

# ASIA AND THE PACIFIC YOUTH SYMPOSIUM 2021

## Concept Note

12–27 August 2021

*Theme: Meaningful Youth Engagement and Pathways to Resilience*

### I. Background: Meaningful Youth Engagement and Asia and the Pacific

Based on demographic trends, the Asia and the Pacific region is simultaneously a very young and aging region. Currently over 1.1 billion individuals between the ages of 15 and 29 live in ADB Developing Member Countries (DMCs). Yet the rate by which populations, particularly in East Asia are aging, will mean that almost one-fifth of the region's people will be over 65 years old by 2050.<sup>1</sup>

Both are important to the development of the region. Young people are a potentially demographic dividend that drives economic growth, innovation and an inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Youth-led initiatives can strengthen program delivery, mobilize people across generations towards a cause, influence community behavior and attitudes, and provide inputs to development policies.

At the same time, without critical investments on young people's education and access to economic opportunities (including employment) and increasing their political and social capital, the dividend potential can shift—and put significant strain on a country's services instead. This risk has increased with the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused massive shocks that disproportionately affected young people. The impacts of COVID-19 on a young person's life are far-reaching and include mental health; employment and income, and education and training, among others.<sup>4</sup> Development institutions are under pressure to deliver response and recovery activities using limited resources to bounce back, which further complicates the role of social dialogue and collective action amidst other priorities.

**Strategy 2030:** “There are 2 billion individuals under the age of 30 living in Asia and the Pacific, representing 54% of the global youth population. Favorable demographics or demographic dividends are often correlated with strong economic development and social progress, but this is contingent on the ability of DMCs to offer quality jobs and maximize workers' productivity.”

ADB's Strategy 2030 highlights the importance of leveraging the region's young population and ensuring a “society for all.” This focus emphasizes the importance of meaningful and mutually beneficial intergenerational partnerships in addressing the region's pressing challenges and incorporating a whole-of-society approach in developing a common vision for a post-COVID-19 future.

<sup>1</sup> In 2019, people above the age of 65 years old accounted for 9% of the region's population. UN estimates project that this would increase to 12.3% in 2030, and 18.15% in 2050.

Successful partnerships across generations are contingent upon the meaningful engagement of the actors involved. Although the topic of youth engagement in Asia and the Pacific is not new, current realities and trends reveal an opportunity to reimagine this practice and address gaps to make it more meaningful. For instance, several organizations and studies recognize the role of social dialogue and collective action to design and implement credible, effective, and well-contextualized development solutions.<sup>2</sup>

## II. Event details

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia and the Pacific Youth Symposium (APYS) is a platform for intergenerational dialogue that convenes governments, young leaders and other stakeholders to discuss major and emerging issues in the region. It aims to facilitate intergenerational dialogues on Meaningful Youth Engagement (MYE)<sup>3</sup> in different sectors, such as youth economic empowerment (YEE), health and wellness, and climate change, in order to gather insights in what resilience means to young people in Asia and the Pacific and how to unlock youth opportunities in these sectors.

Building on the insights and learning from the 1<sup>st</sup> Asia and the Pacific Youth Symposium, APYS 2021 will feature a virtual series of keynote addresses, panel discussions, workshops and consultation space, and a training module for participants to further explore youth resiliency in relation to MYE. It also provides opportunities for networking among ADB staff, government representatives, private sector, academe and think-tanks, and civil society and youth organizations.

## III. Event Objectives

The objectives of the Asia and the Pacific Youth Symposium (APYS) are to:

- showcase youth-led initiatives strengthening the resilience of young people and communities against economic shocks, natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic;
- gather insights on the meaning of resilience to young people in Asia and the Pacific, and potential opportunities for youth to be involved in COVID-19 recovery phase;
- build the knowledge and skills of young people and adult partners in applying meaningful youth engagement as a practice in development programs; and
- collect and analyze knowledge on select MYE topics to inform ADB YfA's future initiatives and launch a MYE case studies research initiatives with partners.

<sup>2</sup> In a recent study by the Youth Employment Funders Group (2021), meaningful youth engagement was found to occur when, “under enabling conditions, youth representatives actively participate throughout the program life cycle and enter into youth-adult partnerships that empower youth and contribute to positive and long-lasting development outcomes.”

#### IV. Event Activities

- **APYS Event Launch:** To celebrate the International Youth Day 2021, APYS will kickstart the with a panel discussion on the State of the Region where intergenerational stakeholders provide a landscape of MYE in Asia and the Pacific. The Event Launch will also include an Hour of Code<sup>3</sup> and an introduction to the MYE Training Course.
- **Knowledge sessions:** To showcase the development of youth-led initiatives to thematic areas, APYS will be conducting knowledge sessions to provide a better understanding on how youth are demonstrating resilience against economic shocks, natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic. Through knowledge sessions, participants will have a better understanding on how youth can be meaningfully engaged when it comes to resilience initiatives in youth economic empowerment, health and wellness, and climate change.
- **MYE Training Course:** To deepen participants' understanding of MYE and its application in development practice, APYS will also provide a training course consisting of three online modules that will cover (i) the definition and conceptual framework of meaningful youth engagement; (ii) relevance of MYE to ADB sector programs; and (iii) good practices and lessons learned in practicing MYE from practitioners. The training will culminate with a 1-day closing workshop, which will include learning circles for participants to share reflections and other insights from the training program.
- **Consultation Session:** To gather insights on what resilience means to young people in Asia and the Pacific and how stakeholders and youth themselves can unlock opportunities for MYE in COVID-19 recover, APYS provide a space for intergenerational dialogue through a consultation session.
- **Event Closing:** APYS Event Closing will provide a space to showcase outputs and journey of APYS delegates from the knowledge sessions, Hour of Code, MYE Training Course and Consultation Sessions.

<sup>3</sup> The Hour of Code is a one-hour introduction to computer science designed to develop solutions through the use of technology, specifically coding.

**Agenda:** Specific session times will be announced closer to the date.

Date	Session/Theme	Duration
12 August	APYS Event Launch, International Youth Day 2021, Hour of Code, MYE Training Module launch	120 minutes
16 August	Knowledge Session: Climate Change	90 minutes
18 August	Knowledge Session: Health and Wellness	90 minutes
20 August	Knowledge Session: Youth Economic Empowerment	90 minutes
16–20 August	MYE Training Module	
23 August	Consultation Session	120 minutes
27 August	Event Closing	90 minutes

## V. Event Audience

APYS will convene key stakeholders working with young people and have initiatives for young people in the region such as:

- young people engaged in initiatives and policy-making and who come from underrepresented and diverse backgrounds; and young professionals with expertise on the topic and youth from different program areas related to meaningful youth engagement;
- government representatives from ministries, departments and local government units that work or have a stake in integrating youth and are interested to learn about youth insights and views on how to meaningfully engage youth in their field or initiatives;
- academia and think-tank researchers, policy writers, and thought leaders who are working on studies related to youth engagement, human capital development, resiliency, and/or inclusivity related to young people; and
- representatives from multilateral organizations, intergovernmental organizations, CSOs, and the private sector with programs that contribute to a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific.