



SEA Youth Festival 2021

Engage
Mobilize
Claim

Online Festival for
Young Southeast Asians.



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SEAYouth Festival 2021

Engage, Mobilize, Claim

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Disclaimer:

This Publication is written for the benefit of youth, human rights defenders, civil societies, and other relevant parties to highlight youth perspectives on human rights issues in Southeast Asia. The Contents of this Publication may be used as reference for any research/study purposes so long as the sources are properly acknowledged.

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SEA
Youth
Festival
2021

ABOUT ASEAN Youth Forum

The ASEAN Youth Forum (AYF) started out in 2009 as a movement for the young people in Southeast Asia to create a better regional community. From 2009 to 2013, the movement has produced statements and recommendations for ASEAN to be more inclusive and rights-based. In 2014, under the guidance of the Yangon Declaration (2014), the movement transitioned from a group making statements and recommendations to the

development of strategies for a youth-driven regional community. In 2019, AYF became fully institutionalized as a legal association with a secretariat based in Jakarta, Indonesia. Ever since the movement started, AYF has been organizing annual forums which are hosted locally in Southeast Asian countries to gather regional perspectives on youth rights issues.

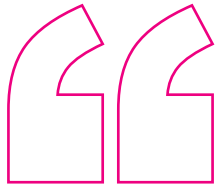
INTRODUCTION INTRODUCTION INTRODUCTION INTRODUCTION INTRODUCTION INTRODUCTION

The Southeast Asia region is made up of 11 countries namely Brunei, Myanmar, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The region is extremely rich with diversity in religion, ethnicity, culture, language, and history. It is also home to approximately 223 million youth aged between 15 to 35 years old which makes up about 34% of the region's total population.¹ In 2020, due to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, ASEAN Youth Forum (AYF) reinvented its annual forums into the SEAYouth Festival, a fully digital online festival that is

held in observance of the International Youth Day (August 12) and the World Humanitarian Day (August 19). The 2021 SEAYouth Festival was held online on 12–15 August 2021 via Zoom where more than 200 youths were in attendance and live-streamed on Facebook which amassed 1,149 views. The Festival was supported by [Plan International](#) and [22 media](#) and community partners. The Festival started with a networking event, Call Me by My Name followed by town hall events, Grand ASEAN Youth Town Hall, a series of Country and Constituency Open Spaces, and other activities namely Youth

Presentations on AICHR, Yuwana Stage, Youth, Girls & Women Activism and a Democratic Space for youth participants to intervene on the output of the Festival. The discussions during the town hall and open spaces events were facilitated by youth moderators, representatives and documented by notetakers and youth rapporteurs which became the basis of the Festival's output, the Youth Collective Statement. This publication will provide a recap for each activity, its highlights and finally a message of appreciation to all involved parties of the Festival.

¹ ASEAN Secretariat, 'Understanding How Young People See ASEAN: Awareness, Values, Identity (Full Version)', September 2021



Remarks

from Program Officer

When we designed the concept of the SEAYouth Festival back in 2021, we tried to conceptualize a safe space for young people in Southeast Asia so that they have a chance to interact and mobilize. With the back to back effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Myanmar military coup crisis, supporting young people to mobilize themselves was critical in building regional solidarity. Youth voices have not been adequately represented in the policy-making discourse resulting in policies that do not fully safeguard the future of

youth. Meanwhile, youth has played a vital role in the development of Southeast Asia into a respectable region. Our dream is to live in a region that puts human rights value as its foundation for taking any action. The Festival was our small collective effort to achieve the dream. As the venue to support youth activism and advocacy in the region we hoped that it could result in the empowerment and elevation of youth to become positive leaders and changemakers in their communities.

Rastra
Yasland





Networking platform to get to know each other in the celebration of the International Youth Day

Call Me by My Name is the icebreaking event of the Festival where the participants get to know each other in a short and light conversational setting. The naming of the program was inspired by the movie Call Me by Your Name. The event began with the participants being assigned randomly into two breakout rooms called the Hollywood and Bollywood rooms. The reason for the names of the breakout rooms is, as the name of the event was inspired by a movie and the biggest movie industry is known to be in such locations, the Festival Committee thought it was a creative way to name the rooms

after the locations. The rooms were facilitated by AYF's Community Engagement Officer Siti Hajar from Indonesia and a member of AYF's youth network from Singapore. The facilitators then prompted each participant in the respective breakout rooms to identify themselves using the script "please Call Me by "your name". I am from "your country" and part of "your constituency," followed by a sharing session of the organization or the social issues they are interested/currently working on and the name of the song that they have recently listened to or have listened to too often.



Grand

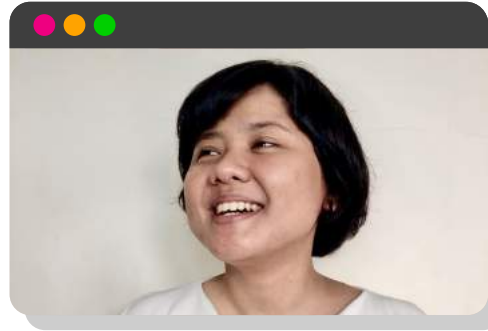
ASEAN Youth town hall

The Grand ASEAN Youth Town Hall events consisted of two sessions where 3-5 young people with diverse backgrounds from Southeast Asia presented about the issues surrounding the main topics of Peace, Politics & Democracy and Youth in Migration, Refugees & Asylum Seekers, Migrant Workers. The young people were selected from their application to be a speaker in the Festival as well as from AYF's youth network. What's

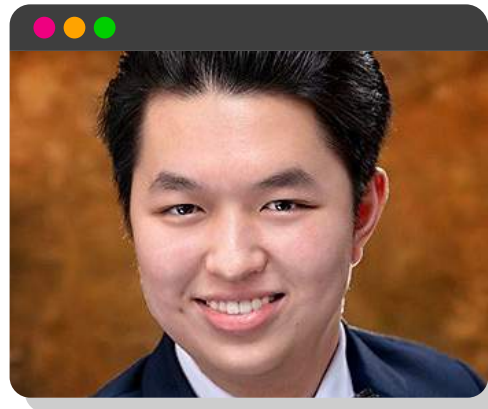
unique about the selection process is that the speakers were not selected solely based on their expertise or experience in the subject, but based on how they framed their thoughts on the issues they would like to raise. The purpose of these sessions was to highlight youth voices and spark a discussion amongst youth from all backgrounds as the topics have a universal impact particularly for young people in the region.

Peace, Politics, & De- mocracy

On the topic of Peace, Politics & Democracy, there were a total of five youth speakers namely:



Safina Maulida, a Program Consultant at the Asia Democracy Network from Indonesia. She explained and reflected on the democratic regression in Asian countries. She mentioned that government leaders in Asia often assume that young people are insufficiently capable to criticize them. However, she noted that with the prevalence of social media in the region, it is easier than ever to build knowledge and solidarity amongst youth on political issues such as democracy, freedom of speech, human rights and even corrupt practices. Therefore, she noted that it is crucial for young people to pay more attention to those issues and voice out their concerns by using peaceful means and creating strong alliances amongst each other to encourage better practices of politics and democracy.



Derick Liew Malaysia's first digital parliament alumni and co-founder of Borneo Youth Foundation from Malaysia. He spoke about the need for governments to create and sustain peaceful and democratic environments to ensure the fulfillment of the people's basic rights and allow for democratic elections to exist. He highlighted several examples where civic spaces in Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia and Malaysia were diminished due to enactment or existing laws that are inconsistent with human rights standards, arbitrary arrest and detention of political protestors and various restrictions to freedom of expression. Thus, he emphasized the need for the ASEAN community to speak up against violations to their rights despite threats or pressure and demand accountability from their leaders to ensure a just and well-functioning society.



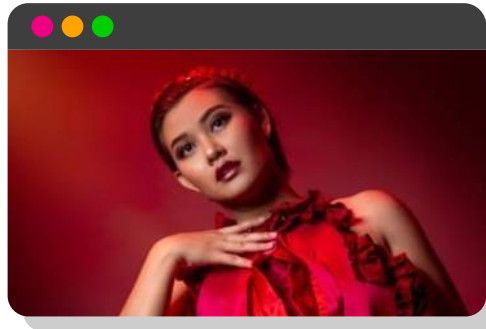
Minh Vien Le is a science teacher and social activist from Vietnam. He explained the difficulties faced by young voters in Vietnam and Laos PDR in obtaining information about election candidates and the voting system in general which hinder them from analyzing the real political situation in the country. Thus, he recommended governments disseminate information about the election through various platforms and to make it widely accessible for all generations, especially young people.



