

REGIONAL YOUTH CALL TO ACTION



APFSD
Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

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Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs for a sustainable future for young people in all their diversity.

Who we are?

We are an intersectional group of over 705ⁱ young people, activists, and advocates from 38 countries and territoriesⁱ 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 2026, held in hybrid modality, from 18th - 20th February 2026 in Bangkok, Thailand. Together, we comprise unique and diverse individuals ranging from age 13-30, across all backgrounds and identities, including persons with disabilities, persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions, young people 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 transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions, with focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under review this year—SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy), SDG 9 (Industry, innovation, and infrastructure), SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), and SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals).

This Call to Action was developed by a dedicated drafting teamⁱⁱⁱ 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 the voices of young people in all our diversities at all levels of the decision making process.

Co-convended by



In collaboration



In partnership



Background

The Asia Pacific region outpaces the rest of the world in terms of progress towards SDGs. Although it is slow and significantly off track, data availability across countries in the Asia Pacific region shows a positive trend.^{iv}

The COVID-19 pandemic, followed by escalating geopolitical tensions, protracted conflicts, and a growing crisis of legitimacy in multilateralism has significantly slowed progress toward achieving the SDGs. Young people have not been spared from these setbacks. Through our participation in the APFSD

Youth Forum 2026 and this Call to Action, we seek recognition as agents of change who, when equipped with the right opportunities, skills, and platforms, can generate innovative solutions and lead transformative action.

It is our hope that the recommendations put forward through this Call to Action is brought to attention at the 2026 APFSD intergovernmental fora, High Level Political Forum (HLPF), ECOSOC Youth Forum, and further processes such as UN Water Conference 2026, and ECOSOC review process in the lead up to SDG Summit 2027.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SDG 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Situational Analysis

2.7 billion people in Asia and the Pacific, or about 60% of the region's population, have been lifted from the most extreme forms of water insecurity since 2013^v. If the current trend continues in SDG 6, only 76% of the population will have access to safely managed sanitation services by 2030, requiring a 2.5-fold increase in efforts to meet the target^{vi}.

Asia accounts for 41% of global flood events, with the events in the People's Republic of China (PRC) and India alone impacting over 1.2 billion people^{vii}. Water-related ecosystems are in regression due to climate change, environmentally harmful infrastructure and regressive climate policies. As climate impacts intensify, these events are likely to deepen already existing inequalities. This means that the natural disasters will further widen the urban-rural divide due to the reinforced patterns of rural exclusions from policy, practice and reforms. Poor infrastructure, limited access to WASH, and the lack of private and secure facilities increase the vulnerability of rural populations to exploitative situations. Further, these conditions disproportionately affect women, children, communities facing caste and descent based discrimination and persons living with disabilities, pushing them into undignified situations that results in limited participation in social and economic life.

Political instability and weak governance are also contributing to the region's slow progress toward

achieving SDG 6. Many countries depend on transboundary water resources, but conflicting priorities, lack of transparency, and poor monitoring make managing these shared water resources a real challenge. This lack of mutual agreement is resulting in degrading ecosystems, water scarcity and economic instability that leaves communities more exposed to future challenges.

Recommendation

Gender Mainstreaming in Policy and Programmes

- » Ensure formal representation and leadership of young women and girls in water resource planning, basin management, and WASH committees addressing underrepresentation and harmful norms that restrict their access, moving beyond mere participation to decision making power
- » Centre women and girls, people of intersectional identities of policy and programme design to ensure safe, accessible, and dignified sanitation and menstrual health management, prioritizing safety and proximity of services to reduce GBV.
- » Address disproportionate care work

burdens and safety risks through data-informed, targeted measures to dismantle gendered structural barriers, ensuring water services act as a catalyst for gender equality and public health.

- » Integrate SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights), bodily autonomy and reproductive justice in SDG 6 services to guarantee privacy, safety, dignity, and inclusive access for all.

Rights-Based Approaches

- » Adopt context-specific wetland restoration, watershed management, rainwater harvesting, and groundwater recharge, to address water scarcity, flooding, and contamination in climate-vulnerable settings .
- » Ensure all WASH policies, investments, and decision-making processes are grounded in a rights-based approach, prioritizing equity, accountability, participation, and non-discrimination.

