



# Nepal's Youth Call to Action for APFSD 2022



## Introduction

Young individuals and organizations of Nepal who were part of the APFSD Youth Forum 2021 created a platform called Nepal APFSD Youth Alliance (NAYA) in July 2021. NAYA envisions young people at the forefront of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development at the national, regional, and international levels. Currently, there are nine youth-led and serving organizations in the working group of NAYA with the membership of about 70 young people in all their diversities.

Visible Impact serves as the secretariat for NAYA. Visible Impact is a young women-led organization in Nepal, which is creating a visible impact on the lives of adolescent girls, women, and youth by unleashing their social and economic leadership through participatory innovative interventions. Visible Impact has been working on three core issues: women and girls' championship, new generation leadership, and global health innovations with a focus on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

Since July 2021, NAYA has been proactively working at the national level to engage young people at the forefront of Sustainable

Development and to link regional and international mechanisms of sustainable development to the national level. NAYA has been amplifying the key messages including the issues, recommendations, and youth actions from the APFSD Nepal Youth Call to Action 2021 through different social media campaigns, meetings, and high-level dialogues with key decision-makers. Prior to APFSD Youth Forum 2022, NAYA organized a National Youth Conclave on 4th March 2022 providing space to the diverse young people from all over Nepal for in-depth discussions and reviews of the five clusters of goals being reviewed this year at APFSD and HLPF 2022 i.e., Goal 4 (Quality Education), **Goal 5 (Gender Equality)**, **Goal 14 (Life below water)**, **15 (Life on Land)** and **Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)**. A provincial-level youth consultation was also conducted prior to the National Youth Conclave at all seven provinces by YUWA and RHRN which brought together 158 young people from 55 districts to gather their views and recommendations for Agenda 2030.

This call to action is a joint endeavor of NAYA that serves as an outcome document of the

National Youth Conclave 2022 and Provincial Youth Consultation. This outcome document encompasses the issues, challenges, and recommendations of young people of Nepal for the five clusters of goals being discussed and reviewed this year at APFSD and HLPF. This call to action aims to feed into the APFSD youth forum 2022, APFSD 2022, and ultimately to HLPF 2022.

## SDG 4: Quality Education

Nepal has made substantial educational improvement over the previous 20 years. In primary schools, the net enrolment percentage has grown to 97 percent. However, the country still faces numerous obstacles. Around 770,000 children between the ages of 5 and 12 are still not in school. Only half of Nepali and mathematics students in grades 3, 5, and 8 meet the academic success criterion. Early childhood education (ECE) participation remains low, at 51%. Only 12 percent of children from the lowest wealth quintile are developmentally on track in literacy and numeracy, compared to 65 percent of children from the top wealth quintile. Only a few schools meet the criteria for being child-friendly. Only 11% of school buildings are in good condition.<sup>1</sup>

### Issues and Challenges

There are numerous challenges that different Nepalese provinces face when it comes to providing high-quality education. One of them is a variety of topographical barriers, which have limited access to schools/colleges because many schools, especially in rural areas, are placed at a distance.

Theoretical and lecture-based education are more commonly used in Nepalese schools and institutions. The practice of technical and vocational education is not well-developed. There is also a scarcity of lab and supplementary

teaching materials for practical schooling, while the teachers themselves lack the necessary skills and training. The allocation of budget in research is very low and no provision for revision of the syllabus.

There is gender prejudice among students, which has created barriers for people from sexual and gender minorities, particularly young females. Patriarchy is rooted in both classrooms and in practice. Because of poverty and gender prejudice, girls are sent to public schools while boys are assigned to private institutions. Women's literacy has also decreased as a result of child marriage.

Curriculums are not gender-neutral, and students are still taught traditional and outdated courses, which has had a severe impact on their psychology. CSE is not emphasized in the curriculum and/or is being portrayed through a health lens and not through a right-based perspective resulting in the incomplete circulation of information among students. At educational institutions, there is a lack of gender-friendly, disabled-friendly infrastructures as well as adolescent-friendly services.

Most people dislike government schools because they are poorly administered, and most private schools are prohibitively expensive. Although the government has legislated the provision of free basic education, many educational institutions have yet to implement it. In schools and educational institutions, there is no monitoring or evaluation of educational quality. Educational policies are also lacking, and even when they are present, they are not implemented in practice. Scholarships for deserving students are also not properly implemented. In schools and universities, menstrual health is not a priority. One of the other issues is the poor implementation of the Early Childhood Development Policy (ECD), and there's no strategy to cater to out-of-school children.

