



Nepal's Youth Call to Action for APFSD 2024

Introduction

Young individuals and organizations in 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 ten youth-led and serving organizations in the working group of NAYA with a membership of more than 100 young people in their diversities.

Visible Impact serves as the secretariat for NAYA. Visible Impact is a young women-led organization in Nepal that 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' championships, 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 2024 through different social media campaigns, meetings, and high-level dialogues with key decision-makers. Prior to APFSD Youth Forum 2024, NAYA organized a National Youth Conclave on 19th January 2024 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 2024 i.e., **Goal 1 (Zero Poverty), Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 13 (Climate Actions), 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and Goal 5 (Gender equality)** were discussed as the cross-cutting issues in each goal.

This call to action is a joint endeavor of NAYA that serves as an outcome document of the Third National Youth Conclave 2024. 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 2024, APFSD Peoples Forum 2024, APFSD 2024, and ultimately to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2024.

SDG 1: No Poverty

The Economic Survey 2022–2023 states that 15.1% of Nepal's population is under the poverty line, meaning they make less than \$1.90 a day in purchasing power parity.¹

The growth in Gross Domestic National Income (GDNI) per capita has exceeded forecasts. The percentage of the population living below the federal poverty line is 18.6%, but the Multidimensional Poverty Index has decreased to 28.6%. Nepal's constitution ensures rights like food security, shelter, and social security for the vulnerable, with successive plans focusing on inclusive growth and poverty reduction. Government initiatives and programs, including a universal pension scheme, prioritize poverty alleviation. Local governments must allocate a portion of their budget to this cause. Social protection covers 17% of the population, with remittances from labor migration aiding economic growth. Policies targeting gender disparity aim to boost women's participation in the workforce. The Multidimensional Poverty Index complements income measures, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 1. The 2019 Poverty Alleviation Policy aims to reduce poverty to 5% by 2030, emphasizing coordination between the government, private sector, and NGOs to enhance resources and opportunities for the poor while addressing discrimination.²

Nepal has made progress in reducing poverty, but sustaining it is a challenge. The aim is to reduce poverty to 4.9% by 2030. However, current progress is insufficient. Enhanced coordination and targeted interventions are needed to reach this goal effectively.³

Issues and Challenges

Corruption remains a significant obstacle in Nepal, perpetuating economic inequality and widening the gap between the affluent and the impoverished. Limited access to quality education across the country exacerbates this issue, hindering skill development and constraining job prospects, thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty. The recent global pandemic has exacerbated these challenges, intensifying economic turmoil and exacerbating the plight of a populace already

constrained by limited opportunities for youth and inadequate education, leading to diminished wages and employment prospects, consequently lowering the overall standard of living and exacerbating health issues that further entrench the cycle of poverty.

The multifaceted nature of poverty in Nepal stems from various social factors, including regressive tax policies, discrimination, socioeconomic disparities, conservative ideologies, and political instability. Despite existing policies, systemic issues persist due to inadequate implementation across sectors, resulting in a lack of accountability and perpetuating the population's hardships. Furthermore, the hunger crisis in Nepal is compounded by rapid population growth, unchecked inflation, low agricultural productivity, insufficient labor and land resources, limited access to healthcare and education, and a scarcity of hybrid seeds.

The vulnerability of a large segment of the population persists due to the limitations of social security programs, which primarily cater to formal sector employees and their families. Additionally, the fragility of the public health system exacerbates challenges during medical emergencies, compounding the adverse effects of poverty on Nepalese society and further deepening the cycle of deprivation and marginalization.

Recommendations

The government's attention should be directed towards creating avenues for meaningful employment, fostering investment in productive sectors, and advancing agricultural practices to alleviate poverty. Ensuring comprehensive road connectivity across Nepal is vital for stimulating economic activity in remote areas.

Offering mothers training programs in home-based skills during their free time can empower them to engage in revenue-generating activities, thus enabling them to meet their needs.