Investing in Health Infrastructure

- » Include well-functioning health infrastructure with WASH, integrating national quality standards, building workforce competencies to deliver comprehensive, confidential and non-judgmental services as part of health systems strengthening.
- » Subsidise hygiene facilities, remove pink tax, specifically on menstrual hygiene management materials to encourage community adoption.

Financing

- » Increase public budget allocations and leverage innovative funding, covering full life-cycle operations and maintenance costs for underserved communities.
- » Close gender gaps beyond binaries in safely managed drinking water through targeted financing and climate-resilient

infrastructure.

Wastewater Treatment and Hygiene

- » Prioritize hygiene as a public health investment: services, soap supply chains, and behaviour change.
- » Treat wastewater as a health, environment, and climate opportunity: expand sewerage and safe treatment, especially in rapidly growing cities to prevent contamination of rivers and downstream ecosystems.

Integrating Indigenous Cultures

- » Integrate indigenous traditions, cultures and rituals in water management and conservation practices.
- » Ensure meaningful participation of young people, persons with disabilities, women and girls, indigenous groups, people from rural and impacted areas, inclusive WASH strategies as they face the widest gap in accessing water resources, which is further exacerbated by climate change.
- » Recognize, collaborate with and amplify best practices from the culture specific Traditional Ecological Knowledges (TEK) to inform sustainable, community led water governance and climate adaptation efforts.

Disaggregated Data

- » Strengthen monitoring systems with reliable disaggregated data collection across all SDG6 targets for regular progress tracking and gap identification, integrating WASH indicators into disaster relief audits prioritising disaggregated data.

SDG 7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Situational Analysis

The Asia Pacific region has made significant progress in achieving SDG7, particularly in electricity access, reaching a 98.6% electrification rate in 2023, due to sustained commitment to the goal and massive investments made in the electrical sector over the last decade^{viii}. This has been achieved through

the implementation of national electrification programmes and the diversification of renewable energy in the region. However, the pace of progress has been slowing down since 2022, indicating a focus on the remaining population of about 50 million living without access to electricity, who are mainly in rural and vulnerable areas^x. The persistent issues in the electricity sector, which are mainly related to the quality and sustainability of the electricity services^x, further highlight the need for the implementation of targeted interventions to ensure universal and sustainable access to electricity in the Asia Pacific region.

Unlike the progress made in the electricity sector, the Asia Pacific region is still lagging in the achievement of universal access to clean cooking fuels and technologies, which is a key component of SDG7. Access to clean cooking fuels and technologies has increased from 38% in 2000 to 78.9% in 2023, however about one billion people still rely on traditional, polluting fuels and technologies that make indoor air quality worse and are linked to health issues, especially for women and children^{xi}. The gap between urban and rural areas still exists, where only 63.6% of people in rural areas use clean cooking fuels and technology, compared to more than 92% in urban areas due to the affordability and availability of the technology^{xii}. It has resulted in a number of adverse outcomes, mainly related to the environment and the health and well-being of women and girls, who are mainly affected by the use of traditional cooking fuels and technologies^{xiii}. Unless there are enhanced and accelerated interventions in the sector, the issue of clean cooking is likely to persist as a major challenge to the achievement of SDG7 by the year 2030.

The region is also known as a global leader in the use of renewable energy because from 2013 to 2023, installed renewable power capacity increased from 568 GW to 1,785 GW^{xiv}. With renewable energy capacity rising from 151 watts to 451 watts per capita over the past ten years, the per capita growth is also significant^{xv}. Since solar photovoltaics (PV) and wind energy have become much more affordable, renewable energy sources have quickly expanded in many of the region's economies^{xvi}. However, the rapid growth in total final energy consumption, mainly driven by industrialization and urbanization, and the

economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, has constrained the growth in the overall share of renewables reaching just 11.2% in total final energy consumption in 2022^{xvii}. In fact, despite the significant growth in renewable energy capacity, the achievement of SDG 7.2 has been incremental. This highlights the importance of balancing the use of renewable energy with the growing demand for energy^{xviii}.

Progress in achieving energy efficiency remains insufficient. The Asia Pacific region, among the world's most energy-intensive, uses about twice as much energy per GDP unit as Europe. Although energy intensity has steadily decreased over the past decade, average annual improvement was only 0.9% between 2020 and 2022^{xix}. This inefficiency leads to higher emissions, reduced competitiveness and increased costs^{xx}. However, some countries are showing leadership in digital retrofitting, sustainable manufacturing, and industrial energy management.

