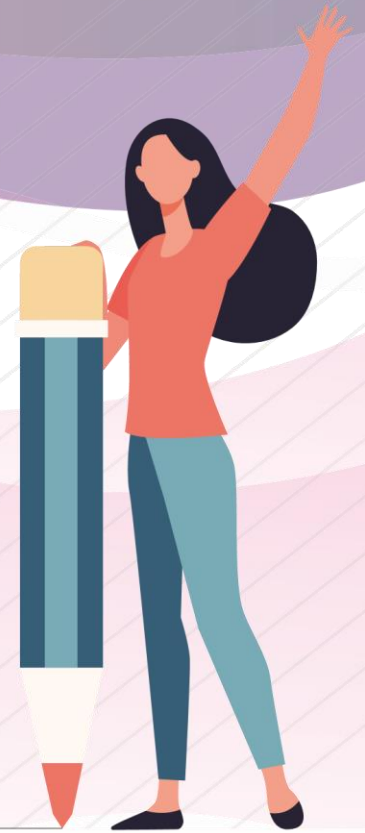




Nepal's Youth Call to Action for APFSD 2023



Introduction

A series of 17 interrelated Sustainable Development Goals also referred to as the Global Goals aim to provide a "blueprint for a better and more sustainable future for all." The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were established by the UN General Assembly in 2015 with the intention of accomplishing them by 2030. Every year, the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) acts as a follow-up and review tool at the international level, enabling nations to evaluate their progress and any gaps in meeting the SDGs.

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).

NAYA has been actively working at the national level since July 2021 to involve youth at the

forefront of sustainable development and to connect regional and global sustainable development mechanisms to the national level. Through various social media campaigns, gatherings, and high-level conversations with important decision-makers, NAYA has been disseminating the major messages, including the issues, and recommendations. NAYA arranged the Second National Youth Conclave on February 24, 2023, giving different young people from all around Nepal a venue for in-depth conversations and evaluations of the four SDGs namely **Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).**

The Second National Youth Conclave 2023 served as the inspiration for this call to action, which NAYA collaborated on. The issues and recommendations raised by the young people in Nepal are included in this outcome document and will produce national recommendations in Nepal for the five goals being evaluated along with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), and 5 (Gender Equality) as a cross-cutting issue before the APFSD Youth Forum at the regional level.

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

Although there is enough fresh water on the earth to provide access to clean water, which is a necessary component millions of people including children, die every year from diseases linked to insufficient water supply, sanitation, and hygiene due to poor economic or poor infrastructure.¹ Nepal has been implementing and promoting related programs and projects, to develop and manage resources sustainability for the achievement of social, economic, and environmental goals, and to advance cooperation and partnership at all levels in order to support and realize internationally agreed-upon water-related goals and targets.²

Following the creation of the National Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan in 2011, progress in the WASH sector began to accelerate. In an endeavor to advance SDG 6 by 2030, the government created a 15-year national WASH sector development strategy in 2015. According to this 15-year plan, each municipality must develop a 5-10 year WASH plan. The goal of the 15th five-year plan (2019–2023, 2023–2024) is to raise the availability of basic drinking water from 88% to 99%.²

Additionally, 'Open defecation-free zone' status was granted to the nation in 2019. According to a report by the Directorate of Drinking Water and Sewerage Management (DWSSM), almost 94% of the population of Nepal has access to basic water supplies. The Ministry of Water Supply (MoWS) has created NWASH, a data app that gathers information about the current water supply systems, potential new water supply systems for underserved community centers, and healthcare facilities, water users' committees, household surveys, drainage, and water management issues, and more.

Issues and Challenges

Poor sanitation in public schools is one such

challenge, with many schools lacking proper toilet facilities and safe drinking water, putting the health and education of students at risk. Additionally, the low prioritization of water quality and sanitation at all levels of government has resulted in inadequate funding and limited resources for addressing these issues. Furthermore, the lack of water quality testing services has made it difficult to identify and address sources of contamination, including fecal contamination of water sources.

The weak institutional setup for the maintenance of clean and sanitary water practices has also contributed to the challenge of achieving SDG 6 in Nepal. The lack of a robust institutional framework has resulted in inadequate policies and regulations, limited funding, and insufficient coordination among government agencies and other stakeholders involved in providing clean water and sanitation services. This has led to poor maintenance of water supply and sanitation infrastructure, resulting in frequent breakdowns and service interruptions.

