
CHILDREN & YOUTH ASSEMBLY AT
THE 7TH ASIA-PACIFIC URBAN FORUM (APUF-7)

CONCEPT NOTE

Dates: 13-14 October 2019

Venue: Setia SPICE Convention Center, Penang, Malaysia

Today's young people are interconnected more than ever before. In fact, they have more access to information than any other generation. Consequently, it should be natural to include young people in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Young people are change-makers, innovators and leaders. Among other factors, technology is crucial to unleash young people's creativity and power to actively contribute to solving global issues.

–UN Envoy for Youth, Jayathma Wickramanayake¹

We must find the best combination among both the old and young, in developing the country. Committed and energetic youths along with experienced elders can uphold all their responsibilities." "The more you seek, the more you realise that there is so much more to learn. Be humble and generous in seeking and sharing knowledge."

– Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr Mahathir Mohamad²

INTRODUCTION

As an official event associated with the 7th Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (APUF-7) in Penang, Malaysia, the Children & Youth Assembly at APUF-7 provides a unique regional platform for Asia-Pacific's children and youth to articulate urban issues and solutions impacting their lives and communities. Being a gathering of diverse organizations and groups representing children and youth in discussions of urban agenda at the regional level, the Children & Youth Assembly offers a step towards strengthening constructive partnership with children and youth as key stakeholders in issues facing Asia-Pacific cities.

¹ Wickramanayake, "World Summit Awards."

² Mohamad, "National Youth Day 2019" and "10th University Scholars Leadership Symposium"

In summary, the Children & Youth Assembly will be:

- Held in Penang, Malaysia between 13-14 October 2019, back-to-back with APUF-7, which will take place during 15-17 October 2019;
- Organized by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP), Urbanice Malaysia under the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and UN Major Group for Children and Youth (UN MGCY);
- Hosted by the Penang Island City Council, and supported by multi-stakeholder partners including youth organizations, civil society, UN agencies, knowledge institutions, international organizations, and private sector partners;
- 1.5 days of highly interactive program consisting of plenary sessions, 9 to 12 parallel sessions of thematic debates on urban issues and solutions impacting the young people, networking, optional workshops and side events;
- For up to 300 youth participants from Malaysia and Asia-Pacific countries with balanced representation, and also open to APUF-7 attendees;

This document outlines the key information on the objectives, background, contents, target participants, and partners and support for the proposed Children & Youth Assembly.

OBJECTIVES:

The Children & Youth Assembly seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- 1. To provide a space for children and youth to engage in meaningful exchanges on topics related to sustainable urban development;**
- 2. To articulate priority issues and strategies for further strengthening children and youth participation in governance in Asia-Pacific cities;**
- 3. To strengthen the voices of Asia-Pacific children and youth in regional and global urban policy dialogues by linkages with APUF-7, the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, and other regional processes.**
- 4. To facilitate capacity building for children and youth on topics related to sustainable and inclusive urban development**

BACKGROUND

Young people in Asia-Pacific represent more than half of global youth population³, and increasingly dwell in cities. Urbanization will continue to be Asia-Pacific's engine of economic growth and social transformation for decades to come, affecting many children and youth. The region is already home to the world's largest urban population, while increasing rapidly, buoyed by migration and youth population rise. The latter phenomenon is known as youth bulge or demographic dividend. From spiked urbanization concentrated in megacities, Asia's urbanization is moving towards broad-based patterns. New economic opportunities will increasingly arise in numerous small- and medium-sized cities, in addition to the region's well-known megacities like Delhi, Jakarta, Karachi, Manila, and Shanghai. Asia's urban future will impact places such as Foshan, Surabaya, and Surat, impacting numerous communities and touching the lives of millions of more youth.⁴

Globally, urbanization has propelled the world towards prosperity in the 21st century. There are more people under the age of 25 today than ever, totalling nearly three billion; 1.8 billion of that total are between the age of 12 and 24. These youth live increasingly in cities and towns. The cities of the developing world account for over 90% of the world's urban growth, and youth account for a large percentage of those inhabitants. It is estimated that approximately 60% of all urban dwellers will be under the age of 18 by 2030.⁵

Youth and children should be empowered as stakeholders, caretakers, and leaders for Asia-Pacific's sustainable urban development. They can participate to enhance inclusive urban governance, ensure protection of urban environment, and lead innovative and entrepreneurial approaches in doing so. Young women and men from the region care deeply about good education and jobs. Moreover, they are keen to engage in governance processes. According to the United Nations My World Survey that collected over 7 million responses worldwide on Post-2015 development goals, youth aged 16-30 from Asia and Oceania voted for "a good education" as the highest priority.⁶ At the same time, "an honest and responsive government" came in second with over 1 million votes.⁷

³ For statistical purposes, youth as a population segment can have different definitions depending on the source of data. When the UN says "young people," it generally means women and men aged 15 to 24. UN-Habitat (Youth Fund) identifies people aged 15-32 as youth.

