



Report on
Regional Consultation on the Present and Future of Youth in South Asia:
Promoting Decent Work for Youth

23-24 March 2023
Colombo, Sri Lanka

Background

There is no single, absolute, and universal definition of youth. The definitions of youth are contextual, depending on culture, tradition, and socio-economic conditions. Various countries and international organisations have set a distinct range of age for defining youths.¹ The total population of youths in the world is 1.21 billion (aged 15 - 25), comprising 15.5 per cent of the global population.² Similarly, the population of youth in South Asia is 27 per cent of the total youth population of the world.³ South Asian region has the largest number of young population among the other regions in the world. The region has around 40 per cent of the world's young population below the age of 20 years. Further, the region will be producing an average of 16 million young labour force in the age group of 15 to 20 annually over the next two to three decades in labour markets.⁴ However, South Asia ranked eighth out of the nine regions in the 2020 Youth Development Index (YDI), with an average score of 0.641 - lower than the global average.⁵ Now, it is highly realised by the South Asian nations to incorporate a large human capital into the world of work with decent work adopting the changing of the world of work and skills.

The world of work is changing quickly - depending on technological advancement, computerisation and increased automation – causing job loss to human power, however, technological advancement is creating new opportunities and new models in the world of work. Not only technological advancement but also demographic transition, environment and climate change, and globalisation are also impacting the future of work and skills, providing new opportunities and challenges to youths. Future labour markers will be technology-driven, however, the value for traditional jobs with a ‘human touch’ in skills and work will be more valued and demanded. Efforts for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in South Asian countries have been sluggish in developing the skilled workforce needed for regional and international labour markets.

¹ Commonwealth Secretariat. 2020. *Global Youth Development Index and Report, 2020*. The Commonwealth. London: United Kingdom. <https://youth-development-index.thecommonwealth.org/assets/pdf/global-youth-development-report-2020.pdf>

² UN World Youth Report. 2020. *Youth Social Entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs: New York. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2020/07/2020-World-Youth-Report-FULL-FINAL.pdf>

³ Commonwealth Secretariat. 2020. *Global Youth Development Index and Report, 2020*. The Commonwealth. London: United Kingdom.

⁴ The Economist, 2015. Skills needed: Addressing South Asia’s deficit of technical and soft skills Analysing the gap in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka

⁵ Commonwealth Secretariat. *Global Youth Development Index and Report, 2020*. *The Commonwealth*. London: United Kingdom.



Given the significance of youth to the future South Asian regional development, it is necessary to provide means and environments in which this major human resource attains the optimal growth potential, equipped with technical and financial inputs and motivational supports to get them engaged and participated in the mainstream of the national and regional developments. According to Decent Jobs for Youth, ILO, there are nearly 68 million young people are looking for jobs globally whereas, 35 million in Asia and the Pacific and 31 per cent of young people in Southern Asia are not in employment, education or training.⁶ Goal 8 of the Sustainable Development Goals, 2030, has set forth global cooperation and partnerships to support initiatives in underlining the need to lessen substantially the volume of youths that are not enrolled in training, education and employment, by 2020.⁷ Additionally, targets 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.A and 8.B under goal 8 advocate for the youth in the SDGs and decent work – youth employment, education or training. Efforts and effective initiatives from trade unions are important to promote decent work for youths and to support the development of policies relevant to youths. Youth unemployment and underemployment in the informal economy have been a global concern. To achieve SDG 8, the empowerment of youths and the creation of their employment opportunity is inevitable. Currently, one-fifth of South Asia's population is aged between 15 to 24-years-old.⁸ In South Asian countries, there will be 1-1.2 million new job seekers every month and it will remain the trend at least for the next two decades.⁹

With the above background, In collaboration with ILO-ACTRAV the South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC) successfully conducted two days of regional consultation with the title - *Regional Consultation on the Present and Future of Youth in South Asia: Promoting Decent Work for Youth* with the SARTUC and its affiliates (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan), on 23-24 March 2023 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Objectives:

1. To sensitise the SARTUC affiliates trade union youth leaders to understand International Labour Standards (ILS) and other instruments to promote decent work as well as the current situation, opportunities and challenges to youths in South Asia;
2. To capacitate the organising skills of the committee members to encourage more youths' participation in the trade unions;
3. To form a full-fledged Youth Committee to advocate the voices of youths in the trade unions;
4. To enhance the knowledge on youth employment, changing world of work and green jobs;
5. Draft an action plan for the SARTUC Youth Committee.

⁶ Decent Jobs for Youth, ILO. <https://www.decentjobsforyouth.org/about>

⁷ Global Youth Development Index and Report, 2016. Commonwealth Secretariat Marlborough House Pall Mall London SW1Y 5HX United Kingdom.

⁸ Sajad Padder. 2021. Youth in South Asia: Challenges and Opportunities. *Daily news*. Colombo: Sri Lanka. <https://www.dailynews.lk/2021/01/19/features/239175/youth-south-asia-challenges-and-opportunities>

⁹AbhilakshLikhii, 2013. 'Employment and Participation in South Asia: Challenges for Productive Absorption', 24 October.



