandemic-induced labour market disruptions resulted in job losses and reduced working hours<sup>24</sup>.

Despite overall progress in school enrollment rates, women and girls continue to face considerable challenges when it comes to accessing education and employment opportunities. They have lower enrollment rates and struggle with literacy. Young women also encounter difficulties accessing labour markets, leading to higher rates of youth unemployment<sup>25</sup>.

## Recommendations

### Education and training

- Invest in and improve access to flexible learning strategies for quality formal and non-formal education, technical and vocational education and training, and skills development for decent work and livelihood.
- Align education with market demand by strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs through collaboration with the industry to meet current and future market demands.

- Implement skill-based capacity building, digital integration and financial literacy of women, girls and gender-diverse persons.

### Labour Rights

- Protect workers' rights in informal sectors by enforcing a minimum wage for gig and migrant workers.
- Reinforce and strengthen labor laws to ensure fair wages, safe working conditions, reasonable working hours, and social protections in line with the Leave No One Behind principle.
- Expand and restructure social protection policies by centering the lived experiences of women and gender-diverse persons.
- Formally recognise, account for, socially protect, and work towards the redistribution of unpaid care work and informal labour done by women and gender-diverse persons.
- Mandate equal parental leave and invest in affordable childcare; Implement equal, fully paid parental leave for mothers and fathers, challenging traditional gender roles. And significantly increase public investment in high-quality, affordable childcare, especially for low-income families.
- Recognize refugees' right to work by issuing temporary work permits and amending laws to allow them access to safe employment.
- Ensure fair and equal living wages for workers of all genders that align with economic growth and are revised every five years in a comprehensive manner.
- Discourage attempts to restrict the existence, agency and functioning of unions.
- Resist corporate capture and facilitate our access to equity-free transformative capital.

### Green Jobs

- Facilitate youth engagement in the transition to a green economy through the promotion of green jobs, support for green entrepreneurship, and dedicated funding for youth-led climate action projects and sustainable businesses.
- Support and provide training relevant to Green Jobs through investing in and establishing upskilling, reskilling, and cross-skilling training programs to accelerate green jobs opportunities and employment.



## Technology and Digitalization

- Ensure that the future of digital governance is inclusive, transparent, and gender-responsive.
- Support and facilitate local tech entrepreneurship, with a particular focus on youth, women in STEM, and marginalized communities.
- Establish incubation centers, provide financial resources, and create an enabling environment where young innovators—especially women and underrepresented groups—can compete with big tech companies on a level playing field.
- To achieve responsible digitalization, introduce digital content laws that protect users from harm without stifling innovation and freedom of speech.

## Micro financing

- Prioritize support for the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) by providing funding, training, and market access to social enterprises, cooperatives, and other SSE initiatives.
- Expand microfinance access to marginalised communities to stimulate grassroots entrepreneurship. Explore partnership with microfinance institutions, build government schemes, and private sector investors to offer seed funding, mentorship, and market linkages to support sustainable businesses.

## Inclusivity

- Immediate end to all forms of hazardous caste-based labour and advocate for swift action against private entities.
- Systematically work towards delinking of caste and labour, and commit to national and regional accountability on progress every five years.
- End discriminatory detention practices, decriminalise sex work, guarantee the access and right of refugees to decent and dignified work, and account for and socially protect migrant workers.

## SDG 14- LIFE BELOW WATER

### Situational Analysis

The Asia-Pacific region is home to some of the world's richest and most diverse marine ecosystems, supporting millions of livelihoods, global food security, and economic stability. Increasing threats to these environments, such as marine pollution, overfishing, and climate change, further

imperil this critical sector; while also undermining the very way of life it supports for coastally dependent people, particularly Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and other low-lying nations. Marine pollution remains one of the biggest issues in the region, with Asia accounting for more than 60% of the plastic waste that ends up in the oceans<sup>26</sup>. Every year, around 11 million metric tons of plastic waste enters the ocean, seriously impacting marine biodiversity and fisheries<sup>27</sup>. Measures like single-use plastic bans and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes undertaken by Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand show that it's possible to move forward, albeit with issues on waste management infrastructure and a very limited implementation practice.

The world is experiencing problems with overfishing and overexploitation. Global fish stock assessments indicate that 34.2% of fish stocks are overexploited, a dramatic increase from 10% in the 1970s<sup>28</sup>. Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing in the Asia-Pacific region constitutes about 20% of the total catch, depleting marine resources and undermining the livelihoods of small-scale fishers<sup>29</sup>. Although multilateral agreements like the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) are intended to combat IUU fishing, their implementation remains inconsistent across the region, which makes them less effective.

Climate change also possesses impacts that exacerbate ocean degradation. The Asia-Pacific region is warming at a rate faster than the global average, and sea levels are expected to rise by 1 meter by 2100, which could displace over 130 million people<sup>30</sup>. Increasing ocean temperatures are causing widespread coral bleaching, threatening marine biodiversity and coastal protection. The Great Barrier Reef has already lost nearly 50% of its coral cover due to extreme heat stress, signifying a grave need for urgent climate adaptation and mitigation efforts<sup>31</sup>.