Although the Asia Pacific region is nearing universal access to electricity, progress in all areas of SDG7 has been uneven, with insufficient progress in meeting the 2030 deadline^{xxi}. To meet the targets, a major boost is needed in accelerating access to clean cooking, a more integrated approach in renewable energy uptake in all energy end-uses, and improving energy efficiency. In addition, a more integrated, resilient, and people-centric energy systems approach is important which is a requirement in fulfilling SDG7 as a whole^{xxii}.

Recommendation

Renewable Energy Expansion & Decentralisation

- » Expand decentralized renewable systems, including solar mini-grids, rooftop solar, off-grid PV, wind, bioenergy, and small hydropower, particularly for rural and island communities, while gradually reducing reliance on fossil fuels to ensure long-term sustainability and climate resilience.
- » Invest in fast-track renewable integration into national grids while modernizing grid infrastructure.

- » Promote transport electrification through expanded EV infrastructure, affordable e-mobility solutions to reduce fossil fuel dependence and support renewable energy uptake.
- » Incentivise off-grid energy infrastructure to democratise energy governance and make grassroots communities energy independent.

Energy Access, Affordability & Equity

- » Guarantee affordable and reliable electricity access for rural, off-grid and marginalized communities ensuring that energy poverty does not deepen socioeconomic inequality.
- » Provide targeted subsidies, concessional financing and microcredit for low-income households to access rooftop solar and clean cooking technologies through collaboration with CSOs and private sectors.
- » Map and monitor energy poverty using disaggregated data systems.
- » Establish social safety and accountability mechanisms in energy financing and infrastructure development.
- » Ensure fair compensation, livelihood restoration and targeted incentives for communities and individuals whose land or livelihoods are displaced due to energy infrastructure development.
- » Integrate energy access into gender-based violence prevention and safety planning (e.g., lighting in public spaces).

Clean Energy and Public Health

- » Prioritise universal access to affordable electricity and clean cooking as a care economy investment.
- » Scale clean cooking solutions to reduce indoor air pollution and associated health risks, particularly for women and children
- » Establish transparent, accessible, and culturally appropriate grievance redress

mechanisms to address disputes related to land acquisition, environmental harm and social impacts of energy projects.

Gender-Transformative & Just Energy Transition

- » Integrate gender-disaggregated data, health impact assessments and energy poverty indicators into national frameworks.
- » Promote gender-transformative energy policies that increase women's including young women's participation in the energy workforce and decision-making processes while reducing unpaid care burdens.
- » Guarantee meaningful participation of youth, women, Indigenous People, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups in energy planning, monitoring and evaluation processes.
- » Conduct intergenerational impact assessments to evaluate long-term social, economic, and environmental implications of energy policies.
- » Establish transparent, accessible and culturally appropriate community grievance redress mechanisms to address disputes related to land acquisition, environmental harm, and social impacts of energy projects.

Community Centred Transition

- » Promote community ownership models and local capacity building to prevent corporate capture and ensure communities are not excluded from decision-making in energy transitions.
- » Advance responsible governance of energy-transition minerals by shifting from extraction-led growth to a sufficiency approach that caps overproduction, internalizes environmental and social costs, and delivers lasting community and ecological resilience
- » Reform fossil energy subsidies into a Just Transition Community Benefit and Skills

Fund targeting informal workers and extraction-affected regions through a dedicated Just Transition Community Fund.

- » Establish green funds and invest in startups for youth-led clean energy projects, training young people to maintain solar panels and micro-grids for jobs, granting scholarships for women in STEM-energy; providing microcredit, green skill training, and energy-based livelihood opportunities to youths from rural and marginalized communities that are affected by energy projects.
- » Integrate energy literacy and renewable energy awareness through right based approach into institutional curricula to promote responsible energy consumption, climate consciousness and innovation among young people.

SDG 9: INDUSTRY INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Situational Analysis

The Asia Pacific region remains a major global hub for manufacturing, trade and infrastructure development. However, progress toward SDG 9 remains uneven and increasingly constrained by widening technological divides, climate vulnerability and unequal access to innovation ecosystems.