With a larger proportion of women in the population, implementing income-generating schemes targeting women can significantly bolster the economy. Engaging community

1. Poverty in Nepal and Multidimensionality: The Farsight [Internet], www.farsightnepal.com/news/163
2. SDG Progress Assessment Report 2016-19, NPC
3. National Review of Sustainable Development Goals, NPC

partnerships in decision-making processes fosters inclusivity and collaboration.

Addressing basic human needs such as access to quality healthcare and education is imperative for sustainable development. Mobilizing appropriate resources and supporting regional and indigenous industries further facilitates sustainable growth.

Granting land rights to women and combating social discrimination are crucial steps toward achieving gender equality and empowering women economically.

A balanced tax system that reduces indirect taxes benefits low-income families and ensures the sustainability of their livelihoods, while taxing the affluent contributes to a fair distribution of resources.

Combatting corruption across all sectors is imperative. Public awareness campaigns are vital for educating the populace about the detrimental effects of corruption and fostering a culture of transparency.

Reforms in the public education system are necessary to enhance education quality and incorporate best practices, ultimately aiding in poverty reduction.

Advocating for climate finance as reparations is essential, especially given the disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable communities. This advocacy plays a pivotal role in achieving sustainable development goals and reducing poverty.

SDG 2: Zero Hunger

In the current scenario, human activities are rapidly degrading vital resources such as soils, freshwater, oceans, forests, and biodiversity, exacerbated by climate change-induced pressures, leading to heightened risks of disasters like droughts and floods. This has compelled many rural inhabitants, especially women, and men, to migrate to urban areas in search of livelihood opportunities due to insufficient land productivity and poor food security, resulting in millions of children suffering from stunted growth due to severe malnutrition, particularly in developing

nations like Nepal, which face inadequate investments in food safety.

Nepal has made significant strides in combating under nutrition and stunting, yet challenges persist. Out-migration, a feminized agricultural sector, challenging terrain, poverty, urbanization, climate change, and natural disasters all threaten food security and nutrition. With agriculture being a primary livelihood source, addressing these issues is critical. Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG2) targets to end hunger, ensure access to nutritious food, double agricultural productivity, and promote sustainable agriculture, necessitating increased investment in infrastructure and technology for farmers to achieve these goals.

To attain zero hunger by 2030, urgent and coordinated efforts are essential to address systemic inequalities, transform food systems, adopt sustainable agricultural practices, and mitigate the impacts of conflicts and pandemics on global nutrition and food security. This requires prioritizing investment in infrastructure, technology, and policies that support sustainable agriculture and equitable access to productive resources for all farmers.

Issues and Challenges

The intricate relationship between malnutrition, poverty, and socioeconomic status forms a complex cycle where deterioration in one aspect exacerbates issues in others. Limited economic resources restrict access to diverse food options, leading to insufficient quantity and quality of nutrition, which in turn impacts productivity and labor capacity due to illness. Additionally, inadequate sanitation and hygiene practices further deepen the cycle of poverty and malnutrition. This interconnectedness underscores the necessity for comprehensive approaches spanning individual, community, and governmental levels to address hunger and malnutrition effectively.

Agriculture, being a crucial component, faces challenges such as insufficient investment and difficulties in marketing agricultural products. While fertilizers are essential for crop yields, their

excessive use contributes to environmental degradation and health concerns, exacerbating malnutrition problems like wasting and stunting. The lack of adequate agricultural production results in improper feeding practices, leading to various nutrition-related issues.

Despite initiatives like the mid-day meal school program aimed at improving children's nutritional status, the choice of foods provided may not always be highly nutritious. High investment in both the education and agriculture sectors is crucial for achieving the set targets for 2030. However, Nepal's struggle with implementation challenges and unequal resource distribution, neglecting equity considerations, necessitates holistic strategies and collaborative efforts across sectors and stakeholders to effectively address interconnected challenges and ensure the right to proper and nutritious food for all individuals.

Recommendations

Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2, Zero Hunger, necessitates a comprehensive approach that addresses various challenges through collaboration and innovation. The first step involves raising awareness and providing essential knowledge to foster behavioral change and enhance skills among individuals. Initiatives like grassroots-level training on kitchen gardening empower communities and promote self-sufficiency, utilizing locally available resources to ensure access to nutritious food.

