

ASIA-PACIFIC YOUTH SYNTHESIS REPORT:

OUR PLANET, OUR FUTURE



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was convened by regional youth networks across Asia and the Pacific, including the Children and Youth Major Group to the United Nations Environment Programme (CYMG), the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) Thailand, the Youth Constituency to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (YOUNGO), Young Urbanists of Southeast Asia (YUSEA), and the Youth Empowerment in Climate Action Platform (YECAP), with support from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The youth networks extend its sincere appreciation to all youth contributors, reviewers, facilitators, and partner organisations who contributed their time, expertise, and perspectives throughout the development of this report.

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Access the annexes accompanying this report, as well as the policy brief!

<https://www.cymgenv.net/asia-pacific-youth-synthesis-report>

INTRODUCTION

The Ninth session of the Committee on Environment and Development (CED9) of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) convenes at a critical moment for Asia and the Pacific, as the region faces escalating pressures from the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. While countries across the region have made significant environmental commitments, the primary challenge now lies in translating these commitments into equitable, on-the-ground outcomes. Despite young people increasingly advancing environmental solutions across the region, meaningful youth engagement in environmental governance remains fragmented, with limited progress in embedding youth voices within decision-making and implementation processes.

In response, this report was convened by regional youth networks, including the Children and Youth Major Group to the United Nations Environment Programme (CYMG), the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) Thailand, the Youth Constituency to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (YOUNGO), the Young Urbanists of Southeast Asia (YUSEA), and the Youth Empowerment in Climate Action Platform (YECAP), with support from ESCAP.

Grounded in youth perspectives across Asia and the Pacific, the report draws on a literature review informed by these five regional youth networks and other institutions. Findings were further strengthened through the Our Planet, Our Future Asia-Pacific Youth Survey (2026), which gathered responses from 269 young people across 32 countries and territories, with more than 70 per cent of respondents identifying as belonging to marginalised or vulnerable groups. Together, these insights suggest that the greatest barriers to meaningful environmental action lie not only in policy ambition but in persistent gaps in implementation, access, and decision-making power.

Across the region, youth-led initiatives increasingly demonstrate how climate action, biodiversity protection, sustainable urban development, and broader environmental goals can be advanced in an integrated manner. However, these efforts remain insufficiently integrated into formal policy systems. This report argues that youth inclusion must be understood as a long-term investment that strengthens policy continuity, innovation, and resilience.

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Addressing current challenges requires a fundamental shift in environmental governance: from consultation-based participation to shared ownership, where youth are formally included in the decision-making, design, implementation, financing, and monitoring of environmental policies; from commitments to delivery through stronger implementation and resource mobilisation; and from isolated initiatives to scalable systems that can expand and embed youth-led solutions. Moving from consultation towards co-decision and co-implementation is therefore essential to advancing more inclusive, integrated, and effective pathways for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.

METHODOLOGY

This report adopts a mixed-methods and youth-centred approach to examine environmental priorities, governance gaps, and youth-led solutions across Asia and the Pacific in the context of CED9. The analysis is grounded in two complementary components: a regional desk study and the Our Planet, Our Future Asia-Pacific Youth Survey (2026).

The desk study formed the primary foundation of the synthesis process. Drawing on contributions from regional youth networks and other organisations, it reviewed youth statements, research and policy documents, consultation outputs, advocacy materials, and other relevant documents to identify recurring priorities and gaps across climate action, biodiversity, pollution, environmental governance, and youth inclusion. Collectively, these materials reflect the perspectives, experiences, and priorities of thousands of young people across the region and provide the broader analytical basis for this report as a regional youth synthesis.

These findings were further strengthened through the Our Planet, Our Future Asia-Pacific Youth Survey (2026), which gathered responses from 269 young people (aged below 32) across 32 countries and territories. The survey provided additional quantitative and qualitative insights into youth perspectives across diverse geographies, age groups, gender identities, and socio-economic backgrounds, with over 70% of respondents identifying as belonging to marginalised or vulnerable groups. Eight interconnected thematic areas are foregrounded, namely climate action, biodiversity, ocean protection, air pollution, water resources management, sustainable urban development, environmental governance and rights, and youth inclusion and empowerment.