Global industrial growth has slowed in recent years due to supply chain disruptions, geopolitical tensions and uneven post-pandemic recovery. The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024 notes that the pace of industrial growth remains insufficient to meet SDG targets by 2030, particularly in developing economies^{xxiii}. While East and Southeast Asia continue to drive global manufacturing output, many least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS) in the region remain dependent on primary commodities and low value-added industries.

Infrastructure gaps remain visible within the region. Developing Asia requires approximately USD 1.7

trillion per year in infrastructure investment until 2030 to maintain growth, reduce poverty and respond to climate change^{xxiv}. Although transport, energy and logistics networks have expanded rapidly in middle-income economies, rural, remote and marginalized communities continue to lack resilient roads, reliable electricity, and affordable digital connectivity. These disparities reinforce spatial inequalities and limit access to education, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for young people.

Digital infrastructure expansion has been significant, yet exclusion persists. Approximately 1.6 billion people in Asia Pacific remain offline, with rural populations, women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, and low-income youth disproportionately affected^{xxv}. Without affordable broadband access and digital literacy, many young people are excluded from innovation ecosystems, digital finance and emerging industries.

Research and development (R&D) investment is highly concentrated within a few advanced economies. Many countries in South Asia and the Pacific invest less than 0.5% of GDP in R&D, limiting domestic innovation capacity and technological upgrading^{xxvi}. This concentration widens regional disparities in industrial competitiveness and reduces opportunities for inclusive and youth-led innovation.

Climate risks further threaten infrastructure sustainability. Asia Pacific accounts for more than 40% of global disaster events, resulting in repeated damage to transport, industrial and energy systems^{xxvii}. Insufficient climate-resilient infrastructure design increases long-term economic losses and disrupts industrial productivity. As climate impacts intensify, infrastructure development must prioritize resilience, decarbonization and circular economy models.

Despite pockets of global leadership in advanced manufacturing, renewable technologies and digital innovation, progress toward inclusive and sustainable industrialization remains fragmented. Persistent infrastructure financing gaps, digital exclusion, limited R&D investment in vulnerable economies and climate-related risks threaten to widen inequalities within and between countries. Accelerated, inclusive and climate-resilient industrial strategies are essential to ensure SDG9 contributes meaningfully to the 2030 Agenda.

Recommendation

Inclusive and Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Systems

- » Scale investments in climate-resilient infrastructure, including transport networks, public facilities, digital systems, and essential service infrastructure to ensure accessibility for rural, remote, island, and vulnerable communities using Universal Design and Gender Impact Assessments.
- » Prioritise reconstruction and modernisation of infrastructure in fragile and crisis-affected contexts through employment-linked public works and skills development programs.
- » Strengthen infrastructure asset-management systems and long-term maintenance frameworks to ensure sustainability and cost-effectiveness.
- » Protect bodily autonomy by mandating the integration of care infrastructure, including childcare facilities, lactation rooms, and menstrual health support, into all industrial zones and public facilities.

Digital Divide and Technological Readiness

- » Expand reliable and affordable broadband, ICT infrastructure, and community connectivity hubs to bridge rural-urban and socio-economic digital gaps.
- » Align infrastructure expansion with digital literacy, AI literacy, and safe technology-use education to ensure equitable innovation capacity.
- » Promote standardized digital data platforms and interoperable systems to improve evidence-based policymaking, transparency, and monitoring of development progress.
- » Regulate surveillance and data platforms to prevent privacy violations and algorithmic discrimination while leveraging innovation

to expand equitable access to reproductive and telehealth services.

Innovation Ecosystems and Research Capacity

- » Increase national investment in research and development through tax incentives, public funding and regional cooperation, particularly where R&D spending remains below global benchmarks.
- » Establish innovation hubs, incubators and youth innovation labs that provide mentorship, equipment and seed funding for locally driven technological solutions.
- » Promote partnerships among universities, industry, and civil society to scale applied research, technology transfer, and green manufacturing innovation.

Sustainable Industrialisation and Economic Diversification

- » Ensure national industrial policies explicitly address structural barriers faced by intersectional identities, including caste, religion, ability, age and refugee status, while implementing robust Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (PSEAH), whistleblowing protections and paid parental leave.
- » Expand access to finance, simplified registration systems and export pathways for youth-led enterprises, women-led businesses and community-based industries.
- » Encourage integration of SMEs into national and regional supply chains through public-private partnerships and technology transfer initiatives.