Peace, Politics, & De- mocracy

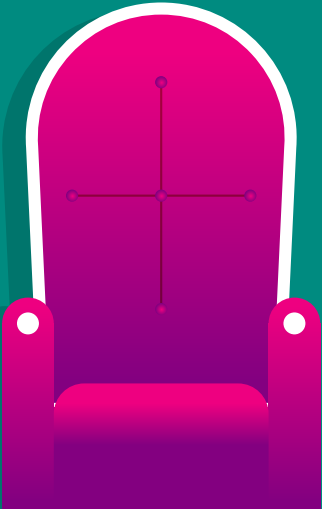


Ydanar Hlaing, is an 19-year-old university student from Myanmar. She explained about the absence of peace, democracy and justice in Myanmar ever since 1 February 2021 when military leaders took over power from the democratically elected government. She highlighted how the military government has conducted violent crackdowns on thousands of protestors and weaponized the COVID-19 pandemic to force people into submission. She insisted ASEAN countries do not condone or tolerate the military's actions by cutting any business ties and imposing various forms of political pressure until it ceases to violate the rights and freedoms of Myanmar citizens; and



Pup Kornkanok, is a political and feminist activist and co-founder of the Feminist Liberation Front from Thailand. She talked about feminism in Thailand's pro-democratic movement and the importance of gender equality in a democracy. She also highlighted the demands of feminist groups for equal representation of women in politics and to enact laws that prevent sexual harassment and provide social protection for sex workers being that it is a legal profession in Thailand. She emphasized the duty of government to project inclusivity in its governance and to create equal opportunity for its citizens.

Towards the end of the session, 92 out of 143 attendees participated in a poll on this topic and the results were as follows:



50% said they are unable to freely express their political opinion without the fear of facing repercussions from their government.

49% don't think their current government will be able to sustain peace in their country.

92% think that there needs to be more accountability on governments to reflect true democracy.

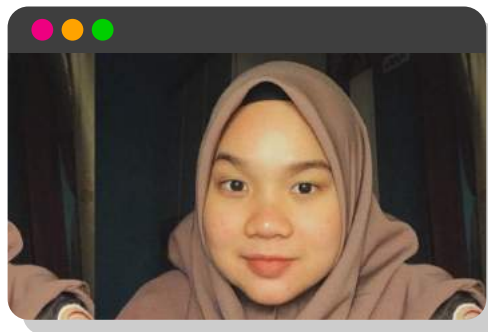
87% think that ASEAN should abandon its non-intervention principle when peace, democracy and human rights are in jeopardy.

92% think that fulfillment of basic human rights should be the cornerstone of any political system.

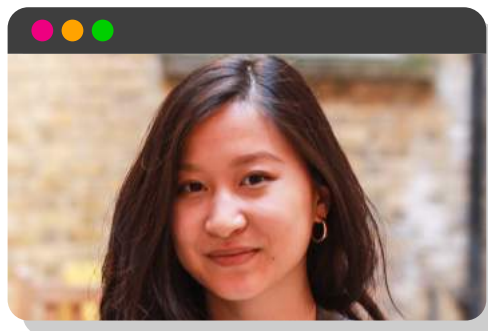
67% feel that they can freely express their mind during the Grand ASEAN Youth Town Hall Program.

Youth in Migration, Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Migrant Workers

On the topic of Youth in Migration, Refugees Asylum Seekers, Migrant Workers there were a total of three youth speakers namely:



Fathia Dhiya Safana, is a university student majoring in industrial engineering from Indonesia. She explained how the pandemic has exacerbated living and working conditions for migrant workers and how asylum seekers and refugees who were rejected from entering some countries ended up stranded in the open sea. She also drew examples from case studies in Indonesia and Singapore to highlight the issues. She then suggested to government officials and leaders in ASEAN to make an agreement amongst themselves that fulfils the minimum standards for migrant and refugee rights followed by an establishment of money lending institutions that can provide soft loans for migrants and refugees. She also emphasized the need for youth activists and civil societies to assist in providing humanitarian assistance for migrant communities.



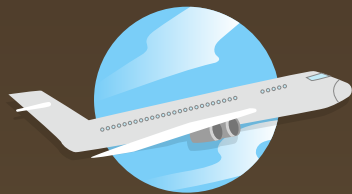
Elana Wong, the Global Focal Point for the MGCY Migration Youth & Children Platform and Migration Advisor of the US-ASEAN Young Professionals Association from Malaysia and Singapore. She gave a brief overview of the multitude of issues surrounding migrants in ASEAN including inadequate access to basic livelihood services, regional disparities in recognition of asylum seekers and refugees, inadequacies in human trafficking prevention, xenophobia, racism and negative attitudes towards migrants which are harmful to the economic and mental health security of migrant communities. Thus, she gave several recommendations for ASEAN & Government Leaders, civil societies and the private sector such as to adopt a migrant-friendly rights framework, establish more pathways to gain access to basic livelihood services, implement migrant-friendly labour laws and recognize the potential of migrants in ASEAN and abroad.



Shaffira Gayatri, an Indonesian development worker specialising in conflict transformation and refugee rights advocacy who is currently working for Migrant Workers Centre Victoria, while actively volunteering for Asylum Seeker Resource Centre and Refugee Migrant Children Centre in Australia. She explained the challenges faced by asylum seekers, refugees, and migrant workers in Southeast Asia who are often “left behind”. She highlighted how only the Philippines, Cambodia and Timor Leste are signatories to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention while a significant majority of refugee and asylum seekers populations are hosted in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. She mentioned how this lack of commitment has led to the lack of human rights protection for migrant communities in the region. Finally, she gave recommendations to ASEAN member States, AICHR, and youth in migration to provide better protection and access to basic rights and services for refugees, impose a regional legal framework based on international standards and responsibility-sharing and persist in holding governments accountable against violations of asylum seekers and refugee rights.

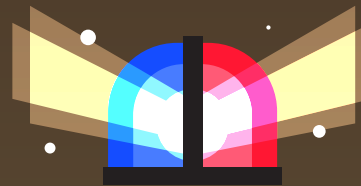
Towards the end of the session, 78 out of 123 attendees participated in a poll on this topic and the results were as follows:

91%



were supportive of individual migration into their countries.

69%



think that national security concerns are a legitimate reason for not fulfilling the human rights of migrants.

79%



think that ASEAN citizens should have free movement within the region to live and work without any visa requirements.

41%



said that asylum seekers or refugees are not treated with respect and fairness in their countries while

27%

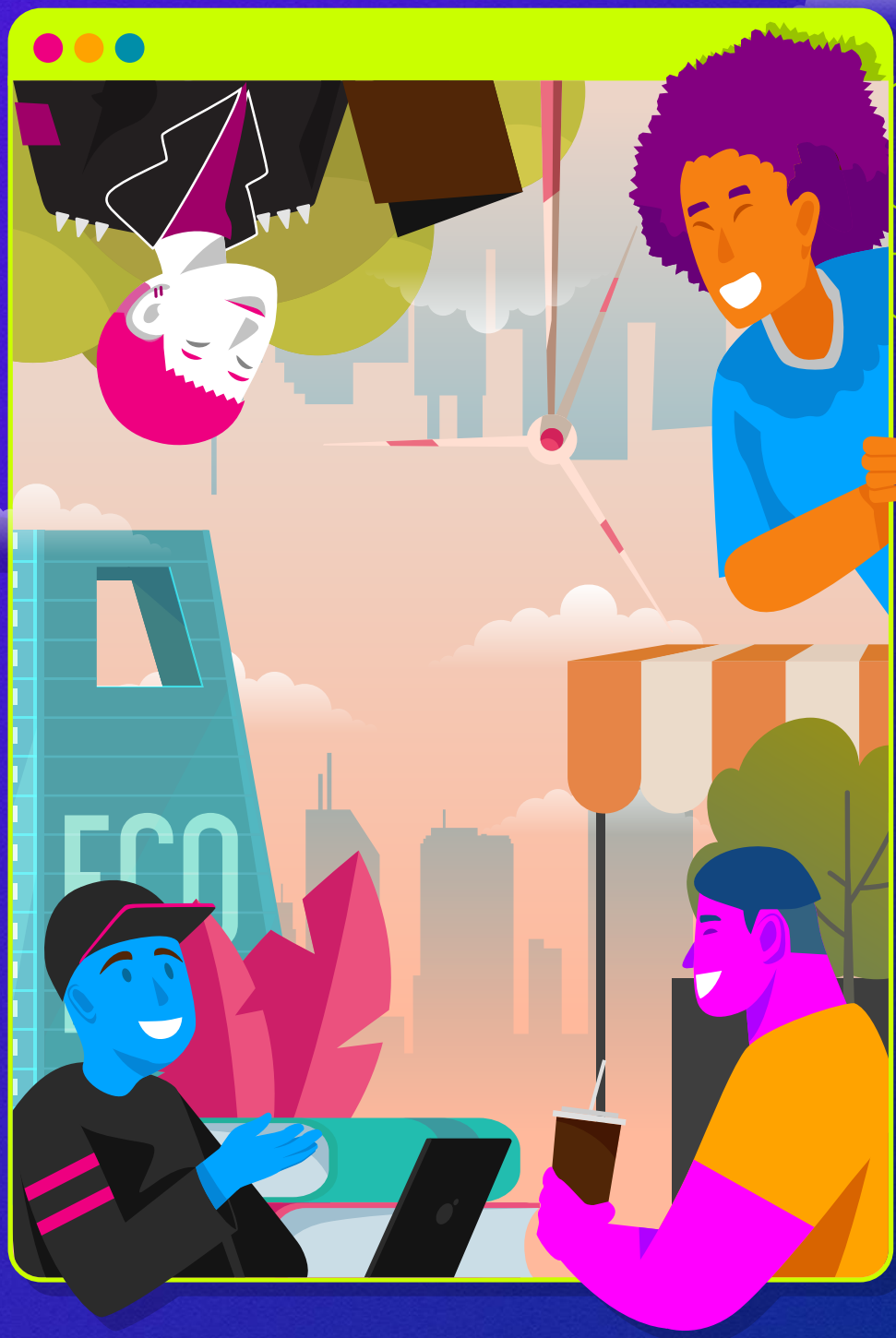


are unaware of how they are treated.

83%



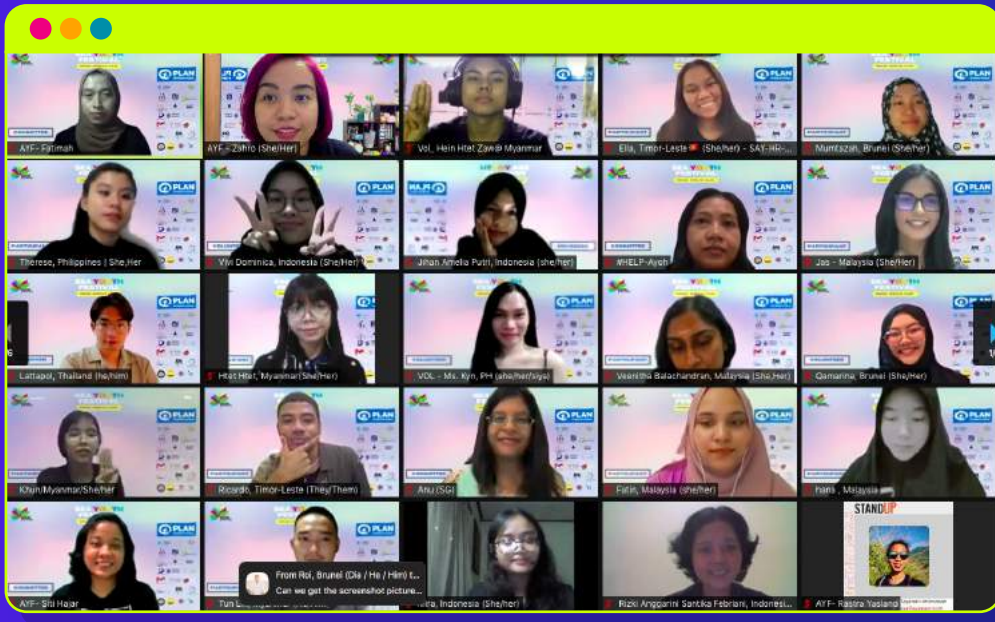
think that migrations can boost economic growth instead of threatening it.



SPACE

The Open Space events consisted of five sessions where young people from a diverse range of constituencies and countries in Southeast Asia converged into one online space where they were able to share and talk about human rights issues. The discussions lasted for approximately 40 minutes each time. The Open Space sessions were entirely led by youth volunteers who had the role(s) of being a moderator who was responsible for facilitating the discussions; a country/constituency representative who was the bridge in coordinating between the Festival Committee and other volunteer members; a rapporteur who highlighted the discussion and recommendations during the sessions. Each participant was assigned to a breakout room that

specified the respective constituency or country that they personally identified with. There were eight constituencies namely, High School Students; University/College Students & Graduates; Young Workers & Professionals; Human Rights Defenders & CSO / NGO workers; Youth in Rural Area or Conflicted Area; Girls & Young Women; Queer Community (LGBTIQ+); Others including Indigenous Community, Urban Poor, People with Disability, Youth in Migration (Exchange Students, Refugees, Migrant Workers, etc) ("Others"). There were eleven countries namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Singapore, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, The Philippines, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam.



The topics for each open space vary depending on its type. For Constituency Open Space, the topics were selected under the assumption that the topic affects youth differently depending on the constituency they belong to which signifies the inequality that each constituency faces. As such, for Constituency Open Space, the topics chosen were Decent Work, Youth Employment, Unemployment & COVID-19 and Youth Network & Organizations. While for Country Open Space, the topics were selected under the assumption that the State/Government for each country in the region has had a role

to play on the topic which has produced both positive and negative impacts on youth. As such, the topics for Country Open Space were Access to SRHR, CSE, and Education; Digital Security, Digitalization, Right to Information; and Environment, Climate Justice, Land Rights, Green Transition, Eco-conscious Living. The Open Space events were purposefully not live streamed to create a relaxed and casual atmosphere for the participants to feel safe and comfortable to share their thoughts and experiences on the respective issues.

CONSTITUENCY Open Space

Key Issues:
Decent Work, Youth Employment,
Unemployment & COVID-19

The moderators led the discussions by asking the problems/challenges that the youth from each constituency faced in securing a job and having decent² jobs and whether they are prone to be laid off due to a crisis. The young workers and professionals, high school students and university students/graduates constituencies mentioned similar challenges in securing employment as follows:

- Recent high school/university graduates experienced hardships in being hired even at entry-level positions due to the demand for an existing working experience.
- There is also a lack of collaboration between the industries and educational institutions which often results in graduates not possessing the appropriate practical skills to contribute to the workforce.

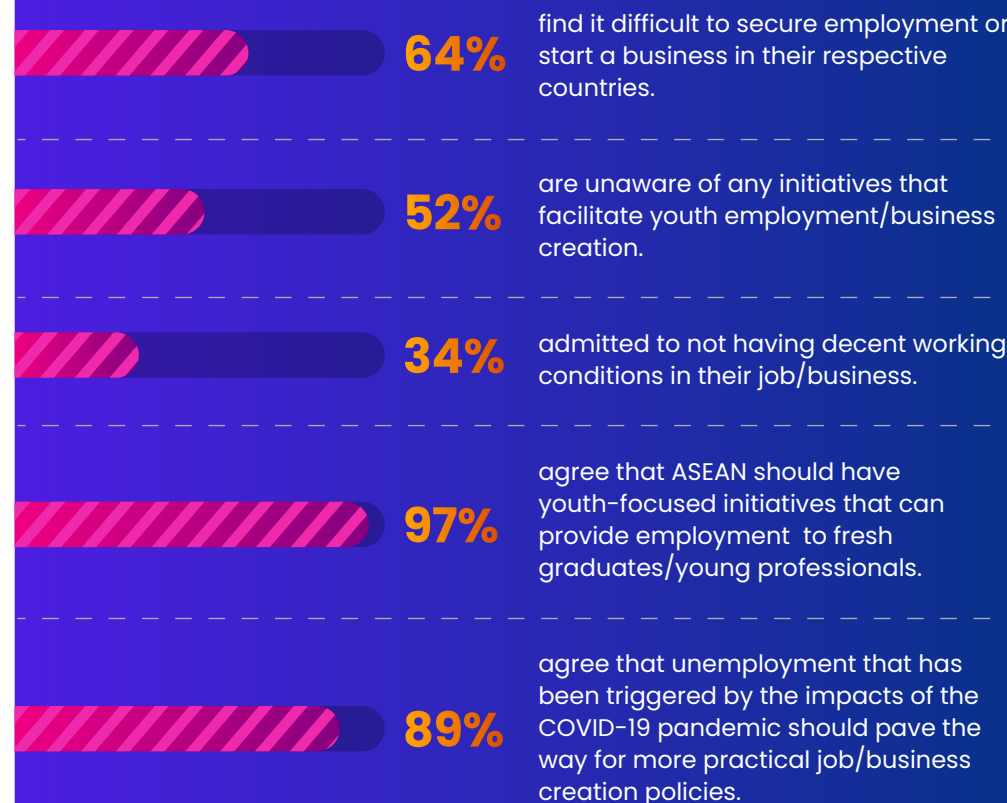
The girls and young women, LGBTI and queer community and Others constituencies highlighted similar grievances that exist simply due to their identities as follows:

- For girls and young women, there is a lack of societal expectation and support for them to pursue a career. Instead, they are often burdened with the expectation of being a good wife and taking care of the household.
- For the LGBTI and queer communities, there's a lack of acceptance for their identities making them prone to being laid off. When a job is secured, they're burdened with the expectation to behave or represent themselves in conjunction with the societal conception of their perceived gender or sexual orientation.
- For the Others constituency, there's a lack of job security and preference for hiring them due to their status as minorities which makes it difficult for them to climb the social hierarchy and attain a higher standard of living.

The human rights defenders, CSO and NGO workers and youth in rural and conflicted areas constituencies voiced similar concerns which stem from situations of crises as follows:

- The economic crisis created from the COVID-19 pandemic forced jobs that can only be done offline such as the informal sector to be severely restricted due to physical distancing and lockdown rules which resulted in many people getting laid off.
- The livelihood crisis created from ongoing military conflicts and wars has created food insecurity and lost opportunities for youth who are considering finding employment.

Towards the end of the session, 100 out of 134 attendees participated in a poll on this topic and the results were as follows:



² The Festival Committee provided a checklist as an indicator to decent working which was made in reference to International Labour Organization's definition of decent work conditions namely:

- Free from sexual violence and harassment
- Safe working space from accidents, discrimination and intimidation
- Healthy working space that supports workers's well being
- Adequate salary, decent wages, and benefits
- Promote personal development in a healthy way
- Social protection (social security, fair condition at work, pension system)
- Freedom of association

CONSTITUENCY Open Space

Key Issues: Youth Network & Organizations

The moderators led the discussions by asking the problems/challenges that the youth from each constituency faced in starting or sustaining a network or organization and how they mobilized offline or online activism. The girls and young women, youth in conflicted areas and Others constituencies mentioned the following insights:

- Lack of internet connectivity and electricity in rural areas makes it challenging for youth to initiate intercity/interstate/international networking. On the other hand, internet connectivity can be used as a tool to repress dissenting movements and voices which have led to systematic internet shutdown that prevents youth from organizing and networking.
- Youth are often stereotyped based on their age and gender as incompetent and lacks the experience to build their own organization or network that can contribute to the development of society which damages youth confidence.

The young workers and professionals, high school students, university students/graduates, human rights defenders, CSO and NGO workers, and LGBTI and queer community constituencies highlighted similar challenges as follows:

- There are a lot of bureaucracies for establishing new organizations thus deterring youth from investing time, energy and money for the sake of clearing out the red tapes.

- The multiplicity of cultures and values in the region and internally within a country may create opposition towards organizations that are focused on addressing a specific issue which may be deemed incompatible with majority views.
- Support from surrounding communities including in the form of identity acceptance, funding, mentorship and presence of relatable role models were identified as crucial for the constituencies to organize.

In regards to activism mobilization, most constituencies emphasized that online mobilization is the preferred method particularly during the pandemic as it is the most inclusive avenue for those who are disabled, work long hours or are not able to participate in person. Nevertheless, online activism effectively excludes those without access to digital devices, particularly those in rural areas and indigenous communities.

Towards the end of the session, 70 out of 99 attendees participated in a poll on this topic and the results were as follows:



70% admitted to being part of a youth network/organization.

100% agree that being part of a youth network/organization helps to amplify their voice and provide creative space to develop ideas.

41% are either unaware or do not think youth networks/organizations are meaningfully included in the policy-making process.

93% agree that some youth networks/organizations fade over time when it is not centrally organized.

97% think ASEAN should include youth networks/organizations in its meetings to get a sense of youth perspective and stay relevant.

COUNTRY Open Space



Key Issues:

Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), and Education

The moderators led the discussions by asking youth in their respective countries the challenges they faced when it comes to SRHR and CSE; whether the current SRHR and CSE governance is sufficient to support the local population dynamics; the ways in which the education system can be more inclusive, non-discriminatory, affordable, and accessible in the current context of pandemic and post-pandemic.

Most countries in the region such as Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam, the Philippines and Timor Leste described how the countries' conservatism led to limitations on access to SRHR and provision of CSE as follows:

- Subjects with sexual nature are perceived as taboo leading to a lack of CSE mainstreaming in schools even at the university level, especially in rural areas. Even if the subject is taught from a bioscience perspective, it lacks comprehensive content such as consent and safety. The topic has been said to bring discomfort to the general public when discussed in an open and detailed manner.
- Medical professionals are not adequately trained to communicate unbiasedly for those wanting access to SRHR such as conducting HIV testing which has led to unsolicited remarks that shame youth for accessing their rights. In rural areas access to such services are mostly unavailable.
- Young people are more likely to learn from unreliable sources such as the movies and the internet creating further confusion and misconception of safe and consensual sexual relations which have led to unwanted pregnancies and transmission of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI).
- There's an expectation for girls to not pursue higher education after finishing high school and instead be forced into early marriages and carry children which have led to deaths from complications during childbearing/childbirth. Similar expectation is also put on youth, in general, to marry early as to avoid committing "sins of fornication".

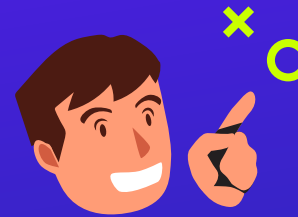
Malaysia emphasized its discussion on the difference in access to safe abortion and maternal health. Access to safe abortion is limited and has a low prioritization within the Universal Health Coverage. Unwanted pregnancies have not been categorized as a health issue even though an estimated 14% of total pregnancies ended in abortion in Peninsular Malaysia. Meanwhile, maternal health in Malaysia is highly prioritized as maternal mortality from risks of pregnancy and delivery is deemed a significant public health issue. This prioritization has allowed for attendance of birth by skilled health professionals and antenatal coverage to reach 90% in the last 20 years. While the policy seemingly champions rights to life of the fetus and women, it only serves women with wanted/intended/planned pregnancies and systematically disregards the rights of women with unwanted pregnancies to safe abortion procedures thus posing potential harmful consequences for them.

Thailand highlighted instances of discrimination when it comes to accessing SRHR as follows:

- The government has put a higher tax on feminine products which makes it unaffordable for low-income families/women leading to period poverty.
- While Thailand is often viewed as a haven for LGBT communities, there still exists homophobic sentiments amongst its general public which contributes to a lack of SRHR for same-sex couples.

Towards the end of the session, 83 out of 93 attendees participated in a poll on this topic and the results were as follows:

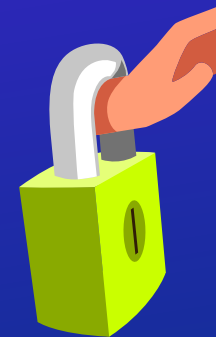
88% are aware of their SRHR.



57% were never provided with CSE either through school or a specialized organization.



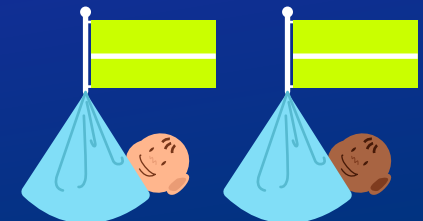
96% agree that effective provision of CSE and understanding of SRHR are key determinants to attaining individual bodily autonomy.



66% are aware of local organizations that can provide CSE/SRHR services.



87% thinks that SRHR services including access to birth control, safe abortions and youth-friendly consultations should be state-provided.



COUNTRY Open Space

Key Issues: Digital Security, Digitalization, Right to Information

The moderators led the discussions by asking youth in their respective countries the challenges they faced when it comes to digital security or cybercrime and whether current digital/cyber laws respect human rights; the digital divide and whether access to information is readily available. Vietnam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Singapore, Timor Leste, Myanmar, Thailand and the Philippines mentioned similar insights as follows:



- Lack of proper netiquette mainstreaming has contributed to widespread cyberbullying. Personal identity anonymization has also enabled hackers to create scams and steal people's private information.
- Some digital law provisions that allowed censorship of certain information/sources were enacted under the guise of filtering out fake news and maintaining the authenticity of the information. At the same time, it blocks access to some foreign channels effectively limiting people's right to seek information and verify its truth from external sources. The practice of blacklisting and whitelisting of sources have on occasion hindered youth access to educational websites effectively impacting their right to education.
- Inadequate data protection laws continue to jeopardize people's privacy and freedom of expression as the government conducts red-tagging from its unlimited access to citizen data. The government has also placed restrictions on several expressions of dissent to its rule.
- The digital divide exists between urban and rural populations and it has been exacerbated throughout the pandemic.



Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Indonesia highlighted similar concerns on cybercrime as follows:

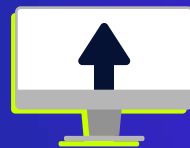
- Cybercriminals have taken advantage of the forced digitalization of multiple mechanisms due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, existing digital laws are yet able to enforce accountability for cybercriminals.
- Cybersafety awareness and digital literacy need to be prioritized and mainstreamed to prevent misappropriation of personal data and victimization of online attacks.

Towards the end of the session, 67 out of 89 attendees participated in a poll on this topic and the results were as follows:

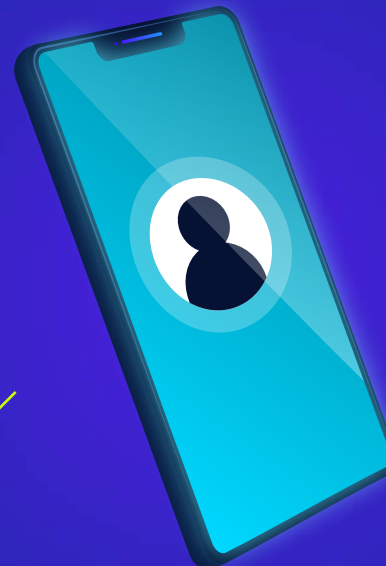
54% are not able to access information on the internet freely without government restrictions.



42% believe that young people themselves should be responsible for processing the data that they put on the internet. Whereas 40% think it is the responsibility of the platform creators and only 18% think it's the government's.



93% agree that the existence of a digital divide highlights the inequality of individuals' access to information.



57% have a preference for certain apps that have more security and respect for data protection.



49% think everyone should be able to express their opinions freely without restriction, while 45% think restrictions can be put in place for public health and safety concerns. 6% chooses not to comment on the issue.



COUNTRY Open Space

Key Issues:

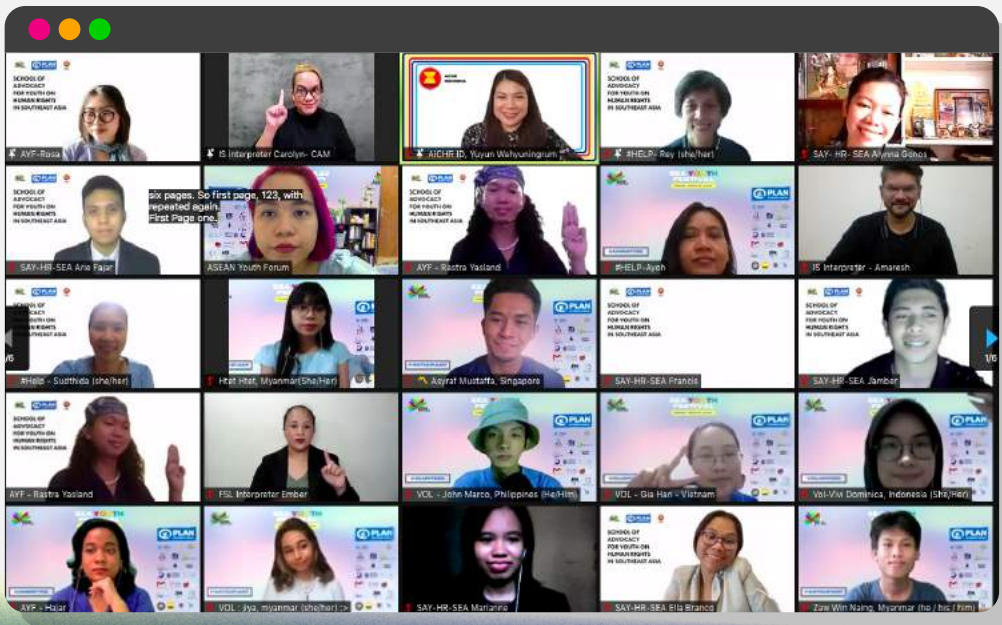
**Environment, Climate Justice, Land Rights,
Green Transition, Eco-conscious Living**

The moderators led the discussions by asking youth in their respective countries the challenges they faced when it comes to climate justice and environment activism and whether existing laws including land rights laws are respecting the right to a safe and healthy environment; the effects of climate changes from their personal experience; and how should a green transition look like in the post-COVID 19 recovery framework. Cambodia, Laos PDR, Singapore, Timor Leste, Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand and the Philippines highlighted similar concerns:



- Some residential areas became too polluted for residents to live in as dumping grounds containing waste from private factories are situated too close to it. The government's practice of receiving bribes from the companies continues to enable the situation.
- Improper and severe lacking of waste collection and management systems leads to waste being burned or disposed of in rivers, streets and backyards.
- While laws exist to provide land rights to farmers and indigenous communities, it is not implemented properly. As a result, local/indigenous communities are often forced to evict when companies' development projects are underway. Governments have also practised arbitrary land confiscation as punishment for expressing dissent to the ruling regime.
- There is a lack of accountability mechanism for both public and private entities who are responsible for environmental damage. Hence, known perpetrators of mass deforestation and illegal logging continue to destroy local environments with no remorse. Meanwhile, environmental defenders and activists are being targeted for calling out the injustice.
- The majority of people primarily from the older generation and those living in rural areas purposefully disregard or do not understand the severity of environmental concerns leading to inaction or absence of adjustment to environmentally conscious lifestyles. This attitude for example has led to the continued use of fertilizers and pesticides which contaminates soil and emit large amounts of greenhouse gas from the chemicals used.





Malaysia and Indonesia highlighted the following concerns:

- Rapid industrialization and urbanization have severely diminished the protection and conservation of forests.
- In pursuit of achieving the highest levels of economic development, the government has willingly sacrificed the sustainability and health of areas where it believes it can generate the maximum profit.
- The demands from exotic animals trade have enabled rampant wildlife hunting practices leading to endangerment and in the worst case, extinction of many animal species.

Towards the end of the session, 80 out of 115 attendees participated in a poll on this topic and the results were as follows:

91% admitted to experiencing/witnessing first-hand the impact of climate change.

75% does not think the government has been fair in issuing land rights/permits in its development initiatives.

96% agree that collective action from all societies is needed to mitigate the effects of climate change.



79% are aware of government initiatives/projects that ensure just and sustainable development.

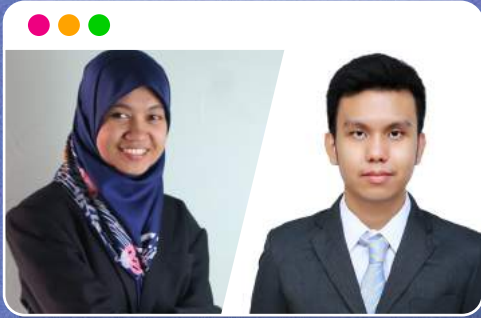
86% are willing to sacrifice usual comforts (AC, travelling by plane, using single use plastic) to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Youth Presentations on AICHR

School of Advocacy for Youth on Human Rights in Southeast Asia

The Youth Presentations on AICHR makes up the second activity in the School of Advocacy for Youth in Southeast Asia ([SAY-HR-SEA](#)) program which is an initiative between AYF, Plan International, and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) to strengthen the engagement of AICHR with stakeholders, partners, and young human rights defenders, to raise the awareness of about AICHR, and build capacity in engaging and working with AICHR. A total of 10 youth across the region were selected to present their ideas, proposals, and recommendations on the advancement of human rights. The Festival hosted the presentations live in front of AICHR Representatives from Indonesia and Thailand.

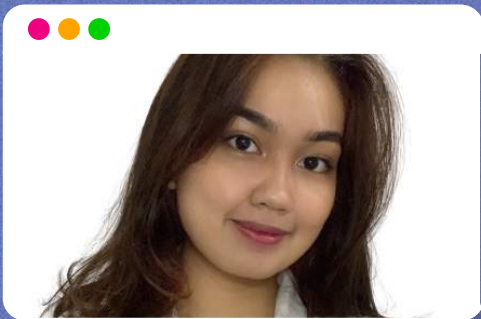




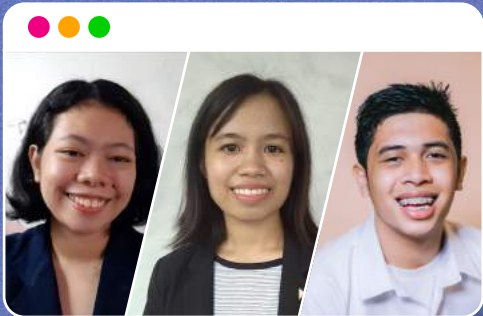
Ruslina Muleng from Thailand and **Arie Fajar** from Indonesia presented on Inclusive Education for Children with Disability. They highlighted how current education systems practice (1) exclusion meaning a child with a disability is not allowed to attend a school or is given special conditions to attend; (2) segregation meaning a child with a disability is isolated from others and only allowed to attend a special school/classroom; (3) integration meaning a child with a disability is placed in a classroom with other children but is forced to learn using the same means of other students without special needs. Hence, they recommended several steps be taken by local governments during and post the COVID-19 pandemic which includes creating inclusive curriculums to break down barriers faced by children with disabilities in classrooms, providing teacher training programmes that will allow achievement and participation amongst all learners; and enforcing minimum standards of accessibility in schools for children with disabilities.



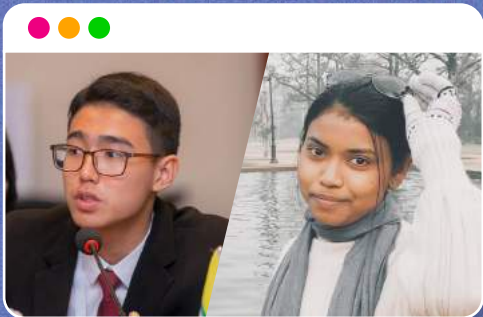
Pascoela Joana Branco from Timor Leste and **Nurdinah Hijrah** from Indonesia presented on Better Education System for The Enforcement of Human Rights. They highlighted the vacuum in the early education system on teachings of human rights leading to youth growing up not knowing their rights as human beings and consequently unequipped to respect the rights of others. Issues that have arisen from this practice include fewer opportunities for women and girls to access education and discrimination and bullying of LGBTQ communities. Thus, they recommended countries to among others implement a human rights-based system at all school levels and conduct socialization of basic human rights to communities either directly or indirectly through social media.



Cessie Hillia Debora from Indonesia presented on Freedom of Religion Issues in ASEAN Member States. She highlighted the tension between religious minority and majority and how States' preference/bias towards the religious minority has led to laws, regulations and rulings which effectively discriminate against or even led to the persecution of religious minorities. Therefore, she recommended among others, ASEAN member States to ratify relevant treaties and instruments that protect religious freedom and act consistently with its obligations under such instruments; and for the repeal of laws that protect religions instead of the freedom of religion or belief of individuals. She also proposed the concept of an ASEAN Human Rights Court or ASEAN Criminal Court that can better process claims of human rights violations.



Alynna Gonos, Marianne Borja and **Jamber Idulsa** from the Philippines presented on the Assault Behind Power: Deprivation of Right to Life with the Involvement of Illegal Drugs and Political Intervention. They highlighted how the Philippines' police and military soldiers have conducted extrajudicial killings of those involved in the illegal drug trade. The "war on drugs" was used as justification for the killings and over time it developed into an abuse of power and the rise of police brutality against innocent civilians. Furthermore, the enforcement of the 2020 Anti Terrorism Act effectively legalized criminalization for those engaged in activism and expressing dissent against the government. Thus, they recommended stricter monitoring of human rights violations by human rights bodies; imposition of sanctions by the international community; and assessment of possible interventions by ASEAN as the right to life is significantly at risk.



Min Punia and **Michelle** from Myanmar presented on Burma: The Story So Far. They described what the military has done since the coup started on 1 February 2021. Internet and communication lines were cut off, peaceful protesters were dispersed by soldiers using lethal force, criminals were released from jail to spread terror amongst communities, and hundreds of women and children were killed, arbitrarily detained and became targets of torture and harassment in custody. Meanwhile, the economy crashed and the poverty rate increased thus signifying the humanitarian crisis among the local population. They recommended among others for ASEAN to stand up and hold accountable the military for the atrocities it has committed, and for citizens of ASEAN member States to stand in solidarity with the people in Myanmar and urge their respective governments to strengthen or change their stance on Myanmar to support the true will of the Myanmar people.





Yuwana Stage

Creative Space for Artists to Showcase Artworks

The word Yuwana is derived from the Sanskrit word “yauvana” which translates to “youth”. It stands for young, uniting, witty, accessible, and non-discriminating activism. AYF believes that youth in the region have multiple life perspectives that can be expressed through creative processes. Hence, the Festival Committee held a Yuwana Stage for young artists in the region to showcase their creative artworks. Several of the artworks were also published in AYF’s Yuwana Zine #4 under the theme of Lockdown.



**Bryan G
Fernandez II**

Bryan G Fernandez II A college student from the Philippines presented a poem titled “Cold Night Anecdote” which described his feeling of loneliness, solitude and being locked in that mindset over and over again as the COVID-19 pandemic reached its peak. The purpose of the poem was to remind his peers that they are not alone and moving on and finding one’s happiness is still possible.



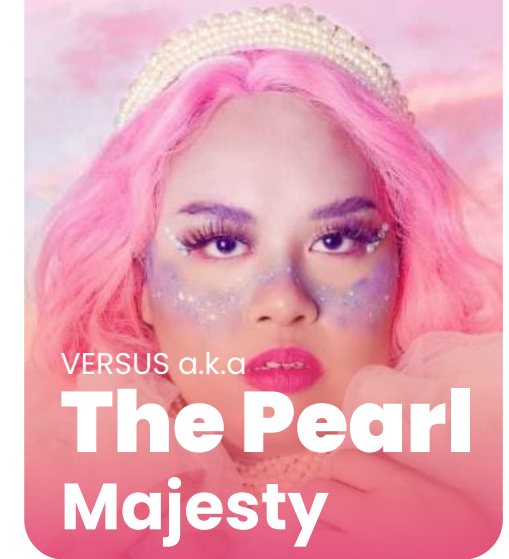
**Ayu Dian
Pamungkas**

Ayu Dian Pamungkas, a multimedia Teacher from Indonesia presented an illustration titled “The Story of Papua” which described the hardships that women in Papua have had to face, from being prone to experiencing violence and not having an ID card; and how development projects have damaged natural habitats and the land. The purpose of the illustration is to advocate for Papuans to have their basic rights fulfilled.



Nabris Mufti a.k.a
**Nobi
Nobpitosch**

Nabris Mufti a.k.a. Nobi Nobpitosch from Indonesia shared an illustration titled “Membela Membeli (Discount is Ok, Not Buying Should be Cheaper)” which described people’s impulse to buy unnecessary things during lockdown to cope with boredom. Nobi reminded the importance of making sustainable purchases to reduce waste production.

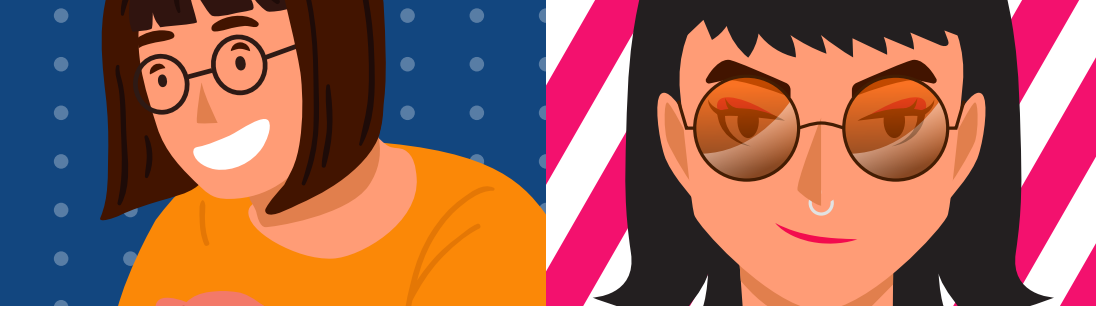


VERSUS a.k.a
**The Pearl
Majesty**

VERSUS a.k.a. The Pearl Majesty, a transgender singer, performer, and entertainer from the Philippines sang a song titled “DIVA!” which centers on the collective frustration of women and LGBTQ+ communities of the patriarchal society. She reminds the importance of having confidence and love for oneself to fight for one’s future.

Ian Inoy, a gender fluid multidisciplinary artist from the Philippines shared a video of them performing in what seems to be an underwater setting. Ian is mostly inspired from first hand environmental experiences ranging from exploring the woods or diving in the deep waters.

Alison Liew, a software engineer and writer from Malaysia shared a poem titled “Frequencies” which was written to express her feelings towards the disconnect between friends and loved ones from not being able to reach them during the lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic.

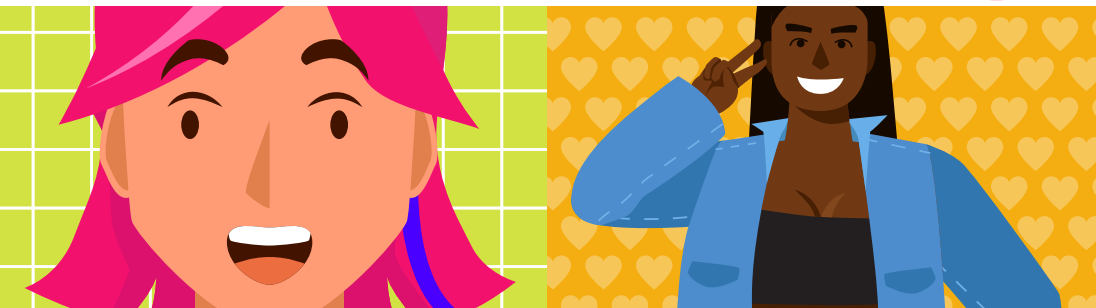


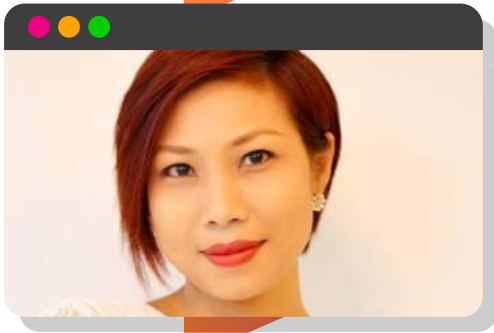
Youth, girls & young

Women Activism

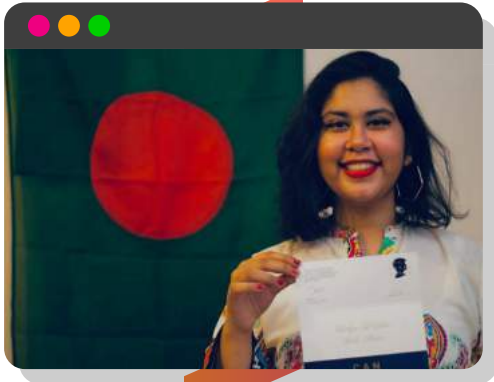
Activists sharing sessions

This session was used as a platform for Plan International to share its findings on the situation of girls in the Asia-Pacific region and for girl & women activists to share their insights and experiences in navigating their activism at the national or regional level.





Chamaiporn Siangyen presented Plan International's 2021 report that focused on girls' civic engagement and activism for gender equality in the Asia Pacific Region. She tackled the emerging trends and issues that are being advocated for by girls and women; the role of technology for young people in promoting a cause; and the response from governments on the rise of youth activism in the region.



Khadiza Ahsan, the founder of WeMen View from Bangladesh shared about her journey and the work that her organization is doing. She highlighted how her organization combats gender-based violence by working with youth and children and explaining to them about gender roles and building awareness on consent. She also explained the challenges that she faced from not gaining access to schools due to the perceived taboo conception of the topic; the fact that she was occupied as a full-time student herself; the need for funding; and receiving threats simply for being an activist. She, therefore, recommends for youth gender activists to take care of their mental health, have a support system, build themselves up through education or work to gain new skills and strengthen their influence in society.



Barbara Clarina Mendonça, a 19-year-old activist from Timor Leste opened the space for participants to share about youth activism in their countries. A participant from the Philippines then shared about their violent encounters with policemen when peacefully protesting in the streets. Barbara then shared about her own activism journey from being a sponsored child of Plan International to leading the Girls Out Loud movement with over 1400 members of girls and women in Timor Leste. She also shared her recommendations for girls to start involving themselves in activities that can shape their knowledge and mentality; supporting fellow females while taking on leadership roles, and having empathy to recognize the value of oneself and others.



Democratic Democratic Democratic Space Space Space



Distillation,
statement formulation,
& youth interventions

From the start of the Festival, the recommendations from each Grand ASEAN Youth Town Hall and Open Space events were noted by notetakers and special rapporteurs. At this [final session](#), the Festival Committee provided a platform for the participants to provide their final contribution to the recommendations for the thematic issues discussed in the events. The session allowed the participants to raise their comments on the existing notes via the chat box or verbally as they unmute themselves. The notes from the sessions and the democratic space were then consolidated into the Youth Collective Statement. The Youth Collective Statement contains seven thematic action points based on the topics of the Grand ASEAN Youth Town Hall and Open Space events for ASEAN/government leaders, civil societies, NGOs, CSO, private sector and youth in the region to take heed of. The Statement was signed and supported by 208 individuals and 32 organizations. On 15 September in observance of the International Day of Democracy, the Statement was released and read to the public by a team of youth drafters who assisted in the statement finalization. In December 2021, the Statement was submitted individually by AYF to ASEAN Secretariat's Education, Youth & Sports Division and Poverty Eradication & Gender Division and jointly with Child Rights Coalition Asia to AICHR Representatives. To date, the Statement has received official acknowledgement from ASEAN Secretariat and the Representative of the Philippines to the AICHR. The following contains the full Statement and it is also accessible ([here](#))





Youth Collective Statement 2021

We, the young people of Southeast Asia, express our utmost concern for the deteriorating democracy across the region. We are deeply saddened by the erosion of fundamental human rights through the struggle for political power. We further express our concern for the continued suffering caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, we have managed to preserve our resolution and pursue our mission towards living in a rights-based, people centered and inclusive ASEAN.

We have highlighted 7 thematic concerns namely peace, politics, and democracy; decent work and unemployment; comprehensive sexuality education and access to sexual and reproductive health and rights; youth network and organizations; freedom of expression and right to information; rights of migrants; and the climate emergency. In achieving our mission, we hereby call on ASEAN/government leaders, civil societies, NGO, CSO, private sector and youth in the region to act on these concerns to secure the future of all youth across the region.

We call on ASEAN Policymakers and Government Leaders to:

1. Sustain and restore peace, fair politics, and democracy in Southeast Asia by:
 - A. Developing a specialized policy to exclude the non-interference principle where a member State has used excessive and indiscriminate force against peaceful civilian protestors, followed by an implementation of a weapons embargo to prevent escalation of violence and further loss of civilian lives.
 - B. Prioritizing the provision and distribution of humanitarian aid to civilians in need in response to an ongoing conflict or following the occurrence of a disaster.
 - C. Creating equal opportunities for women, ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+ communities, indigenous communities, religious minorities, people with disabilities and other marginalized communities to participate in public life and the political process. This can be strengthened by the enactment of hate-crime legislation to deter the commission of bias-motivated violence.
2. Ensure decent work, tackle youth unemployment and unemployment due to COVID-19 by:
 - A. Determining minimum wage rates based on the needs of workers and their families to attain a decent standard of living including the ability to cover basic health services.
 - B. Establishing a standard for national employment policies that is inclusive to all communities by considering the different needs of individuals i.e., reasonable adjustment for enabling access to people with disabilities or mental health counselling.

C. Ramping up COVID-19 vaccinations program for the virus to be less consequential with the increase of immunity thereby allowing workers to return to their workplaces and for job seekers to have an increased chance of securing employment.

D. Investing in youth work training programs to ensure youth in the region can keep up with the globalized job market.

3. Ensure Implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) for youth by:

A. Revamping teachers' training programs to enable the introduction of sexual education at the appropriate level in schools or other forms of educational systems.

B. Allocating resources to establish sexual health centers for youth to receive age-appropriate and gender-sensitive consultation with experts and access to free/affordable birth control and/or menstruation supplies.

C. Organizing national safe sex campaigns with a targeted reach of youth in both urban and rural areas to increase awareness of the importance of consent for engaging in sexual activities, sexually transmitted infections, forced marriage and union, child, early, and unintended pregnancy, and avenues to report sexual violence.

D. Creating or introducing a national policy to guarantee the implementation of CSE and access to SRHR followed by proper implementation of such policy.

4. Support/include youth networks and organizations in policymaking process by:

A. Providing a seat for youth-led organizations in discussions of policies that impact youth the most.

B. Establishing funding opportunities for youth-led initiatives that serve as a platform for youths from all backgrounds to analyze/criticize existing youth policies.

C. Strengthening privacy laws and providing a safe space to encourage and enable youth networks and organizations to mobilize their activism or participate free from any form of intimidation or retaliation.

D. Ensuring diverse candidates from youth organizations are fully represented.

E. Extending professional gateway programming for youth to pursue careers in leadership roles.

5. Bridge the digital divide in urban and rural areas; protect freedom of expression and right to information for youth by:

A. Boosting internet infrastructure development to enable adequate access to the internet and improve digital literacy particularly for youth in rural areas and the disadvantaged communities such as ethnic minorities and indigenous people.

B. Enacting data protection laws to secure individual's digital privacy and eliminate arbitrary surveillance followed by mechanisms for prosecuting breach of personal data usage by either public or private actors.

C. Ensuring transparency in the development of national and transnational issues without redaction or altercation.

D. Bridging the gender digital divide and ensure that girls and those of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, sex characteristics are provided equal online access as their peers.

6. Support the needs of youth in migration, refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers by:

- A. Creating a regional framework that covers protection and access to basic rights and services for refugees and asylum seekers with consideration to the non-refoulement principle and resettlement procedures.
- B. Consulting with migrant communities to make the necessary amendments to local labor laws to incorporate protection from exploitation by local employers and wage theft.
- C. Improving the condition of reception or detention centers to adhere to the International Standards of Immigration Detention and Non-custodial Measures.
- D. Providing access to legal representation without discrimination

7. Act on the climate emergency, promote eco-lifestyles, issue responsible land permits and champion green projects by:

- A. Strengthening laws on environmental protection and sustainability by tackling waste management, ensuring wildlife conservation, and safeguarding endangered species, reversing deforestation, and reducing industrial-scale slash-and-burn activities that lead to widespread haze problems. Followed by ensuring accountability for its violators be it a public or private actor.
- B. Shaping societies' mindset through promotion of green economic activities, advancing initiatives that eliminate utilization of single-use plastic and encourage creative recycling methods.
- C. Conducting extensive risk assessment for potential environmental damage prior to issuance of land rights.

In support of the above-mentioned calls, we encourage civil societies, NGO, CSO and private sector to:

- 1. Continue to spread awareness on human rights issues which impact youth by collaborating with other organizations to amplify its reach in various communities.
- 2. Advocate for inclusivity for all communities through creating safe spaces for youth to represent themselves at any level of societal interaction.
- 3. Provide support for youth through financial, mentorship, educational, employment and mental health programs to increase their personal capacity to create on-ground change.
- 4. Promote healthy engagements and mindsets for better societal interaction by combating xenophobia, discrimination, hate speech and hate crime.
- 5. Implement paid internship programs for youths to eliminate exploitation of youth labor.
- 6. Navigate business activities according to the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) approach, such as the banning of single-use plastic within product development processes and other sustainable manufacturing methods to market eco-friendly products and services.
- 7. Ensure human rights-based, gender transformative and inclusive initiatives and programs for young people.

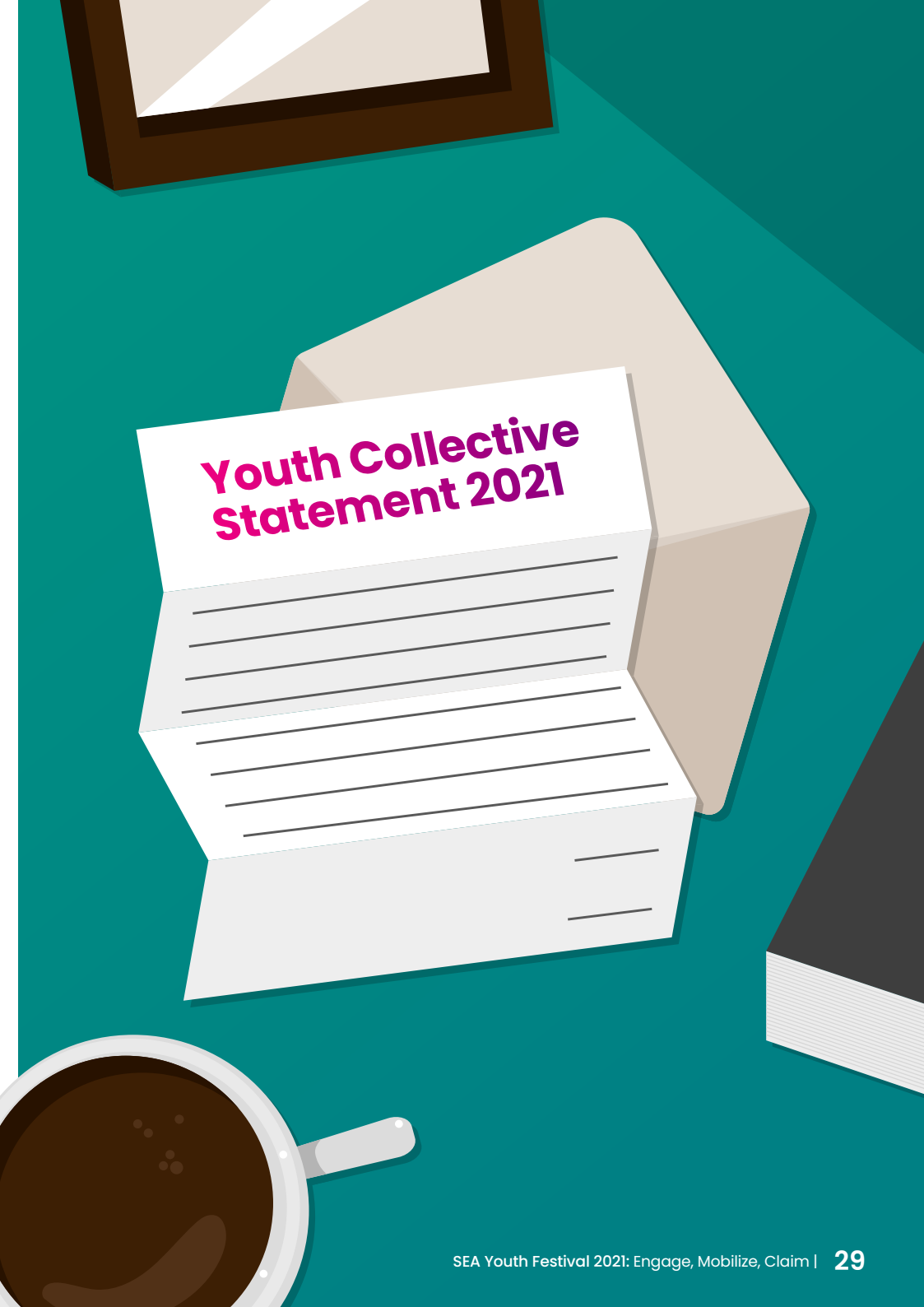
We further call on Youth in SEA to:

1. Be an active member of society by standing in solidarity with other nations who are struggling for democracy, expressing opinions or concerns on situations that are clear/potential violation of human rights, participating in youth forums and joining campaigns to support human rights advocacy and persist in holding violators of human rights accountable.
2. Promote networking and organizing activities amongst youth to maximize their opportunity and enhance their soft skills.
3. Practice environmentally conscious lifestyles by reducing the consumption of single-use plastic, general plastic, and nonrenewable resources, utilizing reusable products, collecting rubbish from local communities to dispatch to waste banks, supporting climate justice advocates, and passing down such lifestyles to the younger generations.
4. Model gender equality and social inclusion on a day-to-day basis.

We, the youth of Southeast Asia, value morals that advance human dignity, justice, democracy, freedom, and peace. We shall cooperate in promising a future where empathy, respect, individuality, and inclusivity stand as principal foundations for building better Southeast Asian communities.

September 2021

Youth of Southeast Asia



Final Remarks

The Festival Committee would -not have been able to hold the Festival as successfully as it did without the support of so many parties that were involved. As such, the Festival Committee hereby convey its sincerest appreciation to all of the supporting partner organizations namely, Plan International Asia Pacific, Kilang ReRoot, Persatuan Transpuan Sumatera Utara (PETRASU), Nisai Brunei, Youth Against Slavery Brunei, Majulah Community, Higher Education Malaysia Association (HEYA), Malaysian Youth for Education Reform (MYER) Movement, Minority Report, YUU Organization, GAYa NUSANTARA Foundation, Voice of Youth, Peduli Napas, Youths United for Earth (YUFE), Youth Future leaders Timor-Leste (YFUL-TL), PT Impactbyte Teknologi Edukasi (Skilvul), YSEALI Women's Leadership Academy (WLA) Alumni Network (Brunei), US-ASEAN Young

Professionals Association (formerly US-ASEAN Youth Council), SEA Junction, Teens & Dreams, Artdialogo, Public Action 2021, and Big BWN Project. The Festival Committee also thanks all youth speakers and presenters for their insightful presentations on human rights issues in the region. The Festival Committee further thanks H.E. Yuyun Wahyuningrum, Indonesia Representative to AICHR and H.E. Prof. Dr. Amara Pongsapich, Thailand Representative to AICHR for observing and providing commentary on the Youth Presentations on AICHR. Finally, the Festival Committee thanks all of the youth volunteers and participants for their immense contribution in each of the Festival's activities. The Festival Committee is truly humbled by the support of the above mentioned parties and it will strive to host a Festival that's even bigger, better and more accommodative of youth's needs in the years to come.



References of Youth Speakers and Presenters

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