DAY - ONE

Opening and Welcome Address

Address by Mr Laxman Basnet, General Secretary of SARTUC

Mr Laxman Basnet, General Secretary of SARTUC, welcomed all the participants of women's training as well as participants of the youth's regional consultation and highlighted the objectives of the programmes along with the importance of the regional gathering in promoting gender equality, ending gender-based violence in the workplace, promoting decent work and youth engagement in the trade union. He also emphasised the need for more youth and women's participation in leadership roles in trade unions, thus, they have to take responsibility to step forward the regional cooperation of trade unions and workers. The constitutional process for the women's and youth committee is the committee's election and adoption of ToR. He further shared, this is the first time SARTUC is initiating the two committees - women's and youth's committees where SARTUC will provide ToR to participants and they will make their own constitution.

Address by Mr Soya Yoshida, General Secretary, ITUC-AP

The training started with an opening and welcome address by **Mr. Shoya Yoshida**, General Secretary of ITUC-AP, congratulated SARTUC and its affiliates for organising youth and women programmes along with the general conference, and he welcomed all the youth and women participants of the SARTUC programme. The ITUC-AP has always been committed to promoting and protecting the rights of workers and in particular, the rights of youth and women who face numerous challenges in the world of work. We recognize that empowering these groups is essential to achieving social justice and building a more inclusive society. The youth and women programme conducted by SARTUC is a remarkable initiative that has helped to strengthen the voices and leadership of young and female trade union leaders. He requested all trade union leaders to take part in similar programmes and to continue working towards achieving decent work for all and eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work. Finally, he expressed the ITUC-AP remains committed to supporting initiatives that promote gender equality, youth empowerment, and decent work for all.

Address by Mr. Harbhajan Singh Sidhu, the President, SARTUC

Mr. Harbhajan Singh Sidhu, President, SARTUC, and General Secretary, HMS, in his address, welcomed all the youth and women participants. He emphasized the need to promote second-line leadership in unions and appreciated SARTUC's initiative in organizing the Youth and Women program. He hoped the youth and women programmes would decide the future course of action to protect workers' rights. Further, he criticized governments in the region for supporting big corporate houses and highlighted the violation of workers' rights, thus youth and women leaders have to work innovatively on these issues.

Address by Mr Ahok Singh, Vice President, SARTUC/INTUC

Mr Ahok Singh, Vice president, SARTUC/INTUC, welcomed all the participants in the programme. He highlighted the importance of youth and women in the trade union movement, especially in the case of South Asia where the number of youth population is high. He expressed the suffering of most marginalized and vulnerable groups like women and youth during the COVID-19 pandemic. He believed that the youth and women programme organised by SARTUC is a positive step towards empowering young and female trade union leaders. This



initiative reflects SARTUC's belief that youth and women's empowerment is essential to promote a fair and equal society.

Address by Ms. Champa Verma, Deputy General Secretary and Chair, Women's Committee, SARTUC

Ms. Champa Verma, Deputy General Secretary and Chair, Women's Committee, SARTUC, welcomed and thanked all the participants attending the women and youth programmes. She expressed that women and youth make up a significant proportion of the workforce, and their contributions to the labour movement are invaluable, thus, the gathering is an excellent opportunity for us to learn from one another, share experiences, and strategize on ways to strengthen the labour movement. SARTUC provides opportunities for women and youth to strengthen the trade union movement and promote gender equality. She highlighted the involvement of female workers in the informal sectors is around 90 per cent so gender equality along with unity shall be promoted and recommended to connect OSH and C190 to protect women, mostly in the informal sector. Also, she appreciated the SARTUC for the formation of women's committee in 2017 when she got elected as chair.

Address by Ms Simrin Singh, ILO, Country Director Sri Lanka and Maldives

Ms Simrin Singh, Director, Country Office, ILO Sri Lanka and the Maldives, welcomed all the participants on behalf of ILO to a beautiful island. She thanked SARTUC and General Secretary for inviting her and ILO to such an important event. She expressed that Youth, women, and migrant workers are facing more difficulties in the world of work despite being key stakeholders. She applauded SARTUC's planning for youth and women's programmes and assured the availability of ILO support for the trade union movement. They constitute a significant portion of the workforce and yet continue to face numerous challenges that hinder their full participation and contribution. Therefore, it is essential to empower and equip them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to overcome these challenges and realize their full potential. SARTUC is planning to make a second line of leadership and equip youth and women with knowledge of the trade union movement.

Address by Mr Prabhu Rajendran, Regional Consultant, Mondiaal FNV

Mr. Prabhu Rajendran thanked SARTUC for the opportunity to share his views with women and youth leaders from South Asia. He highlighted the importance of the youth and women programmes in trade unions to make leadership a strong and secure future. Young workers need to organise more youth workers into the trade union and shall have discussed topics like climate change, just transition, and stronger representation. Also, he requested leaders to provide spaces for young and women workers in the unions at the leadership so that they can prove the true sense. He ensured the partnership with the SARTUC and trade unions in South Asia.