Skills Systems with Future-Ready Industries

- » Align education and training systems with emerging sectors including digital technology, green manufacturing, sustainable agriculture, and climate-resilient construction.

- » Shift vocational training evaluation from participation numbers to measuring long-term impact on decision-making authority and sustainable income growth through structured post-training follow-up mechanisms.
- » Integrate technical, entrepreneurial and digital competencies into national curricula to build adaptive and future-ready workforces.

Youth Participation in Infrastructure and Innovation Governance

- » Ensure meaningful youth representation in planning committees, infrastructure decision-making bodies, and SDG implementation mechanisms.
- » Build institutional accountability by mandating the use of disaggregated data, regular algorithmic bias audits and transparent anti-discrimination policies to prevent individual biases from becoming structural injustices.
- » Support youth innovation clubs, community monitoring groups, and digital reporting tools to strengthen participatory governance and accountability.
- » Allocate dedicated funding streams and participation budgets to enable sustained youth engagement in innovation and policy processes.

SDG 11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Situational Analysis

The Asia Pacific region is undergoing the world's fastest and largest urban transition. Over half of the region's population, approximately 2.2 billion, now reside in cities, with urban growth concentrated in megacities and rapidly expanding secondary cities. While urbanisation has driven economic growth, it has also exposed deep structural gaps in housing, infrastructure and basic services. Approximately

60% of the world's slum population, accounting for 600 million people, live in informal settlements or slums in the Asia Pacific region, reflecting persistent affordability and social inequalities^{xxviii}. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic that occurred 6 years ago highlighted urban inequalities, disproportionately affecting informal workers, migrants and persons with disabilities, while straining public transport, health systems and municipal finances^{xxix}. In response, many nation-states have renewed commitments to affordable housing, slum upgrading and national urban policies^{xxx}.

At this current moment, environmental sustainability and resilience are major concerns for cities across the region. Cities across Asia Pacific region are among the most exposed, globally, to climate-related disasters, including floods, cyclones, heatwaves, earthquakes and sea level rise, with more than 75% of the population affected by disasters from the region^{xxxi}. In 2025, the region faced intensifying climate-related disasters such as monsoon flooding in Pakistan, a huge storm in Sri Lanka triggering floods and landslides and a tropical storm in the Philippines and Viet Nam that affected millions of people^{xxxii}. These instances have created and increased emphasis on climate-resilient urban planning and stricter building codes. At the same time, air pollution continues to undermine urban livability, with many cities exceeding safe air quality limits, despite the temporary improvements during COVID-19 lockdowns^{xxxiii}. Member states are increasingly promoting low-emission transport, electric buses, renewable energy and compact urban development, though implementation remains uneven across the region and even within the country.

Access to inclusive, safe and green urban spaces, and services remains a significant gap, particularly for low-income and marginalised communities in large cities. Public transport, water and sanitation, solid waste management and open public spaces are often inadequate or unevenly distributed, especially in informal and peri-urban areas. While some high-income cities have made progress in expanding parks, pedestrian zones, and smart city solutions, many cities in the least developed and small island contexts continue to face capacity and financing constraints. The overall progress on SDG11 in Asia Pacific is mixed. At the same time, policy frameworks,



infrastructure development and climate awareness have strengthened significantly, but rapid urban growth, inequality and climate vulnerability continue to outpace implementation.

Recommendation

Governance

- » Strengthen inclusive, multilevel governance, future-ready urban planning and resilient infrastructure and services for all.
- » Deepen Regional and Global Cooperation to Accelerate the Uptake of Effective and Scalable Urban Solutions.
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Urban Planning

- » Promote inclusive, participatory, and rights-based urban planning that guarantees affordable and inclusive housing, basic services and safe public spaces for all.
- » Expand access to adequate, affordable, climate-resilient and gender responsive housing, prioritising low-income families, migrants, people with disabilities, young people and other marginalised groups.
- » Upgrade informal settlements through integrated slum upgrading programmes that ensure safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), clean energy, structural safety and secure tenure.
- » Housing standards should be reformed to prioritise livability, health, accessibility, disaster resilience and proximity to essential services over minimum size supply targets.
- » Improve solid waste management systems through circular economy approaches, recycling mandates, anti-dumping enforcement and youth-led waste-to-value initiatives.
- » Expand and protect green and blue public spaces, including parks, urban forests,

mangroves, community gardens and coastal ecosystems.