<sup>1</sup> Shrestha N, The challenge. UNICEF. 2015.

Participants in Lumbini province highlighted that the Muslim Community lacks sufficient accountability because it gives education in its own institution. Other provinces experience a delay in the creation of provincial education policy at the government level, as well as low stakeholder participation in policymaking. Covid-19 has recently emerged as one of the barriers to quality education owing to remote learning. Not all students have access to the internet or cell phones/laptops, which makes it difficult for them to study well.

The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the already-existing gaps in accessibility to education. The alarming surge in COVID-19 cases in the country forced the closure of every sector, including educational institutions, resulting in lost learning and high drop-out rates among vulnerable and underprivileged children. The government of Nepal implemented schooling via television for grades 6-10 as part of the "Digital School System," but according to a poll done in 2017, just 72 percent of Nepalese households own a television, excluding more than a quarter of the students from the initiative. The evidence from prior crises suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to cause a surge in poverty and related child marriages, thereby ending the educational careers of adolescent girls. The danger of the COVID-19 school closures is therefore that the share of child marriages may increase, which subsequently prevents girls from returning to education after the restrictions have been lifted.<sup>2</sup>

## Recommendations

CSE should be scaled up for in-school and out-of-school children as per International Technical Guideline on Sexuality Education (ITGSE) guidelines. Strategies to cater to out-of-school children should be formulated.

Prioritize enabling environment in school

through implementation of Menstrual Health Friendly School models that focus on joint and tailored action between school management and students.

Schools should ensure a disability-friendly teaching-learning environment with a provision of a psychosocial counsellor especially emphasizing the post-COVID scenario.

Involve and empower girls in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) in all the regions through the initiation of campaigns and programs.

Instituting proper monitoring mechanisms in schools and other educational institutions for the evaluation of teachers' performances in the classroom and proper completion of curriculum.

## SDG 5: Gender Equality

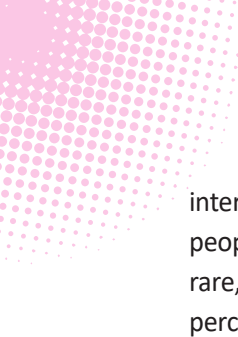
Despite the fact that women make up 32.7 percent of Nepal's parliament, more effort needs to be done to achieve gender equality. In 2018, the adolescent birth rate was 63 per 1,000 women aged 15-19, down from 88.2 in 2015. In the past 12 months, 11.4 percent of women aged 15 to 49 reported being subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner. In comparison to boys, girls are more likely to drop out of school at a rate of around 5%.<sup>3</sup>

## Issues and Challenges

Many people are still uninformed of gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation, and many others have little knowledge about CSE. There is a general lack of understanding of people's rights and services. When it comes to SRH services, the majority of women are emphasized, whereas minorities, including LGBTIQ persons, and individuals with disabilities are frequently overlooked. At all levels, diversity, inclusion, and

<sup>2</sup> Nepal VI. The Impact of Covid-19 on Access to Education in Nepal 2020

<sup>3</sup> Data. Nepal. UNWomen.



intersectionality are not taken into account. Young people with good SRH understanding are extremely rare, and they are also exposed to negative SRH perceptions via social media platforms.

Power imbalance guided by the patriarchal ideology engraved among women themselves has been a reason for the oppression of women. Domestic violence is common in families as a result of patriarchal beliefs, and women are pushed to stay in toxic relationships as a result of social structure, norms, and values. People who identify as LGBTIQ+ continue to face discrimination and difficulty assimilating to society. LGBTIQ+ people experience discrimination from the government, as well as verbal and physical abuse. In addition, there are no equal rights in the property. Lack of infrastructure, such as toilets, is also visible, limiting access to people like transmen and transwomen because only ladies' and gents' toilets are indicated. Rape, sexual harassment, violence, abuse among girls, women, youth, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ people are high.

Gender identification and sex-selective abortions are also common. Different cultural barriers are also visible, such as limiting access to kitchens and untouchability during menstruation. Women and girls are overworked in the home and have few opportunities. Despite numerous interventions, "*chhaupadi pratha*" is still prominent in most regions.