Many communities still practice open defecation, leading to the contamination of water sources and posing a significant health hazard to the population. Encouraging behavior change among communities to adopt clean and sanitary practices, such as the use of toilets and proper disposal of waste, is crucial to achieving SDG 6.

Despite being a water-rich country, many communities still face water scarcity due to insufficient use and management of water resources. This is exacerbated by the effects of climate change, which has resulted in reduced water availability in some areas.

The insufficient capacity of water supply service providers and inadequately trained human resources are additional challenges in achieving SDG 6 in Nepal. Many water supply service providers lack the capacity to provide reliable

¹ Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation [Internet]. nepalsdgforum.org. [cited 2023 Mar 14].

² SDG 6 and Nepal achievement and challenge. thehimalayantimes.com

and safe water services to communities, while inadequate trained human resources limit the ability to address these challenges effectively. The consequences of these challenges are severe, with increased child mortality due to waterborne diseases being a significant issue in Nepal.

The absence of proper monitoring mechanisms and poor advocacy efforts with limited evidence-based approaches have made it difficult to address these issues effectively. Additionally, reaching marginalized and hard-to-reach areas at the grassroots level presents significant challenges, further exacerbating the problem.

Recommendations

Improving sanitation in public schools is crucial to ensure the health and safety of students. This can be achieved by ensuring that schools have clean and functional toilets, hand-washing facilities, and proper waste disposal systems. The government can allocate a sufficient budget for the water supply and sanitation sector to provide essential services to all, especially in rural and marginalized areas. Strengthening institutional arrangements for water and sanitation is also necessary to ensure the effective implementation and management of WASH programs at all levels.

It is equally important to maintain the occupational health and safety of sanitation workers who play a critical role in keeping the environment clean. Waste recyclers and sanitation workers should be recognized and appreciated for their work and contribution toward the maintenance of a clean environment. Public-private partnerships can also be established to ensure the accountability and sustainability of WASH programs.

Social media campaigns and advocacy can be used to create awareness and educate the public about efficient water resource use and

the importance of maintaining proper sanitation and hygiene practices. To ensure the quality and sustainability of water supply and sanitation services, competent and skilled human resources should be deployed for proper infrastructure setup. Robust monitoring mechanisms should also be established in the WASH sector for accountability.

Conducting research for evidence-based advocacy, and engaging youth can also help in achieving SDG 6. Increasing awareness and capacity building for youth and communities is crucial as they are the future custodians of the environment and the drivers of change. Through education and awareness campaigns, people can be empowered to participate actively in promoting sustainable water and sanitation practices.

Implementing these recommendations can help Nepal achieve SDG 6 and provide access to clean water and sanitation for all. The government, civil society, and private sector must work collaboratively to ensure that these recommendations are implemented effectively and sustainably. This will not only contribute to achieving SDG 6 but also enhance the overall well-being and development of Nepal.

SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

Nearly every significant difficulty and opportunity the world confronts today revolve around energy. Access to energy for everyone is crucial for improving earnings, securing jobs, combating climate change, and producing more food. Because of its connections to other Sustainable Development Goals, achieving this target is very crucial.³

One-fifth of families in the nation use LPG for cooking, whereas nearly three-quarters of all households in the nation utilize solid fuels as their primary source of energy for cooking. In the past few years, LPG usage has significantly expanded, not just in urban households and

³ Goal 7: Affordable And Clean Energy [Internet]. nepalsdgforum.org. [cited 2023 Mar 14].

businesses, but also in rural areas. Yet, households continue to heavily rely on conventional energy sources. Although almost three-fourths of households have access to power, the actual supply of electricity is much less than the demand.⁴

The nation has the capacity to accomplish the goals due to the enormous hydropower potential, the private sector's rapid growth in power generation, the rising grid connectivity, and the capitalization of alternative contemporary energy sources. Thus, the proposed specific targets for SDG 7 include making electricity accessible to 99 percent of households, reducing the number of households that use firewood for cooking to 10 percent from nearly 75 percent currently, limiting the use of LPG to less than 40 percent of households, and generating at least 15 thousand megawatts (MW) of electricity.

