

# 2020 Regional Results Report Of the UN System for **Asia and the Pacific**

23 March 2021



## United in action: System-wide results of the United Nations development system at the regional level in Asia-Pacific in 2020

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*The document provides an overview of regional challenges and regional responses of the United Nations development system at the regional level in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and highlights some examples of systemwide action and results at the regional level in the course of 2020. The document responds to the call by the Secretary-General for annual reporting on system-wide results at the regional level.*

*The year 2020 has been defined by unprecedented disruptions. The extraordinary socio-economic impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic have added further hurdles on the road towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the region. The United Nations development system in Asia and the Pacific has swiftly mobilized its collective expertise to assist countries and stakeholders in their efforts to save lives and sustain the momentum around the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Whether by forging consensus among governments in the region to strengthen social protection, ensuring the delivery of quality education and health services during the pandemic, helping close the digital divide, mobilizing volunteers to respond to the pandemic, or strengthening data and statistics, joint actions have focused on leaving no one behind.*

*The five Issue-based Coalitions established under the Regional Collaborative Platform as of July 2020 have also allowed for a more coordinated and focused response by the United Nations development system at regional level on key priority areas for the region, namely (i) climate change mitigation, (ii) building resilience, (iii) inclusion and empowerment, (iv) human mobility and urbanization, and (v) human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment. Targeted support to countries, resident coordinators and United Nations country teams in these key areas are helping to set a strong foundation for building back better from the pandemic, in line with the 2030 Agenda.*

### I. Introduction

The year 2020 has been a year defined by unprecedented disruptions. The impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic risk reversing decades of hard-earned socio-economic progress. But all countries in the region have quickly rolled out policy measures, including fiscal and monetary measures, to support affected businesses and households. Many of these experiences

have shown how the pandemic should not upend the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To this end, the United Nations development system in Asia and the Pacific has promptly mobilized its collective expertise to assist countries and stakeholders in their efforts to save lives and sustain the momentum around the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. As the implementation of the reform of the United Nations development system at the regional level gathers pace, the newly created Regional Collaborative Platform has allowed for more responsive and coherent analytical and policy support to the national level. The new coordination structure, in its first six months of operation, has left an imprint in more gender-responsive and human-rights centered COVID-19 assessments and response plans, new regional dialogues around climate action and data for the Sustainable Development Goals, and coherent policy messages on strengthening social protection, people mobility and disaster risk reduction.

Results are also noted in other areas of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The United Nations development system in Asia-Pacific continues to work with regional and national stakeholders to build a stronger evidence base for policy making in areas such as people mobility, quality education for all, and climate-induced disaster risks. New solutions are being piloted and upscaled in areas critical for sustainable development such as bridging the digital divide, building sustainable food systems and economic empowerment for women. United Nations intergovernmental platforms have been utilized to facilitate member States' deliberation on raising the level of ambition on social protection. Partnerships with sub-regional organisations have been strengthened.

The present report provides an overview of the joint work undertaken and highlights of the results achieved by the United Nations development system in Asia and the Pacific at the regional level in 2020, in partnership with national and local governments, subregional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society organisations, and the business sector.

## **II. Advancing the Secretary-General's reforms at the regional level**

In 2019, the Secretary-General outlined five transformative areas for restructuring United Nations regional assets in support of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>1</sup> These included a unified United Nations internal mechanism for regional coordination; the establishment of strong regional knowledge-management hubs; annual reporting on system-wide results of the United Nations at the regional level in support of the 2030 Agenda; the consolidation of existing capacities on data and statistics; and the identification of administrative services that could be provided more efficiently through common back offices.

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<sup>1</sup> A/74/73 – E/2019/14.

Member States asked to further tailor the Secretary-General's approach for a revamped regional approach on a region-by-region basis. In the course of 2019 and 2020, an interagency task team co-led by the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), supported by ESCAP and the Development Cooperation Office (DCO) Asia-Pacific, assisted the entities of the United Nations development system in Asia Pacific in developing region-specific recommendations and a roll-out plan to implement measures identified for the five transformative areas, supported by dedicated interagency working groups.

