



The VR Contest **Handbook**



Introduction

About SIMPLE

SIMPLE (Sustainability Issues Multiverse for building Participatory Learning Environments) is an EU-funded collaborative project that aims to explore the value of virtual reality (VR) in raising young people's awareness of the need to build sustainable solutions to environmental challenges. Through immersive, educational VR experiences, SIMPLE transforms complex environmental data into engaging games and interactive evidence-based simulations, enabling youth to explore critical ecological issues and discover potential solutions in a virtual world.

Since 2023, SIMPLE has successfully developed six Virtual Universes (VUs) across the Mekong region, enabling students and educators to experience the integration of VR in education through pilot implementations. These VUs address a range of sustainability topics, such as biodiversity in Thailand, water salinity in Vietnam, epidemiology in Laos, and agroecological crop protection in Cambodia. All VUs developed under SIMPLE are open-source, promoting the wider adoption of VR-based learning across the region.

About the VR Contest

The SIMPLE VR Contest is inviting applicants across ASEAN to design and develop original VR experiences that address sustainability topics in a fun, creative and impactful way using the tools and resources provided by SIMPLE.

The SIMPLE VR Contest is structured into three different rounds. First, a preliminary stage focuses on the selection of the best concept notes, emphasizing the sustainability messages that the participants intend to convey through their games. This is followed by a development and training program, where selected teams benefit from direct mentorship provided by the SIMPLE team and IRD researchers as they work on their VR game prototypes. Finally, the contest concludes with a grand finale, featuring a live exhibition and an awards ceremony that will honor the three most outstanding teams.

Beyond the competition itself, the contest will create meaningful opportunities for collaboration by connecting students, researchers, practitioners, and industry professionals around a shared goal of communicating scientific messages on sustainability and inspiring public action. The contest will also serve as a platform for identifying and nurturing emerging talents across ASEAN, creating pathways for participants to connect with industry professionals and sustainability-focused organizations for long-term collaboration and career opportunities beyond the contest. These trained individuals, the "young ambassadors", will become a permanent pool of regional experts who can diffuse in their home countries the "constructionist" and hands-on approach to learning promoted by SIMPLE.

Theme of the contest

The SIMPLE VR Contest invites young creators across ASEAN to develop an **original VR experience** that communicates meaningful messages on sustainability challenges, using SIMPLE's resources as their technical foundation.



*What are
participants
asked to
create?*

Each team is asked to propose an original VR experience that immerses players in a sustainability challenge relevant to the region. The game must be built using SIMPLE's tools and resources, and should communicate a clear, science-based message that raises awareness, inspires action to identify solutions for mitigation to sustainability issues.



Deliverables

The contest will be split into two separate phases, each having dedicated expected deliverables:

Phase 1: Concept note

- ★ The sustainability issue the team wishes to address and its relevance, urgency, and expected impact on young people;
- ★ The core message to be conveyed through their VR game and the expected positive outcome of properly delivering this message;
- ★ A brief technical development proposal, including intended tools, approaches, technical challenges for the team and implementation plan.

Phase 2.1: Design document (after the training)

- ★ A VR game/experience script and narrative outlining the sustainability issue addressed, the core message and its intended impact, and the player's journey;
- ★ A presentation explaining the design choices (gameview, gameplay, etc.), the chosen approach and tools, and potential remaining technical challenges.

Phase 2.2: Development of the Virtual Universe (VU)

- ★ A playable fully fledged VU game developed using the team's choice of open-source or free tools, including at least the core of the SIMPLE toolbox:
 - ★ 3D VR game assets in Blender or equivalent free software
 - ★ A VR game developed as a set of scenes in Unity Engine
 - ★ (Optional) several GAMA model(s) serving as scientific references for the Virtual Universes.
- ★ Reference and documentation about the SIMPLE toolbox are available here: <https://doc.project-simple.eu/>

Objectives

The SIMPLE VR Contest is designed to expand access to virtual reality technologies in education and empower young people across ASEAN to become active contributors to sustainability solutions. It aims to:

01



Empower youth to creatively explore and communicate sustainability challenges through immersive VR experiences;

02



Build capacity in VR technologies and sustainability literacy among students across ASEAN;

03



Foster cross-sector collaboration among academia, CSOs, and the private sector around shared sustainability goals;

04



Raise public awareness on sustainability issues by enabling young people across ASEAN to build, experience, and engage with VR technology as a tool for change.

Prizes & Recognition



CASH PRIZES
for the
03 FINALIST TEAMS
(to be announced)

VR EQUIPMENT
to the **3 FINALIST TEAMS**
at their **HOME INSTITUTIONS**
ensuring long-term student access



CERTIFICATES
for **ALL 11 TEAMS**
issued by **IRD**

Eligibility and team composition

3-5 team members



01 mentor



Each team consists of three to five participants and one professor or mentor. Team members are primarily university students operating within ASEAN member countries. We strongly promote gender balance and actively encourage teams to include female creators.