Address by Mr. Syed Sultan Uddin AHMMED, Senior Specialist in Workers Activities, ILO-ACTRAV

Mr. Sultan Ahmmmed thanked SARTUC and welcomed all the participants in the programme. He shared his experience of joining the trade union movement in his youth age. He said youth is composed both of males and females so, there shall not be confusion on the meaning of youth. The trade union movement is a continuous process and one has to hand over his/her torch to another



for the continuation, it never stops. So the young leaders have the responsibility to carry a torch and move ahead. The preparation of youth is two-way - the elder generations have to prepare the youth and the youths also need to prepare themselves. Now, young people have to come forward to strengthen SARTUC and move ahead. Technology, climate change, and demography are shifting the future of work. We are working in a world where workers don't know who is their employers. Connecting ourselves is a challenge in this technological world.

Introduction of Participation

Ms. Anna Tuvera, Director of Gender Equality Activities, ITUC-AP, conducted an interactive exercise for the introduction of participants – Paper Facebook, where participants made their pictorial and descriptive representation through drawing and writing on paper and pasted it onto their chests to introduce to others. After the interaction, the participants were told to explain the feature of one person and said to guess that person by other participants. The Paper Facebook helped the participants to know each other and also helped in networking.

Session on “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment”

Ms. Vraie Balthazaar, a Gender Expert

The first session was on “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment”. **Ms. Vraie Balthazaar**, a Gender expert from Sri Lanka, conducted the session in an interactive way based on her presentation - Gender Stereotyping and Sexual & Gender-Based which covered the concept and understanding of ‘Sex’ and ‘Gender’ and highlighted how they are different and constructed differently. The session also explored into the importance of gender equality and women’s empowerment in promoting social and economic development. She fostered an environment where participants were able to share their experiences and views on gender and sex. Additionally, she shared her experiences from the research work she conducted in Sri Lanka where women have faced violence at the workplace however, the women themselves were not aware of the violence – lack of toilets and drinking water at the workplace. The presentation covered a wide range of topics, including Sex vs Gender, Social norms and Gender roles, the traits of masculinity and feminism, fitting into gender stereotypes, and Gender-based violence. She emphasized that reducing violence against women requires male engagement, sensitivity, awareness, and bystander intervention. Finally, she urged not to promote unhealthy gender norms as parents, professionals, and adults.

Session on “Youth in the new forms of the informal economy (digital and platform workers): Challenges and a way forward”

Mr Manorajan Pegu, Country Program Director, Solidarity Centre

During the two-day regional consultation on youth and decent work in South Asia, **Mr. Pegu** discussed various issues related to youth in the informal economy, with a focus on digital and platform workers. He pointed out that young workers are fighting back against the informal economy by using technology and moonlighting as a tool to combat it. Moonlighting refers to working a second job outside of a full-time job, which serves as a side hustle. He also highlighted how workers are fighting back against the algorithm, citing examples of *Ola* and *Uber*. While it is often said that workers are victims of technology and capitalism, he expressed that workers are



resilient and always fighting back. The gig economy, which originated in the music industry, provides an additional source of income and a platform for organizing informal sector workers. However, technology is also increasing surveillance and changing the world of work, with an increasing number of workers working remotely or on flexible time. Informality is set to increase in the future due to technology and outsourcing, with job insecurity, lack of social protection, isolation, and unfair payment practices being key challenges. Further, he questioned whether the formalization of these workers is more important than providing better working conditions. He praised SEWA's cooperative model, where employers and workers are members, and profits are shared among all. He highlighted the importance of fighting back with alternatives in the informal economy and using multifaceted strategies to combat the challenges posed by informality and technology. He concluded that informality is set to increase, and technology will be used to organise workers, but workers are always empowered and can fight back.

Session on “Technology and Future of Work: Youth Engagement in New Skills and Technologies”

Ms Nishi Kapahi, Coordinator, South Asia Gender Platform

Ms Nishi Kapahi made the session interactive by discussing the issues with the participants and asking about their views on technology and the future of work. She started her presentation by discussing the 4th Industrial Revolution in 2015, which marked the beginning of the digitalisation of the economy. She explained that the whole economy is shifting towards technology, and COVID-19 has accelerated the process of digitalisation. She discussed the advancement of automation, robotics, and e-commerce, which are the future of work, including driverless trains/cars and the gig economy. She acknowledged that while people are not happy with the gig economy, they are forced to do it because they cannot find regular jobs in the market. According to her, youth are more familiar and comfortable with technology, which they can use for productive outcomes. Technology has both positive and negative roles in the job market, but people mostly focus on the negative side. She also highlighted how technology is rapidly changing the job market, creating new opportunities and challenges for youth entering the workforce. Therefore, young people need to develop their skills in areas such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and data analysis to prepare for the changing job market. She emphasised the importance of learning and using digital tools to improve productivity and efficiency in the workplace. During the session, she emphasised the importance of gender equality in the technology sector, encouraging young women to pursue careers in technology and highlighting the need for more diverse representation in the job market. She also requested the participants to listen to the labour radio for current news on workers. She interacted with participants on the impact of technology on their respective countries and listened to their experiences. Finally, she aimed to inspire youth to take an active role in shaping their future by developing the skills necessary to succeed in the rapidly changing job market and advocating for gender equality in the technology sector.



