



Youth Agenda 2024

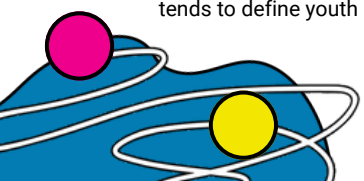
About the 2024 Asia and the Pacific Youth Agenda on Climate Change

The 2024 Youth Agenda outlines the needs and priorities of Asia and the Pacific's youth¹ on climate change, with actionable recommendations for governments, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society across three priority areas: i) green skills and green jobs; ii) climate advocacy; and iii) the role of young women and girls in a just economic transition. The Youth Agenda is an expression of the voice of the 500 participants of the 4th Asia and Pacific Youth Symposium (APYS4), held between 17–19 April 2024 online with in-person participation of young people in Bhopal, Kathmandu, and Manila.

In addition to the young people of Asia and the Pacific, APYS4 was attended by regional government representatives, local government units, academia, multilateral organizations, civil society organizations, intergovernmental organizations, and the private sector.

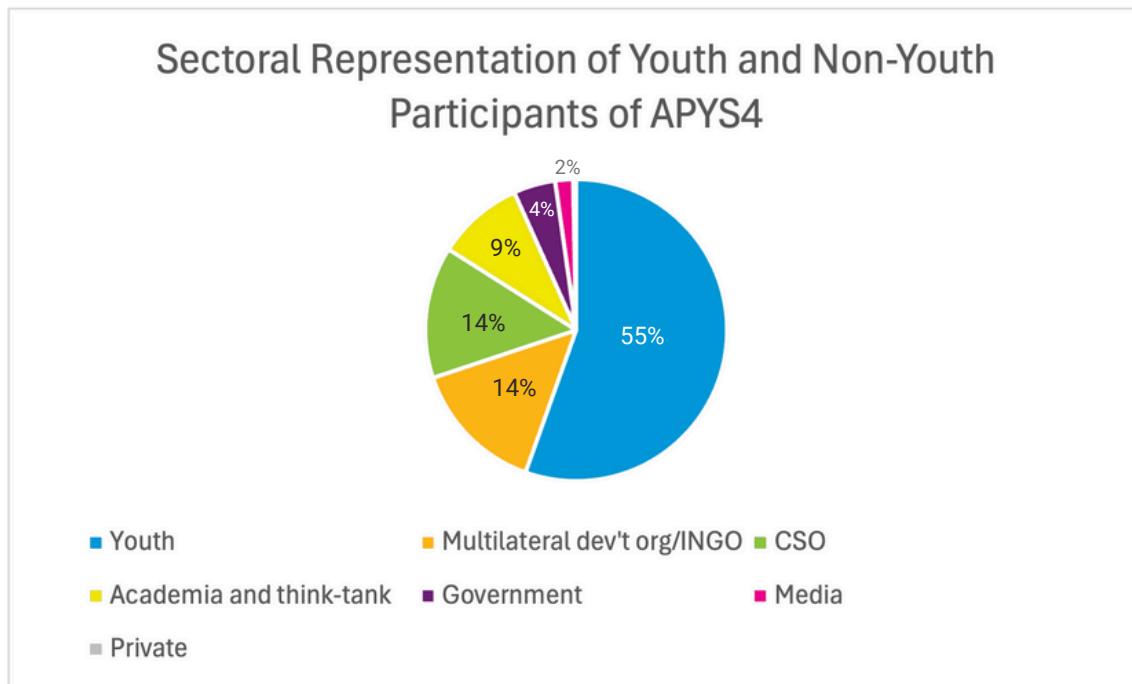
APYS4 was co-convened by the Asian Development Bank, Plan International Asia-Pacific, and the UNICEF Regional Offices for South Asia and East Asia and the Pacific. It was co-created with the meaningful participation of six youth ambassadors selected through a competitive process. This Youth Agenda was developed by APYS4 Youth Ambassadors Noa Limpoco, Shameer Rishad, Rubina Adhikari, Giao Truong, Sheba Sunny Marottickal, and Alvian Wardhana.