Implementing sustainable agricultural practices is paramount in addressing interconnected crises. Introducing new techniques such as precision farming, which optimizes crop yields while minimizing resource use through data analytics, is crucial. Research and investment in agriculture are essential for achieving Zero Hunger by enhancing productivity and resilience in food production.

Engaging youth and Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) can drive community-level change effectively. FCHVs, with their community ties, advocate for nutritional improvements, while educating the younger generation through school

clubs fosters a culture of proper nutrition consumption.

Program implementation must be accompanied by rigorous monitoring and evaluation to gauge effectiveness and adapt strategies for enhanced efficiency. Strengthening policy frameworks, governance structures, and institutional capacities for food security and nutrition governance is crucial. Collaboration with international organizations and regional partners is vital for mobilizing resources and sharing best practices, accelerating progress toward achieving Zero Hunger in Nepal.

SDG 13: Climate Action

Climate change, resulting from fossil fuel consumption, increased greenhouse gas emissions, ozone depletion, and rising global temperatures, affects Nepal significantly due to its hilly terrain and delicate geology. Despite Nepal's minimal contribution (0.027%) to global warming, extreme weather events increase yearly by 0.056 Celsius, impacting agriculture, glaciers, rivers, groundwater, and settlements, and causing floods and landslides. SDG 13 prioritizes climate action through mitigation and adaptation. Nepal has ratified international conventions such as the UNFCCC 1992, Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework, and SDGs, enacting national policies and mechanisms to uphold climate justice.²

Nepal has ratified key international climate change agreements, including the UNFCCC 1992, Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework, and SDGs. National policies, plans, and institutional mechanisms have been established for their implementation and monitoring. The Climate Change Council, formed in 2009, guides policy direction, while a climate change policy and National Adaptation Program were adopted in 2010. The Local Adaptation Plan for Action (LAPA) was launched in 2011. Over the past decade, efforts have focused on integrating climate adaptation into sectorial policies, legislation, and programs, with strategies aimed at reducing carbon emissions, enhancing ecosystem resilience, promoting clean energy,

mitigating disaster risks, and advancing climate-friendly agriculture.²

Issues and Challenges

Climate action faces numerous challenges across various dimensions. Representation remains a key issue, with stakeholders directly impacted by climate change often excluded from decision-making processes. Access to accurate and timely information is another hurdle, hindering informed decision-making at all levels. Bridging the gap between policy intentions and on-the-ground results poses practical challenges, requiring effective policy implementation strategies.

Energy transition is crucial for limiting global temperature rise, yet it presents significant challenges in practice. Collaboration among different levels of government and international bodies is essential for effective climate policy implementation, but clear roles and responsibilities are often lacking in Nepal. Behavioral change is pivotal but complex, requiring efforts to promote sustainable practices and cultivate positive environmental attitudes.

Monitoring and evaluation systems are necessary for accountability and continual improvement in climate action. Challenges in natural resource management persist, impacting climate change mitigation and ecosystem resilience. Gender disparities in climate impacts necessitate gender-responsive policies to address disproportionate effects on different genders. These challenges underscore the multifaceted nature of climate action and the need for comprehensive approaches to address them effectively.

Recommendations

Youth-led advocacy is crucial for effective climate action, harnessing their energy and perspectives for impactful change. Mentorship programs and capacity-building initiatives are essential to equip young leaders with the skills and knowledge necessary for effective advocacy. Inclusive participatory planning processes ensure that all voices are heard in decision-making, enhancing the legitimacy and effectiveness of climate initiatives.

Emphasizing biodiversity conservation and nature-based solutions is integral to addressing climate challenges sustainably. Adoption of eco-friendly practices through awareness programs led by government entities is vital to reduce environmental impact across sectors. Support for technological innovation fosters climate resilience and mitigation efforts, particularly among youth innovators.

