



**ECOSOC
YOUTH
FORUM**

#YOUTH2030

8th Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

8 April 2019
CR 8, 1.45-3.45 p.m.
United Nations Headquarters, New York

| IDENTIFICATION | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Session focus | Asia and the Pacific |
| Session title | Regional break out session- Asia and the Pacific |
| Session lead | Junjian Gaoshan, UNFPA China Youth Program Officer |
| Session co-organizers | Matthieu Cognac, ILO Advisor |
| | TBD, Major Group on Children and Youth |
| Session moderator | Mandira Paul, Technical analyst, UNFPA HQ |
| Rapporteur | Yi Yangqianxi, WHO China Special Envoy for Health |
| Session note-taker 1 | TBD |
| Session note-taker 2 | TBD |
| BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES | |
| - Adolescent and youth population | |

The Asia-Pacific region (including Western and Central Asia) contains nearly 60 percent of the world's youth population (58%), with 700 million youth aged 15 to 24 years. In 2020, India will have the highest youth population globally, at 248 million (representing 18 percent of the country's total population). Afghanistan, Micronesia and Timor Leste have the highest percentage of the population who are youth in the region (22%), followed by Nepal and Tonga (21%). In comparison, several countries have low percentages of youth populations with Japan lowest at 9% and China at 11%.

- **Education**

Asia and the Pacific has had significant success in expanding participation in school especially for primary education. By 2016, primary net enrolment was over 93% for the region. The fastest progress was in South and West Asia: between 2000 and 2017 primary net enrolment increased from 77% to 90%. Nevertheless, In Asia, 128 million (almost the half of the global out of school children number) children and youth were still out of school in 2017 – 18 million were of primary school age, 26 million of lower secondary school age, and 84 million of upper secondary school age. The majority of these children were in South and West Asia.

The most extensive global assessment of educational outcomes is the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment, which tests 15-year-olds in 73 school systems around the world, of which 16 are in Asia and the Pacific. In a typical school system about six out of ten students in 2015 had the minimum level of proficiency in mathematics and reading. Of the 16 Asia-Pacific countries, 10 showed better-than-average results, with around 80% of students possessing the minimum levels of proficiency in mathematics and reading. In the other six countries, between 31% and 49% of students met the minimum standard in mathematics and 45% to 63% in reading. The low level of achieving proficiency in mathematics and reading, and the high number of out-of-school children in a considerable number of school systems in the region suggest that these systems are not preparing the majority of students well for the basic knowledge skills that are required for continuous learning.

- **Youth unemployment and decent job opportunities**

Today, over 63 million young people are unemployed across the globe, and 141 million youth are working, yet living in poverty. Youth unemployment in Asia and the Pacific is expected to reach 27 million youth in 2019, at a time when millions of new job seekers are entering the labour market. Youth living in rural areas, around half of the region's population, are most likely to be among the working poor, facing particular challenges such as limited access to information and education, land, financial services and markets. Moreover, youth's voices are often not heard during the policy process to reflect and address their multifaceted needs. This situation sheds light on the economic potential and role of decent jobs to transform the lives of young women and men across the region.

- **Adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights**

Youth's sexual and reproductive health has implications for their immediate and future health, well-being and opportunities. Child marriage and adolescent pregnancy cause girls to drop out of education and limit their future employment opportunities. Adolescent pregnancy rates are highest in Nepal, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh, and usually higher in rural areas and lower socioeconomic communities. In Bangladesh, 58% of women 20-24 had given birth as teenagers, with 39% in Nepal and Afghanistan (DHS 2014-2016). Rates of adolescent pregnancy have dropped significantly in most countries in South Asia in the past two to three decades linked to the decrease in child marriage. However, it is of concern that adolescent pregnancy rates are increasing in South East Asia and Pacific. Young people face many challenges in accessing the SRH services they need to avoid unintended pregnancy. These barriers include legal barriers requiring parental consent for teenagers, social cultural barriers for unmarried sexually active young people as well as financial and other access barriers.

- **Peace and security**

In 2016, an estimated 408 million youth (aged 15-29) reside in settings affected by armed conflict or organized violence which means that at least 1 in 4 young people are affected by violence or armed conflict. In Asia Pacific, where 60 percent of the world's conflicts are located, young people are affected by a number of protracted crises, long-running conflicts, and humanitarian crises. Moreover, violence against women and girls across the region disrupts lives and threatens security. As per Asia and the Pacific SDG progress report 2017, published by the UN ESCAP, SDG10 and 16 are the only two goals where the region has not made any progress but also regressed, in comparison to 2000 and 2015.

Hence there is an immediate need to address existing shortfalls for promoting peaceful and resilient societies. Across the region, young people are demonstrating their leadership in preventing violence, post-conflict peacebuilding, sustaining peace as well as building resilience in humanitarian contexts. It is crucial to recognize their pivotal role and open avenues for young people's participation at all levels. Young people bridge the silos of development, human rights, humanitarian and peace and security.

