

CONCEPT NOTE

Asia and the Pacific Youth Symposium 2023
17–19 April 2023 | Zoom Virtual Conference

Theme: Rebounding Asia: Recover, Reconnect and Reform

I. **Background: Youth and Asia and the Pacific**

Basing off its demographic trends, the Asia and the Pacific region is simultaneously young and aging. Over 1.1 billion individuals between the ages of 15 and 29 live in ADB developing member countries. Yet the rate by which populations particularly in East Asia are aging can mean that almost one-fifth of the region’s people will be over 65 years old by 2050.¹

Both are important to the development of the region. On one hand, young people can potentially become a demographic dividend that drives economic growth, innovation and 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. These include mental health, employment and income, and education and training, among others.⁴ 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.

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.

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

¹ 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.



the role of social dialogue and collective action to design and implement credible, effective, and well-contextualized development solutions.²

II. Knowledge Event Overview

The 3rd Asia and the Pacific Youth Symposium (APYS3) is a social dialogue exchange that convenes governments, young leaders and other key stakeholders in development to discuss major and emerging issues in the region. APYS3 aims to bridge the discourse gap in the region by facilitating intergenerational dialogue between youth and adult stakeholders. These meaningful discussions ultimately revolve around the region’s collective efforts to “build back better”³ and move towards a future that youth and adults alike want to live in.

Building on the knowledge and learnings from previous youth events and programming, APYS3 will feature a hybrid program composed of workshops and an integration of youth voices in the 56th ADB Annual Meeting (AM56) in Incheon, Republic of Korea. It also provides opportunities for networking among ADB staff, government representatives, private sector, the academe and think-tanks, civil society, and youth-led or youth-centered organizations.

III. Knowledge Event Objectives

The objectives of the APYS are to:

- Illustrate youth’s vision of “building back” a better Asia and the Pacific in the COVID-19 recovery period;
- Build the capacity of youth networks to amplify youth voices in the upcoming AM56;
- Develop a youth agenda that puts forward the ambitions of youth for a better and more sustainable future, especially on key development issues covered by the sustainable development goals (SDGs); and
- Gather insights from youth and adults to inform organizers’ future youth engagement directions

IV. Knowledge Event Activities

- **Call for youth ambassadors:** To showcase youth talents and skills in development practice, APYS will be recruiting youth ambassadors who will be facilitating knowledge workshops and representing youth for select sessions AM56.
- **APYS Knowledge Workshops:** 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 as economies, societies, and the environment recover from the pandemic. Through insights gathered from these workshops, a youth agenda will be developed to be shared with key actors in development (i.e., government, regional bodies, CSOs) during AM56.

² 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.

³ “Building Back Better” is defined as “recovery that leads to improvements above and beyond the predisaster status quo” (ADB, 2019)



- **Youth Giving Back to Youth during the ADB Annual Meeting:** To provide a space for intergenerational dialogue, youth ambassadors are invited as resource speakers and correspondents in the digital space for other youth. Through their unique approach and command of the digital space, youth will utilize social media to streamline and share access to discussions on key development issues to foster a wider discussion across the region.

APYS3 Journey

Specific session time slots will be announced closer to the knowledge session dates.

Date	Activity/Theme	Duration
15 February	Call for APYS Youth Ambassadors	----
7 March	Selection of Youth Ambassadors	---
27 March	Onboarding of Youth Ambassadors	---
APYS Session 1		
17 April	Opening, and Knowledge Workshop: <i>Recover</i> (Partner: UNICEF ROSA)	2 hours
APYS Session 2		
18 April	Knowledge Workshop: <i>Reconnect</i> (Partner: Plan International)	90 minutes
APYS Session 3		
19 April	Closing Session and Knowledge Workshop: <i>Reform</i> (Partner: ADB NGOC and Youth for Asia)	90 minutes
2–5 May	ADB Annual Meeting Sessions	

V. Knowledge Event Participants

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

- young people engaged in initiatives and policy-making, 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; and
- 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.