⁴ Ibid.; Dobbs, Manyika, and Woetzel, *No Ordinary Disruption*.

⁵ UN-Habitat, *Cities of Youth, Cities of Prosperity*.

⁶ United Nations, "My World Analytics."

⁷ Ibid.

While urbanization and lifestyle in cities can lead to wasteful consumption or vulnerability to social and environmental risks, including disaster and climate change, Asia-Pacific's younger generation also holds the key to steer their cities to inclusive and sustainable development paths.⁸ Urban youth face relatively high levels of unemployment and vulnerable work conditions in the informal sector, particularly if they are less educated.⁹ The region's culture of respect for elders could also at times hold back participation of youth in formal decision making situations. But youth have brought their leadership, organization, skills and volunteerism to tackle the most difficult challenges faced by their community in cities. This is demonstrated by the recovery efforts at the tragic earthquake in Nepal.¹⁰

Youth engagement today is investment for tomorrow when it comes to sustainable and inclusive development. Today's younger generation in Asia-Pacific is expected to be at the forefront of aging society as middle-income countries mature rapidly in the region. Asia-Pacific's young women and men have much to offer to debates on urban challenges, opportunities and solutions ultimately impacting future generations.

APUF-7 IN ASIA-PACIFIC

APUF-7 will take place in Penang, Malaysia on October 15-17, 2019, jointly organized by UNESCAP, UN-Habitat and Urbanice Malaysia, the event will be hosted by the Government of Malaysia and Penang Island City Council. The Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (APUF) is a large-scale multi-stakeholder forum organized periodically every 4-5 years with the aim to provide a regional platform for urban actors to: (i) discuss emerging and critical urban development issues from the perspectives of diverse stakeholders, (ii) share experiences on good practices and approaches, and (iii) explore cooperation opportunities and links to regional and global processes and development objectives.

In 2019, APUF-7 will provide this unique platform to discuss and analyze the status, challenges and opportunities of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the region. APUF-7 will also be the venue to launch The Future of Asia-Pacific Cities 2019 report being developed by UN ESCAP and UN-Habitat in partnership with the European Union, Asian Development Bank, The Rockefeller Foundation, UNDP, Singapore's Centre for Liveable Cities and many others.

⁸ United Nations, *UN Youth Report for Asia-Pacific*.

⁹ Mathur, *Urban Poverty in Asia*.

¹⁰ "Generation next."

PROPOSED CONTENTS

The Children & Youth Assembly will be designed around APUF-7's theme:

1. **Urban & Territorial Planning** - How might present effective options for how urban land use and territorial planning policies and systems be implemented and accelerated for the achievement of sustainable urbanisation, engaging both private and public actors?
2. **Urban Resilience** - How might we strengthen city and multilevel governance and capacities to address rising vertical and horizontal inequalities, rising climate emissions and adaptation needs in Asia-Pacific cities?
3. **Data & Technologies for Smart Cities** - What new forms of open data and innovative technologies are being implemented for accelerated smart city development in the region?
4. **Urban Finance** - What are the solutions for financing inclusive socio-spatial development, shared prosperity for cities and regions, and responses to climate and environmental challenges?

The program will include sessions focusing on leadership strengthening, technical skills training and capacity building, culture, technology and media. The program will address the theme of children and youth's potential as leaders and empowered agents of change in implementing the New Urban Agenda in Asia-Pacific urban contexts. The plenary sessions will ensure that the voices of children and youth are expressed clearly for APUF-7.

FROM APUF-6 IN JAKARTA TO PENANG

Building on the outcomes of the Asia-Pacific Urban Forum on Youth (APUFY) at the Sixth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (APUF-6) which was held in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2015, Children & Youth Assembly to be held in Penang recognizes that young citizens in the Asia-Pacific region can help their urban communities and cities by going beyond their own personal needs or interests and concerns of youth population only, to engage with each other to create holistic and inclusive urban solutions for everyone in their cities.