Youth, Labour migration and decent work

Youth labour migration in South Asia: Exploring the opportunities and challenges & Post-Pandemic Strategies: Creating Decent work in the South Asian Labour Market

Mr Ch Saad Muhammad, Deputy General Secretary, PWF

At the beginning of the interactive session, **Mr. Ch Saad Muhammad** led an energizer and discussed the issue of youth migration in South Asia with participants. He highlighted that many young people in the region aspire to migrate to other countries due to several reasons such as poverty, inequality, limited opportunities, discrimination, low wages, gender-based violence, and the impact of climate change. Typically, lower-class and lower-middle-class individuals tend to engage in labour migration. He mentioned the migrant resource centre run by PWF in Pakistan, which was initiated to promote safe and organized migration and the self-financing model of the resource centre that operates at zero cost. He urged youth trade union leaders to initiate similar efforts. He then shared the migration cycle - Safe migration with 4 stages: 1) planning of migration - a) thinking of migration, b) selecting legal channels, c) Pre-Departure Orientation Training - rules and regulations, and culture of destination countries, and 2) Travelling to country of destination, 3) information about the country of destination, and 4) reintegration. He shared his experience of visiting labour migrants in Qatar, where he observed the lack of toilets for workers in model housing. He also highlighted some of the challenges and opportunities of youth labour migration. The lack of awareness about the migration cycle and certification of skills are significant challenges for South Asian workers, who often end up in 3D jobs (Dirty, Dangerous, and Degrading) in destination countries and are jobless when they return to their home country. Lack of social protection and reintegration policies are also major challenges. On the other hand, trade unions, international treaties, and ILO conventions present some opportunities for youth migration. Furthermore, he stressed expressed that South Asian countries do not have any plans for the crisis situation which was also exposed during the time of COVID-19. Thus, youth have to discuss and interact with the post-pandemic strategy for decent work in South Asia - social protection for workers, skills upgrade and reintegration policies for migrant workers.

Session on “Trade Unions in Transformation: Youth and Women for Change”

Mr. Syed Sultan Uddin AHMMED, Senior Specialist in Workers Activities, ILO-ACTRAV

The expert discussed the challenges and opportunities in the changing world of work, with a focus on South Asia stating that there are no political forums existing in this world, except the UN, but all are business forums. He highlighted globalisation, technological change, demographic change, and climate change as the key causes of change. In an interactive session, he kept questions to groups – participants discussed the challenges faced by workers and trade unions in their respective countries - Nepali participant explained other civil societies or organisation are challenged to trade union that provides heavy allowances to their programmes and discourage workers to be a member of trade unions. Political parties politicised the issues of workers which is also a challenge to the trade union, and informalisation of the market and domestic workers are also going to be another challenge to workers in Nepal. Indian participants expressed privation as a challenge to Indian workers. Political instability is a challenge in Pakistan. Digitalisation, automation and OSH are a challenge in Bangladesh, mostly for women workers. The economic crisis and targets given to the



pluckers in tea plantations are a challenge to workers in Sri Lanka. India - change in labour laws, Informal sector and decreasing number of members in trade unions. He has also talked about the cooperation framework - a written partnership agreement between the UN and the government that sets the plan for the implementation of Agenda 2030 in a country. The speaker emphasised the importance of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and urged trade unions to use it as a bargaining tool as the OSH became as ILO Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW). He also discussed the role of women and youth as actors and suggested creating a cooperation framework between the UN and the government. He has provided the example of Rana Plaza collapsed to the situation of OSH in South Asia. Finally, he recommended making strategic steps to turn challenges into opportunities. Overall, the session aimed to identify the challenging issues in South Asia for trade unions and find universal tools to resolve them.

In between the session **Mr Prabhu Rajendran**, Regional Consultant, Mondiaal FNV discussed **Climate change in South Asia and Climate Migrants:**

He addressed the concerns of youth and women leaders in trade unions and emphasised the importance of collective efforts to strengthen the trade union movement. He drew attention to the alarming effects of climate change in South Asia, including floods, rising sea levels, and water scarcity, which are affecting workers. He stressed the need for a transition in the labour market that prioritises workers' welfare and highlighted the crucial role that trade unions can play in this process. To achieve a just transition that does not harm workers, he proposed the 4 R's - Recognise, Responsible, Respond, and Respect. He urged union leaders and workers to change their behaviour and adopt a proactive approach to tackle these challenges. Furthermore, he emphasised the importance of youth engagement in the transition process. He concluded by showing a video that explains the concept of just transition and how unions can demand social justice and work together for decent work on a healthy planet.

DAY TWO

The day started with quick recap as “connecting stories” by **Ms Anna Tuvera**, and demonstrated by **Mr. S. M. Fahimuddin Pasha**. Ms. Anna expressed that the world of work has been defined more broadly in C190 and is not limited to the workplace. Participants shared their learning on the world of work, C190, FPRW, OSH and gender equality from the previous day.