Tokenistic participation of youth and women at tables decision-making spaces. In terms of political, educational, and professional engagement, LGBTIQ+ people are underrepresented. Gender digressive words are employed in the classroom, both verbally and in writing. Teachers are also insensitive to language that is gendered. Even educated people have a lack of awareness of gender norms and sexuality whereas lack of information on the existing laws, rights, and available services among people from rural areas and other marginalized communities

is also seen in our society. People with disabilities are not able to put their views forward due to inaccessible infrastructures and environments in various sectors like education, employment, health care, etc.

Furthermore, during the pandemic, the number of women without paid work increased by 337 percent, and 83 percent of women lost their jobs and income. Due to the loss of income, the pandemic is likely to exacerbate food insecurity among already vulnerable populations such as landless women, women-headed households with little savings, returnee women migrant workers, and single women. Women who work as daily wage employees, in the entertainment industry, in brick kilns, or who run their own enterprises have been struck the worst.<sup>4</sup>

## Recommendations

More gender-inclusive politics should be established. Political parties should practice the implementation of affirmative actions' availing opportunities for female leaders. Young girls should be provided with an environment where they can see meaningful and active participation of women in political leadership at all levels.

Unleash young people from the grassroots to be social champions so that they can sensitize their peers and community, and lobby with local government for enhanced policies and actions on gender and human rights.

Youth should develop a culture of research, generating evidence for advocacy on gender equality. Sensitization of youth on patriarchy, masculinity, gender equality, and intersectionality also should be done in order to enable them to advocate on the same.

The school-level curriculum should contain topics relating to gender and gender equality including the issues of SAGM.

Inclusive, safe, quality, and stigma-free SRHR services at all levels for adolescents, LGBTIQ+, and marginalized youth and women should be available. One-stop Crisis Management Centres (OCMCs) should be strengthened.

## **SDG 14: Life Below Water and SDG 15: Life on Land**

The Land Resource Mapping Project (LRMP), which surveyed the country's land use pattern in 1978/79, found that forest and shrub-land made up 42.8 percent of its area, agricultural land made up 20.1 percent, grassland made up 11.9 percent, rocky land made up 13.2 percent, water bodies and snow made up 3.5 percent, and other land types made up 8.5 percent. Wetlands, which encompass 416,563 ha of the country, include rivers, lakes, reservoirs, ponds, and marshlands.<sup>5</sup>

Nepal's unique geological location, vast natural resources, fertile fields, and cultural variety provide a solid foundation for the country's socio-economic development however, management of these resources for long-term usage has been the challenge. Soil erosion and degradation, declining soil fertility, monsoon-dependent agriculture in Nepal, unsustainable fertilizer and pesticide use, as well as rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and the frequency and intensity of droughts and floods have all reduced agricultural production, affecting 76 percent of households that rely on agriculture.<sup>6</sup>

### **Issues and Challenges**

Due to economic concerns that result in haphazard resource usage, as well as other factors such as forest fires that result in the loss of natural habitat for animals, there has been an increase in human-wildlife conflict. Illegal hunting and poaching of wild endangered animals are also reducing the population of these creatures. Political disagreements result in unstable

regimes, which obstruct the project's progress.

Increasing global warming causes the melting of snow caps, resulting in a dangerous rise in sea level; hazardous waste management causes water pollution, endangering aquatic life. Lack of resources, a lack of understanding, and a technology gap result in unplanned city development and vast forest destruction for construction. Stakeholders are formed by technological gaps and ignorance issues, while knowledge gaps between planners and implementers result in improper and unplanned infrastructure. Youth engagement is minimal, and there is a lack of creativity and greater dependence on established traditions.

Approximately 4.6 million Nepalese individuals were food insecure prior to the outbreak. The current COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on all aspects of the food supply chain, affecting agricultural output, food processing, transportation, and logistics, as well as end demand.<sup>7</sup>

### **Recommendations**

Inclusion of local youths in both discussion and decision making at the local level, development of a green governance structure engaging the youth at the local level.

Awareness programs with up to date and scientific knowledge and conduction of different awareness programs with different methods and media. For instance land pollution, desertification, habitat loss, etc.

Highlighting the importance of indigenous communities and their knowledge by developing community forests, the establishment of more protected areas for preserving flora and fauna, protection of wetlands, and so on.

Planned and sustainable infrastructure development, planned urbanization, and

<sup>5</sup> Government of Nepal, Central Bureau of Statistics. 2008. Kathmandu.

<sup>6</sup> JICA. 2012. Review of Food Production and Agriculture in Terai – JICA's Support Strategy. Kathmandu.