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

- » Strengthen disaster risk reduction by integrating climate adaptation, resilient infrastructure, early warning systems and community-based preparedness into all urban development plans.
- » Ensure relocation and redevelopment processes in disaster-prone areas are community-led, rights-based and protect livelihoods, culture and social cohesion.

Financing

- » Scale up Urban Finance by Strengthening Local Capacities and Access to Financing Mechanisms.
- » Harness Digital Transformation to Build Robust, People-centred Urban Data Ecosystems.
- » Increase domestic and international climate finance dedicated to resilient urban infrastructure, affordable housing and inclusive service delivery.
- » Leverage blended finance, green bonds, and climate funds to accelerate low-carbon urban transitions.
- » Climate finance must reach those on the frontlines—adaptation funding should prioritise marginalised communities who are least responsible yet most affected by the climate crisis.

Inclusion

- » Institutionalise meaningful participation of youth, women, persons with disabilities, indigenous people and marginalised communities in urban and DRR planning, budgeting, monitoring and decision-making processes.
- » Mandate inclusive and disability responsive urban design based on universal design principles and co-creation with affected communities.

- » Integrate cultural heritage protection, traditional knowledge, and indigenous practices into urban development frameworks.
- » Recognise that sustainable cities are central to reducing poverty, unpaid care burdens, inequality and gender based violence, and invest accordingly in social and physical infrastructure.

Practical Solutions

- » Housing, food waste, transport and shopping drive most emissions. Match policies to thrift and convenience, not green ideals.
- » Regular people act sustainably when it's practical and affordable. Don't only target eco-enthusiasts.
- » Get high earners using smart city tools while helping thrifty locals scale their lightweight living habits.

Low Carbon Emission

- » Expand safe, affordable, accessible and low-carbon public transport systems, including electric mobility and non-motorised transport such as cycling and walking lanes.
- » Reduce air pollution and emissions through stricter enforcement of clean energy transitions in buildings, transport, and industry to meet net-zero pathways aligned with 1.5°C goals.
- » Enforce stricter air quality standards to protect public health, particularly in low-income and high-density communities

Data and Technology

- » Establish transparent, real-time urban data platforms and dashboards to strengthen accountability, evidence-based planning and equitable allocation of resources.
- » Promote smart and digital urban solutions that enhance service delivery, environmental monitoring and inclusive governance while ensuring digital accessibility.

- » Combat digital divides to ensure no community is excluded from smart-city benefits.

SDG 17: PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS

Situational Analysis

The Asia Pacific region has strengthened regional cooperation through ESCAP, ASEAN and the Pacific Islands Forum. However, major financing and inclusion gaps persist. Developing countries in the region face an annual SDG financing gap of over USD 1.5 trillion^{xxxiv}. Several Pacific Island States carry public debt exceeding 90% of GDP, limiting fiscal space for SDG investments^{xxxv}. Climate finance remains insufficient, despite Asia Pacific accounting for nearly half of global disaster-related economic losses^{xxxvi}.

Inequalities within countries continue to weaken inclusive partnerships. Women's economic participation remains uneven. Female labour force participation in Asia Pacific is approximately 47% compared to 72% for men, and women spend 2-4 times more hours in unpaid care work. Similar is the situation for youth^{xxxvii}.

Additionally, limited access to finance persists in the region. Women-led Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) face an estimated USD 1.5 trillion global financing gap, a significant share of which is in Asia. Digital gender gaps further restrict participation. Women and girls in Asia Pacific are 19% less likely than men to use mobile internet, with wider gaps in South Asia.^{xxxviii} This limits access to digital finance, e-governance and cross-border economic opportunities. Around 1.6 billion people in Asia Pacific remain offline^{xxxix}.

Non-binary and gender-diverse persons face legal invisibility and exclusion from data systems in most countries in the region. Studies show transgender and gender-diverse people face significantly higher unemployment and workplace discrimination, pushing many into informal and precarious work. Lack of disaggregated data restricts their inclusion in SDG financing and partnership frameworks.

Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD), including caste-affected communities,

continue to experience exclusion from formal finance, land rights and decent work. Data disaggregation by work and descent is largely absent from SDG reporting, despite persistent poverty and occupational segregation. The most affected are women and youth^{xl}.

The region hosts over 16 million forcibly displaced people, many excluded from national development systems and formal labour markets.