[1] Globally, for statistical purposes, youth are often defined as those aged 15–24 years, which is in line with the United Nations definition. National definitions vary across Asia and the Pacific region (e.g., Nepal uses 16–40 years). The Asian Development Bank tends to define youth internally as those aged 18–29 years.



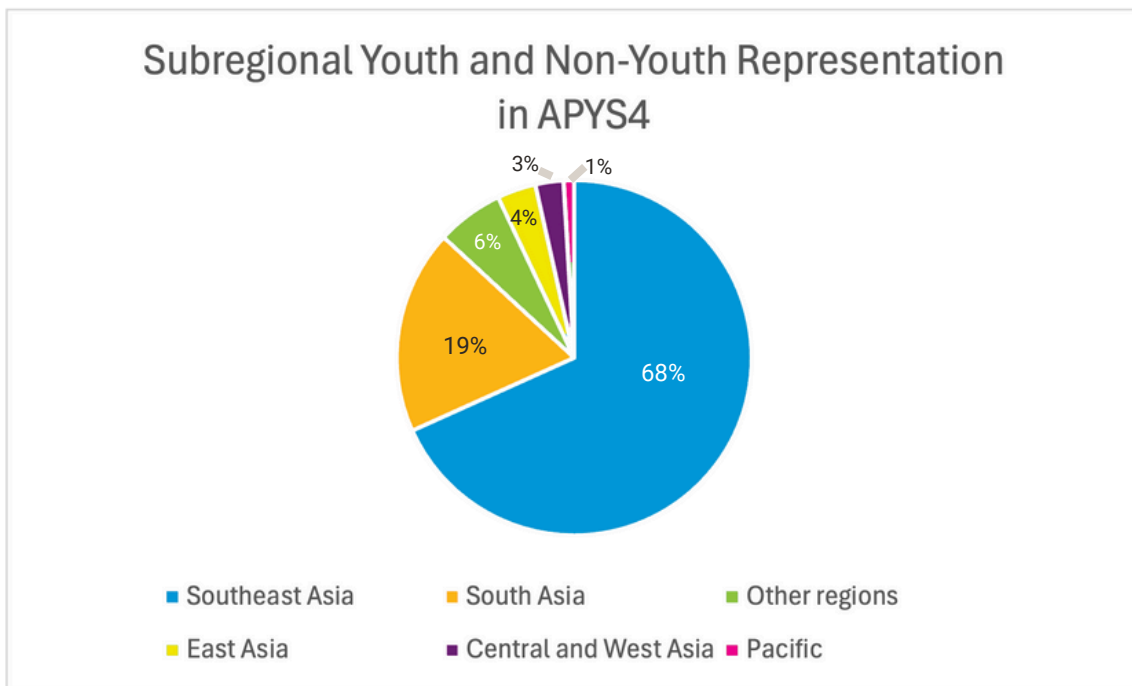
Sectoral and Geographical Representation at the 4th Asia and the Pacific Youth Symposium

Figure 1. Distribution of the youth and non-youth participants in the 4th Asia and the Pacific Youth Symposium, by sector