269

young respondents across diverse geographies, age and identities

70%

identified as belonging to marginalised or vulnerable groups

In addition to identifying gaps and priorities, the report highlights youth-led initiatives submitted through the survey process. These initiatives were reviewed based on their ability to demonstrate synergies across environmental and development priorities, deliver tangible impacts for both communities and ecosystems, and reflect the geographical diversity of Asia and the Pacific. Particular attention was given to initiatives that demonstrate integrated, collaborative, and scalable approaches involving youth, governments, civil society, academia, and local communities.

The report also underwent a rigorous peer review process involving experts from organisations, and members from youth networks to strengthen the accuracy, inclusiveness, and policy relevance of the analysis. While the report does not claim to represent all youth perspectives or initiatives across the region, it aims to provide a timely, youth-centred, evidence-informed synthesis of the CED9 thematic priorities, lived experiences, and actionable pathways for strengthening youth-inclusive environmental governance in Asia and the Pacific.

YOUTH PRIORITIES

In the context of CED9, young people across the region have joined forces to articulate a set of priorities addressing the triple planetary crisis. These priorities reflect the growing demand of young people for more integrated, implementation-focused, and inclusive approaches to environmental governance across Asia and the Pacific.

1	Climate Finance & Inclusive Climate Governance	Ensure predictable and accessible financing and participatory governance processes for locally-led and inclusive climate adaptation solutions that take into consideration the needs and rights of communities most exposed to climate-related risks and disasters.
2	Climate Action	Accelerate a just and equitable transition away from fossil fuels to keep the 1.5°C goal within reach.
3	Biodiversity Protection	Prioritise the protection, restoration, and conservation of biodiversity, ecosystems, and water systems through inclusive ecological governance mechanisms, grounded in Indigenous and local knowledge and supported by rights-based nature-based solutions to strengthen ecosystem integrity and resilience.
4	Sustainable Urban Development	Strengthen regional platforms and city-to-city cooperation frameworks to advance integrated, resource-efficient, and climate-resilient urban development.
5	Air Pollution	Strengthen air quality governance through science-based emissions standards, investment in low-carbon public transport and renewable energy, and the reduction of harmful incineration practices.
6	Youth-led Environmental Governance	Reform environmental governance by institutionalising mechanisms that enable the meaningful participation and leadership of children and young people, particularly those systematically left behind, in environmental policy design, implementation, and governance processes. This includes formal representation, inclusive consultation processes, and sustained financial and capacity-building support for long-term youth engagement.

Collectively, these priorities highlight the need for more integrated, inclusive, and implementation-oriented approaches to environmental governance across Asia and the Pacific. However, despite growing ambition and youth-led action across the region, significant structural gaps and challenges continue to constrain the realisation of these priorities in practice.

GAPS AND CHALLENGES

Building on the priorities identified in the previous section, this section examines the major structural gaps and challenges affecting climate action, biodiversity protection, ocean governance, air pollution, water resources management, environmental governance, youth inclusion and sustainable urban development (SUD) across Asia and the Pacific. The analysis highlights persistent barriers to implementation, access, financing, and meaningful participation across environmental sectors.