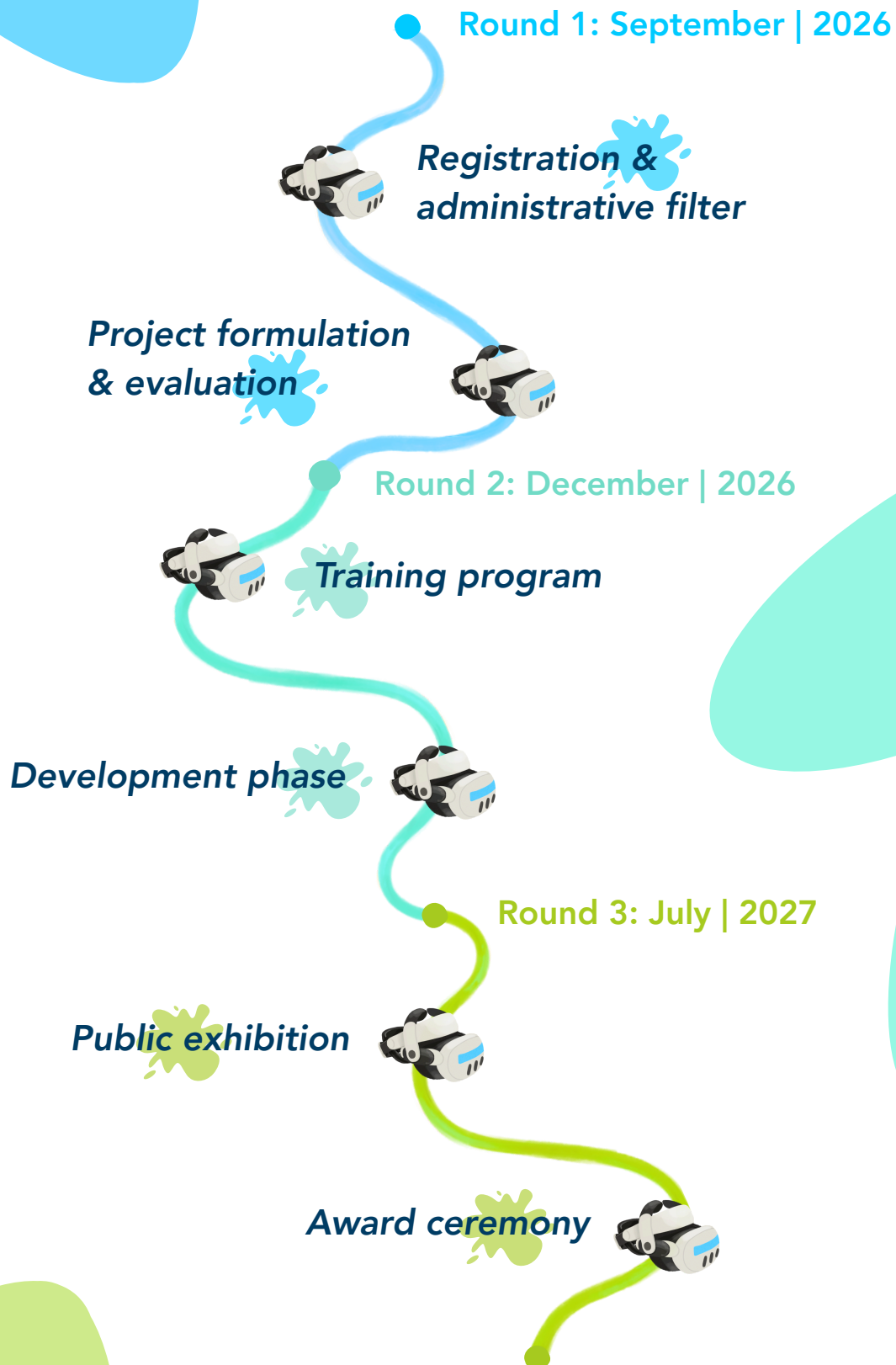
Teams can invite non-academic members to provide specialized expertise (e.g., 3D modeling, graphic design, technical/scientific skills) under these rules:

- * They must not constitute the majority of the team.
- * Their specific contribution to the project must be clearly described in the application form.
- * Unless an exception is granted, they are not eligible to attend the training program.

- * *If the profile of your team does not exactly fit these descriptions, please complete the registration form anyway for a case-by-case eligibility assessment by the contest committee.*
- * *Teams are allowed to change their composition only once, with a maximum modification of two members. Any changes to the team composition must be submitted to, and approved by the contest committee.*
- * *A participant is strictly permitted to register and participate in only one team for the duration of the contest. Dual-registration will result in disqualification.*
- * *Only one member shall fill out and submit the official registration form on behalf of the entire team.*

Timeline

Please note that the timeline below is indicative and may be subject to minor adjustments to accommodate the participation of teams across ASEAN member states.



Contest structure
& rounds

Round 1: Preliminary round

(1st September - 20th November 2026)

The preliminary round is designed to bring together complementary perspectives from across the region. Beyond evaluating individual submissions, the selection process actively seeks to ensure balance across key dimensions, including geographic representation from all 11 ASEAN member states, a diversity of sustainability themes, cross-disciplinary backgrounds, and gender-balanced team compositions, in order to assemble a cohort that truly reflects the richness and diversity of the ASEAN region.



Phase 1: Registration and administrative filter

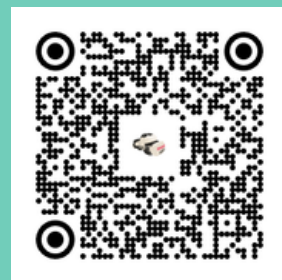
- * **1.1 Online profile completion:** Teams initiate the process by completing individual member profiles in English on the [SIMPLE VR Contest's page](#), compiling personal information, ASEAN countries of origin, fields of interest (game development, 3D modeling, sustainability), and professional portfolios or relevant past works.
- * **1.2 Technical and social capability assessment:** The project administration evaluates the submitted profiles against baseline compliance criteria. Registrations are assessed based on the team's technical capability to build a functioning VR game, their demonstrated alignment with sustainability challenges, and geographic distribution across the 11 ASEAN member states.

Phase 2: Project formulation and evaluation

- * **2.1 Concept note submission:** Teams formally submit a comprehensive concept note in English via the contest email. This document must explicitly detail:
 - The target sustainability issue along with its relevance, urgency, and regional impact.
 - The core message to be delivered through the immersive gameplay.
 - A technical development proposal outlining the intended software tools, development approaches, and the overall implementation schedule.



[Concept note template](#)



- * *Please note that submitting a concept note is only applicable to teams that have received an official confirmation of their eligibility via email.*

- * **2.2 Multidisciplinary jury review:** The submitted concept notes undergo a formal evaluation by a multidisciplinary jury of experts specializing in VR, modeling and simulation, computer science, sociology, pedagogy, and environmental sciences.
- * **2.3 Evaluation criteria:** The jury scores the documents based on four explicit metrics: the significance of the sustainability issue, the clarity/impact of the message, the originality of the narrative design, and the technical feasibility of the proposal.
- * **2.4 Final selection:** Based on the jury's scoring and the requirement for broad regional representation, a final cohort of 11 teams, ideally representing one team per ASEAN member state, is selected to advance.



A stylized illustration of a woman with dark hair, wearing a white lab coat over a dark skirt, a white VR headset, and yellow gloves. She is standing with her right arm raised, as if interacting with a virtual environment. The background is a solid blue color with a large, light blue abstract shape behind her.

Round 2: Development & training program

(1st December 2026 - 20th April 2027)

In the second round, the eleven selected teams will develop their initial concepts into complete, playable VR game/experience prototypes designed to communicate a meaningful sustainability message, using SIMPLE's tools and resources. Each selected team will receive essential equipment from SIMPLE (VR headset & laptop) to support the development of their prototype during this round and will be invited to participate in a common training session.

Training program

To strengthen participants' technical capacity, and to set a starting ground for all the teams, a seven-day intensive training session will be organized at ACROSS Laboratory, in Hanoi, to help them effectively utilize SIMPLE's technological tools and platforms. The program will include:

- ✳ Hands-on technical sessions on key tools and software, including Blender, Unity, and GAMA;
- ✳ Guidance on designing a coherent game script and narrative for a VR environment;

All travel and accommodation expenses of academic participants for the training session will be covered by the SIMPLE project.

Development phase (following the training program)

Over the following months, teams will independently develop their VR game/experience prototypes with ongoing support from the SIMPLE project, including:

01



Mentorship: Regular remote guidance sessions with assigned mentors from SIMPLE team;

02



Technical support: Access to SIMPLE's platforms, resources, and technical assistance as needed;

03



Progress checkpoints: Teams will be asked to submit periodic progress updates to ensure development is on track and to identify any support needed.

Round 3: Grand finale

The final round serves as the highlight of the SIMPLE VR Contest, choosing the top three outstanding teams to showcase their completed VR experiences before a panel of expert judges and a live audience.



Public exhibition

VR experiences of the top three outstanding teams will be displayed in an open exhibition space, allowing participants, educators, invited guests, and the public to experience each game firsthand and provide feedback.

Team's presentation

Each team will be given a set amount of time to present their VR game, covering:

- * A live demonstration of their virtual experiences;
- * An explanation of their design process and technical approach;
- * A description of the sustainability message conveyed and its intended impact.

Q&A session

The judging panel and audience will have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the potential impact and feasibility of each VR experience.

Award ceremony

The event will conclude with a formal award ceremony, during which:

- * **Prizes** (to be announced) will be awarded to the top three teams;
- * **Recognition certificates** will be presented to all eleven finalist teams in acknowledgement of their contribution to the contest.
- * **Receiving VR equipment** for their home institution - giving fellow students ongoing access to VR technology for learning and hands-on exploration long after the contest ends.

The final round (grand finale) is expected to take a whole day (exact date and location to be announced). All the expenses (including travel expenses and accommodation) for the top three outstanding teams will be covered by the SIMPLE project.



The VR Contest