A bottom-up approach to climate action empowers local communities and youth to drive change at the grassroots level, complementing centralized efforts. Monitoring and evaluation systems ensure accountability and effectiveness in climate initiatives. Accessible communication channels facilitate the flow of information and promote transparency. Prioritizing research provides evidence-based insights for informed decision-making while advocating for a "polluters pay" policy that holds industries accountable for their environmental impact, promoting sustainability.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

Nepal faces a gap between its progressive policies and their practical enforcement, particularly in the realm of justice. Despite well-crafted legislation, weak institutional frameworks pose a significant challenge, with corruption, lack of accountability, and nepotism undermining fair administration. Aligning policy objectives with tangible outcomes is imperative. SDG 16, prioritizing peace, justice, and strong institutions, is paramount. A robust and impartial justice system is not only vital for its own effectiveness but also for fostering socio-economic progress. Tackling corruption and fortifying institutions are pivotal steps in this endeavor.

Strong institutions are vital for sustainable development, aiming to maintain peace, justice, and the rule of law. SDG 16 targets reducing violence, exploitation, and corruption while promoting equal justice and participatory decision-making. It emphasizes global engagement, legal identity for all, public access to information, and enhancing national institutions. Nepal's constitution reinforces separation of

powers and checks and balances, empowering constitutional bodies to oversee governance. Institutions like the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority and the National Human Rights Commission uphold justice and the rule of law in public affairs.²

Nepal's constitution guarantees fundamental rights such as equality, justice, and protection against discrimination and exploitation. The updated Criminal and Civil Codes of 2018 aim to align legal provisions with constitutional principles, prioritizing prompt and equitable justice. Various commissions, including the National Commission on Women, National Dalits Commission, and others, are established to safeguard the interests of diverse communities, ensuring social justice and inclusion.²

Issues and Challenges

In Nepal, a significant data gap hampers comprehensive understanding across various domains, exacerbating measurement and evaluation challenges due to diminishing indicators. Despite espousing gender equality and social inclusion principles, practical application often remains elusive, relegating these ideals to mere rhetoric. While media's pivotal role in promoting good governance is acknowledged, consistent realization of its potential remains elusive, coupled with significant hurdles in the practical implementation of progressive policies.

Nepal grapples with prolonged and costly court procedures, exacerbating justice delays, particularly in cases of domestic violence, which are frequently underreported, perpetuating injustice. Government systems often superficially represent diversity, with centralized decision-making inhibiting effective governance. Neglecting Nepal's diverse societal fabric exacerbates tensions, fostering an atmosphere of distrust and hindering cooperation, thereby impeding progress and exacerbating accountability challenges.

Moreover, the absence of coordinated efforts among agencies working on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) complicates overarching developmental endeavors. This lack

of synergy exacerbates accountability issues, power struggles, and ultimately impedes the nation's advancement, signaling a pressing need for improved interagency collaboration and holistic governance reforms.

Recommendations

The awareness of the SDGs should be widespread, extending to individuals unfamiliar with all the objectives. Engaging local government agencies and community members is vital for any initiative. Enhancing awareness, transparency, and accountability mechanisms is crucial for fostering a responsible society.

While humanitarian actions should be prioritized in conflict resolution, national interests must be considered in international matters. Disseminating information on rights, duties, and local governance through local media platforms at appropriate times and locations is essential. Encouraging collaborative efforts involves creating platforms for cooperation that bring together various sectors and organizations, starting from the government level.

Strengthening communities involves providing leaders and advocates with capacity-building training. It's imperative to find innovative ways to engage marginalized groups, such as addressing challenges like limited internet access for rural youth seeking employment opportunities online. Disseminating information on laws and policies, with a focus on marginalized communities and individuals with intersecting identities, is vital. Efforts should also concentrate on combating corruption, reducing violence, discrimination, and human trafficking while ensuring that services are accessible and equitable to build a just and inclusive society.

ACRONYMS

APFSD: Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

FCHVs: Female Community Health Volunteers

GDNI: Gross Domestic National Income

HLPF: High-Level Political Forum

LAPA: Local Adaption Plan for Action

NAYA: Nepal APFSD Youth Alliance

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

SRHR: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

UNFCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

NAYA Core Working Group:





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