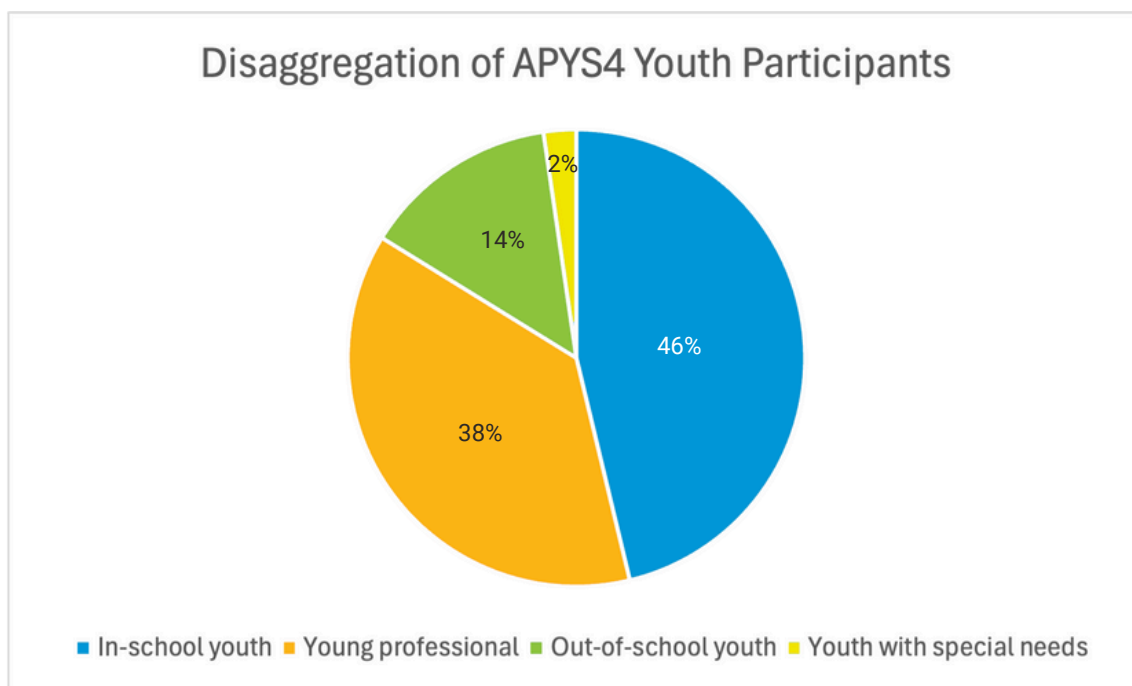
The sectoral representation of participants in APYS4 clearly depicts the active involvement of the target audience in meaningful youth engagement. Although more than 50 per cent of the attendees were youth, the decreased number of sectors including governments, the private sector, and the media are highlighting the lack of the non-youth category in supporting youth engagement in civic spaces. It also emphasizes compact representation and the impact of academia and the think-tank sector in intergenerational discussions for actionable solutions which are reflected in drafting the Youth Agenda.

Figure 2. Distribution of the youth and non-youth participants in the 4th Asia and the Pacific Youth Symposium, by region of origin



The subregional youth and non-youth representation mark a significant level of input from the Southeast Asian region while witnessing a disproportionate small number of youth from the Pacific. Consequently, this high disproportion will inevitably lead to the lack of those valuable inputs and feedbacks of future APYS activities to the youth and other vulnerable populations of such regions. On the other hand, this draws an attention for a more inclusive approach in designing youth engagement in the global forefront.

Figure 3. Distribution of the youth participants in the 4th Asia and the Pacific Youth Symposium, by youth sub-sector



One of the highlights of the APYS4 was that the majority of youth who attended the session are in the in-school category, followed by young professionals. At the same time, APYS4 has seen a remarkable proportion of youth with special needs in raising their voices for the unsettled matters in combating climate change. Not only this show the success of APYS4 in keeping its comprehensive objective, but culminating the significance of active youth involvement from all walks of the community challenging the status quo.

In photos: Participation Hubs in Manila, Kathmandu, and Bhopal

Manila Participation Hub @ ADB Headquarters



In-person pre-webinar activities were held at the Staff Hub on April 17 with the theme "Towards a Greener Tomorrow: Green Skills and Green Jobs with Young People in Asia and the Pacific."



APYS4 workshops held at the Innovation Hub on April 18 focused on the theme "Youth Leadership in Climate Policy Advocacy: Local to Global Level."



APYS4 Day 3 pre-webinar activities were held at Multifunction Hall 1 on 19 April with the theme "Bridging the Gap: Young Women as Catalysts of Just Transition."



ADB Director (Fragility and Engagement) Benjamin Graham welcomed youth participants to the ADB Headquarters on April 18.