Issues and Challenges

One of the primary challenges is the lack of coordination with the local level in the affordable and clean energy sector. This has led to a disconnect between national policies and local-level actions, resulting in the ineffective implementation of energy plans. Furthermore, there is insufficient research and study at the local level, which has led to inadequate identification of local energy demands and a lack of knowledge on alternative energy sources.

Another issue is the lack of young people empowerment and technicians in the field, which results in a shortage of skilled manpower for energy-related work. This hinders the mobilization and empowerment of youth in Nepal to take action toward clean energy. Additionally, there is a neglect of issues faced by people with disability and children, such as access to energy-efficient devices and mobility aids, resulting in further marginalization of these communities.

Moreover, the inadequate consideration of flash floods' impact on action plans and ineffective fossil fuel consumption patterns have led to increased emissions and damage to the environment. The lack of awareness among vulnerable communities and youth not studying the environment and climate further exacerbates this problem. Limited youth participation in decision-making events, gaps between policy, plan, and implementation, and disparities in access to clean energy between urban and rural areas are also major issues that need to be addressed.

Furthermore, there is a lack of indicators for tracking progress and updating targets, making it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of energy-related policies and plans. The insufficient capital budget for promoting and implementing renewable energy and the high cost of clean energy for those in need of it further adds to the challenges in achieving SDG 7. Additionally, there is a need to empower and mobilize youth, prioritize the needs of vulnerable communities, and adopt effective energy-efficient practices.

Recommendations

Promote the use of electric vehicles and appliances, which can reduce carbon emissions and energy consumption. Additionally, it is important to mobilize youth to participate in research activities, as they can bring fresh perspectives and ideas to the table. Providing opportunities and authority to youth for promoting sustainable development can discourage migration abroad and retain talent in the country.

It is also essential to ensure that policy documents are matched by corresponding actions, such as developing railway infrastructure, which can reduce the reliance on fossil fuels. Legal policies should be developed that address youth and children issues, including the issues faced by people with disability.

⁴ Nepal's Sustainable Development Goals Baseline Report National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal [Internet]. 2017.

Proper implementation of policy rules and standards is necessary, including making fact-based decisions.

Policies to reduce carbon footprint should be introduced, and budgets should be allocated for green infrastructure development. Strengthening connections between local and policy sectors can empower women, children, and youth, and awareness programs, including capacity-building training, should be conducted for local communities.

Enhance coordination and collaboration among all stakeholders, including the local level, and allocate sufficient resources for research, capacity building, and infrastructure development. Proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established to track progress and update targets.

Ensure that clean energy is easily accessible and affordable for all, including those in rural areas, who may lack access to electricity and other sources of clean energy. By implementing these recommendations, Nepal can work towards achieving SDG 7, which is to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

The targets of SDG 9 aim to enhance economic development and human well-being through the development of sustainable, reliable, and resilient infrastructure. This includes the promotion of inclusive and sustainable industrialization and increasing access to small-scale industries. Upgrading infrastructure and enhancing scientific research and innovation are also key components of achieving SDG 9. The targets highlight the importance of investing in infrastructure that is eco-friendly and resilient, ensuring that it meets the needs of present and future generations.

By 2030, the target road density will be 0.25 km/sq km for paved roads and 1.5 km/sq km for unpaved roads. The construction of a road network that connects each district and village is one of the objectives. At least 50% of the route must be considered safe. The proposed road-specific targets for SDG include building four-lane roads and bridges in some sections, building expressways, improving existing roads to make them shorter by building viaducts, tunnels, and bridges, and optimizing the construction of longer and on higher levels to prevent longer lengths of roads to the bottom hill for river crossing.⁴

Issues and Challenges

Monitoring of Environmental Sustainability Governance (ESG) in industries and private sector contributions to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is insufficient. Building codes are not followed, and marginalized and vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities and different genders are not adequately considered in infrastructure development.

Additionally, discrimination exists in the industrial world, and the digital divide poses a challenge, particularly for poor young people and persons with disabilities. Finally, a lack of digital literacy and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) for building resilient infrastructure and communities through innovations further hinder Nepal's progress towards achieving SDG 9.