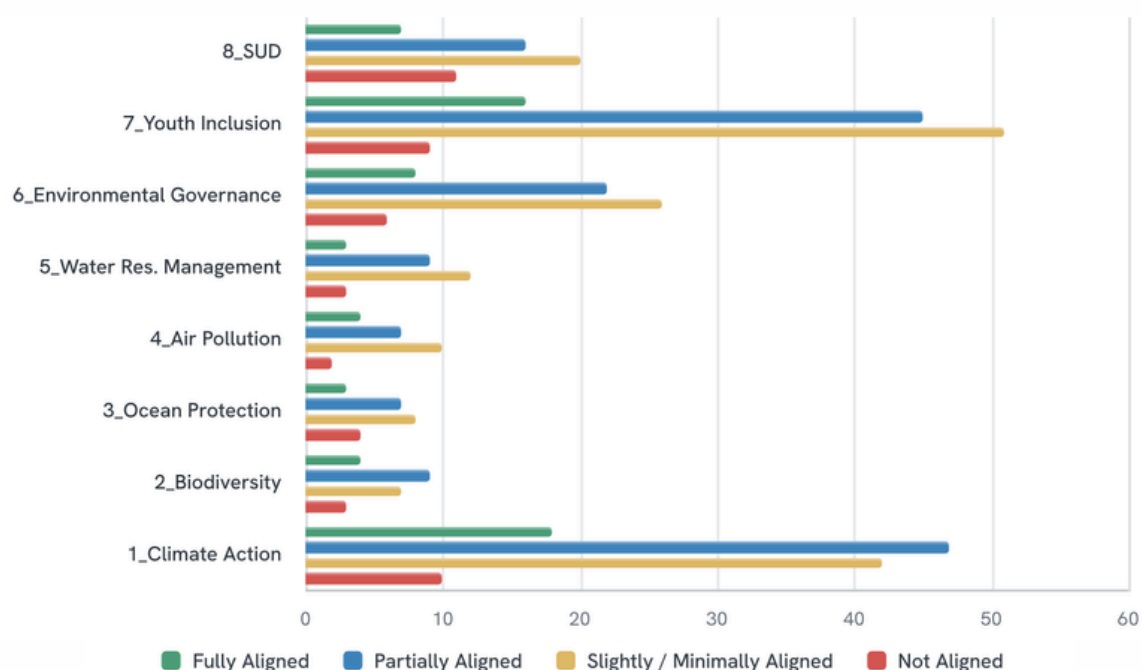


Figure 1. Alignment of Policies, Practices, and Investments of Asia-Pacific Governments with Youth Priorities (Source: Our Planet, Our Future Asia Pacific Youth Survey (2026))

Based on Figure 1, responses across the eight thematic areas are concentrated around “slightly/minimally aligned” and “partially aligned.” This suggests that, while environmental policies, practices, and investments exist across Asia and the Pacific, young respondents perceive them as only partially reflecting youth priorities. This finding is consistent with our broader desk review in the Annex, reflecting a wider implementation gap: youth priorities are increasingly recognised in policy discourse, but remain unevenly translated into financing, institutional mechanisms, monitoring systems, and concrete implementation pathways.

Notably, climate action and youth inclusion record comparatively higher responses in the “fully aligned” category, but also remain prominent under “slightly/minimally aligned.” This pattern is closely linked to P1, P2, and P6, which focus on climate finance, climate action, and youth-led environmental governance. It may reflect the fact that these areas are more visible in regional and international policy spaces, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) processes, youth consultations, advocacy platforms, and policy language that increasingly recognises youth participation.

However, visibility does not necessarily translate into meaningful implementation. Many young people may still perceive limited alignment where access to finance, implementation roles, monitoring mechanisms, and formal decision-making power remains weak.

The results therefore suggest that the main challenge is not only recognising youth priorities, but ensuring that they are supported through practical governance mechanisms.

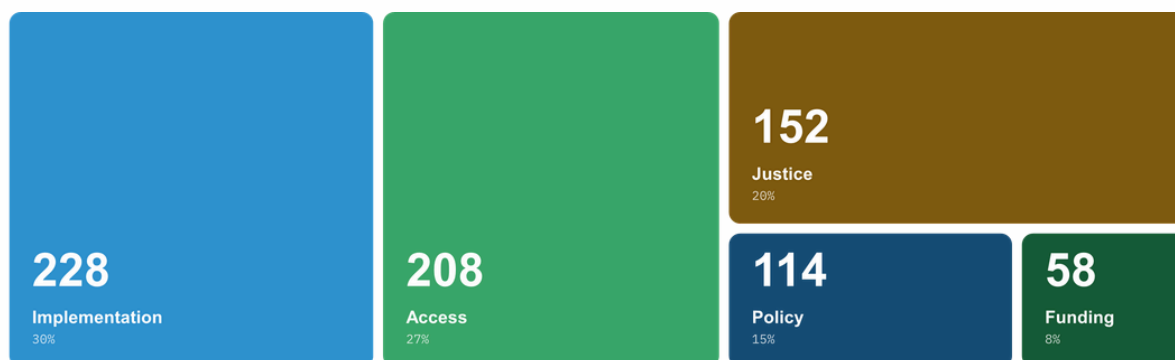


Figure 2. Types of Gaps Identified Between Youth Priorities and Environmental Realities (Source: Our Planet, Our Future Asia Pacific Youth Survey (2026))

Description: Treemap of 760 gap entries derived from 269 open-ended survey responses, where each response was coded into thematic gap categories. Block size represents the number of entries in each category.

