



# Intergenerational Dialogue of the Asian Parliamentarians and Youth Advocates on Meaningful Youth Engagement



8 JULY 2021





The intergenerational dialogue, attended by more than 100 participants from 23 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, was held to discuss ways to create/strengthen platforms for meaningful engagement, which helps reflect youth voices in national policies. The webinar followed a youth preparatory consultation for youth advocates on 5 July 2021, in which several recommendations were made.

The main objectives of the Intergenerational Dialogue and Youth Consultation were:

- ✓ To have a shared understanding towards meaningful youth engagement
- ✓ To share good examples /different modalities of meaningful youth engagement either in general or COVID-19 contexts, both online and offline engagement
- ✓ To identify gaps in youth engagement and discuss ideas to address these gaps
- ✓ To form and promote partnership between parliamentarians/NCs, CSOs, and youth partners in respective countries and explore modalities for meaningful youth participation and engagement.

The dialogue was organized by the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA) and supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO) and Y-PEER Asia-Pacific Center.







*Address by Organizer*

**Hon. Hitoshi Kikawada, MP Japan, Secretary-General of JFPF, Japan**

Hon. Kikawada welcomed the participants and said that this webinar provided parliamentarians and National Committee representatives with the opportunity to listen to the views of young people in order to reflect their needs and sensitivities into policies. He stated that addressing the issue of population was crucial for society and that preventing unintended pregnancies was central to this issue, since unintended pregnancies had a negative impact on almost all social aspects. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted widening disparities and increasing problems related to access to health services including SRH, but the states have not been able to sufficiently respond to young people's needs. He thanked UNFPA APRO's initiative and hoped that this dialogue would serve as a platform for bridging intergenerational differences, building shared goals, incorporating the needs of younger people to build a better future.





*Address by Supporting Partner*

**Mr. Björn Andersson, Regional Director of UNFPA APRO**

Mr. Andersson said that young people were a heterogeneous group, with wide-ranging challenges and needs and that we could not address their diverse challenges and needs without partnering with them. This must include the poorest and most marginalized. He also pointed out that we must ensure that young people are engaged in all stages of our interventions — from programme design, planning, and implementation to evaluation. It is only by partnering with and meaningfully engaging young people, that we can achieve the vision of the ICPD Programme of Action, which is, in turn, essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He emphasized that UNFPA had been working hard towards systematically strengthening national and regional youth networks and youth leadership and participation, since young people were at the heart of the programmes, not as beneficiaries but as partners. During the COVID-19 pandemic, youth were mobilized to respond to the crisis by working as health workers, advocates, volunteers, scientists, social entrepreneurs, and innovators. Despite this, there were systematic barriers that hinder youth engagement that often result in a lack of trust and respect for youth perspectives.

**A quote read by Ms. Iris Pi, Youth Advocate, China**

Ms. Pi read a quote by a young person from Bhutan, highlighting that it was necessary to include empowered young leaders in decision-making, policymaking and lawmaking. Once elders have invested in creating this trust, this trust would be amplified and given back.



*Introduction*

**Ms. Ayeshwini Lama, Y-PEER, Bhutan**

Ms. Lama introduced the sessions and outlined the objectives. The sessions would include a shared understanding of meaningful youth engagement and share examples of different modalities of meaningful youth engagement and gaps in youth engagement. The delegates would discuss ideas to address the gap and form and promote partnerships between parliamentarians, national committees on population development (NCs), civil society organizations and youth partners.



## Session 1:



### Meaningful youth engagement and its modalities in the Asia-Pacific region

This session was moderated by Ms. Ayeshwini Lama, with three themes under discussion. First, the principles of meaningful youth engagement, second, feedback from youth consultation, and third, examples of meaningful youth engagement at a regional level.

*Meaningful engagement is defined as follows:*

Meaningful adolescent and youth engagement is an inclusive, intentional, mutually-respectful partnership between adolescents, youth, and adults whereby power is shared, respective contributions are valued, and young people's ideas, perspectives, skills, and strengths are integrated into the design and delivery of programs, strategies, policies, funding mechanisms, and organizations that affect their lives and their communities, countries, and world.