Bhopal and Kathmandu Participation Hubs

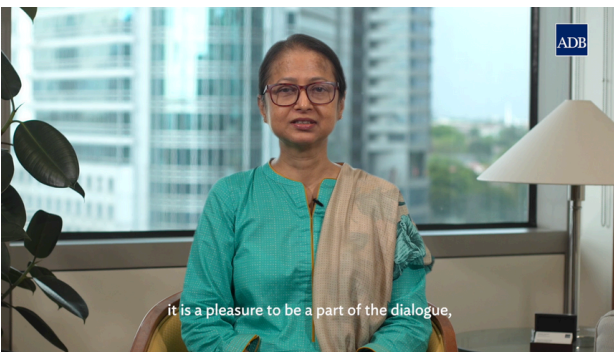


UNICEF's Regional Office for South Asia in Bhopal, India hosted in-person pre-workshop activities on April 17.

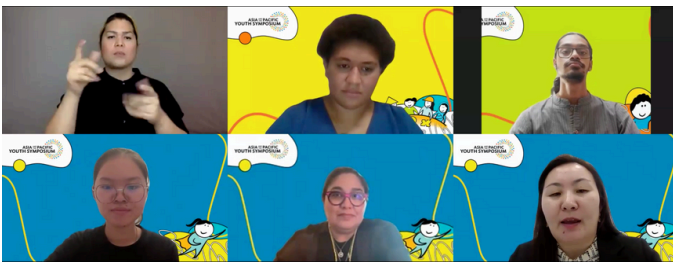


ADB CSO Anchor for Nepal Binita Shah Khadka moderated APYS4 Day 2 sessions on 18 April from Kathmandu, Nepal.

Online Participation Hub



ADB Vice-President (Sectors and Themes) Fatima Yasmin welcomed APYS4 participants on 17 April to formally open the 4th Asia and the Pacific Youth Symposium. She highlighted the important role of the youth in helping shape policies of key development actors in addressing major challenges such as climate change.



Zonibel Woods, Senior Social Development Specialist, served as one of the panelists of "Towards a Greener Tomorrow: Green Skills and Green Jobs with Young People in Asia and the Pacific"



ADB Gender Specialist (Climate Change) Jin Ha Kim delivered an ADB response to youth inputs during the "Bridging the Gap: Young Women as Catalysts of Just Transition" session on April 19.



Key Takeaways

Priority Area 1: Green Skill and Green Jobs

Demand for green jobs far outstrips supply, and young people in Asia and the Pacific are already facing major challenges when it comes to securing decent employment.

According to the ILO report on Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Asia and the Pacific, the overall youth unemployment rate in the Asia-Pacific region was estimated at 14.1 per cent. The adoption of a green economy, created as countries transition toward low-carbon and climate-resilient economies, has the potential to create 24 million new jobs globally by 2030.² Seventy-seven per cent (77%) of young people in the developing countries of Africa as well as in the Asia and the Pacific region between the ages of 15 and 39 want to hold a green job by 2032,³ but as of 2022 only 1 in 10 young people surveyed had applied to or were employed in a green job.⁴

Although there is no agreed definition,⁵ green jobs can be considered decent jobs that support the transition to a low-carbon economy or contribute to the preservation or restoration of the environment across both traditional emerging green sectors. Green jobs can be both skilled and unskilled, and green skills are the knowledge, competencies, and qualifications needed to secure and perform green jobs. The availability of green jobs and demand for green skills is driven by the labor market. Asia and the Pacific young people need to understand the jobs of tomorrow and be equipped to secure these jobs through education, vocational training, and workforce learning.

Youth Insights on Green Skills and Green Jobs

- 1. Young people have little awareness of the shape of the labor market and the way the market is likely to transition in their country.** There is a lack of information about green sectors, the types of jobs available, and what skills are needed to secure them. “Green jobs” is a poorly understood term seen as jargon, making it difficult for young people to meaningfully engage with the issue.
- 2. Decisions about the economic transition are made without understanding the needs and interests of today’s youth, the job holders of tomorrow.** These decisions shape the labor market and therefore determine the types of jobs available. Young people perceive decision-making to be top-down and exclusionary and lack confidence that it will create economies that fulfill their aspirations. There is more work to do on a rights-based and participatory transition.