Figure 2 further unpacks the nature of the gaps between youth priorities and environmental realities across Asia and the Pacific. While Figure 1 shows that existing policies, practices, and investments are perceived as only partially aligned with youth priorities, Figure 2 indicates that the largest gaps are concentrated in implementation and access, particularly in relation to funding, policy delivery, and equitable participation mechanisms. This suggests that young people are not only concerned about whether environmental policies exist, but also if these policies are effectively delivered, equitably accessed, and supported by practical mechanisms on the ground. This finding closely aligns with insights from the desk review, which indicates that youth priorities are increasingly visible in environmental policy discussions, but remain unevenly translated into practical delivery systems, financing mechanisms, accountability structures, and meaningful participation pathways.



Figure 3. Weighted Heatmap of Key Challenges Faced by Youth Across Environmental Priorities

(Source: Our Planet, Our Future Asia Pacific Youth Survey (2026))

Description: Heatmap of weighted challenge scores calculated from ranked survey responses. Darker cells indicate higher weighted scores, showing where specific barriers are most prominent across thematic priorities.

Building on the gap categories identified in the previous figure, Figure 3 examines how specific challenges vary across the eight thematic priorities. Ranked survey responses were converted into a weighted scoring system, where higher-ranked challenges were assigned greater value, and scores were aggregated by theme. The heatmap therefore, helps identify which barriers are most prominent within each priority area.

The results show that limited access to decision-making spaces, insufficient funding and resources, and weak policy implementation are the most consistent challenges faced by youth in advancing their environmental priority areas across thematic domains. Funding is particularly prominent in climate action and biodiversity, reflecting the continued difficulty young people face in accessing financial support for climate solutions, locally led adaptation, ecosystem restoration, and youth-led conservation. In other areas, especially youth inclusion, environmental governance, sustainable urban development, water resource management, and air pollution, limited access to decision-making spaces emerges as a major barrier. This suggests that young people are not only asking for more resources but also for clearer pathways to influence policy design, implementation, monitoring, and accountability.

These findings reinforce the patterns identified in both the treemap and the broader literature review, including analyses conducted by major youth groups and networks across the region. Across P1 to P6, the main constraints are not a lack of youth interest or solutions, but structural barriers within governance, financing, and implementation systems. Climate action, biodiversity protection, sustainable urban development, air pollution control, and youth-led environmental governance all require more accessible funding, stronger institutional support, capacity-building, and formal mechanisms for youth participation. This underscores the need for more inclusive, sustained, and accessible financing and partnership models that recognise youth not only as beneficiaries, but as long-term partners in environmental governance, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

SITUATIONAL GAP ANALYSIS

The following sub-sections examine governance and implementation gaps across the key priority areas identified in this report. In this structure, the triple planetary crisis is treated as a standalone priority area that brings together P1 on climate finance and inclusive climate governance, P2 on climate action, the biodiversity-related elements of P3, and P5 on air pollution. P4 on sustainable urban development and P6 on youth-led environmental governance are addressed in separate sections, while ocean and water resource management is examined as a distinct environmental domain due to its cross-cutting relevance to ecosystems, health, and climate resilience.

1.

TRIPLE PLANETARY CRISIS

(Climate, Biodiversity Loss, Pollution)

The triple planetary crisis is treated in this section as a standalone priority area, bringing together climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Countries in Asia and the Pacific region are facing the challenge of shifting from resource-intensive growth patterns towards more low-carbon, climate-resilient, resource-efficient, and nature-positive development pathways. The ESCAP Asia-Pacific SDGs Report (2026a) identifies climate action (Goal 13) as the only SDG in regression, risking reversal of broader SDGs gains. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) Climate Report 2025 also adds that 75% of the region's GDP remains tied to natural capital (ADB, 2026). These findings highlight the continued dependence of regional development on natural resources, and the difficulty of translating environmental commitments into planning, financing, and implementation.

Climate change intensifies biodiversity loss and pollution risks; degraded ecosystems weaken food security, public health and disaster resilience; and pollution compounds climate and health vulnerabilities, particularly in rapidly urbanising areas (ESCAP, 2026b). These interconnections are especially significant in Asia and the Pacific, where development remains closely tied to natural capital and where environmental risks often overlap with social and economic inequalities. As a result, the key challenge is not only to respond to climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution in parallel, but to address them through integrated approaches that connect just transition, climate finance, adaptation support, rights-based nature-based solutions, pollution prevention, capacity-building and participatory governance.