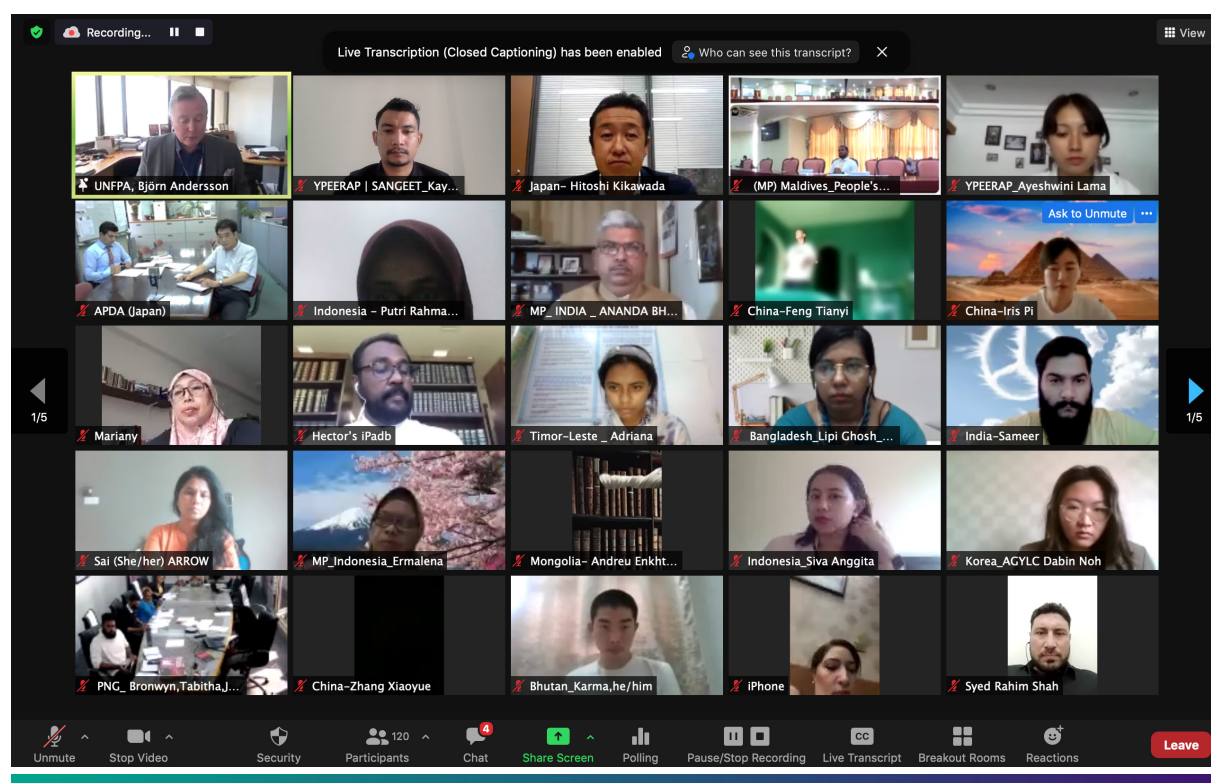


**Ms. Situ Shrestha, Youth Advocate, Nepal**

Ms. Situ Shrestha broke down the mechanisms used in some countries for youth engagement. In Sri Lanka and Papua New Guinea, there were national youth parliaments and in Nepal, there were youth councils. Cambodia, Mongolia, Vietnam and Bangladesh have youth advisory groups, while Lao PDR has a youth reference group. There were other informal mechanisms.

Ms. Situ Shrestha said that a small survey asking about intergenerational dialogue found that more than 50% replied they were not involved in any kind of consultation or dialogue. The group identified 10 gaps in meaningful youth engagement, including:

1. Lack of inclusion or proper platform
2. Ineffective and limited communication between parties
3. Lack of purpose, participation, and interest from youth
4. Mental health issues
5. Inadequate capacity-building opportunities for young people
6. Lack of mutual trust between youth and adults
7. Geographical, socio-economic, cultural, gender and political barriers
8. Lack of resources for youth
9. Time management issues
10. Lack of education/unemployment problems