<sup>7</sup> Joshi T, Mainali RP, Marasini S, Acharya KP, Adhikari SJJoa, Research F. Nepal at the edge of sword with two edges: The COVID-19 pandemics and sustainable development goals. 2021;4:100138.

investments in sustainable and traditional practices with noble innovative ideas should be ensured.

Regulation of industries and factories for clean energy use and use of technology complying with zero-carbon emission should be strictly ensured.

Integrated forest management (Incorporating watershed, wildlife, and natural resources).

Pressurize government and leaders to formulate effective laws and implement them. Development projects should strictly be executed only after undergoing EIA and IEE processes.

## **SDG 17: Partnership for goals**

Government should create a space for CSOs and stakeholders to provide inputs and feedback for their plans and programs. Meaningful and inclusive participation of CSOs in the planning and programming of education initiatives should be encouraged. Formal and informal education should be made more inclusive. Collaborative strategies of CBOs, NGOs, and government bodies should be formulated to cater to out-of-school children.

The involvement of private-sector corporations in the achievement of the 2030 agenda should be encouraged. Public-private partnerships also should be strengthened. CSOs should collaborate with youths and sensitize them on issues that fall beyond the school/college curriculum. These may include the topics of sexuality, gender, sustainability, climate change, etc.

Traditional healers and local leaders who carry the ability to guide communities should work hand in hand to end harmful practices and social norms that nourish and foster gender inequality.

Partnership with educational departments like

Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD), Ministry of Education and Technology (MoST) for including the issues in the curriculum.

Partnership with relevant government bodies including Family Welfare Division of Ministry of Health and Population, Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, National women commission for SRH services and reducing violence, etc. The constitutional body working on gender equality i.e the National Women Commission should be localized and decentralized in the federal context.

Coordination and collaboration with different sectorial partners and CSOs of various fields like indigenous women organizations, disability organizations, women-led, youth-led organizations, LGBTIQ organizations, feminist organizations, and so on for more collaborative sharing as well as learning.

Organizations like World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) should work in collaboration with local organizations like the Nepal water conservation foundation (NWCF), the Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (*FECOFUN*), and the Institute for Social and Environmental Transition - Nepal (ISET-Nepal) in order to address local needs.

Different departments like the department of forest and the department of water resources should work hand in hand for the protection and preservation of local biodiversity. Community participation in such initiatives should be kept at the forefront.

Approaches for protection and promotion of biodiversity such as social media outreach with a wider audience. Evidence generation for the planning of different activities is also needed. But last but not least multi-sectorial collaboration is needed in order to complete the activity.

## ACRONYMS

<b>APFSD:</b>	Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
<b>ARROW:</b>	Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women
<b>BBC:</b>	Beyond Beijing Committee
<b>BCN:</b>	Bird Conservation Nepal
<b>BYAN:</b>	Blind Youth Association Nepal
<b>CDC:</b>	Curriculum Development Centre
<b>CEHRD:</b>	Centre for Education and Human Resource Development
<b>CSE:</b>	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
<b>CSOs:</b>	Civil Society Organizations
<b>ECE:</b>	Early Childhood Education
<b>ECD:</b>	Early Childhood Development
<b>EIA:</b>	Environmental Impact Assessment
<b>FECOFUN:</b>	Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal
<b>HLPF:</b>	High-Level Political Forum
<b>IEE:</b>	Initial Environmental Examination
<b>INGO:</b>	International Non-governmental Organization
<b>ISSET-Nepal:</b>	Institute for Social and Environmental Transition - Nepal
<b>ITGSE:</b>	International Technical Guidelines on Sexuality Education
<b>LGTBIQ:</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, Intersex, and Queer
<b>LRMP:</b>	Land Resource Mapping Project
<b>MoST:</b>	Ministry of Education and Technology
<b>NAYA:</b>	Nepal APFSD Youth Alliance
<b>NGO:</b>	Non-governmental Organization
<b>NWCF:</b>	Nepal Water Conservation Foundation
<b>NYCA:</b>	Nepalese Youth for Climate Action
<b>OCMCs:</b>	One-Stop Crisis Management Centres
<b>RHRN2:</b>	Right Here Right Now 2
<b>SAGM:</b>	Sexual and Gender Minorities
<b>SDGs:</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SRH:</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health
<b>STEM:</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
<b>UN Agencies:</b>	United Nations Agencies
<b>WAN:</b>	Water Aid Nepal
<b>WWF:</b>	World Wide Fund for Nature



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