In this context, the Asia and the Pacific region has emerged as a central arena for environmental action across multiple fronts. On climate action, countries across the region are engaging in the preparation and implementation of successive NDCs, while the region is also driving rapid renewable energy expansion. ESCAP (2025a)'s review of climate ambition in Asia and the Pacific notes that Asia is broadly on track to triple renewable energy capacity in line with a 1.5°C pathway by 2030, accounting for around 70 per cent of new renewable capacity added in 2024.

On biodiversity and ecosystems, countries are updating national biodiversity strategies, action plans, and targets in line with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, alongside regional efforts on ecosystem restoration, blue carbon, coastal resilience, and transboundary environmental cooperation, including restoration initiatives in the Northern Aral Sea and wider Aral Sea Basin (UNEP, 2025). In relation to air pollution, UNEA-6 Resolution 6/10 on promoting regional cooperation on air pollution, together with mechanisms such as the Regional Action Plan on Air Pollution and the Air Quality Management Exchange, provides an important basis for strengthening science-based standards, data sharing, capacity-building, and participatory monitoring.

Taken together, these processes show that the triple planetary crisis is an immediate governance and implementation challenge for Asia and the Pacific. Survey findings and desk review insights further suggest that youth-led solutions continue to face barriers related to access to finance, decision-making spaces, technical capacity, and institutional support. Addressing these gaps requires accelerated mitigation, stronger international cooperation and support, and more systematic integration of equity, benefit-sharing, rights-based approaches, and regional realities into responses to climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.

2.

OCEAN & WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

In Asia and the Pacific, ocean and water resource management face shared challenges of rising water stress, inefficient and fragmented water governance, transboundary risks, marine pollution, overfishing, and the degradation of coral reefs, mangroves, and other coastal ecosystems, underscoring the need for more sustainable, ecosystem-based, and climate-resilient management approaches (FAO RAP, 2026; ADB, 2025).

The key gap lies in the weak translation of regional commitments into coordinated and locally effective implementation. According to the CED9 background document on the sustainable management of water resources, progress towards SDG 6 in Asia and the Pacific remains mixed and predominantly stagnant, despite the region being home to around 60% of the world's population but only 36% of global freshwater resources. (ESCAP, 2025b) While progress has been made in expanding water access, it has not been matched by sufficient gains in water-use efficiency, wastewater treatment, watershed protection, and long-term monitoring, while ocean governance continues to face challenges related to marine plastic pollution, unsustainable fisheries, weak enforcement, and limited financing for coastal ecosystem restoration. These challenges are further complicated by fragmented mandates across agencies, sectors, and borders.

This directly links to youth priorities on inclusive ecological governance, ocean protection, water systems, and youth-led environmental governance. Young people are already contributing through advocacy, awareness-raising, citizen science, restoration, and community monitoring, but their role often remains project-based and insufficiently institutionalised. Regional platforms such as the 10th World Water Forum, the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership, the Archipelagic and Island States Forum, and the Our Ocean Conference provide important entry points, but stronger mechanisms are needed to connect these platforms with youth participation, sustained financing, technical support, and implementation at the local level.

3.

SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Across Asia and the Pacific, a key gap lies in translating regional platforms and city-to-city cooperation frameworks into practical support for circular, resource-efficient, and climate-resilient urban systems. While these frameworks can help cities exchange knowledge, mobilise green finance, and scale local innovations, they often remain fragmented, state-centric, and insufficiently accessible to youth-led and community-based initiatives, as informed by C40 Cities (2025) and OECD (2025).

Existing mechanisms, including the Asia-Pacific Urban Forum, global city networks, and city-to-city cooperation platforms, have advanced regional dialogue on sustainable urban development and created important spaces for policy exchange. However, their impact on implementation remains uneven, particularly for smaller cities, local communities, and youth-led initiatives seeking to move beyond pilot projects (ESCAP & UN-Habitat, 2023). Survey findings and desk review insights reinforce this disconnect, showing strong youth demand to contribute to circular economy practices, sustainable mobility, green infrastructure, and resource-efficient urban solutions, alongside persistent barriers related to funding, access, and institutional entry points.