Moreover, while SDG 9 aims to build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation in developing countries, its lack of explicit focus on the needs of LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer/questioning) communities can indirectly impact their lives in several ways. Discrimination and stigma can prevent LGBTIQ individuals from accessing essential healthcare services, such as HIV testing

and gender-affirming care.

Discrimination against LGBTIQ individuals can also lead to exclusion from the job market and other economic opportunities, making it harder for them to support themselves and their families. In many developing countries, there are no legal protections for LGBTIQ people, leaving them vulnerable to violence and abuse without recourse. The lack of attention to the needs of LGBTIQ communities within SGD 9 can perpetuate inequality and exclusion, making it harder for these individuals to thrive and contribute to their communities.

Recommendations

Disability and gender-friendly infrastructures and innovations should be promoted at all levels, especially in critical areas such as health and education. Investing in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields and promoting the participation of young people in all their diversity in STEM education will also help drive innovation and build the necessary skills for sustainable development. The promotion and investment in innovations, technology, and infrastructures that reduce or end gender inequality and the digital divide will also be key to achieving SGD 9.

Indigenous knowledge and skills should also be promoted and invested in, with research on indigenous skills and knowledge being conducted. Regular monitoring of private sectors should be ensured and funding should be channeled towards youth-led innovation and industries. Utilizing platforms like National Innovation Center to increase the involvement of people with disability can help promote their skills and knowledge in various areas.

Promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace and increase access to technology. Companies should adopt policies that support the inclusion of LGBTIQ employees and provide equal opportunities for advancement.

Additionally, initiatives should be put in place to ensure that LGBTIQ communities have equal access to technology and its benefits. This includes improving internet connectivity and providing digital literacy training. By prioritizing diversity, inclusion, and equal access to resources, we can ensure that all individuals, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from sustainable economic growth and innovation.

The knowledge and skills of young people in digital technology and tools should be promoted to make innovations youth-friendly, which can lead to sustainable and eco-friendly industries and infrastructures.

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Building secure residences are in great demand in urban areas. The private sector is becoming a more active participant in the urban housing market as a result of the rising housing demand in metropolitan regions. Nonetheless, the housing stock is subpar and decent housing is becoming costly. Around 46.7 percent of homes have five or more people living with them, 7% of houses are squatters, cities are not well-planned, and public transportation is not very safe.

Ten satellite cities are currently planned but have not yet begun building. The goal is to build 60 satellite cities by 2030. A very small number of public roads and cars now meet international safety standards. Presently, sewerage services are available in 45% of municipalities. The majority of hospitals (98%) separate waste, whereas only 9.4 percent of homes have subterranean drainage systems. This suggests that connecting every home to the underground drainage system is still a challenge.

By efficiently executing the National Housing

Policy-2011, it is necessary to provide all residents with safe and affordable housing in accordance with the constitutional guarantee of the right to appropriate housing. The goal is to decrease the proportion of households with more than five occupants from 47% in 2015 to 20% by the year 2030.

Additionally, the proposed specific targets for 2030 include increasing the budget allotted to protecting cultural heritage from about 1% in 2015 to 2% by 2030, doubling the proportion of households living in safe houses to 60%, significantly reducing air pollution, preventing disaster-related deaths and injuries, and repairing and reconstructing all earthquake-damaged cultural heritage by 2020.

Issues and Challenges

One of the main issues is the lack of local and sustainable food systems, resulting in a reliance on imported food and insufficient investment in local agricultural systems. This leads to a lack of access to fresh, nutritious, and locally produced food, as well as a large amount of food waste due to improper food storage, transport, and consumption habits. There is a need to incentivize the production and sale of locally grown produce and introduce food waste management systems. However, this requires proper training for farmers and enough green spaces that also protect the native plants.

Another challenge is the lack of investment in infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, water supply, sewage systems, and waste management facilities. This leads to insufficient public transportation systems and not enough use of renewable energy, including the use of private vehicles rather than public vehicles. Moreover, the reliance on fossil fuels in transportation and electricity generation hinders the development of renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power. To promote renewable energy sources and electric vehicles, there is a need for solutions that focus

on promoting and incentivizing their use.

Rapid urbanization also poses a challenge to achieving sustainable cities in Nepal. Rapid urbanization leads to unmanaged growth and informal settlements, which result in inadequate housing and infrastructure facilities. The lack of proper urban planning, increasing access to housing and infrastructure facilities, and promoting sustainable urbanization exacerbates the problem.