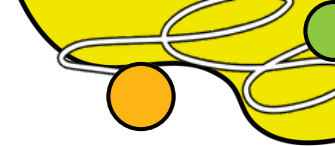
[2] ILO. (2021). ILO’s World Employment and Social Outlook Report. ILO.

[3] Accenture. (2022). Youthquake Meets Green Economy 2022. Accenture.

[4] Plan International. (2022). Young People Unprepared for jobs in the “green economy” – global survey. Plan International.

[5] United Nations Industrial Development Organization (2020). Green Industrial Skills for a Sustainable Future.

https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-02/LKDForum-2020_Green-Skills-for-a-Sustainable-Future.pdf

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3. Desirable green jobs are seen to have high barriers to entry, with few entry level positions available. **It is difficult for young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds or facing other forms of marginalization to secure desirable green jobs.** Young people lack confidence that they can secure these jobs.
 4. **Young people are discouraged from pursuing green jobs by their families and communities,** who see these jobs as low-paying and unstable, and unlikely to lead to economic security. Youth gave the example of waste management, forest protection, recycling, and other related businesses as some typical low-paying and unstable jobs. Occupations like small-scale organic farming are perceived as financially unviable due to high initial costs and uncertain market demand, further deterring youth interest in these sectors.
 5. **Young women face significant employment disparities, being almost three times more likely than young men to be neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET).** In 2020, the NEET rate for young women in the Asia-Pacific region was alarmingly high, exacerbating gender inequality in access to decent work and career opportunities.

Priority Area 2: Climate Decision-Making, Advocacy and Participation

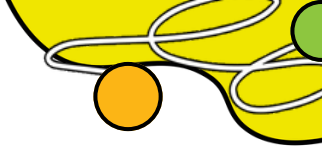
Climate change is an intergenerational justice issue. Today's actions (or lack of actions) will impact future generations. While today's young people are those least responsible for climate change they will bear the brunt of the costs throughout their lifetimes. This means young people have a right⁶ to meaningfully participate in the climate decisions that concern them, whether that happens at the local, subnational, national level, or on the international stage. Through various global youth movements such as Fridays for Future young people are raising their voices demanding access to decision-making spaces and mechanisms to allow them to contribute to the design, implementation, and review of climate policies and programs at all levels.⁷

There is a need to amplify and empower youth voices to drive effective, inclusive, sustainable, and accountable climate action. In particular, we must consider how to best strengthen the voices of young women and girls who, in many parts of Asia and the Pacific, need to overcome unequal gender norms and discriminatory practices that limit their participation in public life.⁸ An additional consideration is how adults in civil society can effectively work with young people.

[6] United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (unicef.org.au)

[7] Arnot, G., Pitt, H., McCarthy, S., Cordedda, C., Marko, S., & Thomas, S. L. (2024). Australian youth perspectives on the role of social media in climate action. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 48(1), 100111.

[8] UNICEF, UNFPA & UN Women (2019) Gender Counts: Sub-regional report for East and Southeast Asia Gender Counts_East_SouthEast_Asia.pdf (unicef.org)



Young people are acutely aware of their marginalization and understand that adults can play a useful role, either as experienced adult advocates who possess knowledge they lack, or who can offer practical support on legal and security issues. While young people are aware of the necessity of cooperation, adults can also alter the dynamics of the youth groups when power comes into play and the adults' views take precedence.⁹