This structural gap is closely linked to P4 on sustainable urban development and P6 on youth-led environmental governance. To make city cooperation more inclusive and implementation-oriented, young people need clearer pathways to participate in urban planning, access finance and technical support, test innovative solutions through living labs or pilot programmes, and connect successful local initiatives to wider city-to-city learning and scaling processes.

4.

YOUTH INCLUSION IN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

Youth inclusion in environmental governance is treated in this section as a standalone priority area corresponding to P6, while also serving as an enabling condition for the delivery of P1 to P5. Across climate finance, climate action, biodiversity protection, sustainable urban development, and air pollution control, young people are increasingly recognised as important stakeholders. However, recognition has not consistently translated into formal representation, shared decision-making, sustained financing, or clear roles in implementation and monitoring.

Existing youth engagement efforts, including consultations, dialogues, youth forums, capacity-building programmes, and participation in regional and international environmental processes, have created important entry points for youth voices. However, survey findings and desk review insights suggest that these mechanisms often remain consultative, event-based, and dependent on short-term programmes or individual champions. Young people may be invited to contribute perspectives, but they rarely have influence over policy design, resource allocation, implementation pathways, or accountability mechanisms.

Furthermore, these gaps are not experienced equally. Young women and girls, Indigenous youth, rural youth, youth with disabilities, children and younger adolescents, and other marginalised groups face additional barriers related to safety, mobility, language, digital access, eligibility requirements, autonomy, and financial support for travel and sustained participation. Gaps in education, skills development, mentorship, and access to information also limit youth leadership, employability, and long-term engagement in environmental governance. At the same time, young people with scientific expertise and on-the-ground experience are often insufficiently integrated into formal policy processes.

Strengthening youth inclusion, therefore, requires a paradigm shift from consultation to institutionalised participation. This means establishing formal representation, inclusive and well-resourced engagement mechanisms, youth-led monitoring, capacity-building, safeguarding measures, disaggregated data, and accountability systems that support gender equality, disability, and social inclusion. It also requires moving beyond fragmented and one-off consultation processes towards structured co-leadership arrangements, where youth constituencies and formal governmental institutions share responsibility in setting priorities, designing policies, guiding implementation, and monitoring outcomes.

YOUTH ACTIONS

This section highlights selected youth-led initiatives and community-driven actions across Asia and the Pacific that respond to environmental challenges identified in this report. Rather than presenting an exhaustive mapping, the section showcases examples that offer practical lessons for replication, adaptation, and scale-up across different local contexts.

Across diverse themes and geographies, the selected initiatives demonstrate two cross-cutting insights. First, youth-led action is most effective when supported by collaboration with governments, civil society, academia, communities, and other stakeholders. Second, impactful initiatives are often those that translate global and regional environmental priorities into locally grounded actions that communities can implement, sustain, and expand over time.

The initiatives featured in this section were drawn from submissions to the Our Planet, Our Future Asia-Pacific Youth Survey (2026) and are not intended to represent all youth-led environmental action across the region. A total of 38 initiatives were submitted (Table 4). Featured cases were selected based on the criteria outlined in the Asia-Pacific Synergies Report Call for Case Studies (Institute for Global Environmental Strategies [IGES], 2025), with consideration given to their approaches to advancing synergies and addressing trade-offs, demonstrated impacts, thematic diversity, and subregional representation. Several initiatives operate across multiple countries and regions. No submissions were received from North and Central Asia, and no initiatives from that subregion are included in this section. The full list of submitted initiatives is provided in the Annex. Initiative descriptions are based on respondent submissions and supplemented with additional contextual information where relevant.

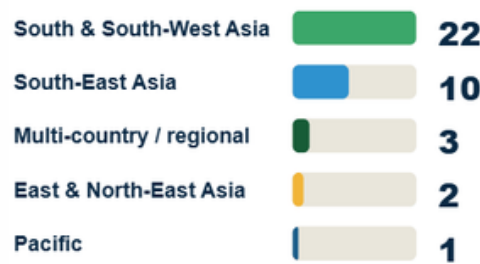


Figure 4. Regional Distribution of Youth Initiative Submissions

On average, each initiative submitted through the survey reported contributing to 3 to 4 thematic action categories simultaneously, highlighting the cross-sectoral and integrated nature of youth-led environmental action across Asia and the Pacific.

1

East & Northeast Asia

SDSN YOUTH KOREA



The SDSN Youth Korea is a network of youth leaders and researchers dedicated to integrating youth-driven visions into the Republic of Korea's sustainable development policies. It has mobilised 1,500 representatives within its SDG Youth Committee and collaborated with 37 partners.