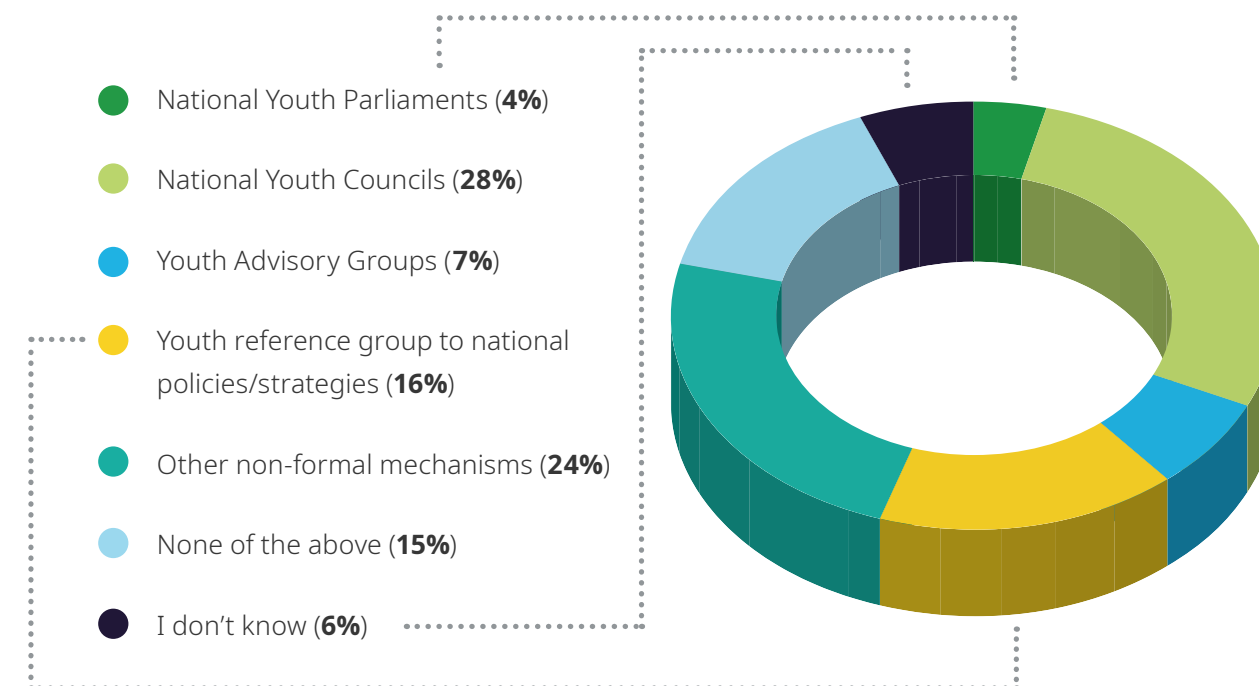
**Mr. Sangeet Kayastha, Y-PEER, Nepal**

Mr. Kayastha said that there were more young people in the Asia Pacific region than other regions, and there were existing mechanisms for meaningful youth engagement. He pointed out that these were on several levels, one where youth could directly engage with governments, CSO partners and UN agencies. There were other examples of platforms that young people had formed for themselves to interact with policymakers and ones that liaised over issues such as SRHR. He acknowledged that there were gaps that needed filling.

Moderator

**Ms. Ayeshwini Lama, Y-PEER, Bhutan**

Ms. Lama thanked the delegates for their presentation. She introduced a pop-up poll for delegates to vote on which platform works best for their country. The results were as follows:



*"Frequent exchange of ideas between Lawmakers and Youth advocates will enhance the utility of enactments and sensitisation on the aspirations of upcoming generations".*

Member of Parliament



## Session 2:



### Lessons learned, gaps, and strategies actions to address these gaps (Panel Discussion)

*Moderator*

**Ms. Ayeshwini Lama, Y-PEER, Bhutan**



**Mr. Ram Dulip, Me for Myself, Sri Lanka**

Mr. Dulip was asked to elaborate on successes in his country. He said that the young generation's ability to talk openly and directly to relevant authorities and policymakers on social media was a key success. This meant that the government and parliamentarians were aware of issues. He also said while young people were most affected by the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, they were also the most active in their responses. They were not only on the frontlines as health workers, but they were also advancing health and safety in their roles as researchers, activists, innovators, and communicators. It would benefit society to ensure youth voices are part of the solution for a healthier and safer world.



**Hon. Romina Khursheed Alam, MP Pakistan**

Hon. Alam was asked to share a concrete example of where young people are meaningfully engaged in Pakistan. She said that there was a huge gap between policymakers and the youth; nevertheless, she said that the parliament engaged university students in different internship programmes in her country. They had also established forums where youngsters and young parliamentarians were invited to discuss policy and legislative changes. She welcomed the dialogue as an opportunity for countries to learn from each other. She also expressed her concern about mental health, drugs, violence, and other social issues that need addressing, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.



**Hon. Hector Appuhamy, MP Sri Lanka**

Hon. Appuhamy said while the youth only represented about 20% of the labor force, young people showed themselves to be very creative in new ideas and innovation. Every country should use this innovative capacity to achieve higher economic growth. He said that it was crucial that youth articulated their vision and engaged in the political environment. In Sri Lanka, there was a Youth Parliament, which he considered being crucial for the future.





**Ms. Siva Anggita, Youth Advocate, Indonesia**

Ms. Anggita was asked to identify major gaps in meaningful engagement with the youth. She identified three gaps, generational, knowledge and financial. Giving an example from her own country, she said that the government was encouraging young people to be involved in the national strategic plan. WHO also encouraged youth participation, and these two had the potential to be success stories. However, she called on the government to work to increase young people's skills through training and development. In terms of the financial gap, youth should be given national or district budgets to fund their projects. About political participation, she said that it was no secret that when young people became parliamentarians, they were from privileged backgrounds and so it was crucial to create a political system that included all young people.

*"It gives us not only the framework, but also gives us some experience from other countries on how to approach and involve young generation in the development programmes".*

National Committee Officer



**Hon. Sarah Elago, MP Philippines**

Hon. Elago was asked how to maintain youth engagement in the COVID-19 context. She said that it was crucial to minimize the digital divide. Internet connectivity and technological advancement enabled people to continue to work during this time. Still, it had also brought many more pervasive problems such as digital surveillance and privacy issues. She said that they had witnessed several inspiring youth-led initiatives in campaigns. A notable example was the community kitchens set up to combat hunger and poverty as exacerbated by the massive loss of jobs and livelihoods due to the pandemic. She said that the Philippines had launched a national campaign for creating community-learning spaces for learners to assist with online education until schools can be safely opened. It was important to break from the past and encourage parliamentarians and policymakers to work with the youth. There should also be transparency

and accountability. She was happy to report that it had been the priority agenda of the Philippines Congress to address the resolutions to gender-based violence, online sexual abuse, and exploitation in the past month.