Asia Pacific is home to about 70% of the world's Indigenous Peoples. While Indigenous knowledge is increasingly recognized in climate frameworks, land tenure insecurity and limited implementation of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) remain concerns.

Overall, while regional cooperation frameworks are strengthening, partnerships remain unequal in access to finance, data visibility and decision-making power. Achieving SDG 17 in Asia Pacific requires scaled-up climate and development finance, debt relief, gender-responsive and caste-responsive budgeting, digital inclusion, and institutionalized leadership of women, non-binary persons, CDWD, refugees and Indigenous Peoples as equal partners in sustainable development.

Additionally, around 1.6 billion people in Asia Pacific remain offline (ITU, 2023), with rural women, Indigenous communities, refugees and marginalized caste-affected groups disproportionately excluded from digital and financial systems.

Overall, while regional cooperation frameworks are strengthening, partnerships remain unequal in access to finance, data visibility and decision-making power. Achieving SDG 17 in Asia Pacific requires scaled-up climate and development finance, debt relief, gender-responsive and caste-responsive budgeting, digital inclusion, and institutionalized leadership of women, non-binary persons, communities discriminated on work and descent (CDWD), refugees and Indigenous People as equal partners in sustainable development.

Recommendation

Financing

- » Prioritise Gender Responsive Budgeting
- » Expand innovative finance models

combining public funding, private capital, and development assistance to scale infrastructure and innovation investment.

- » Mobilize funding for local research institutions, island-based studies, and community-driven clean energy innovation.
- » Develop transparent financing frameworks and ESG-aligned investment mechanisms to improve accountability and attract sustainable industry investment.

Partnership and Cooperation

- » Strengthen regional cooperation platforms for technology exchange, capacity-building, and cross-border innovation partnerships.
- » Strengthen community partnerships to ensure transparent, inclusive, and accountable energy transition strategies.
- » Strengthen multi-level coordination among municipalities, national governments, civil society, academia and private sector actors to deliver coherent and equitable urban policies.
- » Focus on capacitating the local governments in the region
- » Ensure data driven decision making to strengthen multi-stakeholder coordination among government agencies, private sector, local authorities, civil society, and development partners to improve governance and sustainability of WASH resources.

Meaningful and Inclusive Youth Participation (MYIP)

- » Establish youth advisory committees and guarantee meaningful youth engagement in high-level energy agenda-setting and international negotiations.
- » Co-create solutions with young people, and institutionalize youth as partners for SDG 6 and SDG 5: create formal roles for youth representatives to co-design WASH

in schools and community monitoring.

- » Support and partner with youth-led WASH, Climate, Gender initiatives, to scale activities and address systemic barriers.
- » Support youth-led urban initiatives in climate action, data monitoring, safety auditing, community mapping, and neighbourhood resilience building.
- » Support youth-led renewable energy literacy workshops and hands-on rooftop assessments; Online course on renewable energy planning; Community volunteer networks and digital awareness campaigns

Future of Multilateralism, UN80 and Road to SDG Summit 2027

As the international community approaches the 2027 SDG Summit, the final high-level summit before the conclusion of the 2030 Agenda, multilateralism is entering a decisive phase of reflection and reform. The Summit will not only assess progress toward the SDGs but also initiate discussions on the post-2030 development framework, making it a critical milestone for global governance^{xii}.

The Asia Pacific region, home to significant economic dynamism yet facing widening inequalities and climate vulnerabilities, remains off-track on several SDG targets, underscoring the urgency for more inclusive and regionally grounded multilateral action^{xiii}.

Institutional reforms are underway through the UN80 Initiative, that was launched to review mandates, improve efficiency, and strengthen the UN's capacity to respond to contemporary challenges^{xiiii}. Parallel negotiations on the review of ECOSOC and the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) aim to modernize the global follow-up and review architecture of the 2030 Agenda, reflecting lessons learned over the past decade^{xiv}.

Together, these reform processes and the road to the 2027 Summit and post 2030 Agenda signal a pivotal moment for reimagining multilateralism, one that

must better integrate regional perspectives, including those of Asia Pacific youth, into global decision-making.

With the 2030 deadline for achieving the SDGs rapidly approaching, cooperation that leverages the expertise of all stakeholders is the only way forward. Strengthening global partnerships and ensuring that young people and rightsholders have a meaningful role in decision-making processes are both essential to restoring trust in multilateralism.