By developing localised SDG metrics, conducting academic research, and delivering regional policy statements, the organisation aims to bridge the gap between youth voices and government action while ensuring intergenerational equity. Their work spans critical thematic areas such as climate action, renewable energy, and urban development.

Action Categories Identified: Youth Inclusion & Empowerment

2

Southeast Asia

CARE FOR CORAL



Care for Coral is Thailand's largest youth-led ocean conservation initiative, empowering students to protect coral reefs through education, advocacy, and hands-on restoration projects. Care for Coral creates synergies between ecological restoration, youth empowerment, and government policy by pairing scientifically guided coral work with immersive education and community-building.

Care for Coral has engaged over 800 volunteers to plant ~400 corals at 13 sites, with trips involving 10–100 participants each, demonstrating scalable participation and direct habitat gains. By integrating government approvals, scientific methods, and multi-stakeholder partnerships, Care for Coral shows that young people can safely lead coral transplantation, nursery work, and land-to-sea cleanups on a national scale.

Action Categories Identified: Biodiversity, Climate Action, Environmental Governance/Rights, Ocean Protection, Youth Inclusion/Empowerment

3

WITNESS STAND PROJECT

Pacific



The Witness Stand Project, created by Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change (PISFCC), is a powerful intervention that brings human stories directly into the world's most significant climate case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The project creates a unique synergy between frontline lived experience and international legal processes by transforming personal climate testimonies into direct appeals to the ICJ. The project mitigates key trade-offs—simplifying complex legal issues without losing credibility, balancing Pacific-centred leadership with global inclusivity, and ensuring emotional testimonies remain rights-based and respectful. This project is one of the initiatives that assisted PISFCC's ICJ case and produced the Climate Advisory Opinion on July 23rd, 2025 (PISFCC, 2025).

Action Categories Identified: Biodiversity, Climate Action, Environmental Governance/Rights, Ocean Protection, Youth Inclusion/Empowerment

4

YOUTH CLIMATE CATALYST

South & South-West Asia



The Youth Climate Catalyst (YCC) is a youth-led initiative that strengthens community-based climate action by equipping young people with the skills, networks, and platforms needed to address environmental and climate challenges. Implemented across 10 municipalities in Nepal, the initiative demonstrates strong collaboration between youth communities and local governments. Municipal focal persons actively participate in both training and field implementation, helping align activities with local priorities while fostering institutional co-ownership and long-term commitment. Through this collaborative approach, several municipalities have expressed commitments to scaling the initiative further.

By engaging schools, local governments, communities, youth clubs, and NGOs, YCC has reached more than 6,700 young people, established 104 eco-clubs, and supported the planting of over 5,000 trees. The initiative illustrates how youth-led and multi-stakeholder approaches can contribute to long-term community resilience, environmental stewardship, and positive nature outcomes.

Action Categories Identified: Youth Inclusion/Empowerment, Climate Action

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations in this section are derived from both the survey findings and the broader gap analysis presented in this report. Survey respondents identified six main areas for action: policy and governance reform (26%), education and awareness (18%), funding and resource allocation (16%), youth empowerment and inclusion (15%), grassroots and community-based action (14%), and accountability and implementation (11%). Respondents also highlighted several enabling mechanisms for sustained youth engagement, including institutional integration (24%), continuous funding and long-term institutional support (20%), youth-led platforms and networks (18%), capacity-building and training (16%), digital engagement tools (12%), and recognition and incentive systems (10%).

Based on these insights, our recommendations translate them into practical implementation pathways. This approach connects the recommendations to the key gaps identified earlier in the report, particularly limited access to decision-making spaces, insufficient funding and resources, weak policy implementation, fragmented institutional support, and barriers faced by marginalised youth. It also builds on the youth-led initiatives highlighted in the previous section, which show that young people across Asia and the Pacific are already advancing practical environmental solutions, but often lack the systems needed to sustain and scale their impact.

Move from Consultation to Institutionalised Youth Co-Governance

1

Governments and regional institutions should move beyond one-off consultations and establish formal mechanisms that allow young people to contribute to environmental policy design, implementation, financing, monitoring, and evaluation. These may include youth advisory councils with clear mandates, youth representation in environmental committees, structured participation in NDC and biodiversity planning processes, and formal channels for youth constituencies to engage with regional environmental platforms. To avoid tokenism, youth engagement mechanisms should include transparent selection processes, clear feedback loops, adequate resources, and defined roles in implementation and accountability.