**Mr. Fura Sherpa, Youth Advocate, Nepal**

Mr. Sherpa said it was crucial to keep in focus the SDGs and that policymakers and parliamentarians needed to connect with the youth to improve the society and country. Health, equal opportunity to learning, and information should be prioritized for the LGBTI+ communities and people with disabilities.

*"I am satisfied but it seemed like we don't have much time. The youth must be encouraged to comment on the adults' presentation and/or our comments".*

Former Member of Parliament



## Session 3:



### Opportunities for continued dialogue and next steps (break-out discussion)

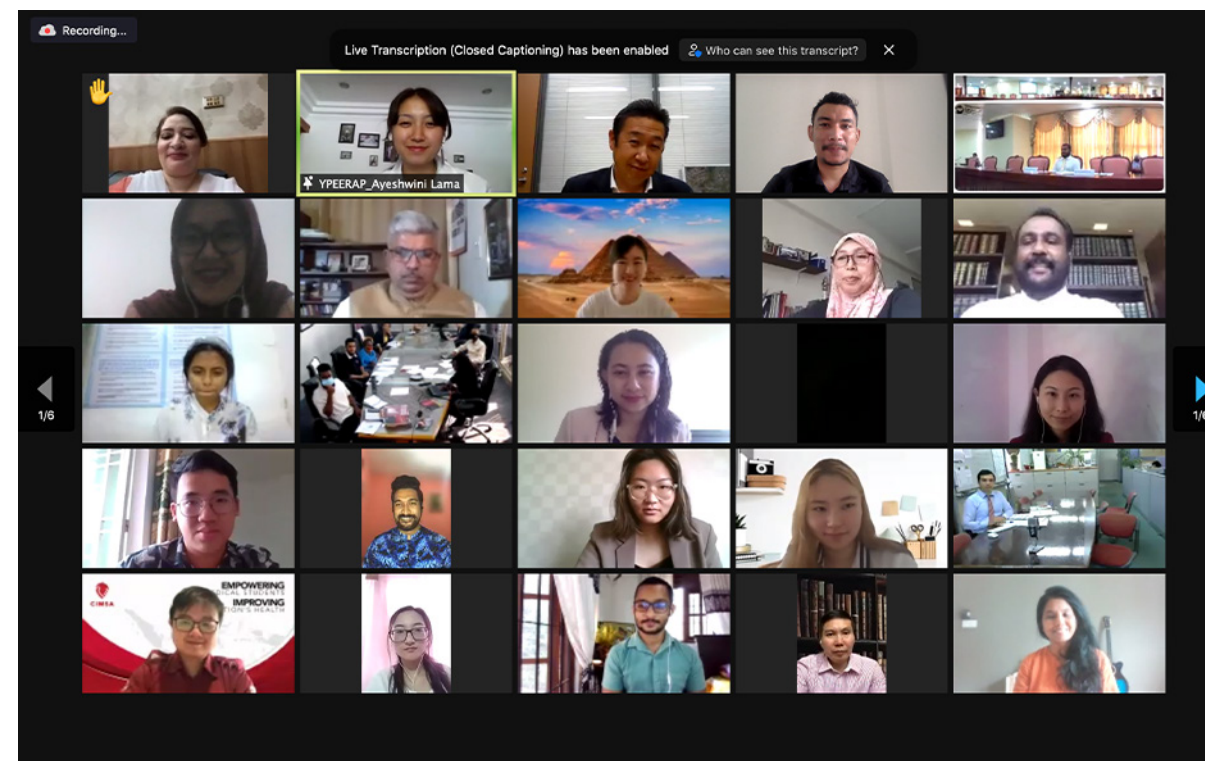
The participants were divided into breakout groups. Some of these were mixed, and others were country specific. Questions to be discussed included:

1. How can you work together to strengthen meaningful youth engagement in your country?
2. Are there policies related to youth engagement at the local and national level?
3. Does your country have any feedback mechanisms that reflect youth perspective, international policies?
4. What are your ideas for regional level follow up activities, or how can you continue exchanging with practices and lessons learned for the mixed country groups?