As highlighted by a APUFY youth representative in their Opening Speech, *meaningful youth participation in urban development policies can enhance inclusive urban governance, ensure protection of urban environment, and lead to innovative and entrepreneurial approaches in doing so. In other words, "smart is must but not sufficient," and strong values and looking out for the benefit of all members of the community are needed.*

PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE

Day 1 October 13th, Sunday		Day 2 October 14th, Monday	
9:00 - 13:00	Participants' Arrival/ Optional Icebreakers Activities	8:00 - 9:00	Opening Plenary
		9:00 - 9:30	Break
		9:30 - 11:00	Parallel Session 1 Parallel Session 2 Parallel Session 3
		11:00 - 11:15	Break
		11:15 - 12:45	Parallel Session 1 Parallel Session 2 Parallel Session 3
13:00 - 15:00	Registration / Check-in Parallel Session 1 Parallel Session 2	12:45 - 13:45	Lunch
15:00 - 15:30	Break	13:45 - 16:15	Co-Creation
15:30 - 17:30	Parallel Session 1 Parallel Session 2	16:15 - 16:45	Break
19:00 - 21:00	Welcome Reception	16:45 - 18:00	Dialogue (TBC)
		18:00 - 18:30	Closing Plenary

LINKAGES TO APUF-7, NEW URBAN AGENDA AND BEYOND

The Children & Youth Assembly will also offer direct linkages to APUF-7, including through the Opening Ceremony, Urban Innovation events and exhibition space. The Children & Youth Assembly's objectives and scope mirror the main APUF-7 in representing and engaging with multi-stakeholders in the region, including sub-regional diversities and many sectors that have a stake in sustainable urban development.

Children & Youth Assembly's linkages to the regional and global policy dialogues will be ensured by: (i) youth participation at APUF-7 main events, (ii) a team of youth civic media reporters using social media to report on the Children & Youth Assembly itself and APUF-7, after receiving training during the Children & Youth Assembly, (iii) interested APUF-7 participants observing the Children & Youth Assembly's events, thus facilitating intergenerational dialogues, (iv) Children & Youth Assembly's roundtable or panels inviting key persons attending APUF-7 such as young mayors, entrepreneurs, and urban planning professionals and researchers to exchange ideas with youth participants.

PARTICIPANTS, PARTNERS AND SUPPORT

PARTICIPANTS

The Children & Youth Assembly expects up to 300 participants aged between 15 to 30 years old, comprising a mix of local participants from Penang and other Malaysian cities, and from countries in Asia and the Pacific. By relying on a network of youth-led and children-centred partner organizations, the organizers and their partners and supporters will work to attract a balanced participation of diverse children and youth groups to reflect regional, sectoral, developmental phase, thematic focus, as well as, demographic representativeness of the urban children and youth in Asia-Pacific.

Participants are expected to commit to actions and continue engagement both with the global implementation of the New Urban Agenda process as well as in their activities in their communities, cities, and countries of origin and at Asia-Pacific regional-level, following their participation at the Children & Youth Assembly.

ORGANIZERS AND PARTNERS

The Children & Youth Assembly in Penang is to be co-organized by UN-Habitat, UN-ESCAP, Urbanice Malaysia under the Ministry of Local Government and Housing and UN MGCY in close collaboration with partners and hosted by Penang Island City Council.

Key partners of the Children & Youth Assembly include the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Environment, UN Volunteers and UNDP among many others. The organizers are also grateful for the support of Universiti Sains Malaysia students and volunteers.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN & YOUTH ASSEMBLY

Key support for the Children & Youth Assembly in Penang, Malaysia will take the form of finance, in-kind (venue, technology, existing partnership networks, printing, catering volunteer time, and other locally available resources), and expertise (keynote speakers, panellists / moderators / facilitators and workshop instructors).

Financial sponsors can contribute to the Children & Youth Assembly by supporting the overall event, supporting specific program contents such as skills or thematic workshops, providing technology and other products for sessions and / or exhibition space, or providing scholarships for organizations or groups of participants from marginalized communities or exhibiting genuine need of travel support. Participants in need of travel support are highly encouraged to independently fundraise to sponsor their own travel.