Shift from Short-Term Project Funding to Sustained Youth-responsive Financing

Governments, development partners, philanthropic actors, and regional institutions should establish accessible and sustained financing pathways for youth-led environmental action. These may include small grants, seed funding, participatory budgeting, simplified application procedures, and dedicated funding windows for informal or emerging youth groups. Financing should support not only project activities, but also coordination, monitoring, safeguarding, communications, training, and long-term partnership building, so that youth-led initiatives can scale beyond short-term project cycles.

2

RECOMMENDATIONS

Move from Awareness-Raising to Applied Environmental Education and Capacity-building

3

Governments, schools, universities, civil society organisations, and UN agencies should strengthen formal and non-formal education linked to the priority areas identified in this report, including inclusive climate governance and finance, climate action, biodiversity protection, sustainable urban development, air pollution, and youth-led environmental governance. Capacity-building should also help young people engage with cross-cutting issues such as ocean and water resource management, environmental rights, and the synergies and trade-offs between environmental and development priorities. Training should be practical and implementation-oriented, covering areas such as policy advocacy, project management, climate finance literacy, environmental monitoring, data collection, community engagement, and science-policy communication.

Scale Grassroots and Community-based Action through Local Partnerships and Regional Platforms

Governments, cities, universities, civil society organisations, and regional platforms should create mechanisms that help youth-led initiatives move from pilot projects to sustained implementation. These may include living labs, city-to-city cooperation, mentorship programmes, technical assistance, community innovation funds, and regional knowledge-sharing platforms. Such mechanisms can connect youth-led initiatives with policymakers, funders, technical experts, and communities facing similar environmental challenges, while supporting locally grounded solutions to be adapted and scaled across different contexts.

4

RECOMMENDATIONS

5

Strengthen Accountability Mechanism to Close the Implementation Gap

Governments and regional institutions should strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that environmental commitments are translated into clear responsibilities, timelines, resources, and measurable outcomes. This includes commitments related to climate action, biodiversity protection, pollution control, sustainable urban development, and youth inclusion. Young people should be supported as contributors to accountability through community-based monitoring, citizen science, youth scorecards, participatory reviews, and digital reporting tools, helping ensure that youth-related commitments are followed by transparent implementation and regular review.

Ensure Meaningful and Inclusive Youth Engagement Operational Through Targeted Support and Safeguards

Governments, regional institutions, and partner organisations should move beyond broad commitments to youth inclusion by providing targeted support for young people who face additional barriers to participation, including young women and girls, Indigenous youth, rural youth, youth with disabilities, children and younger adolescents, migrant youth, and young people from climate-vulnerable or conflict-affected communities. Practical measures may include travel support, interpretation, accessible venues, digital access, flexible participation formats, safe reporting channels, child safeguarding, disability inclusion measures, and disaggregated data collection. Recognition and incentive systems should also be strengthened so that youth contributions are valued through visible opportunities, institutional support, and long-term pathways for leadership

6

CONCLUSION

Across this report, one message has remained consistent: young people in Asia and the Pacific are not waiting for the future to begin; they are already shaping it. From climate action and biodiversity protection to sustainable cities, pollution control, and strengthened environmental governance, the priorities, gaps, and actions here show that youth are bringing practical ideas, local knowledge, and a sense of urgency to the region's environmental agenda.

What stands in the way is not a lack of commitment, leadership, or creativity from young people, but the systems around them. The report has shown that policies, practices and investments are often only partially aligned with youth priorities, and that the biggest barriers remain implementation, access, and meaningful decision-making power. Closing that gap requires more than just recognition; it requires sustained financing, institutionalised participation, stronger accountability, and a shift from consultation to co-governance, so that youth are not only heard but able to help shape the outcomes.

The youth voices reflected in this synthesis point toward a future that is more inclusive, more coordinated, and more grounded in action. If governments, regional institutions, and partners meet that energy with lasting support and shared responsibility, Asia and the Pacific can move from fragmented progress to real transformation. The question is no longer whether young people should be part of environmental governance, but how the region's leaders and institutions can build the future with them.

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