Moreover, there is a lack of inclusive society, especially when it comes to disability-related infrastructure. There is a need for proper infrastructure for people with disabilities, including disability-friendly spaces that are publicly available, breakage-free sidewalks, adequate transportation facilities, and access to public buildings. Providing sign language interpretation to the general population can also help communicate with the deaf and mute. There is a need to invest in accessible infrastructure and transportation facilities and raise public awareness about disability rights and needs.

Additionally, inadequate rehabilitation services for people with disabilities pose a challenge. Lack of access to healthcare, social services, and vocational training, as well as the absence of life skill training centers, hinders the provision of adequate rehabilitation services. Although hearing aids are provided and distributed free of cost by different projects, there is a lack of proper centers, especially at the tertiary level, that help in managing these aids. There is a need to invest in rehabilitation services and improve access to healthcare, social services, and vocational training for people with disabilities.

Improper waste management also poses a challenge to achieving sustainable cities in Nepal. Improper waste management leads to pollution and health hazards, and there is a lack of waste segregation, recycling, and composting facilities. Moreover, there is a lack of promotion

of waste segregation and recycling and increasing public awareness about the importance of proper waste management. Burning of waste also leads to pollution and health hazards. Improper waste disposal and lack of recycling facilities, as well as inadequate management of the dustbins provided in public places, exacerbate the problem. Sanitary pads are also not disposed of properly, and people burn all the garbage, resulting in smoke and the emission of gases. There is a need to improve waste management systems, promote waste segregation and recycling, and enforce stricter regulations on waste burning.

Transportation is another major issue that leads to air pollution and related health problems. The Kathmandu Valley is heavily car-centric, with increased usage of old transportation options. There is a lack of a system that promotes public transportation, encourages the use of electric vehicles, and enforces stricter air pollution regulations.

Finally, data regulation poses a challenge in achieving SDG 11 in Nepal. There is a lack of timely and effective data regulation that would help in policy planning, inadequate monitoring and reporting of SDG 11 indicators, and a lack of focus on improving data collection, and regulation systems, increasing transparency and promoting accountability.

Recommendations

Provide technical training for engineers to get a good understanding of disability-friendly infrastructure. This can help in creating inclusive societies and providing equal opportunities for people with disabilities. Another important recommendation is to manage the food system well by training farmers to adopt sustainable farming practices and manage agricultural waste effectively. This can promote local farming and limit the use of pesticides, leading to a healthier food system. In addition, improving public transportation services can

reduce traffic congestion, air pollution, and carbon emissions. This can be achieved by promoting green transportation options such as electric vehicles and cycling.

Fostering green spaces can promote healthy living and sustainable urbanization while developing rural areas can distribute the population and reduce the burden on urban areas. Ensuring that basic services such as healthcare, education, and clean water are provided to all, including people with disabilities, is another important recommendation. This includes teaching life skills, providing hearing aids and braille, and maintaining tiles in public spaces.

Controlling population growth through family planning and awareness campaigns can help achieve SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being while creating an inclusive society by establishing resource schools and centers that can provide equal opportunities for people with disabilities. It is also important to prioritize sustainable and inclusive urbanization through urban planning strategies that promote well-planned neighborhoods and economic investment.

Finally, establishing emergency response plans and committees for Disaster Risk Reduction (DDR) can help deal with natural disasters and emergencies. In addition, promoting renewable energy sources to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality, and focusing on waste management and the 3 Rs: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle, can contribute to achieving SDG 11 in Nepal. By implementing these recommendations, Nepal can move towards achieving SDG 11 and create sustainable, resilient, and inclusive cities and communities for all.

ACRONYMS

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

DDR: Disaster Risk Reduction

DWSSM: Drinking Water and Sewerage Management

ESG: Environmental Sustainability Governance

HLPF: High-Level Political Forum

LGTBIQ: Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, Intersex, and Queer

LPG: Liquefied petroleum gas

MW: Megawatts

MoWS: Ministry of Water Supply

NWASH: Nepal Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

NAYA: Nepal APFSD Youth Alliance

PPP: Public-Private Partnership

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

SRH: Sexual and Reproductive Health

STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

UN Agencies: United Nations Agencies

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