Youth Insights on Climate Decision-Making, Advocacy and Participation

- 1. Policy engagement processes frequently exclude youth voices, discouraging innovation, leading to poorer policy outcomes, and demoralizing young advocates.** Young people are interested and energized to meaningfully engage with policy processes. However, many governments lack the capacity or political will to engage with diverse ideas from a wide variety of stakeholders, instead preferring to work internally or within their existing relationships. When young people are in fact engaged in high-level policy initiatives their participation can be tokenistic, with decision-makers not actioning their insights and recommendations. Exclusion is compounded for youth from marginalized communities.
- 2. There are significant challenges for young people in successfully advocating and influencing policy processes.** Young people are often committed to full-time study and work, with some having significant caring responsibilities as well. Young people need access to good quality and relevant research, data and community insights, as well as access to policymakers.
- 3. Scarce funding resources and limited spaces for youth voices in formal policy processes led to youth advocates and youth-led civil society competing with each other or working in silos,** instead of collaborating for greater efficiency and innovation. This leads to poorer development outcomes as efforts are wasted and potential new initiatives do not emerge. The stress and toxicity of competition can deter other youth from entering the climate space.

[9] Elsen, F., & Ord, J. (2021). The role of adults in “youth led” climate groups: enabling empowerment. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 3, 641154.



Priority Area 3: Young Women and Girls in a Just Transition

Climate change is never gender-neutral. It disproportionately impacts women and girls.¹⁰ A Just Transition means that inequalities, vulnerabilities and human rights are fully considered when economies transition to being low-carbon and climate-resilient, ensuring no one is left behind. Economic transitions on this scale are often disruptive, creating risks for gender equality while also creating opportunities for transformative social and economic change. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's review process identified that governments' National Determined Contributions (NDCs) are not taking a whole-of-society approach that includes youth, women, and marginalized groups.¹¹ Given NDCs function as climate action plans for each country under the Paris Agreement this means that, in many places, the needs, priorities, and perspectives of young women and girls are not being considered in plans to transition economies. In the Asia-Pacific region, women's representation in national parliaments is just 20 per cent, highlighting their underrepresentation in crucial legislative roles where policies, including those on climate, are formulated.

Women play a variety of active roles in responding to climate change. It is well understood that countries and states led by women are more likely to ratify international environmental treaties.¹² Women's involvement in conservation has been linked to stricter, more sustainable resource management rules.¹³ Communities are more effective in resilience building against climate change when women are part of the planning process, and women are leaders in local-level disaster risk reduction.¹⁴ The full participation of young women and girls could lead to transformative outcomes in promoting a Just Transition: we just need to find out.

Youth Insights on Young Women and Girls in a Just Transition

- 1. Inadequate access to funding in the technology and innovation sector restricts women's capacity** to develop and scale up climate solutions, perpetuating gender disparities in entrepreneurship and hindering the transformative potential of women-led initiatives. Women face systemic barriers in accessing financing, including gender biases in investment decisions and a lack of supportive networks and mentorship opportunities.

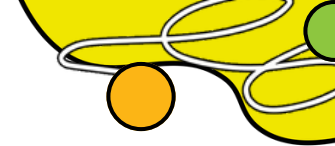
[10] UN Women (2022) Explainer: How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected | UN Women – Headquarters

[11] UNFCCC. 2021. Workshop Report- Good Practices in NDC Updates and Implementation: Challenges and Lessons Learned from Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa.

[12] United Nations Development Programme. (2020). Human Development Report 2020: The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene. UNDP.

[13] World Bank. (2020). Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific: A Companion Report to the World Development Report 2012. World Bank.

[14] UNFCCC. (2023). Five Reasons Why Climate Action Needs Women | UNFCCC

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- 2. A lack of sex-disaggregated data undermines the ability to create tailored and representative climate mitigation policies.** Young people felt that policymakers struggled to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different genders, leading to less inclusive and equitable outcomes.
 - 3. Unequal gender norms and discriminatory legal frameworks limit young women and girls' ability to engage in climate action.** Cultural gender norms in Asia and the Pacific often confine women to domestic spheres, limiting their involvement in public. Young women and girls' time poverty, caused by a disproportionate unpaid work and care burden, undermines well-being, fosters financial dependence, and limits options for decent work. There is little time or energy left to contribute to climate action at any level. Young people highlighted women's unequal access to land ownership in particular as inhibiting their ability to enhance environmental sustainability in agriculture.
 - 4. Young men and boys face societal pressure that limits their ability to act as allies.** Young men and boys expressed that they felt unable to advocate for gender equality or support women's leadership in the climate space owing to social disapproval.