## Recommendations

### Marine Pollution and Waste Management

- Enhance marine pollution control & waste management by implementing carbon pricing for high-emission industries to fund marine conservation.
- Strengthen wastewater treatment protocols, ban single-use plastics, and promote biodegradable alternatives.
- Support community-driven plastic clean-up initiatives.
- Reduce marine pollution and strengthen waste management by enforcing a nationwide ban on single-use plastics, and promoting circular economy practices



in waste management, particularly in coastal areas and marine industries.

### Sustainable Fishing Practices

- Expand Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to safeguard biodiversity.
- Rehabilitate coral reefs and mangroves for carbon sequestration and coastal defence. Implement sustainable fishing practices, including seasonal bans and alternative livelihoods like ecotourism and seaweed farming.
- Promote Sustainable Maritime Activities. Decarbonise maritime transport through energy-efficient technologies, sustainable port infrastructure, and alternative energy vessels like electric and hydrogen-powered ships.
- Enforce seasonal fishing bans and strict regulations during spawning seasons to allow fish populations to recover.
- Strengthen ocean governance & policy enforcement by establishing an independent regulatory body for marine conservation.
- Enhance monitoring of illegal activities using AI and satellite technology to prevent overfishing and pollution.
- Stronger enforcement of microplastic particles used in cosmetic and skin care products, implementation of a nationwide deposit refund system for plastic waste, and increased penalties for industries dumping plastic waste into rivers and oceans.

### Indigenous Knowledge and communities

- Empower communities & foster innovation by integrating indigenous conservation practices into marine policies.
- Value local knowledge, traditions, and rights should be at the core of conservation strategies, allowing communities not just to participate but to lead efforts that directly impact their livelihoods and environment.
- Use of traditional wisdom and indigenous knowledge coming from the communities discriminated at work and descent should be deployed.
- Improve the maritime women and young women's access to transportation, including affordable shipping and air services, and emergency services, to and from maritime areas to be reflective of the realities in these communities. This should be done through improving basic infrastructure for rural, maritime, peri-urban and urban communities that can affect women and young women's daily lives; which includes access

to quality and sustained water supply; accessible, safe roads and bridges with reasonable accommodation (sustained maintenance); proper lighting of streets to ensure the safety and security of women and girls and the sustained/affordability of rural electrification.

- Enhance climate resilience for coastal communities by implementing mitigation and adaptation measures, including mangrove restoration and building climate-resilient infrastructures. This should include livelihood transition programs for fishing communities affected by climate change.

### Funding

- Fund youth-led innovations in ocean conservation and pollution reduction. Provide skill development programs for coastal populations in renewable energy and marine biodiversity research.
- Enhance financial mechanisms by creating funding initiatives, to provide financial support for sustainable marine projects, waste management programs, and coastal ecosystem restoration.
- Empower communities by recognising and funding community-led initiatives and ensuring their active involvement in decision-making processes.

## SDG 17- PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS

### Situational Analysis

The progress in SDG 17 in the Asia-Pacific Region remains uneven, with some areas witnessing stagnation and even regression while other areas witnessing gradual progress<sup>32</sup>. Many developing countries remain heavily dependent on external funding, raising concerns about the long-term sustainability of development initiatives, particularly in light of recent global shifts in the donor landscape<sup>33</sup>. While the Asia-Pacific region has made progress with increased remittances to least developed countries (LDCs) and improved market access, achieving sustainable public finances remains a challenge. According to the Asia Pacific SDG progress report for 2024, there are concerns about regressions in the proportion of domestic budgets funded by domestic taxes, debt service as a proportion of exports and use of country-owned results frameworks and planning tools in development cooperation. Progress in the region is stagnant on funding for environmentally sound technologies, foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows to LDCs, exports of commercial services from LDCs, and the registration of births and deaths.

Efficient taxation, enhancing debt management, and



investing in statistical development and civil registration processes are essential for effective policies and inclusive development<sup>34</sup>.

Youth engagement in SDG implementation on the other hand has made some progress, with increased opportunities for youth involvement in policy and program design<sup>35</sup>. However, meaningful inclusion remains limited, especially for youth-led organisations representing diverse groups such as young women, LGBTQI+ individuals, people with disabilities, and indigenous communities<sup>36</sup>. These groups face barriers due to structural inequalities and a lack of youth-friendly frameworks that prioritise accessibility and inclusion. In order to harness the potential of young people from diverse backgrounds as agents of change, it has become imperative more than ever to integrate their voices in identifying priorities, formulating policies, and implementing development initiatives.