### Special thanks to sub-group facilitators:

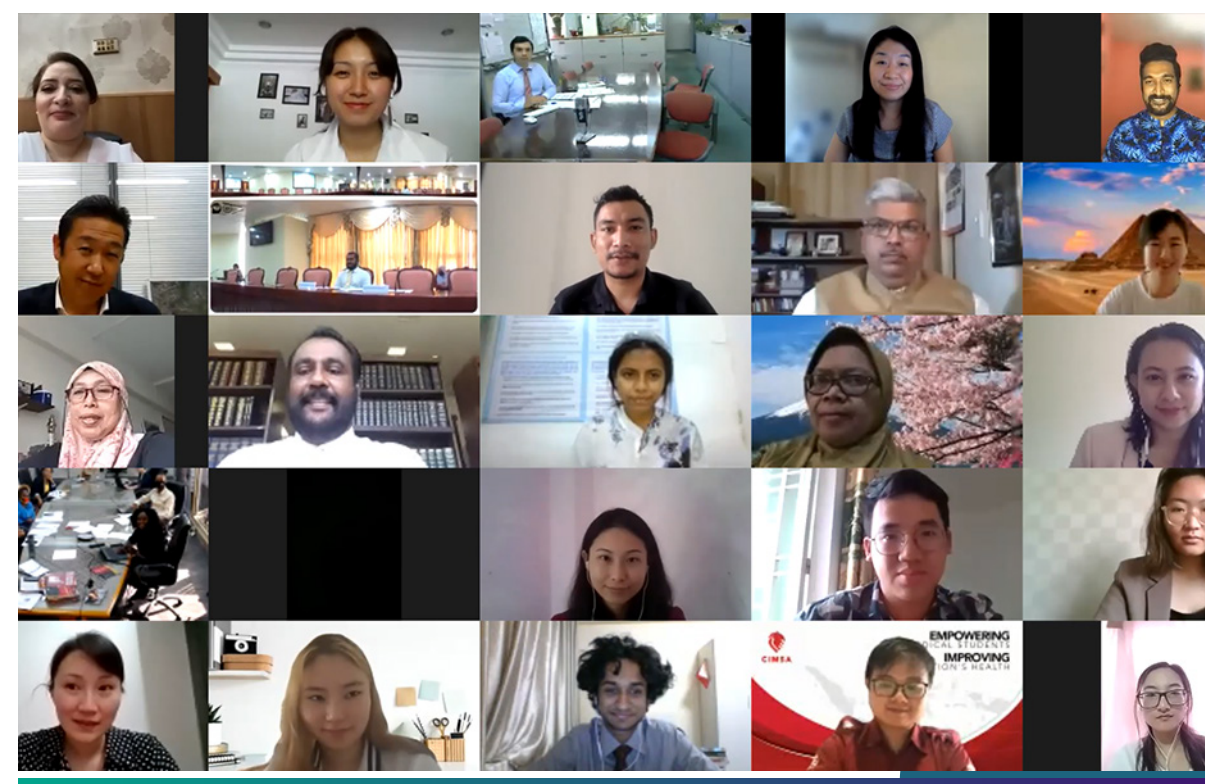
Samir Kumar Paul, Lipi Ghosh, Iris Pi, Kuenzang Dema Norbu, Pema Choden Dorji, Karma Sangay Phuntsho, Situ Shrestha, Fura Gelzen Sherpa, Maria Iqbal Shah, Maryam Ghulami, Rosemary Pawih, Ram Dulip, Alexander Bernal.

*Thank You!*



*"It was wonderful, a great experience and felt that I learn many things and a great feeling to listen the youth and their open, frank candid views too".*

National Committee Officer







## Session 4:

### Report back

Two groups reported back. The first was the Sri Lanka Group. They found some basic gaps, which included the exclusion of some groups like the LGBTI plus community. The group also wanted to make youth councils more accessible to all young people regardless of political affiliation. It was a concern that youth were legislated about without any consultation.

The other report back was from Mixed Group A, which was comprised of Afghanistan, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Fiji, Lao PDR, Malaysia and Japan. The group found that there was a youth development policy in Malaysia, but youth participation of marginalized groups was missing. In Papua New Guinea, there were consultations on the New Youth Policy underway. One of the challenges was that there was a lack of youth representation in the youth councils. It was also reported that there were mechanisms in place for participation in the budget discussion in Malaysia, but these were limited.

#### Comments

##### **Hon. Mariany Mohammad Yit, former MP, Malaysia**

Ms. Yit commented that despite having a National Youth Policy in her country, there was no data to assess its success. She commented that she was not sure the government was serious about youth participation.

##### **Hon. Mohamed Ali, MP Maldives**

Hon. Ali commented that the COVID-19 pandemic had adversely affected youth. Many youth businesses went bankrupt. National Recovery packages are made and distributed in the country, to support the youths' businesses. He was concerned that while there was a policy, it was not clear whether this was actually effective in harnessing youth participation.

##### **Hon. Ermalena Muslim Hasbullah, MP Indonesia**

Hon. Hasbullah said that she was happy to be involved in the discussion and believed that this type of forum should be appreciated. Meaningful youth engagement would lead to empowerment and enlightenment.

### Wrap up and next steps:

### Discussion and Adoption of Concrete Action Points

The recommendations from youth preparatory consultation were presented, while participants were invited to share comments and reflections to be included in the recommendations. (Please refer to the **Key Recommendations**.)