Recommendations

For Asia and the Pacific governments...

- **Reform curricula and non-formal skilling programs to include green skills and green jobs.** Ensure curriculum design is participatory and includes meetings and consultation with schools and teachers in local and rural areas for quality management and assistance on this reform.
- **Invest in capabilities for evidence-based and data-driven decision-making.** Allocate adequate resources to research, including evidence and insight generation from local and marginalized communities, so that the policy-making process is data-rich. Support civil service skills to develop evidence-based policy and undertake public consultations.
- **Ensure the regulatory environment is friendly** toward youth entrepreneurship, with incentives for green and sustainable initiatives.
- **Increase women's representation at all levels of decision-making in climate actions.** Ensure that policies are not only inclusive but are also crafted and implemented with women's active participation and voice. This includes creating youth teams/advisors and platforms that allow for more participation, particularly for young women.
- **Local governments should foster partnerships with women's and youth organizations to leverage their expertise.** By tapping into the knowledge and resources of these groups, institutions can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of climate initiatives while fostering greater community ownership and resilience.



For international organizations...

- **Fund a special platform** such as “Green Young People’s Hub” for young people, youth-led and youth-focused organizations to boost awareness raising on green jobs and green skills, including through labor market forecasting.
- **Enhance the possibilities for meaningful youth engagement** by building safe and enabling spaces for intergenerational collaboration and dialogue with state actors. Provide technical assistance to state actors interested in developing their capacities in meaningful youth engagement.
- Focus on **building advocacy skills** among young people by training them to understand policy processes and enable their participation in governance structures.
- Develop **gender-transformative climate action programs**, providing education and training in climate action. This should include ensuring that women and young people from diverse backgrounds are included in the design and implementation phases, fostering a more inclusive and empowered approach to addressing climate challenges.
- Establish **dedicated financial mechanisms and support programs** that provide accessible and tailored financing options for women, particularly those in vulnerable regions, and young women entrepreneurs. These mechanisms should offer flexible terms, reduced interest rates, and simplified application processes to overcome traditional barriers to finance.
- **Develop a “Green skills and Green jobs” Resource Guide:** Publish resource guides for young people in the two regions which are customized to their country's context and in their language for better accessibility and understanding about green skills and green jobs. These resource guides will provide a foundation for green skills and green jobs, the market trends/demands, and the resource allocations on research, fund mechanism, and materials.



For the private sector...



- **Develop mentorship programs and guidance** for local young people on how to obtain a green job and succeed in the green economy, with a focus on programs for marginalized youth.
- **Provide seed funding and invest in early-stage** youth climate social entrepreneurs and activists. Link aspiring young innovators in sustainability with private sector funding sources.
- As part of corporate social responsibility, **support capacity-building and mentorship programs for women and girls** to enhance financial literacy and entrepreneurship skills among women, empowering them to access and effectively utilize available financing opportunities for climate-resilient initiatives.

For civil society...

- **Create local hubs (online and offline) for green jobs:** Create an online hub functioning like a social platform (such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram) which can be managed by the National Youth Union where young people and adults alike can daily share, access, and update information, job opportunities, internships, stories, campaigns about green skills and green jobs. In addition, local youth-led organizations will act as an offline hub for mentorship support and career guidance.
- **Establishment of Youth Advisory Boards and expansion of networks:** Youth advisory boards can work on a high level to advocate for policy change through political processes—including nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and as members of delegations—thereby expanding networks for collective and codependent initiatives. Further, such boards can have a focus on diversity and inclusion as young people from different vulnerable communities can come on one platform and through a collective voice advocate for greater social change.
- **Civil society organizations in the climate space should conduct internal audits to assess their gender and inclusion sensitivity**, including reflecting on their leadership structures and potential unconscious bias.

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