



2nd SEAMEO Youth Leadership Forum

7-11 March 2016

Bangkok, Thailand

Concept Note

I. Background

In preparation for the launch of the ASEAN Community in 2015, SEAMEO (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization) aligned and intensified its initiatives to foster human and intellectual connectivity, which is also congruent with the ADB's (Asian Development Bank) Regional Cooperation and Integration Strategy. SEAMEO and the ADB signed a memorandum of understanding in 2013 to facilitate the development of regional cooperation programmes, including assistance from the ADB to SEAMEO. The main initiative under this cooperation is SEAMEO College, a high-level policy and strategy forum among education leaders and practitioners. SEAMEO College focuses on three major regional and cross-cutting issues and concerns, namely: a) bridging regional divides; b) creating a 'common space' for education frameworks and standards in Southeast Asia; and c) social needs and market demand signaling systems for technical manpower.

SEAMEO College comprises four modules, one of which is the "Learning and Innovation Forum for Youth Leaders" (Module 4). This module focuses on developing 'new leaders' who will assume future leadership roles in education, science, culture and other fields within and beyond Southeast Asia. The SEAMEO Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts (SEAMEO SPAFA), the designated lead centre for Module 4, organized the first "SEAMEO Youth Leadership Forum" in November 2014. Building on the success of the inaugural leadership forum, SEAMEO SPAFA will organize a second Forum in March 2016, in Bangkok, Thailand.

II. Rationale

The World Bank estimates that globally there are 1.8 billion young people (defined as persons aged between 15 and 24¹), the highest number ever in history.² As of 2013, it is estimated that more than 60 percent of the world's youth live in the Asian region,³ with recent estimates suggesting 15 percent (or nearly 160 million) are in Southeast Asia.⁴ The so-called "youth bulge" presents opportunities for countries to maximize their human capital in pursuing their social and economic development goals. On the other hand, failing to prepare future generations of citizens – as workers, business people, community leaders, and parents – can have serious costs for governments.⁵ Not meeting youths' expectations to secure gainful employment or participate in political decision-making runs the risk of fostering social discontent.

Societies today have to tap the enormous potential of young people in contributing positively to efforts in poverty reduction and socio-economic growth by harnessing youths' interconnectivity, dynamism and idealism. Development efforts are not only effective but also more sustainable if youths have a sense of ownership of their societies' futures. Moreover, for youths to participate

¹UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Social and Human Services. Available online: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/youth/youth-definition/> [acc. 21 October 2015]

²World Bank Group, Solutions for Youth Employment, 2015. Towards Solutions for Youth Employment, p.1. Available online: https://www.s4ye.org/sites/default/files/Toward_Solutions_for_Youth_Employment_Full.pdf [accessed 21 October 2015]

³Population Reference Bureau, The World's Youth: 2013 Data Sheet, 2013, p.8-9. Available online: <http://www.prb.org/pdf13/youth-data-sheet-2013.pdf> [accessed 21 October 2015]

⁴UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Available online: <http://www.unescapsdd.org/files/documents/Youth%20factsheet%2020121112.pdf> [accessed 21 October 2015].

⁵World Bank Group, *op.cit.*, p.2.

fully in society, now and especially in the future, their values and skills must align with the vision of a society that is culturally sensitive, politically inclusive, and environmentally caring.

SEAMEO, as a leading organization in developing Southeast Asia's human capital, has a critical role in ensuring that the region's youth are equipped with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that prepare them to become leaders of the next generations. The Youth Leadership Forum will thus serve as one of the catalysts for the effective engagement of young people in steering the course of Southeast Asia's future development.

III. Overall Objectives

The SEAMEO Youth Leadership Forum aims to provide a regional platform for youth representatives from Southeast Asia to build their leadership skills and strengthen their capacity to contribute to the ASEAN Community now and in the future. Specifically, it aims to:

1. Develop future Southeast Asian leaders through engagement with present leaders in various key professions, with a focus on good governance and civic responsibility.
2. Enhance youth representatives' understanding of globalization, intercultural communications, and changes in the natural environment and social relations.
3. Provide a space for youth representatives to voice their unique views on the current and future state of their respective communities and of Southeast Asia.
4. Foster personal, professional, and cross-cultural networking among youths within and across the ASEAN region.

IV. Themes

The forum will focus on four key themes covering leadership, professionalism, sustainable development management, and intercultural understanding. These themes only serve as broad guides for the discussion topics; therefore, rather than looking at them as distinct forum strands, they are in fact interwoven and complementary.

The Forum's Four Themes

1. Developing Future Leaders of Southeast Asia
2. Effective Professional Values and Skills
3. Managing the Development of a Changing World
4. Intercultural Understanding

Theme 1: Developing Future Leaders of Southeast Asia

This theme facilitates a conversation about young people's understanding and definitions of leadership. It aims to underscore the complex processes of exercising good leadership skills such as how leaders should listen to, and take into account, multiple stakeholders' interests and concerns. To illustrate that leadership is a two-way street, team-based collaboration will likewise be highlighted in this theme. Furthermore, twenty-first century skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and global citizenship will be introduced along with examples of pathways for such skills to be practiced by leaders. This theme will thus offer opportunities for participants to reflect on how they see themselves as leaders in an interconnected, dynamic, and collaborative ASEAN region. Plenary sessions in this theme include:

- a. Concepts and Facets of Leadership
- b. Team Leadership and Team Dynamics
- c. Leadership of 21st Century Global Citizens

Theme 2: Effective Professional Values and Skills

While professionalism encompasses multiple traits, this theme will focus on ethical behaviour, which is deemed to be the foundation of professional integrity or professionalism. For youths at the cusp of transitioning from school to the workplace, it is vital that they have relevant values to navigate the professional world. Speakers from multiple fields such as education, the media, business, and information technology will expound on the desired professionalism and ethical conduct in their occupations. Plenary sessions in this theme include:

- a. Professionalism in Practice
- b. Professional Ethics and Responsibility

Theme 3: Managing the Development of a Changing World

Our changing world will generally be defined by rapid economic growth and increasing cultural interconnectivity. As future leaders, ASEAN's youth should have a nuanced understanding of development linked not solely to rapid economic growth but also to cognizance of impact on communities and ecology. This theme attempts to provoke youths' reflections on how economic growth should be guided by principles of sustainable development. It will also delve into how development can be inclusive and equitable. Plenary sessions in this theme include:

- a. Sustainable Development Economics
- b. Sustainable Environmental Management

Under Theme 3, the forum will have **two site visits** outside of Bangkok. They are sites of projects and initiatives that highlight sustainable practices and community participation: a) Chang Hua Man Royal Project, Phetchaburi Province (sustainable agriculture) and b) Khlong Phitthaya Longkorn School, Bangkok (mangrove conservation).

Theme 4: Intercultural Understanding

For youths to be effective in their professions in the context of an inter-connected ASEAN community, this theme will highlight models of effective intercultural communication. It will conclude by engaging the youth's collective vision of an interconnected and integrated ASEAN pluralistic community. Plenary sessions in this theme include:

- a. Multi-lingual Communication
- b. Intercultural Appreciation and Understanding

Under Theme 4, the forum will have **one site visit** in the vicinity of Bangkok. This site visit will highlight intercultural community coexistence within the Kadi Chin multicultural community, Thonburi, Bangkok.

V. Methodology

The forum will adopt participatory methods to raise awareness, stimulate creativity, encourage innovation, and engage participants. Activities will include lectures, workshops, group discussions, and site visits. Lecturers and speakers will offer informed perspectives on leadership and critical issues in the ASEAN region. Sessions and workshops will also solicit youths' viewpoints on leadership, professionalism, and sustainable development by way of their interaction with speakers and with each other throughout the forum.

VI. Target Participants

Three (3) participants from each SEAMEO-member country (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, and

Vietnam) will be selected to join the SEAMEO Youth Leadership Forum. We will also accept two (2) participants from each of the ASEAN+3 nations, specifically Japan, South Korea, and China. The desired participants are those who are at the junction of their education and professional career; therefore, priority will be given to senior university students or those who have recently graduated from university in the previous academic year. Preference will also be given to individuals who have demonstrated strong leadership characteristics while in school or as members of their community. A cross-section of different career fields such as law, engineering, science, arts, media, medicine, etc. - will be represented in the forum.

VII. Expected Outcomes

1. Enhanced leadership skills of youth representatives
2. Improved knowledge of sustainable development
3. Sustained cross-cultural networking among youth representatives for their communities' benefit
4. Better understanding and appreciation of the ASEAN community

VIII. About SEAMEO and SEAMEO SPAFA

The **Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization or SEAMEO** (www.seameo.org) is a regional intergovernmental organization established in 1965 among governments of Southeast Asian countries to promote regional cooperation in education, science, and culture. Its 11 member-countries include Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam. Over the past four decades, SEAMEO has developed 20 specialist institutions throughout Southeast Asia, which provide regional leadership in human resource development and diverse expertise that they offer in education, culture, health, environment, agriculture and natural resources.

The **SEAMEO Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts or SEAMEO SPAFA** (www.seameo-spafa.org) was constituted in 1985 to promote awareness, appreciation, and protection of the cultural heritage of Southeast Asia. Its work is guided by the principle of sustainable development that benefits communities and raises the quality of life of the people in the region and beyond. It specializes in the fields of archaeology, museology, visual and performing arts, and cultural resource management. SEAMEO SPAFA advances mutual knowledge and understanding through collaboration and partnership with field specialists, communities, youths, educators, artists, and policymakers.

SEAMEO SPAFA has led numerous programmes designed specifically for youths. In 2008 and 2009, the organization conducted six “Youth, Culture, and Development” workshops that benefitted 225 young participants from SEAMEO-member countries. The workshops encouraged young people to become active participants in their countries’ development process. In 2011, SEAMEO SPAFA held the “Asia Pacific Forum: Youth Action on Climate Change” which highlighted the use of the creative arts (e.g. films, posters, story-telling, puppetry, music, sculptures, etc.) in delivering the youths’ message regarding climate change mitigation and adaptation. Over 160 delegates from 17 countries in the Asia-Pacific region participated in the forum. In 2014, SEAMEO SPAFA organized the first “SEAMEO Youth Leadership Forum” under the SEAMEO College Programme for 33 youths from SEAMEO’s 11 member-countries, which was consistent with SEAMEO SPAFA’s vision of engaging youths in shaping the future of their communities and the Southeast Asian region. Given the success of the first forum, SEAMEO SPAFA will host the second forum in March 2016.