Coordination challenges continue to hinder the progress towards SDG 17 in the Asia-Pacific region, with fragmentation among stakeholders at national and regional levels undermining development initiatives<sup>37</sup>. A need for improved synergy across government agencies, sectors, and central-provincial levels is critical to aligning efforts toward shared goals. However, data gaps persist, with only 51% of SDG indicators having sufficient data<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, strengthening inclusive partnerships, capacity-building, and data systems will ensure no one is left behind in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

## Recommendations

### Meaningful Youth Engagement

- Formulate and regularly update national and regional youth policies that prioritise youth-led and youth-focused initiatives.
- Create mechanisms and digital platforms to ensure the meaningful engagement of youth, marginalised groups, indigenous communities, and rural populations in decision-making, development planning, and sustainable projects.
- Invest in leadership training, professional development, and mentorship programs to empower young talent, while ensuring fair compensation and ethical practices in internships and volunteer work.
- Enhance the role of bridging the community and the government by allowing young people to attend high level and multi-governmental forums.
- Strengthen the funding for youth-led organisations through networks with donors and embassies.

### Governance

- Reform governance frameworks by introducing transparent, accountable, and inclusive decision-making processes while safeguarding institutions from political and financial manipulation.
- Enact open data initiatives and freedom of information legislation to ensure transparency, public access to government data, and accountability in decision-making.
- Establish robust mechanisms to prevent corruption, tax evasion, and improper management of funds, ensuring ethical practices and effective use of resources.

### Financing

- Identify and invest in opportunities in eco-tourism, technology services, niche industries, and green financing mechanisms such as impact investments and green bonds.
- Use blended financing models and progressive taxation to boost public spending on essential services like healthcare, education, and social protection, ensuring investments are environmentally and socially responsible.

### Partnerships and Collaborations

- Foster strong partnerships among government agencies, private sector, civil society, international donors, and development agencies to pool expertise and resources.
- Encourage public-private partnerships to drive sustainable investments and mobilize resources for projects that balance economic growth with environmental and social goals.

### Digital solutions

- Develop national and regional platforms to facilitate technology transfer, share best practices, and coordinate efforts in sustainable development.
- Build and maintain centralised databases with modern digital tools (e.g., AI, big data analytics, satellite monitoring) to improve real-time tracking of development progress and inform evidence-based policy decisions.
- Standardise reporting mechanisms and integrate digital solutions to monitor project implementation and progress toward Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).





## Empowerment of Communities

- Encourage local innovation and indigenous solutions while attracting international collaboration to drive sustainable economic growth.
- Empower community-led research and response by enhancing the collaboration with organisations, especially the grassroots ones.

## CONCLUSION

Across the Asia-Pacific, young people are pioneering transformative solutions to address the challenges. However, these efforts often lack the institutional and financial support needed for long-term scalability. To accelerate progress toward SDGs 3, 5, 8, 14, and 17, it is imperative to integrate youth perspectives into national and regional policies, by expanding access to funding for youth-led initiatives, and create meaningful avenues for young people to engage in governance. Strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships will not only amplify youth-driven solutions but also ensure the resilience for future generations.

With Asia-Pacific's future direction on the way to sustainable development, including youth as the primary stakeholder is no longer an option, but a necessity. Youth leadership must be recognized and institutionalised to foster innovation, cooperation, and accelerated collective action toward the realization of SDGs. It will only be through such an approach-bridging policy, finance, and community engagement that we will have a sustainable future.

Through this Call to Action, we hope that the governments will recognise the needs and demands of young people and address the issues collectively faced by young people in Asia and the Pacific.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
APFSD	Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
EPR	Extended Producer Responsibility
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IUU	Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual
MPA	Marine Protected Areas
NCD	Non-Communicable Diseases
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
PSMA	Port State Measures Agreement
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SSE	Social and Solidarity Economy
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VAW	Violence against Women
WHO	World Health Organisation



# ENDNOTES

- 1 The organisers of the APFSD Youth Forum were able to provide access to 549 young people from across 34 Asia Pacific countries. 121 young people attended the Youth Forum in person and over 428 young people actively engaged virtually through Zoom.
- 2 The countries represented in this Youth Call to Action are as follows: Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Macau (SAR), Hong Kong (SAR), East Timor, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, and South Korea.
- 3 The Call to Action consists of recommendations brought together by participants during the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) Youth Forum, 2025 and was drafted and compiled by a dedicated drafting team. The development, editing, and finalisation of the document was led by Shiwa Karmacharya (ARROW), with support from Fithriyyah Iskandar (CYMG UNEP), Bhawana Pradhan (Y-PEER Bhutan), Palden Dorji (Y-PEER Bhutan), Shaan Gom (YECAP), and Agatha Syailendra Hamdan (Youth LEAD). Sai Jyothirmai Racherla (ARROW) and Ranjeeta Silwal (ARROW) reviewed and provided valuable inputs to the document.
- 4 <https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en/adolescents-and-youth>
- 5 Data was taken from the speaker's PPTs at the APFSD Youth Forum 2025.
- 6 United Nations. (2023). World Social Report 2023: Leaving No One Behind In An Ageing World <https://desapublications.un.org/publications/world-social-report-2023-leaving-no-one-behind-ageing-world>
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