For young people and rightsholders, UN80 serves as both a moment of reflection and recommitment. It is an opportunity to recognize the UN's remarkable legacy - from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to global humanitarian achievements and environmental milestones - while also acknowledging the urgency to deliver on its founding pledge enshrined in the UN charter "to save succeeding generations."

On mandate implementation review, we caution against any regression on core gender and human rights mandate. Normative frameworks like the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Convention on the Rights of the Child, World Programme of Action for Youth and others are and should not be time-bound programmes, but foundational global commitments that must be protected and upheld.

Reform cannot only be based on the past and budget constraints. We call for holistic impact assessments across peace and security, humanitarian matters, and development on what proposed reforms or restructuring may lead to. This should be built in as part of the UN80 exercise.

Strengthening regional-to-global engagement offers a practical pathway to maximize impact, enhance participation, and lower costs while improving the overall quality of inputs into UN processes. Regional engagement is closer to on-the-ground realities, more effective at supporting countries with diverse development levels, and helps avoid forcing artificial commonalities at the global level.

The role of the Resident Coordinators within the regional processes should be enhanced through a triangulated model of engagement that links regional issues, multilateral discussions and the UN's performative scope.

Regional mechanisms can also help address global consultation fatigue, for example, United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) could submit reports alongside VNRs to reduce duplication of work.

Another key gap is the lack of systematic integration of regional inputs and outcomes into global processes in New York and Geneva. This includes better linking regional thematic processes and committees with their global counterparts - for example, connecting ESCAP's Committee on Financing for Development with the FfD Follow-up Forum and FfD4 implementation, and ensuring that inputs from the RFSDs meaningfully inform the HLPF.

Through this Call to Action, we hope that the UN agencies and governments will not only recognise and respond to the needs and demands of young people on the SDGs under review but across the broader development agenda, grounded on systemic and structural shifts. The future of multilateralism must be grounded in intergenerational equity and meaningful co-creation. The UN80 reforms present an opportunity to reshape governance structures so that young people are not merely consulted, but recognised as partners in shaping global agendas. Only through such inclusive and forward-looking global governance systems can we build a just, resilient, and equitable future for all.

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| DRR | Work and Descent |
| ECOSOC | Disaster Risk Reduction |
| ESG | Economic and Social Council |
| | Environmental, Social and Governance |
| ESCAP | Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific |
| EV | Electric Vehicle |
| FfD | Financing for Development |
| FPIC | Free, Prior and Informed Consent |
| GBV | Gender-Based Violence |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GW | Gigawatt |
| HLPF | High-Level Political Forum |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| ITU | International Telecommunication Union |
| LDCs | Least Developed Countries |
| MSMEs | Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises |
| MYIP | Meaningful and Inclusive Youth Participation |
| PV | Photovoltaic |
| PSEAH | Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment |
| R&D | Research and Development |
| RFSDs | Regional Forums on Sustainable Development |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SIDS | Small Island Developing States |
| SMEs | Small and Medium Enterprises |
| SRHR | Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights |
| STEM | Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNCTs | United Nations Country Teams |
| USD | United States dollar |
| VNRs | Voluntary National Reviews |
| WASH | Water, Sanitation and Hygiene |

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------|---|
| AI | Artificial Intelligence |
| APFSD | Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development |
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| CDWD | Communities Discriminated on |

ENDNOTES

- i. The organisers of the APFSD Youth Forum were able to provide access to 705 young people in person and online from across 38 Asia Pacific countries.
- ii. The countries represented in this Youth Call to Action are as follows: Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Hong Kong- SAR, Mongolia, Japan, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Lao PDR, Timor

- Leste, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Fiji, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Kiribati, Maldives, Malaysia.
- iii. The Call to Action consists of recommendations brought together by participants during the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) Youth Forum, 2026 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 Bhawana Pradhan (Y-PEER APC), Palden Dorji (Y-PEER APC), Shaan Gom (YECAP), Danish Tariq (MGCY), Naveen Gautan (MGCY), Yugratna Srivastava (MGCY). Sai Jyothirmai Racherla (ARROW) and Ranjeeta Silwal (ARROW) reviewed and provided valuable inputs to the document. Design coordination support was done by Anuj Bhandari (ARROW).
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GLIMPSES OF APFSD YOUTH FORUM 2026



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