#### Comments

##### **Hon. Ananda Bhaskar Rapolu - MP India**

Hon. Rapolu said this dialogue gave him hope. The COVID-19 pandemic taught him not only to distance but also to assimilate through advanced technological facilities. This period enabled the exploration of new avenues for dialogue. He welcomed the dialogue because as lawmakers they learned from the youths' observations and aspirations. He committed parliamentarians to improve the political empowerment of the youth as outlined in the recommendations.

#### Final remarks

Dr. Farrukh Usmonov thanked the delegates for their participation and invaluable contributions, hoping that this dialogue would continue.

*"Good to have platform to exchange experience with young advocates...  
having different innovative ideas".*

Member of Parliament



# Key Recommendations

## 1. ENABLING POLITICAL FRAMEWORK:

- Promote collaboration and dialogues between the government and young people
- Structure youth parliament
- Strengthen political empowerment of youth.
- Involve youth in governance through central and state level youth led committees.
- Reform laws for unspoken issues that affect youth.

## 2. NEEDS-DRIVEN REFORMS:

- Youth policies to be reviewed and revised in accordance with new emerging challenges, issues and aspirations of the youth.
- Promote school, both formal and informal, education on youth engagement.
- Include skills that prepare youth for future employment and larger social and political roles in the society in school curriculum.
- Promote youth sensitive funding policies and legal structures.
- Accept all forms of youth voices, including marginalize, vulnerable youngsters via digital methods.
- Review commitments made by National Governments on Youth, Peace and Security Agenda annually and share progress report

## 3. INCLUSIVENESS:

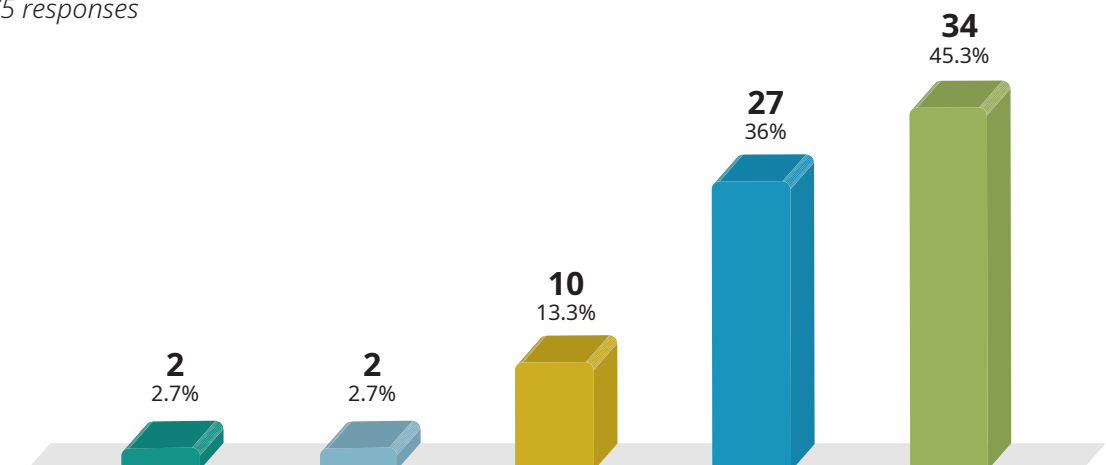
- Include youth in control over decision making and partner in implementation of global commitments like YPS agenda etc.
- Include marginalised youth groups (LGBTQ, persons with disabilities, etc)
- Strengthen or develop platforms that are working for youth
- Implement awareness sessions for youth rights and involvement of young people in action projects.

# Evaluation of Intergenerational dialogue

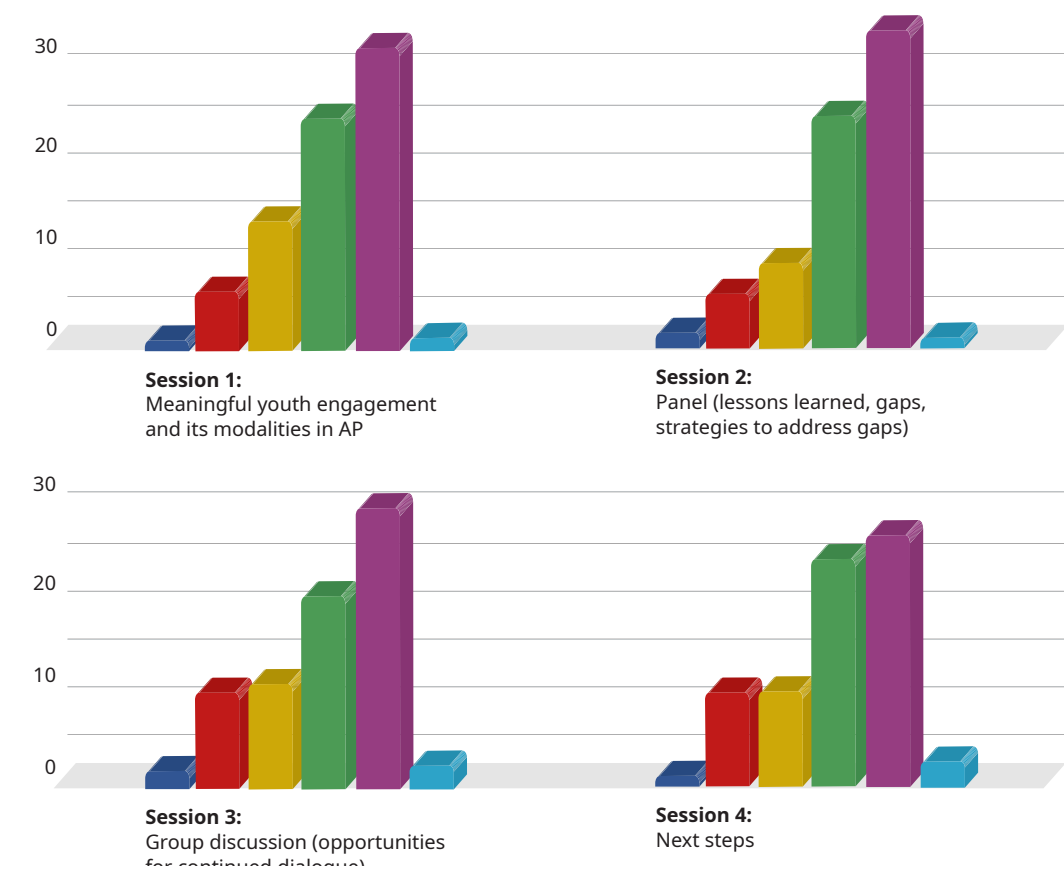
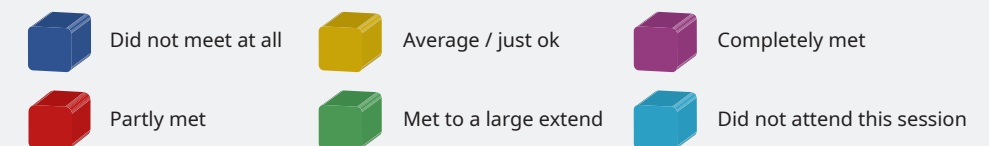
## OVERALL SATISFACTION

Did the intergenerational dialogue meet its overall objective and your expectation?

75 responses



## SATISFACTION OF EACH SESSION



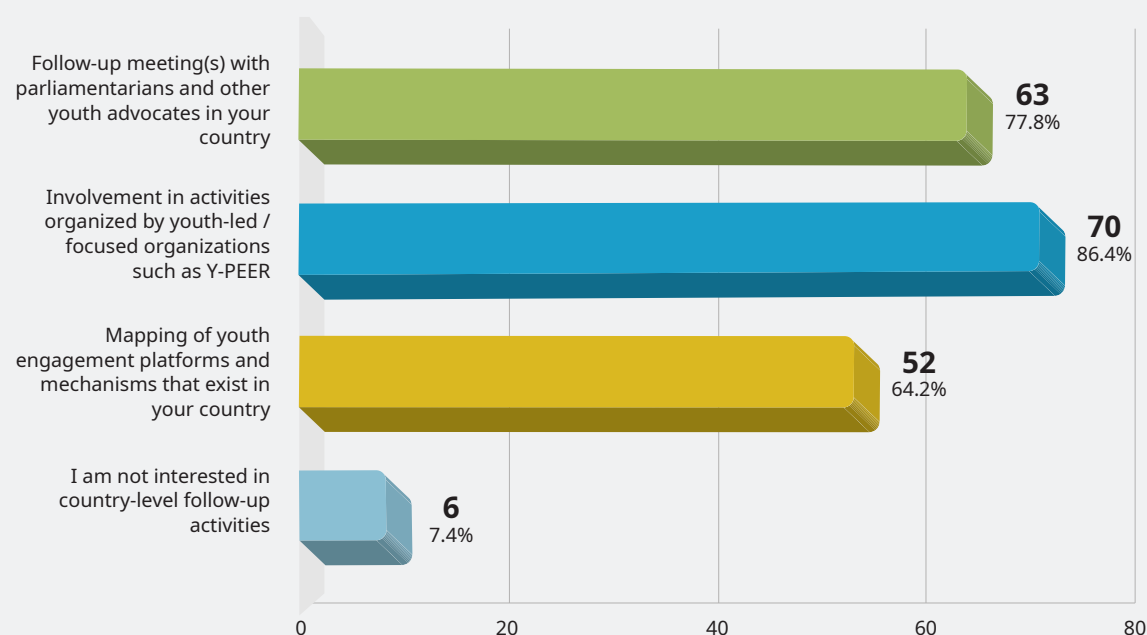


# Suggestions for follow-up actions

## COUNTRY-LEVEL FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Please select follow-up activities you are interested in engaging in your country (select all the apply).

