# YMC

Youth Model ASEAN Conference

## YOUTH MODEL ASEAN CONFERENCE 2023

# YOUTH VOICES

# Contents

# Foreword

Singapore is a small country with no natural resources. Singapore's pioneer leaders recognised the importance of global engagement and unfettered trade with world partners as a fledging independent nation in 1965. This awareness has shaped the educational mission of Singapore Polytechnic (SP). Since early 2000, concerted effort has been put into growing Singapore Polytechnic's international influence and leadership in engineering education with the CDIO Worldwide Initiative. In addition, robust engagement with the industry and institutes of higher learning in ASEAN remains a focal point in its international outreach efforts. This ASEAN-centric approach positions SP to cultivate an extensive network with ASEAN institutes of higher learning through SP's Learning Express programme (LeX) and a distinctive regional youth programme, the Youth Model ASEAN Conference (YMAC).

In its 12th year running, YMAC continues its tradition of stimulating contemplation and thoughtful discussion among its youthful delegates regarding the pivotal challenges confronting our region. This conference has consistently nurtured meaningful dialogues among the future leaders of our region, providing a dynamic platform where passionate minds convene to discuss solutions to pressing challenges that our societies face today.

The youth bring a fresh lens from which to view the region. They see opportunities where others may see obstacles. Their voices carry the weight of potential and the promise of change. They reflect not just our present but are also the beacon for our future. As the world becomes increasingly deglobalised and new challenges abound, understanding the perspectives of the youth from this region and harnessing their strengths to unite the ASEAN community will be even more important.

YMAC 2023 aims to celebrate the voices of our youth delegates through this inaugural digital publication, "YMAC 2023: Youth Voices." This booklet captures a diverse array of voices centered around the theme of this year's YMAC: Inclusive Growth in ASEAN. It features the ideas, dreams and aspirations of young minds from across the region. The thoughts from the youth delegates serve as a window to peek into their worlds, illuminating the different challenges and experiences that define our ASEAN youth. Yet, underpinning their thoughts is a common desire for progress, inclusivity, and a voice that matters. And a shared hope for a brighter future for their country and the region.

May this booklet serve as an inspiration to all who read it. May it provoke thought, dialogues and collaborations that will shape the ASEAN of tomorrow. May the youth voices from ASEAN remind us that together, we can shape a better ASEAN for current and future generations.

**Soh Wai Wah**
Principal & Chief Executive Officer
Singapore Polytechnic

**Mr Soh Wai Wah**
Principal & Chief Executive Officer
Singapore Polytechnic

# Youth Model ASEAN Conference (YMAC) : A Flagship Programme by Singapore Polytechnic

Singapore Polytechnic's Youth Model ASEAN Conference (YMAC) is a simulation of an ASEAN Summit Meeting which involves almost 200 students from across the 10 ASEAN Member States. Since its first run in 2012 with just 5 Singapore-based polytechnics, YMAC is celebrating its 12th year of proceedings this year and has expanded to include international youth delegates from the 5 Singapore-based polytechnics as well as 52 Southeast Asian Institutes of Higher Learning. As part of YMAC, youth delegates take on roles as diplomats representing one of the 10 ASEAN Member States, where they conduct research and debate on current issues faced by ASEAN and the Southeast Asian region.

# About Youth Model ASEAN Conference 2023

YMAC 2023 saw the coming together of about 160 local and foreign youth delegates from Institutes of Higher Learning from Southeast Asia, China and India. During the 4-day conference, the delegates researched on and discussed issues related to the pertinent theme of *Inclusive Growth in ASEAN*, focusing on 3 sub-themes:

(i) Providing Equitable Access to Inclusive and Quality Education

(ii) Bridging the Digital Divide

(iii) Creating and Recognising Valued Employment for All

# Providing Equitable Access to Inclusive and Quality Education

Education plays a significant role in the progress and growth of any society. It acts as a key that unlocks the potential of nations and regions by providing citizens with the skills and knowledge to actively contribute to social, cultural and economic development. Inclusive and quality education provides individuals with numerous personal and professional opportunities while developing the human capital in the country. However, challenges such as poverty, inequality and rapid urbanisation need to be overcome. Therefore, it is essential to address the need for an accessible high-quality and inclusive education system that complements the region's citizens as well as the economic strengths of the country and the region.

## What does having equitable access to inclusive and quality education mean to you?

Equitable access to inclusive and quality education is not only a basic human right but the foundation for a fair and prosperous society. It represents the promise that every individual, regardless of circumstances, background or abilities, has an equal opportunity to receive an education that not only imparts knowledge but also nurtures critical thinking, creativity and empathy.

To me, equitable access to such education is a vision of a world where the potential of every child is fulfilled, diversity is celebrated and where inequality is eliminated. Fundamentally, equitable access to education means that no child is denied the opportunity to learn because of factors beyond their control.

Quality education gives students the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in a complex and ever-changing world. It further prepares students not only for work but also for life, teaching them to become active citizens, capable of making meaningful contributions to society. Equitable access to quality education recognises that education is a lifelong journey. The benefits of equitable access to a comprehensive, quality education go beyond individual students. When students have access to education, they are better equipped to find high-paying jobs, break out of the cycle of poverty, and contribute to community development.

**Thinishwaran A/L Kamaleswaran, 20**
*Politeknik Ungku Omar,*
*Malaysia*
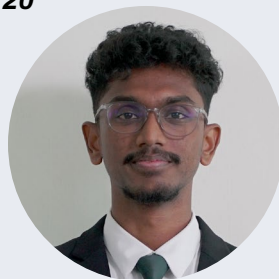
"Beyond incorporating the latest technology and educational infrastructure, inclusive and quality education involves inspiring others."

**Renee Lauryn Tuazon Melitante, 22**
*Ateneo de Manila University,*
*Philippines*

4

# Why is having access to an inclusive and quality education important to you or in your country?

The famous philosopher Maimonides once said, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime". The idea behind this simple phrase holds great power for humankind.

Consisting of more than 18,000 islands with diverse backgrounds, Indonesia is considered the largest archipelago in the world, which may inevitably lead to education challenges and socio-economic gaps in parts of the country. Even the disparity in education quality and resources between areas in the same province within 20 kilometres of each other can vary significantly.

I remember visiting and experiencing life in a rural village when I was 14 years old as part of a school project. We were tasked with educating and assisting 21 kindergarten students for two days throughout various activities. The school only had two teachers and a large room with limited educational resources. If there were not enough resources for a student to use, the teacher would allow the student to use their own personal resource or for the students to share amongst themselves. The entire experience made me acutely aware that we as a community could contribute more.

Government initiatives have been gradually helping Indonesian youth excel in education over the past few years. The Indonesian government launched the 'Kampus Merdeka' initiative, allowing college students to participate in teaching underprivileged students, upgrading villages in Indonesia, taking up internships at well-known Indonesian companies, student exchanges, and more.

Despite these initiatives, there is still more that can be done to address the gap regarding inclusivity and quality in education. The importance of having equitable access to inclusive and quality education is not limited to just me, it extends to my country as well. Education is a process through which humans obtain knowledge, which they can use for personal growth and future development. After all, a nation can stand stronger on the global stage with an educated society supporting it.

I believe my voice reflects not only the aspirations of Indonesian youth but also those of youth in other ASEAN countries hoping to tackle gaps in education equity.

***Alvita Hari Kusmanto, 20***
*Bina Nusantara University, Indonesia*
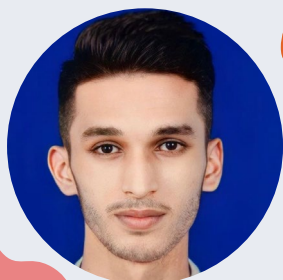
"Education is important as it nourishes the mind, and allows us to grow and find new opportunities, making it a necessity for both our personal lives and professional careers."

***Muhammad Hasvinder Bin Abdullah, 20***
*Politeknik Ungku Omar, Malaysia*
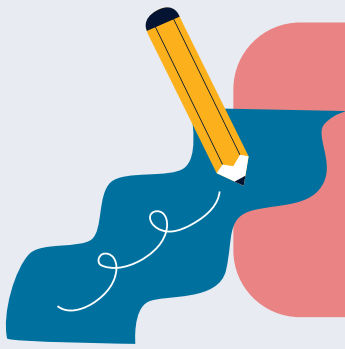
## Why is having access to an inclusive and quality education important to you or in your country?

As someone who is about to end his education journey and is first-hand experiencing the importance of education, I was able to see the challenges and the benefits of having equitable and quality education.

As a Filipino of modest means, I was raised in a home that experienced occasional leaks and issues of the sort. Like other Filipino children, the hope of a better life beyond academics fuelled my passion for a better future.

Through my educational journey, I realised that quality resources which supplement the delivery of education is vital for a student to flourish and grow as a productive individual.

I always believed that small actions would add up to something big. With the use of social media as a platform and by conducting small group peer teaching sessions, I was able to touch the lives of underprivileged students such as myself. This resulted in me being able to share my knowledge and the skills that I had acquired.

Today, I am standing at the Youth Model ASEAN Conference as the representative of underprivileged students. I am eager to exchange ideas with my fellow delegates as I want to become one of the catalysts for change. I want people to hear my stories, to exchange ideas and collaborate with them in order to come up with proposals that can address quality education issues.

**Armon Mendoza Landicho, 23**
*Batangas State University,*
*Philippines*

" Education can be a catalyst for regional progress, fostering innovation, cross-cultural empathy, and collaborative solutions. By investing in quality education, ASEAN can empower its youth to contribute meaningfully to society. "

**Valerie Neo Rui Tian, 21**
*Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore*

Having equitable access to inclusive and quality education embodies the principle of equality. In my perspective, access to education is a fundamental right for all individuals. Unfortunately, educational opportunities, especially high-quality education, are sometimes not distributed equally, and may be a function of one's means. This is a pervasive issue worldwide.

Secondly, equitable education means the chance to explore the wider world and transcend social class boundaries. In China, it is a widely held belief that education can change a person's destiny. Even someone born into poverty in a remote village can escape their circumstances and enter a larger, more promising world through education. This is why people in ancient China dedicated decades to preparing for exams that could alter their destinies. Furthermore, I believe access to inclusive and equal education fosters a fair and equitable society, where people can lead happier lives.

I was born into modest means. I never had the opportunity to attend special interest classes or after-school tutoring sessions, not just due to financial constraints but also because my hometown lacked such resources. However, my parents provided for me the best that they could.

## What does having equitable access to inclusive and quality education mean to you?

Throughout the years, many of my middle school classmates dropped out for various reasons, and many of them continue to reside in our village. As for me, I continued my studies from middle school to university and am currently studying for my master's degree, and might study abroad in the future to pursue a PhD. I have transitioned to a larger stage, a bigger city, a bigger world outside of China, and am closer to my dreams through education. I am not implying that one path is superior to the other; what I am emphasising is how knowledge and education have transformed my destiny. In the days ahead, I am determined to contribute efforts to the cause of education, recognising its profound significance for every young person across the globe.

**Zhou Shu Sen, 23**
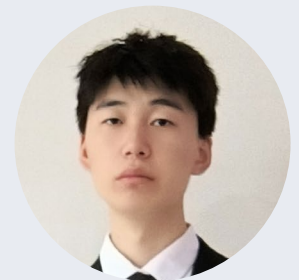*Chongqing University, China*

"Having equitable access to inclusive and quality education is crucial for the development of individuals, the promotion of social cohesion, and the attainment of sustainable development goals."

**Worapitcha Sathawornsmith, 20**
*Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi, Thailand*

# What has your country done to tackle challenges to achieving equitable access to an inclusive and quality education?

When I look back at Thailand's journey towards achieving equitable access to inclusive and quality education, I am reminded of both the remarkable progress the country has made and the personal experiences that have shaped my understanding of this critical issue. Thailand's commitment to education is evident in its ambitious "15-year Free Education Program", a significant step towards breaking down the barriers that hindered individuals like me from accessing quality education.

Growing up in a family of modest means in Thailand, I was keenly aware of the challenges that many students like me would face in pursuing an education. Financial constraints loomed large, making it difficult for my parents to afford the costs associated with school. Uniforms, textbooks, and even basic school supplies often felt like luxuries that were out of reach. Moreover, the fear of being unable to complete my education due to financial limitations cast a shadow over my childhood dreams.

Thailand's 15-year Free Education Program emerged as a hopeful avenue for individuals like me. It was introduced to provide every Thai child with access to quality education from kindergarten to grade 12 without the burden of tuition fees. This initiative aimed to remove financial barriers and ensure that education was a fundamental right rather than a privilege.

One of the most significant aspects of this program was its recognition of the fact that equitable access to education required more than just free schooling. To truly achieve inclusivity and quality education, the government took steps to improve the overall educational infrastructure. Investment in schools, teacher training, and educational resources received due attention. This not only ensured that children could attend school without financial constraints but also guaranteed that they would receive a meaningful and valuable education.

However, it is important to acknowledge that challenges persist. Despite the government's commendable efforts, disparities in educational access and quality education still exist, particularly in remote and marginalised communities. Access to quality education should not be determined by one's geographic location or socio-economic background, and Thailand must continue its commitment to addressing these disparities.

As someone who personally benefited from this initiative, I am deeply appreciative of the opportunities it provided. In addressing the challenge of equitable access to quality education, it is essential to consider a combination of these solutions and adapt them to the specific needs and circumstances of the country and its various regions. A comprehensive approach that involves government commitment, community engagement, and international support can make significant strides in ensuring that every child has the opportunity to receive a quality education.

> " My story resonates with the aspirations of countless Thai youth who are diligently striving for equal opportunities, and I am wholeheartedly committed to amplifying their voices on this international stage. "

**Dusita Proisurin, 20**
*Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi, Thailand*
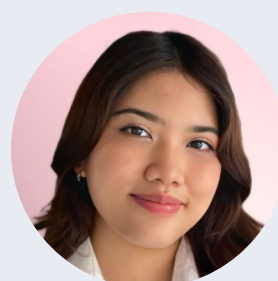
As technology continues to drive innovation and develop economies, it is important to address the issue of accessibility to technology in society. Bridging the digital divide is crucial especially considering the challenges and vast potential of Southeast Asia.

# Bridging the
# Digital Divide

By closing this gap, ASEAN Member States can ensure competitiveness and prosperity in the economy. When more people have access to technology they can actively participate in society and the economy on a national and international scale. This enables better access to essential services such as healthcare and education, while facilitating easier establishment and growth of businesses.

# How has access to technology allowed people in your community to participate more in society?

Indonesia is the fourth most populous country in the world, with over 267 million people. Despite the country's vast size and diversity, access to technology has enabled people to participate more in society in various ways. As someone who has lived in Indonesia for most of my life, I have witnessed the positive impact of technological advancements on my community.

One of the most significant impacts is on the economy. With technology, people can now access more job opportunities, run their own businesses, and engage in e-commerce platforms. Innovative ride-hailing services like Gojek and Grab have reduced unemployment rates, while e-commerce platforms like Tokopedia and Shopee have enabled SMEs to sell their products online and expand their businesses. This has not only created more job opportunities but has also contributed to the overall growth of the economy.

Access to technology has also improved the healthcare sector in Indonesia. With the use of Telemedicine, people can now access medical consultations remotely. This is particularly beneficial for those living in remote areas with limited access to healthcare services. Healthcare workers can now use mobile devices to communicate with patients, provide medical advice, and monitor their condition. In addition, the use of technology in healthcare has enabled the government to track and manage disease outbreaks more effectively. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the government used mobile apps to track the spread of the virus and communicate important health information to the public.

Moreover, technological advancement has also had a significant impact on education in Indonesia. With the rise of e-learning platforms, people can now access educational resources online. This has helped to increase access to education, particularly for those living in rural areas.

Technology has also allowed Indonesians to connect with each other, even if they are geographically separated. With the widespread availability of smartphones and the internet, people can stay in touch with friends and family members who live far away. This has helped to strengthen social ties and build stronger communities.

However, technology has also created new challenges. One of the most pressing issues is the digital divide. In Indonesia, many people still lack internet access, particularly in rural areas. This hinders participation in the digital economy and limits opportunities for social and economic advancement.

It is thus important to ensure that everyone has access to technology, so that the benefits of the digital revolution can be shared by all. Through YMAC, I believe that, together, we can envision a digitally inclusive future for ASEAN and collaborate towards a brighter future for our region.

*Keisha Amira Zalika, 20*
*Bina Nusantara University,*
*Indonesia*

In this era, our lives are undeniably intertwined with technology. Its omnipresence permeates from the bustling streets to the tranquil corners of the gardens. While there exist certain adverse consequences of technology usage, the numerous advantages it offers outweigh any drawbacks.

Reflecting on the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the concept of a "Circuit Breaker" was introduced in Singapore, the significance of technology became abundantly clear. This period held particular importance for me, as it marked the commencement of my preparations for national exams. Fortunately, recognising the importance of education, the Government devised strategies that allowed students to continue their studies even amidst the lockdown. This feat was only made possible by technology, as online platforms like Zoom facilitated virtual lessons. Although these lessons may not have replicated the efficacy of traditional classroom learning entirely, they allowed us to persist in our studies while safeguarding our health. Without technology, not only in Singapore but across the globe, students would have faced obstacles in pursuing their education, particularly in less affluent regions where access to devices and the internet remained limited.

Furthermore, technology has played an instrumental role in fostering community spirit and fortifying bonds within neighbourhoods. Thanks to technology, communication is no longer constrained by time or place. In Singaporean communities, various digital platforms have given rise to group chats and forums where people engage, understand one another better, and forge connections. I firmly believe that our community is not an exception, as such closely-knit social networks have proliferated across Singapore, enabled by technology.

At a more personal level, technology has wrought transformative changes in family dynamics, enabling more meaningful connections regardless of physical distance. Beyond the age-old telephone, the visual aspect of video calls has breathed new life into family relationships. Being able to see the faces of loved ones virtually, especially when they are far away, imparts a deeper connection than just hearing their voices. This sentiment resonates with me; my own experience involves relatives in Malaysia whom I was unable to visit for an extended period due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fears that time and circumstances may prevent any reunion were alleviated through technology. A tearful video call bridged the gap that had widened over 2 and a half years. This was especially important for my father, as he was able to reconnect with his family.

In conclusion, the prevailing technological landscape offers an assortment of advantages that have affected facets of our lives. Technology has proven indispensable, especially during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

How do you think technology has benefited your country/community/family in the area of education/work life/personal life?

"Technology has sustained education, empowered communities, and strengthened familial bonds in ways that were previously unimaginable. As we navigate this era of ever-evolving technology, harnessing its potential while being mindful of its impact remains a continuous, dynamic endeavour."

*Javier Tan Jun Heng, 17*
*Nanyang Polytechnic,*
*Singapore*

# What role can technology play in bridging the education gap and providing equitable access to learning opportunities for underprivileged students?

I have witnessed the rapid growth of technology in my country, Malaysia. In today's digital world, technology has the potential to be a great equaliser in education and a powerful force in addressing one of the most crucial challenges in education – ensuring access to learning opportunities for underprivileged students.

Firstly, online learning platforms have revolutionised education by providing a wealth of educational resources that transcend geographical boundaries. These platforms offer a vast array of courses, tutorials, and educational materials that are accessible to anyone with an internet connection. Students separated by geographical locations can now access high-quality educational content that was previously out of reach, breaking down the physical barriers and limited educational resources.

Secondly, technology enables remote learning environments, a particularly crucial tool during unexpected disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtual classrooms, video conferencing tools, and online collaboration platforms have allowed students to continue their education from their homes, regardless of physical school closures. This has been a game-changer for students in underprivileged communities who might have otherwise faced significant interruptions in their learning.

Thirdly, digital libraries and e-books have democratised access to reading materials. Digital resources offer an extensive catalogue of books, research materials, and educational content, often free or at a low cost. This accessibility enhances literacy and encourages self-directed learning.

Additionally, the widespread use of smartphones, even in underprivileged communities, has made mobile learning a feasible option. Educational apps and platforms optimised for mobile devices allow students to engage with learning materials on the go, making education more flexible and accessible.

Lastly, technology empowers teachers and educators in underprivileged areas. It provides tools for lesson planning, assessment, and communication with students and parents. Virtual mentoring and professional development opportunities can help educators enhance their teaching skills, thereby improving the overall quality of education.

In conclusion, technology is a potent catalyst for closing the education gap and ensuring equitable access to learning opportunities for underprivileged students. It offers an expansive, flexible, and cost-effective means of acquiring knowledge, transcending geographic constraints, and tailoring education to individual needs.

However, it is vital to recognise that access to technology itself can be a hurdle. To achieve the goal of equitable access, efforts must be made to provide affordable devices and internet connectivity, along with digital literacy training. By combining technology with supportive policies and initiatives, we can pave the way for a more equitable and inclusive education system.

***Nur Izzah Khalida Binti Khairudin, 19***
*Politeknik Ungku Omar, Malaysia*

> ## What role can technology play in bridging the education gap and providing equitable access to learning opportunities for underprivileged students?

In a world where access to knowledge and education can shape the course of a person's life, technology emerges as a powerful equalizer, a beacon of hope for underprivileged students. As I reflect on the pivotal role that technology plays in bridging the education gap and creating equitable access to learning opportunities, I am filled with a sense of awe and gratitude for the transformative potential it holds.

Growing up in Vietnam, I have witnessed first-hand the differences in educational opportunities that exist among different segments of society. For many underprivileged students, their path to quality education may sometimes involve limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and geographical limitations. These barriers may seem insurmountable, casting a shadow on their dreams and aspirations.

However, technology has emerged as a game-changer, offering a glimmer of hope to those who seek better access to quality education. The digital age has ushered in a new era of learning, one that knows no boundaries.

One of the most remarkable aspects of technology's role in education is its ability to personalise learning experiences. Adaptive learning systems and AI-driven tools can tailor educational content to individual students' needs and pace, ensuring that no one is left behind. This level of personalisation not only enhances comprehension but also boosts self-confidence, empowering underprivileged students to achieve their potential.

Moreover, technology transcends the confines of traditional classrooms. It reaches into the most remote corners of the world, providing education to those who were once considered unreachable. Online courses, virtual classrooms, and educational apps create a bridge to knowledge, connecting students with teachers, mentors, and resources from across the globe. Geographic location is no longer a barrier to accessing high-quality education.

In addition to expanding access to learning materials, technology fosters a collaborative learning environment. Students can engage in discussions, share ideas, and collaborate on projects with peers from diverse backgrounds. This not only enriches their educational experience but also promotes cultural understanding and global citizenship.

In conclusion, the role of technology in bridging the education gap and providing equitable access to learning opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds is nothing short of revolutionary. It transforms lives, redefines possibilities, and underscores the boundless potential of education to shape a brighter future. As I look ahead, I am filled with optimism, knowing that technology will continue to be a driving force for positive change, levelling the playing field for all students, regardless of their background or circumstances.

***Vũ Mạnh Dũng, 22***
*Hanoi University of Civil Engineering, Vietnam*

# How do you think technology has benefitted your country/community/family in the area of education/work life/personal life?

As a youth from Cambodia, I really appreciate the opportunity to share my voice and ideas on the topic of "Bridging the Digital Divide''. Cambodia has seen a lot of improvements and benefits from our country's adaptation to digitalisation and the use of technology in recent years.

Firstly, Cambodian students are able to learn independently beyond the classroom setting. Nowadays, Cambodian students are able to enrol in online courses that they are interested in, and these courses have local and foreign teachers. Moreover, some students also benefit from the use of technology to do research and self-study in certain topics. This highlights the important role that technology plays in improving the access of education in Cambodia since we only used to have physical classrooms when I was younger.

In the field of business, Cambodia has recently adapted to the use of technology. One of the most recognized digitalisation tools commonly used in Cambodia is the QR code scanning for payment. It is evident that a majority of Cambodians are now using QR Code payments for buying and selling goods or services. This is a medium for Cambodians to make payments by only using their phones. Personally, I also enjoy the payment method by using such technology as it is convenient.

**Chhann Chan Sopong, 20**
*National University of Management, Cambodia*

"Technology has the potential to drive positive societal change. By embracing technological advancements, we can create a more inclusive and connected world where everyone has the opportunity to learn, thrive, and contribute to their communities."

**Riise Tan Yi, 18**
*Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore*

# Creating and Recognising Valued Employment for All

Meaningful employment is a powerful tool to address social inequalities, reduce poverty, and instil a sense of dignity among citizens. When people have valuable work, they contribute to society and feel recognised, boosting well-being and social cohesion. Additionally, it drives economic growth, as skilled individuals become more productive and strive for innovation.

Through international cooperation, countries can shape a brighter future together by empowering individuals and strengthening regional communities with meaningful employment.

# After graduation, what are valued job opportunities that you will consider going into?

As someone who was born in Myanmar but spent most of his life growing up in Singapore, I have a point of view not shared by many others. Although I am essentially Singaporean in all but nationality, I have never forgotten my roots, visiting my home country regularly throughout my childhood.

As a child I would wonder why there would be sudden blackouts in Myanmar. My father, an electrical engineer, would educate me on the technical details from a very young age.

As I grew older and started thinking more about this difference in the electrical grid, I started to understand the electrical infrastructure development in Myanmar. Electrification, it seemed, had not yet reached some parts of the country and this utility service which I had taken for granted, and crucial for industrialisation as well as safety and security, was missing from one of the places I called home. This helped shape what my mission would become in life.

After my O-Levels, I chose to pursue a diploma in Electrical Engineering (EE) with the goal of getting a bachelor's degree and becoming a Professional Engineer (PE). My motivation was simple - I wanted to bring a stable supply of electricity and even simple light to the corners of my beloved home country. I had faced questions as to why I had not chosen more profitable paths of education, such as medicine or aerospace engineering, but this to me, was a meaningful path in life and a valuable job I could do to improve the community in my home country.

In more industrialised and developed economies like Singapore, jobs in basic industries such as electrical power generation and civil infrastructure development are often overlooked for more glamorous jobs like cybersecurity and information systems. Despite this, the reality is that in many parts of the ASEAN region, these basic services and industries still require more development and stability to benefit the community.

> " I hope to bring more attention to these bread-and-butter industries that students may overlook and shed light on the value that it could bring to the development of ASEAN as an advanced economy. "
>
> **Aung Myat Thu, 18**
> *Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Singapore*

# After graduation, what are valued job opportunities that you will consider going into?
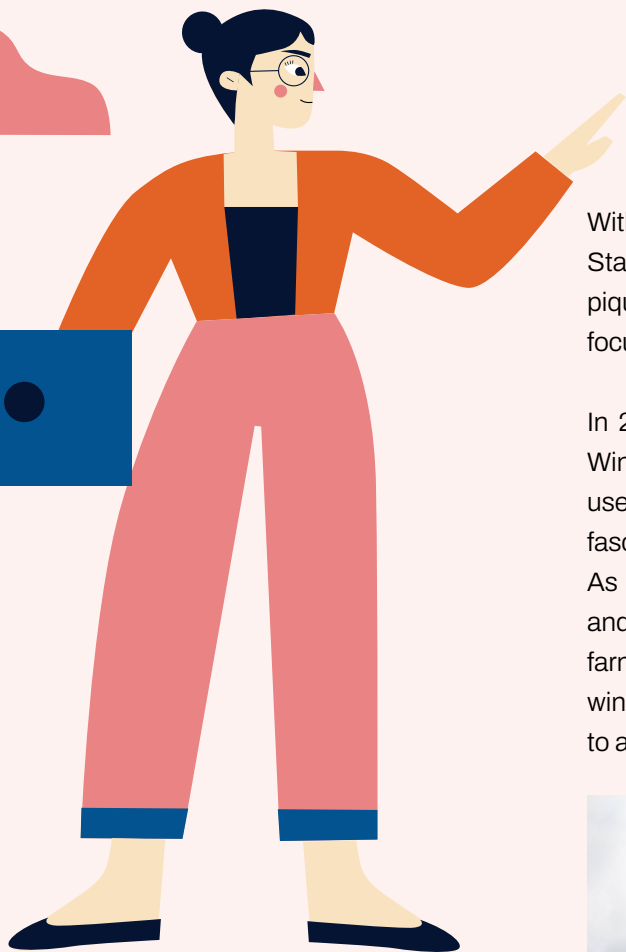
With the need to find solutions to climate change and ASEAN Member States committing to lowering their carbon emissions, my interest was piqued to consider a career path in the energy sector – specifically one focused on improving and implementing renewable energy sources.

In 2018, my family and I were able to visit Alternergy's 54 MW Pililla Wind Farm in Rizal. It was an amazing experience to observe a farm used for renewable energy up close and personal. Furthermore, I was fascinated by how these gigantic wind turbines were designed and built. As a Mechanical Engineering student, I appreciated how much effort and coordination it takes simply to set up a single renewable energy farm. Additionally, when I recalled how loud and windy it was near the wind turbines, I realised the importance of aspiring engineers like myself to also maintain our curiosity and motivation to find improvements.

I feel that YMAC 2023 would be a great environment to rekindle youth's interest and passion in exploring innovative solutions to the challenges we face today. Furthermore, it would reinforce and support the voices of the youth, whose perspectives are significant and critical to the success of our region. I believe that our dreams today are the product of experiences or situations that we found interesting when we were younger; all we need now is the courage to follow through on our thoughts.

**Palbacal Renz Ivan Joyag, 20**
*Batangas State University, Philippines*

> "Diversity in the workplace is a reality. Societies and businesses have changed, and we are all connected through the globalisation of communication, business and recruitment."
>
> **Leow Zi Yi, 17**
> *Republic Polytechnic, Singapore*

# Do you have any suggestions on creating and recognising valued jobs in your community?



The support of the following three major groups is necessary for the creation and recognition of valuable jobs in a community: the government, companies, and individuals. We ought to focus on industries with high demand and favourable wages to create valuable employment opportunities. This may apply to industries like information technology, healthcare, and renewable energy. We must also encourage a culture of respect and appreciation for all forms of labour, which includes offering reasonable pay, benefits, and chances for career advancement.

From my perspective as an individual who has had experience as a kindergarten teacher, there are various ways to improve the education sector in Cambodia. These include the improvement of the quality of educational curriculum and materials, supporting teachers with better training and support, and investing in physical infrastructure such as classrooms and more advanced technology. Additionally, increasing teachers' salaries may help attract and retain talented teachers, which is crucial for promoting the standard of education in Cambodia. Government initiatives, private sector partnerships, and investments can all be used to accomplish this.

Overall, developing and recognising valued jobs in a community requires a comprehensive plan and integrated approach that takes into account a variety of factors, including industry demand, equitable salaries, and cultural attitudes towards work.

**Cheam Narita, 19**
*National University of Management, Cambodia*

> " Creating a valuable job opportunity means providing sustainable and fair compensation, room for growth, and enabling positive impact for the community and environment. Valuable job opportunities are therefore crucial for the wellbeing of society and help to uplift the development of the community. "

**Shannon Ariella Suhartono, 19**
*Bina Nusantara University, Indonesia*

# What do you think are the most important factors in providing and recognising valued employment in your country? How can they be achieved?

There are 3 factors which I think are the most important factors in providing and recognising valued employment in Singapore.

The first is fair compensation. Ensuring fair wages and benefits for employees is a fundamental aspect of valued employment. Adequate compensation not only reflects the value of work being done but also contributes to employees' overall well-being and job satisfaction. One example of how this could be achieved is by providing incentives to encourage employees to work harder.

Another factor is equal opportunity and diversity. Valued employment should be accessible to all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, or other factors. Promoting diversity and inclusion offers a more productive and innovative workforce. For example, individuals with learning disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder may find it more difficult to integrate into the professional world and secure job opportunities. Companies could provide valued employment for such individuals by working with non-profit organisations that seek to better the lives of persons with disabilities. One such example is SG Enable, a non-profit in Singapore that seeks to better integrate such individuals into the professional workforce. One such initiative that SG Enable introduced was the Open Door Programme Job Redesign Grant which incentivised companies to redesign their workplace, such as by introducing ramps and lifts for persons with disabilities.

The last factor which I think is the most important is innovation and entrepreneurship. Encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship can lead to the creation of new industries and job opportunities. Support for startups and research and development initiatives can contribute to economic growth.

“ The three most important factors for providing and recognising valued employment are fair compensation, equal opportunity and diversity, and innovation and entrepreneurship. ”

**Brandon Quek Zi Hao, 17**
*Singapore Polytechnic, Singapore*

# In what ways can all people employed across various sectors be valued and contribute positively to his/her society?

Individuals in all professions have an important responsibility to contribute positively to Indian society in various ways. This includes stimulating economic growth, driving innovation and progress, providing essential services, upholding justice, promoting education and knowledge dissemination, enhancing public health, and addressing societal challenges. All working professionals play integral roles in shaping the nation's development and are admired for their unwavering dedication to the betterment of society.

**Prateek Biyani, 26**
*Symbiosis International (Deemed University), India*

Note:
Contributions by youth delegates were edited for length and clarity.

# Discussion Questions

We invite you to use the discussion questions and resource links to engage in dialogue in your classrooms and programmes on the theme of *Inclusive Growth in ASEAN*. We hope it will serve as a useful springboard for conversations on issues pertinent to the region, and for youth to reflect on the role they can play in shaping a better future for their country and ASEAN.
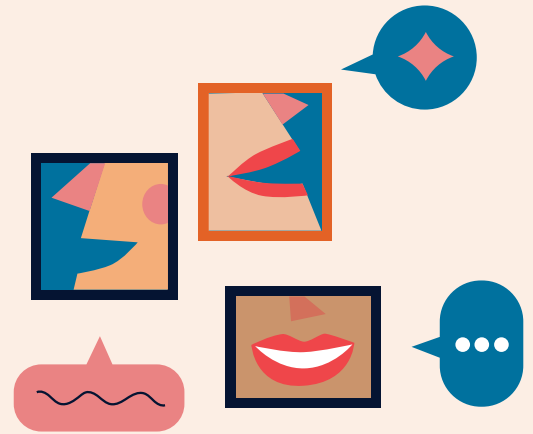
## Inclusive Growth in ASEAN

1) What does inclusive growth mean in the context of ASEAN countries? What are some key indicators that signify inclusivity in a growing economy?

2) What are the major barriers and challenges that hinder inclusive growth in ASEAN countries?

3) How can ASEAN countries leverage on its strengths such as cultural diversity to promote inclusive growth?

4) In what ways can collaboration among ASEAN countries foster inclusive growth?

## Providing Equitable Access to Inclusive and Quality Education

5) Why is having access to an inclusive and quality education important to you or in your country?

6) What priority areas should ASEAN countries focus on in improving equitable access to inclusive and quality education?

7) What has your country done to tackle challenges to achieving equitable access to an inclusive and quality education?

8) How has education increased your opportunities?

## Bridging the Digital Divide

9) How do you think the digital divide affects the daily lives of people in ASEAN countries?

10) How can youth in ASEAN countries use their digital skills to address societal challenges and contribute to their communities?

11) How can technology bridge the gap and provide opportunities for the underprivileged in ASEAN countries?

12) How do you think youth can work together to reduce the difference in access to technology in your country?

## Creating and Recognising Valued Employment for All

13) Why do you think it is important to create valuable job opportunities for everyone?

14) What are the challenges to creating and recognising valued employment for all in ASEAN countries?

15) In what ways can all people employed across various sectors be valued and contribute positively to his/her society?

16) What valued job opportunities will you consider going into and how will you better equip yourself for them?

# Resource Links

## ● ● ● Organisations

Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth:
https://www.mccy.gov.sg/

National Youth Council (NYC):
https://www.nyc.gov.sg/

NYC Asia-Ready Exposure Programme (AEP):
https://www.nyc.gov.sg/programmes-grants/asia-ready-exposure-programme

ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute:
https://www.iseas.edu.sg/

The ASEAN Secretariat:
https://asean.org/

ASEAN Foundation:
https://www.aseanfoundation.org/

ASEAN Youth Organisation (AYO):
https://aseanyouth.net/

## ● ● ● Publications

*The ASEAN* by the ASEAN Secretariat:
https://theaseanmagazine.asean.org/

*The State of Southeast Asia:*
*2023 Survey* by the ASEAN Studies Centre:
https://www.iseas.edu.sg/category/articles-commentaries/state-of-southeast-asia-survey/

*ASEANFocus* by the ASEAN Studies Centre:
https://www.iseas.edu.sg/category/articles-commentaries/aseanfocus/

# Acknowledgements

With sincere gratitude, we present this E-Booklet during the 2023 Youth Model ASEAN Conference. Our heartfelt thanks go to the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) and the National Youth Council (NYC). Your commitment to fostering youth potential and diplomatic engagement has been a driving force behind this initiative.

To the delegates of the Youth Model ASEAN Conference, both past and present, we extend our appreciation. Your dedication to understanding our region's complexities and your thoughtful discourse have been instrumental in creating this platform for dialogue and innovative solutions.

A special note of gratitude goes to the YMAC Organising Committee. Your meticulous planning and dedicated efforts have been the foundation of this conference, reflecting your commitment to excellence.

We also acknowledge the mentors, advisors, speakers, and volunteers who have generously shared their expertise. Your guidance has left a lasting impact on the youth delegates, inspiring them to strive for greatness. This E-Booklet signifies a collective achievement born from collaboration and dedication. As we look ahead, we remain hopeful that the ideas cultivated here will flourish into actions that shape a better ASEAN community.