



ASEAN YOUTH STATEMENT 2012

OUR UPROAR FOR A BETTER LIFE IN OUR ASEAN COMMUNITY!

We, the youth leaders of Southeast Asia representing the countries of Burma/Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam, and youth representatives from China are once again making our voices heard, mainstreaming our issues and initiating our role in actively promoting, monitoring and protecting our rights and freedoms as peoples of the ASEAN community.

We bring to the forefront our concerns which totally affect our lifestyles in this region. We stand united in pursuing a WHOLISTIC approach to effectively address and politicize youth issues at the local, national and regional levels.

We urgently demand for immediate action in facilitating the full actualization of our Humanity: OUR MIND, OUR BODY and OUR HEART.

OUR MIND

Governments and civil societies must realize, acknowledge and fully understand that young people play a huge role in the community and society right at this very moment and every moment. We envision a sustainable and people-centered ASEAN in which we play important and meaningful acts to achieve our common objective as a region. We urge our governments and civil society to realize young people's rights to access to information, get capacity building, and involved meaningfully within ASEAN, our communities, countries and the world.

Sustainable and Quality Education for All

Since it was established, ASEAN community has shared common issues related to our education: **(1) insufficient qualified teaching staffs, (2) poor education facilities, (3) unequal education opportunities for key populations, vulnerable and marginalized groups¹, and (4) lack of programs that cater to the career wants of the youth.** Young people in ASEAN must be empowered to access free and qualified basic education so that they can address their needs in order to find their own solutions, make their own decisions, and realize their own choices.

- We strongly urge the ASEAN to establish the regional education standard which fully ensures the quality of academics, especially in rural and remote areas by enhancing their capacity through sustainable training programs and support for research activities and higher studies.
- We urge governments to spend at least 20% of their national budget for primary education to provide acceptable salaries for all school staff, improve accessibility in terms of cost and facilities and to allocate budget for curriculum reform.
- We urge ASEAN to focus its policies on ensuring Education for All, particularly for youth in key populations.
- We urge ASEAN to strengthen policies which will foster full access to and enhance quality of alternative education such as vocational studies, life skills education and community-based education.
- We urge ASEAN governments to regulate and restrict policies that would lead to commercialization of education.
- We urge ASEAN governments to establish, support and integrate an ASEAN Community Volunteer Center/Network in all levels of education in every country in Southeast Asia.

¹ Including young girls, sexually abused young people, young people with disabilities, young ethnic minorities, young indigenous peoples, young LGBTQI, young people with STI, HIV/AIDS, young sex workers, young religious minorities, young climate refugees, young stateless peoples, young political prisoners, young refugees, young migrants/migrant workers, young farmers, young fishers...

OUR HEART

We are witnessing a **massive decline of understanding and interest from the majority of ASEAN youth** in taking part in the movement for a better, people-centered and human rights-based ASEAN community. Young people in ASEAN should be empowered to ensure the sustainability within ASEAN to be a better, people-centered, and human rights-based community.

Meaningful Youth Participation in all parts of the Region

There is a **limited and restricted space for freedom of expression and meaningful participation among youth** from diverse groups in many parts of the Southeast Asian region. Most existing youth groups have been expressing their opinions and taking concrete actions on critical issues in public without legal protections.

- We demand the ASEAN governments to fully recognize the voice of the youth, in response to addressing their issues at all levels. The ASEAN Youth Forum must be given full recognition in its efforts to sustain a free space for discussion among youths, to provide relevant recommendations and to actively monitor policies related to their issues.
- We demand ASEAN governments to fully support and encourage the establishment of more youth forums and dialogues between governments, youth organizations and individuals from all sectors.
- We demand for the establishment of mechanisms and to ensure their effective implementation within ASEAN for meaningful youth involvement (including key population and various youth sectors) especially in decision making processes, meeting and activities.
- We call for strong support for young people's meaningful participation, leadership and involvement at all levels and types of decision making on sexual and reproductive health and rights, education, environment, and peace including in policy creation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- We demand for ASEAN governments to invest in youth leadership by increasing their capacity and knowledge on ASEAN mechanisms through active participation in forums and workshops.
- We strongly demand ASEAN governments to establish a rights-based legal framework on the protection of political youth individuals, groups, and movements.

Engaging Young People at the Heart of Democratization², Peace Building and Conflict Transformation

Conflict and violence still exist in many ASEAN countries. These are brought about by political unrest, national interest, social benefits, and faulty historical teaching. Examples of conflict issues are: border conflict, labor rights violation, discrimination of migration workers by State authorities and companies and natural resource exploitation such as land concession, dams, deforestation, etc. Conflicts among government and civil society have been on-going in many ASEAN countries. The youth still face political fear and are unaware of many political issues. Moreover, they fall as victims to state, community and domestic violence.

- We strongly demand ASEAN governments to initiate efforts on democratization and peace building.
- We demand ASEAN governments to support an independent committee, consisting of country representatives from each ASEAN State, to develop a people-centered history of the Southeast Asian region.
- We urge the ASEAN to pursue a regional educational program which fosters understanding among its peoples specifically young people. Peace learning modules and cultural exchange programs should be included in all curricula.
- We strongly encourage ASEAN leaders to prioritize peaceful methods such as dialogues, negotiation (with the participation of the youth) in solving conflicts and promoting social justice.
- We strongly ask for the common ASEAN labor law in order to protect and promote the rights of young, local and migrant workers within countries in the region.

² **Democratization:** a process in achieving a just society by putting people at the center of all mechanisms and to adhering to freedom of expression, good governance, and transparency.

OUR BODY

We are currently living in a context which threatens our health and the environment around us. More and more of our ASEAN youths perish because of ineffective, lack of policies and promotion of these policies as well as gaps of implementation which greatly affect our bodies and the ecosystem we co-exist with in achieving sustainable development.

Better Protection and Promotion of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights, Policies and Services

There is indeed an **immense gap on the comprehensive information of young people's sexuality**, which is a key factor in enabling young people to make informed choices to enjoying the highest attainable quality of life.

- We demand for ASEAN governments, ASEAN secretariat and committees leaders to acknowledge and prioritize the universality of young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) as human rights especially in addressing our sexual diversity and gender identity³.
- We strongly urge the ASEAN governments to provide access to comprehensive sexuality education within in and out of school curriculum; and youth friendly health service including services for unwanted pregnancies, pre and post safe abortion care, emergency contraception, Sexually Transmitted Infections including HIV and AIDS. The youth friendly health services shall be cost effective, gender sensitive and rights based that put forward the confidentiality, non-judgmental attitudes and provision of wider choices of modern methods.
- We call for the removal of legal, policy and cultural barriers, including parental and spousal consent for young people particularly young women to exercise their rights. ASEAN governments and stakeholders shall utilize evidence based policy making strategies on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.
- We demand for youth centered budget in national health system financing in all ASEAN countries.
- We urge governments, ASEAN secretariat and committees for ensuring the availability of quality-scientific based data on ASEAN countries that address the gap of young people's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights which utilize the International Conference on Population and Development plan of action indicators that enabling community to actively engage in data collection and analysis for the creation of evidence based advocacy and policy making.
- We urge ASEAN governments to strengthen the implementation of humanitarian response on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights related to disaster management especially when attending to the needs of youth-survivors.

³ Acknowledgement of sexual diversity among young people that includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer.

Sustainable Development in the Protection of and Responsibilities for the Environment

Development activities in ASEAN can be associated with natural resource and environmental exploitation. Its peoples, especially the youth, are facing challenges such as air and water pollution, soil degradation which are the basic needs for human existence. **Massive exploitation of natural resources in ASEAN is brought about by development projects** such as roads, highways, bridges, power grid, dams, mining, nuclear power plants, natural gas extraction etc. These infrastructures may facilitate free flow of labor and goods but governments must also ensure the protection of environment and affected communities in the process. ASEAN citizens must be fully educated to responsibly manage and use natural resources and fully participate in decision making processes related to development projects.

- We strongly call for ASEAN governments to create and support accessible platforms to discuss about the “Right of Our Earth⁴” in ASEAN to ensure sustainable development for present and future generations. They need to initiate mechanisms to monitor case studies on “Right of Our Earth” in the region. They must meaningfully engage the youth in this effort.
- We demand the ASEAN to establish and implement regional, national and local guidelines/policies that require ASEAN member States to fully apply rights-based and Corporate Social Responsibility approaches to Environmental domestic laws, Foreign Direct Investment law, safeguard policies. Comprehensive, genuine and accurate Environmental Impact Assessment, Social Impact Assessment, Health Impact Assessment at the community level must be practiced at all times.
- We urge the ASEAN to enforce mechanisms for public youth consultations, that must comply with other international standards. Free Prior Informed Consent, to ensure transparency and accountability for environmental sustainability.
- We demand ASEAN to set up an environmental fund⁵ for natural disaster response with emphasis on programs for youth affected by natural and man-made calamities.

⁴ **Rights of Our Earth:** The Earth/Environment also needs the right to protect itself from being abused. "Rights of the Our Earth" is a concept of encouraging human beings in fighting for the environment and participate in development projects. Humans should pay respect to the environmental rights. Violating the rights of Nature is also a human rights violation.

⁵ **Environmental Fund:** ASEAN governments should allocate their budgets on financial and technical support for people especially youth groups' initiatives and projects for the protection of a healthy environment and mitigate impacts from development activities that harm the environment. Funding allocation requires enforced mechanisms to ensure equal access and transparency in implementing funded projects.

WE ARE SETTING UP A MONITORING MECHANISM AND STRENGTHENING OUR MEDIA NETWORK TO MAKE SURE THAT GOVERNMENTS, CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND YOUTH GROUPS ARE ABLE TO EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSING THESE ISSUES.

WE DO NOT HAVE TO WAIT FOR THE ASEAN COMMUNITY TO OFFICIALLY START IN 2015! WE ARE MAKING SURE THAT THE ASEAN YOUTH WILL FOREVER BE ACTIVE AND VIGILANT IN ACTUALIZING A PEOPLE-CENTERED, PEACEFUL AND JUST ASEAN COMMUNITY RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW!

OUR ASEAN!

OUR SPIRIT!

OUR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY!

Phnom Penh, March 2012