Session on “LGBT Community: Equal Opportunity”

Ms Bhoomi Harendran, a sexual and reproductive health and rights advocate and activist

Ms. Bhoomi Harendran is an award-winning actress in Asia and Sri Lanka who identifies as transgender, making her the first of her kind to receive a SAARC award. She emphasizes the importance of understanding the differences within the LGBTQ+ community and has led interactive sessions and discussions on sexuality and gender. She explains that when a person is born, they have both a physical and mental body, and it is the mental body that determines their gender identity. For some individuals, their physical and mental bodies may not align, and they are referred to as transgender. She clarifies the differences between transsexual and transgender and addresses intersexuality, where a person may have two distinct physical bodies or genitals that do not fit typical male/female categories. Additionally, she discusses sexual orientation and attraction, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer identities, and stresses that discrimination and violation should not occur in the workplace. She advocates for change within society and plans



to establish a union for transgender individuals known as the National Union for Transgender (NUFT), the first of its kind in Asia for sexual minorities. At last, she replied to the questions from the floor. The questions were raised by Dur e Shawar Siraj, Neha Singh, Anna Tuvera, and Sushila Ghimire. **Mr Pasha** thanked the expert for her interesting and interactive presentation and highlighted the importance of equal opportunity and non-discrimination to the transgender community. **Ms Champa Verma**, Deputy General Secretary, and women's committee chair of SARTUC thanked the expert for her wonderful presentation. She promised to include the transgender voice in ITUC, ITUC-AP, and SARTUC and put effort to include people from the LGBTIQ community in the trade unions trade union movement. To make a strong trade union movement, we have to include the LGBTIQ community in the movement.

The new social contract for Recovery and Resilience: six demands

Mr S. M. Fahimuddin Pasha, Senior Officer, Workers' Rights, ITUC-AP

The session was conducted by Mr. Pasha, on "New Social Contract." He started the session with a discussion with participants and explored their views on the New Social Contract and the historical development of the social contract. He explained that Rousseau (Jean-Jacques Rousseau) had coined the term Social Contract and the importance of the French Revolution in establishing democracy. During the pandemic it was realised that our system is not working properly, thus, a new social contract is needed which has 6 pillars - i. Jobs, ii. Rights, iii. Wages, iv. Social Protection, v. Equality, and vi. Inclusion. He described the just transition in the world of work - environment-friendly jobs, to protect nature and also protect the workers' rights. Trade unions have to work hard to set up minimum wages and social protection for workers in South Asia. He suggested reforming and restructuring the tax system and demanding a global fund for social protection to finance in low-income countries. Workers have faced a lot of problems during and post-COVID-19 situation however, few people have earned a lot in South Asia. The state shall focus on the narrow down the gap between poor and rich in South Asia. As trade unions, we would not discriminate based on - gender, sex, race, class, age, nationality, and other reasons. South Asia is having the highest number of youth population so we have to include youths in the trade union movement. Demands to facilitate in three ways - building workers' power, making social dialogue work, and making social rights. Six demands are not only the demands but also the commitment from affiliates and these demands shall be discussed with our affiliates.

Country reports:

Mr Ch Saad Muhammad, Deputy General Secretary, PWF

Bangladesh

Ms. **Tammanna** presented the overall perspective on Bangladesh - problems faced. ITUC-BC has formed a youth committee, they had a discussion with the age bar but as per the ITUC, ITUC-AP, the committee members shall not exceed 35 years. Many of the unions have changed the age bar in their youth committee as well as in the ITUC-BC. Youth committees are working for awareness, training, and organising the youth in trade unions.



SARTUC

India

Ms. Neha Singh presented a country report from India. She expressed the youth policies in the Indian trade union and youth participation and activities in the trade union. She described, two states have started old age pensions - Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan and described the social protection system for Anganwadi workers. Also, youth are playing a vital role in organising youth workers in trade unions. Furthermore, **Ms. Indu Kanwar Rathore** from SEWA expressed the work done by SEWA on social issues, health, campaigning, skill development and awareness.

Pakistan

Asrlan presented from Pakistan. Promoting secondary leadership in trade unions by providing training and awareness on new policies and skill development. Also, training was provided on laws regarding the workplace and workers. We do not have any female representation on Executive Board so we have discussed the reserved seats for women and youth. The migrant resource centre was the initiation by the youth committee. The youth committee is also promoting the legal help centre and providing counselling to workers.

Nepal

Pawan Chaudhary, NTUC, shared that Nepal has major three trade unions - ANTUF, GEFONT, and NTUC, which all have youth committees in them from the district to the national level. Youth participation has been ensured in all activities. There are also trainings on leadership development and skill development. The role of youths is very much important in increasing membership in trade unions and organising. Youths have been provided training and awareness on climate change and the promotion of a green economy. Trade unions are also providing training and orientation for the youth labour migrants. Youth committees are working for the inclusion of informal sector workers and domestic workers into contributory Social Protection.

Sri Lanka

Shane Vadivel Sutresh from Sri Lanka expressed that collective bargaining with employers in Sri Lanka has been stopped by the government which is shocking to trade unions. Thus, trade unions are trying to re-establish the system. Government has to monitor and supervise in tea plantations as there are a lot of cases of violations and harassment thus, ratification of C190 is necessary and working for it. The issues of internal migrant workers have also been raised by unions and their situation during COVID-19 was pathetic.

Comments on the country reports by Mr S. M. Fahimuddin Pasha, Senior Officer, Workers' Rights, ITUC-AP:

He appreciated all the presenters for their efforts in their respective countries through youth committees. He suggested youths for taking steps to protect democracy to protect the workers' rights. Further, he recommended all the participants for pushing forward the agendas of youths, women, and informal sector workers. He encouraged youth participants to visualise the role of promoting the rights of workers. He appreciated the effort of Brother Laxman, General Secretary, SARTUC for re-establish the SARTUC and establishing the youth and women's committees.





Discussion on the Establishment of the SARTUC's Committees (Women and Youth Committees)

Mr Laxman Basnet, General Secretary, SARTUC, expressed the importance of women and youth committees for SARTUC, and further he explained the frequent efforts of SARTUC to empower the women and youth trade union leaders through training, orientations, workshops, and consultations.

Mr S. M. Fahimuddin Pasha, Senior Officer, Workers' Rights, ITUC-AP, said the formation of the SARTUC Women's Committee is an internal matter of SARTUC so the delegates from ITUC-AP (himself and Ms Anna Tuvera, Director, Gender Equality Activities, ITUC-AP) would not intervene in the process. They are in the meeting to support, assist and guide SARTUC. He further clarified it's all SARTUC and its affiliates' decision to form and elect the committee members. Additionally, he expressed that due to some technical reason and realisation of the need for some more time to formulate the committees, SARTUC is unable to formulate the Women's Committee and youth committee from this gathering. Maybe after 5 or 6 months, SARTUC will have another meeting to formulate these two committees, also SARTUC will decide on Chair for both – the women's and youth committees. He requested SARTUC to circulate the ToR on women's and youth committees to all its affiliates, and they will provide suggestions or changes for the incorporation. The updated ToR will be discussed in the executive board meeting. ToR mentioned that Women's Committee shall be composed of six (6) members, one from each SARTUC affiliate but after discussion with Brother Laxman, General Secretary, he agreed to have 2 persons from each country for both – youth and women committees. For the youth committee, the gender balance is important – one male and one female from each country. Moreover, he mentioned the need to elaborate on the role of the chair. SARTUC affiliates realised more time to discuss among affiliates in the country – who shall be the 2 members of committees. All affiliates shall sit together and nominate the members from the country.

Ms. Champa Verma, Deputy General Secretary and women's committee chair, SARTUC, expressed that she was elected as a Chair of the Women's Committee meeting that was held in Kathmandu, Nepal in 2017 and it was proposed the members recommend one name from each member country to nominate as the committee member. However, the name of Nepal has not been announced yet, they said they will send the name after the official agreement among the member affiliates. The committee was unable to have a meeting because it didn't receive the member's name on time. Then, we were unable to conduct any meetings due to the unpredicted emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is the first time since the meeting happened after the Kathmandu meeting in 2017. She explained, having only 6 members in the women's committee is not justified where the SARTUC has 19 affiliates, thus she proposed the committee with 19 members, comprising one member from each affiliate. Additionally, she proposed the physical meeting shall happen half-yearly if not at least once a year. According to her, the meeting will provide a platform to discuss gender issues with women trade union leaders from SARTUC affiliates across South Asia where the Women's committee could ask for financial support from ILO, ITUC-AP, or any other friendly organisations.



Mr. Laxman Basnet, General Secretary, SARTUC, expressed the meeting of SARTUC's Executive Board in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 30 September 2015 decided to establish a women's committee at the SARTUC. He further highlighted Article 1: (ii) of ToR expresses the Women's Committee shall be composed of six (6) members, one from each SARTUC affiliate, nominated by and representing SARTUC affiliated organizations. Based on the decision, SARTUC held a Women's Committee meeting on 13 September 2017 in Kathmandu, Nepal where Ms. Champa Verma from HMS was elected as a chair of the ad hoc committee and proposed the members recommend one name from each member country to nominate as the committee members. But, the committee has never organized a meeting thereafter. This is the first time we have gathered for the women's committee meeting since the meeting happened after the Kathmandu meeting in 2017. It is difficult to find the financial resources thus, he thought, doing a half-yearly physical meeting for the women's committee is not possible now for SARTUC.

Thus, he proposed to all the SARTUC women trade union leaders that the Women's Committee shall have twelve (12) members, 2 from each affiliated country, but different SARTUC affiliate unions, and among them, they shall elect the chair of the SARTUC's women's committee. Each affiliate country shall nominate 2 members for the Women's Committee.

Decisions

- SARTUC will send the ToR of the women's committee and youth committee to all its affiliates and ask for their suggestions and comments on it.
- Then the General Secretary will take the issues to the Executive Board meeting to discuss on the establishment of the women and youth committee.
- Committees – youth and women - shall be composed of twelve (12) members and each country shall nominate two (2) members with internal discussion among them at the country level.
- The youth committee shall be composed of a gender balance – one male and one female from each country and less than 31 years of age.
- Women's committee shall be responsible to find out the financial resources to conduct meetings or any other programme on women.
- The constitution process or election for the women's committee and youth committee shall be done as per the decisions from the Executive Board meeting.
- The constitution process or election for the women's committee and youth committee shall be done after six months.

Closing Remarks

Mr. Ariel B CASTRO, Senior Specialist in Workers' activities-Desk Officer for Asia and Pacific

Mr. Ariel B Castro thanked SARTUC and South Asian trade union leaders for the opportunity to express his views with youth and women leaders from South Asia and he congratulated all elected members of SARTUC. He added, with the election of new leaders the new chapter of SARTUC has begun. He has given some information about ACTRAV to youth and women participants. The organisation will work on sustainable development and trade union development in the region.



Decent work for the platform economy is been an emerging issue in which SARTUC youth and women will play a vital role in promoting decent work. Approval of the Singapore statement in APRM is a new milestone and looks for the improvement of the workers' condition. Global social justice coalition - as part of the Director-General's campaign at the election - is a plan to establish a Global Coalition for Social Justice, the goal is to gather the tripartite constituents of the ILO, multilateral organizations, and other interested parties together. The ACTRAV is going to set a new programme and budget which will have great implications for SARTUC's activities as well. He is expecting strong, independent, and democratic trade unions in the region, and influential in the policy and development in their respective countries. He expressed, the recent study by ILO shows an increase in members of youth males and females in trade unions. He suggested participants go through and good use the study materials produced by ACTRAV. There are so many restrictions and challenges to the trade union movement and workers' rights in South Asia and the rise of the undemocratic government, so he suggested new ideas shall come from youth and women to cut out these challenges. The capacity building programme by ACTRAV increases awareness and expects to come up with new innovative ideas and strategies from youth and women. Further, he ensured to be with trade unions and available to support trade unions.

Ms. Nishi Kapahi, Coordinator, South Asia Gender Platform

Ms. Nishi Kapahi thanked SARTUC for organising the programmes for youth and women. She Appreciated **Ms Anna Tuvera** and **Mr. S. M. Fahimuddin Pasha (ITUC-AP)** for making the programmes a success and handover the token of love to them. Additionally, she had handover a token of love to **Mr. Ch Saad Muhammad (PWF)**. She thanked the SARTUC secretariat and the hotel as well as hotel staff for providing the space and entire support throughout the programmes.

Address by Mr Laxman Basnet, General Secretary of SARTUC

Mr. Basnet thanked all the participants for their active participation throughout the programmes. Now the constitutional process is on the way, we have received a lot. Within six months we will go for the formation of committees. We have so many helping hands and friends whom we can request to support our programmes.



Annex-I Participants Detail

S.no.	Name	Organisation/ Designation
1	Ms. Simrin Singh	Country Office, ILO Sri Lanka and Maldives, Director
2	Mr. Shoya Yoshida	ITUC-AP, General Secretary
3	Mr. Syed Sultan Uddin AHMMED	ILO-ACTRAV, Senior Specialist in Workers Activities
4	Ms. Anna Tuvera	ITUC-AP, Director, Gender Equality Activities
5	Mr. S. M. Fahimuddin Pasha	ITUC-AP, Senior Officer, Workers' Rights
6	Mr. Manorajan Pegu	Solidarity Centre, Country Program Director
7	Mr. Prabhu Rajendran	Mondiaal FNV, Regional Consultant
8	Ms. Nishi Kapahi	South Asia Gender Platform, Coordinator
9	Mr. Harbhajan Singh Sidhu	Hind Mazdoor Sabha, General Secretary
10	Mr. Ashok Singh	INTUC, Senior National Vice President
11	Mr. Faizur Rahman Rabin	Bangladesh Free Trade Union Congress (BFTUC)
12	Ms. Tamanna Binta Alamgir	Bangladesh Jatyatabadi Sramik Dal (BJSD)
13	Mr. Md Ibrahim Khalil	Bangladesh Labour Federation (BLF)
14	Mr. Nazmul Hasan	Bangladesh Mukta Sramik Federation (BMSF)
15	Ms. Maksuda Akter	Bangladesh Sanjukta Sramik Federation (BSSF)
16	Mr. Shahen Alam	Jatio Sramik League (JSL)
17	Mr. Azhar Yusuf Sheikh	Hind Mazdoor Sabha(HMS)
18	Mr. Divyanshu Singh	Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC)
19	Ms. Indu Kanwar Rathore	Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)
20	Mr. Dharendra B.K	All Nepal Federation of Trade Unions (ANTUF)
21	Ms. Karuna Puri	General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT)
22	Mr. Pawan Chaudhary	Nepal Trade Union Congress (NTUC)
23	Mr. Muhammad Arslan	Pakistan Workers' Federation (PWF)
24	Ms. Nilanthi	Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC)
25	Ms. Yuvani	
26	Mr. Shane Vadivel Suresh	National Trade Union Federation (NTUF)
27	Ms. Chaya Lakmi Fernando	
28	Ms. Waruni Nisasansala	Sri Lanka Nidahas Sevaka Sangamaya (SLNSS)
29	Mr. Chamara Gunawardena	
30	Ms. Champa Verma	SARTUC Women committee Chair/HMS, Women Secretary
31	Mr. Laxman Basnet	SARTUC
32	Mr. Indra Deo Yadav	
33	Mr. Kishor Bikram Shah	
34	Ms. Sweanta Lama	



Annex – II Programme Agenda

Day 1: 23 rd March 2023 (Thursday)		
9:00– 9:30	Registration	
9:30 – 10:30	<p>Opening <i>(Jointly with the participants of the women’s programme)</i> Opening and welcome address: Mr Laxman Basnet, General Secretary, SARTUC Address by Mr Soya Yoshida, General Secretary, ITUC-AP Address by Mr. Harbhajan Singh Sidhu, the President, SARTUC Address by Mr Ahok Singh, Vice President, SARTUC/INTUC Address by Ms. Champa Verma, Deputy General Secretary and Chair, Women’s Committee, SARTUC Address by Ms Simrin Singh, ILO, Country Director Sri Lanka and Maldives Address by Mr Prabhu Rajendran, Regional Consultant, Mondiaal FNV Address by Mr. Syed Sultan Uddin AHMMED, Senior Specialist in Workers Activities, ILO-ACTRAV</p>	
10:30 – 10:45	Introduction of Participants	Ms Anna Tuvera , ITUC-AP
10:45- 11:00 Tea/Coffee Break		
11:00 – 12:15	<p>Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment <i>(Jointly with the participants of the women’s programme)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept and understanding of ‘Sex’ and ‘Gender’. • Women in the changing world of work: Issues, trends, and challenges 	Ms. Vraie Balthazaar , a Gender Expert
12:15 – 13:00	Youth in the new forms of the informal economy (digital and platform workers): Challenges and a way forward	Mr Manorajan Pegu , Country Program Director, Solidarity Centre
13:00 – 14:00 Lunch Break		
14:00 – 14:45	Technology and Future of Work: Youth Engagement in New Skills and Technologies	Ms Nishi Kapahi , Coordinator, South Asia Gender Platform
15:45 – 15:45	<p>Youth, Labour migration and Decent work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth labour migration in South Asia: Exploring the opportunities and challenges • Post-Pandemic Strategies: Creating Decent work in the South Asian Labour Market 	Mr Ch Saad Muhammad , Deputy General Secretary, PWF
15:45 – 16:00 Tea/Coffee Break		
16:00– 16:45	Trade Unions in Transformation: Youth and Women for Change <i>(Jointly with the participants of the women’s programme)</i>	Mr. Syed Sultan Uddin AHMMED , Senior Specialist in Workers Activities, ILO-ACTRAV
16:45 -17:00	Reflections and learning from Day 1	
End of Day 1		



Day 2: 24 th March 2023 (Friday)		
9:00– 9:30	Registration	
9:30 – 10:30	LGBT Community and equal opportunity <i>(Jointly with the participants of the women’s programme)</i>	Ms Bhoomi Harendran , a sexual and reproductive health and rights advocate and activist
10:30 – 10:45	Tea/Coffee Break	
10:45 – 11:45	The new social contract for Recovery and Resilience: six demands	Mr S. M. Fahimuddin Pasha , ITUC-AP
12:15 – 13:00	Country reports about the union activities and policies on Youths <i>(Creative presentation by the participant: Participants shall prepare this in advance focusing on key accomplishments/changes made)</i>	Mr Ch Saad Muhammad , Deputy General Secretary, PWF
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch Break	
14:00 - 14:30	A review of the draft youths’ Charter of SARTUC	
14:30 - 15:00	Formation of a SARTUC Youths’ Committee	
15:00 - 16:00	Plan of Action for the next 4 years to SARTUC Youths’ Committee (Priority Areas)	
16:00 – 16:30	Presentation	
16:30 – 16:45	Closing remarks Mr. Ariel B CASTRO , Senior Specialist in Workers' activities-Desk Officer for Asia and Pacific	
16:45 – 17:00	Closing remarks and vote of thanks, by Mr Laxman Basnet , General Secretary, SARTUC	
End of the Regional Consultation		

Annex-III Photos



Group photo with youth and women participants



Ms Simrin Singh, ILO, in her opening address



Address by Mr. Syed Sultan Uddin AHMED



Address by Ms. Champa Verma, Deputy General Secretary and Chair, Women's Committee, SARTUC



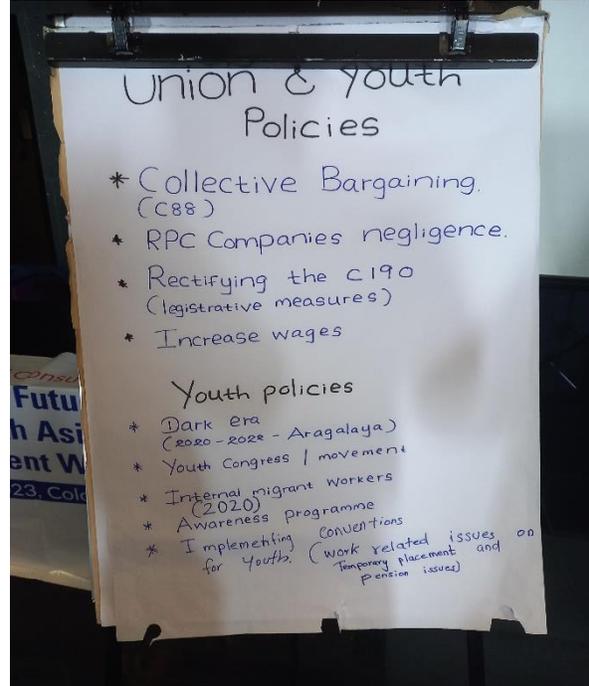
Ms. Vraie Balthazaar in her session



Ms Bhoomi Harendran in her session



All the Participants in the opening session



Participants discussed about youth policies



Mr Laxman Basnet, General Secretary in his closing remarks



Mr. Ariel B. CASTRO, provided his closing remarks through Zoom