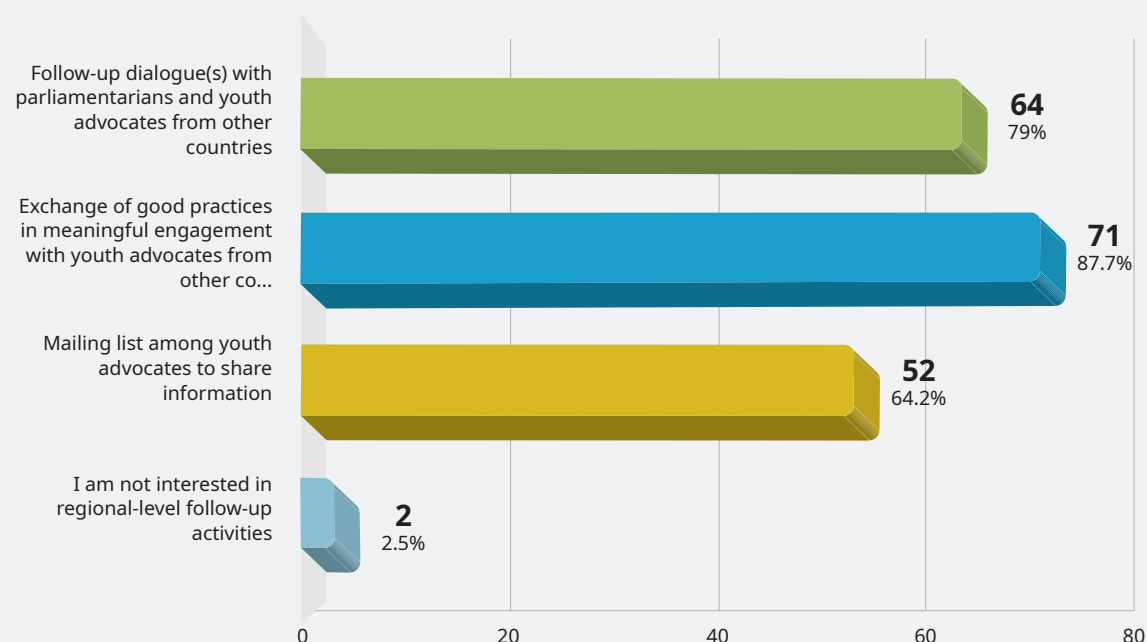
81 responses



## REGIONAL-LEVEL FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

2. Please select follow-up activities you are interested in engaging in at the Asia-Pacific regional level (select all the apply).

81 responses





# Agenda

(Tokyo time)	Agenda	Speaker
15:00-15:15	Opening and welcome	APDA
	Address by Organizer APDA/JPPF, Japan (5 min)	Hon. Hitoshi Kikawada, MP Japan, Secretary- General of JPPF
	Address by Supporting Partner - UNFPA (5 min)	Mr. Björn Andersso, Regional Director of UNFPA APRO
	Introduction	APDA, Ms. Ayeshwini Lama, Y-PEER
15:15-15:40	Session 1: Meaningful youth engagement and its modalities in the Asia-Pacific region	Ms. Ayeshwini Lama, Y-PEER
	1. Principles of meaningful youth engagement (5 min) 2. Feedback from youth consultation (15 min) 3. Examples of meaningful youth engagement at a regional level (5 min)	
15:40-16:10	Session 2: Lessons learned, gaps, and strategies actions to address these gaps (Panel Discussion)	Ms. Ayeshwini Lama, Y-PEER
	Tentative questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please share a concrete example where young people are meaningfully engaged in your country</li> <li>What are lessons learned from the examples through your efforts in your country? What were keys to success?</li> <li>Is there anything new you learned today? How can you apply them to your contexts?</li> <li>How did you manage to maintain youth engagement in the COVID context?</li> <li>What are some major gaps in your context? What are your roles in addressing these gaps?</li> </ul>	Panel speakers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 parliamentarians</li> <li>3 youth advocates</li> </ul>
16:10-16:55	Session 3: Opportunities for continued dialogue and next steps	MP facilitator
	Questions to be discussed in each group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are gaps that need to be addressed in your country? (In terms of inclusiveness of diverse groups, mechanisms, level of engagement, capacities etc.)</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the next steps to address these gaps in your country? How can you work together to strengthen meaningful youth engagement in your country?</li> <li>Are there policies related to youth engagement at the local or national levels?</li> <li>Does your country have any feedback mechanisms to reflect youth perspectives into national policies / strategies?</li> <li>What are your ideas for Asia-Pacific regional-level follow-up activities? / How can we continue exchanging good practices and lessons learned?</li> </ul>	
	Report back by a member of selected groups	
16:55-17:15	Session 4: Wrap up and next steps	Facilitator
	Discussion and Adoption of Concrete Action Points / Next steps for the group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>APDA rapporteur</li> <li>Youth Representative</li> </ul>
	Closing	

## Organized by:

The Asian Population and Development Association (APDA)



## Supported by:

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)



Y-PEER Asia-Pacific Center







# APDA

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