- **Environmental issues**

Asia-Pacific still has a long way to go to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for youth and other groups. Around 1.7 billion people in Asia do not have access to clean water and sanitation, with 780 million practicing open defecation and 80 per cent of wastewater being discharged untreated into waterways. The problem is particularly endemic in rural areas, where only 46 per cent of the population has access to improved sanitation, compared with 75 per cent of those in urban areas. Female youth face significant sanitation challenges, with a lack of menstrual hygiene management and hygiene promotion, particularly in South Asia.

- **Tobacco consumption of young people**

Tobacco is the only commercial product which, when used exactly as intended, kills half its users. That's 6 million deaths globally every year, approximately 30% of which occur in the World Health Organization (WHO) Western Pacific Region. Most smokers start using tobacco at a young age, almost a quarter of these individuals begins using tobacco before the age of 10, and then continue using it throughout adulthood. Eventually, a significant proportion will experience tobacco-related illness and death. While many new forms of tobacco products are emerging in the market, such as e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products, which creates another risk among youth to start smoking, empowering youth to say no to tobacco and tobacco smoke is in urgent need if we are to reduce the increasing global burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and to achieve SDG by 2030.

- **Youth political participation**

Engaging youth as active citizens is integral to promoting and preserving peaceful and prosperous societies. Accordingly, since in the region many youths distrust the political process, there is a need for greater efforts to foster the faith of youth in political systems and promote full and meaningful participation in improving governance and building democratic institutions. This requires dismantling existing barriers to political participation, in particular in the environment that civil society participation is restricted. In this regard, there is a role for public leaders, politicians and policymakers across political parties, and civil society organizations to engage with youth.

SESSION OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the Asia and Pacific session is to build a platform for young people from the region and young people who are interested in the region to discuss the challenges, solutions and experience towards achieving the SDGs.

In order to contribute to the final outcome of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2019 and the High Level Political Forum on SDG implementation, the Asia Pacific regional break out session will specifically aim to:

1. Discuss the roles that young people can play and want to play, in order to achieve the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific, and discuss the challenges and mechanisms supporting these roles,
2. Identify youth initiatives in the region that has created a sustainable impact to the communities;
3. Provide concrete suggestions to ensure young people's voices are included in the decision-making processes;
4. Promote networking and exchanges of knowledge and experience among youth of diverse backgrounds, including those from rural and urban settings;

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Recommendations from the regional break out session will be presented to the plenary session of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2019.

APPROACH USED TO GENERATE REGIONAL NEEDS ANALYSIS & CONTRIBUTION

- Pre-ECOSOC youth consultation online via the Major Group and Children and Youth
- Desk review on relevant documents from youth groups and UN agencies

OVERALL STRUCTURE AND FLOW

The session will be structured to allow for a maximum degree of interaction. Youth from Asia and the Pacific and beyond will be encouraged to participate in an inclusive and constructive manner, with the session being facilitated by a moderator. A rapporteur will take notes and provide feedback to the plenary session that follows the regional breakout sessions. The event will be open to all with an interest in the Asia Pacific region.

In order to save time and maximize young people's participation, this session will use online application- mentimeter- to collect participants' views on certain issues. Participants are encouraged to bring their mobile devices or computer in the meeting room. The results from the online poll will be presented in the regional reporting in the plenary session.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In order to maximize the contribution of all participants in the regional breakout session on Asia and the Pacific during the 2018 ECOSOC Youth Forum, participants are encouraged to consider the following questions to guide discussions:

1. What are the specific youth development challenges and needs in Asia and the Pacific region?
2. Where are the emerging opportunities to engage young people in the region?
3. How to further promote youth participation in to order to overcome the challenges that prevent Asia and the Pacific region to achieve SDGs, in particular on SDG 4, 8, 10, 13, and 16?
4. How to ensure young people's voices are sustainably incorporated in the decision making processes?
5. What are the successful experiences and failure experiences in the region on youth development can we share with other regions?

PREPARATORY EVENTS

Extensive consultations have been conducted to prepare the regional session. Firstly, a call meeting has been arranged between the session lead, co-lead and the Forum organizer to map the opportunities and agree on the direction of the regional break out session. Based on the discussion, the session lead has drafted the concept note which has been sent for wide consultation, among UN agencies in the region and young people, including young people from the Major Group on Children and Youth. After comments received, the session lead has revised the concept note for submission.

The session lead has also actively reached out for good candidates as the rapporteur and moderator.

The session lead, co- leads, moderators and rapporteurs will meet one day before the Forum in New York to go through the plan.

SUGGESTED READING

AIPNY website <https://asiapacificyouth.net>

UNESCAP Switched On Report

https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/SDD%20Switched%20On%20report%20v12-4-E_0.pdf

UNESCAP Asia and the Pacific Youth Fact Sheet

<https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Youth%20factsheet%202016.pdf>

UNESCAP 2016 SDG Baseline Report

https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/SDG_04_ESCAP_SYB2016_SDG_baseline_report.pdf

UNESCAP Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report

<https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Asia-Pacific-SDG-Progress-Report-2017.pdf>