As soon as the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) welcomed the Secretary-General's recommendations to harness regional assets in July 2020<sup>2</sup>, the United Nations development system in Asia Pacific has been working together to develop the plans for their full implementation. This has given the region a head start so that with the formal establishment of the Asia-Pacific Regional Collaborative Platform in October 2020 it was immediately operational and meeting regularly to share updates on emerging issues and coordinate joint regional interventions, including in response to COVID-19. The Regional Collaborative Platform has identified five Issue-based Coalitions and which are enabling a more coordinated response by the United Nations at regional level to key priority areas and cross-cutting challenges in the region, namely:

- a) Climate change mitigation;
- b) Building resilience;
- c) Inclusion and empowerment;
- d) Human mobility and urbanization;
- e) Human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Issue-based coalitions have developed work plans and in 2020 prioritized actions in support of COVID-19 assessments and responses. Moreover, dedicated dialogues with groups of Resident Coordinators in Asia and the Pacific were organized to better match the regional expertise and offer of support with national demands.

The Asia Pacific Regional Knowledge Management Hub<sup>3</sup> is already in place and a soft launch was organized on 15 October 2020 in conjunction with the 390th session of ESCAP's Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission. The Knowledge Hub draws from the existing SDG Helpdesk developed by ESCAP with resources and financial contributions of the broader regional United Nations development system. The Knowledge Hub facilitates universal access of countries and United Nations Country Teams to knowledge resources, communities of practice and expertise across the United Nations development system. At the time of writing the Hub was being further fine-tuned, with a view to its official launch at the eighth Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable

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<sup>2</sup> E/RES/2020/23

<sup>3</sup> The Asia-Pacific Knowledge Management Hub can be accessed at: <https://knowledge.unasiapacific.org/>

Development in March 2021. There is also ongoing discussion on the harmonization of common elements and operating principles with other regions.

Asia and the Pacific was the first region to report on system-wide results of the United Nations at the regional level in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the seventh Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development in May 2020. The reporting was supported by a joint report, which presented the value proposition of the United Nations development system in Asia and the Pacific and highlighted in this regard key results achieved in 2019, focusing on contributions to regional-level initiatives and to country level support.<sup>4</sup> The current report builds on the experience of the first report and further highlights the work of the Issue-based Coalitions and Working Groups under the Regional Collaborative Platform since their establishment.

In terms of data and statistics, the SDG Gateway<sup>5</sup> provides consolidated data on progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional level, acting as a one-stop-shop for SDG data, and feeds into the global SDG indicator database maintained by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, which compiles data from the United Nations system for the annual report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The annual Asia and the Pacific SDG progress report<sup>6</sup> has evolved to mobilise inputs of United Nations at the regional level. The 2020 edition benefited from contributions from UNDP, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). Moreover, the Asia-Pacific Regional Collaborative Platform’s Working Group on SDG Data and Statistics has focused on the harmonization and alignment of SDG data and statistics and also been the source of technical support for Resident Coordinators, United Nations Country Teams and National Statistics Offices including to navigate the impacts of COVID-19 on statistical operations. The regular “Asia-Pacific Stats Café” webinar series has facilitated exchanges of practices and advice between United Nations entities and national statistics offices, with topics aligned to country priorities and requests for assistance.

Finally, the first-ever Regional Operations Management Team comprising business operations expertise from regional entities was formed in October 2020 and is currently working towards the rollout of a regional business operations strategy for Asia Pacific, as well as supporting countries in the region with the implementation of the business operations reform initiatives to support greater efficiencies and effectiveness of their operations.

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4 ESCAP/RFS/2020/INF/3 available at: [https://www.unescap.org/apfsd/7/document/ARFSD7\\_INF3E.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/apfsd/7/document/ARFSD7_INF3E.pdf)

5 The SDG Gateway can be accessed at: <https://data.unescap.org/home>

6 The 2020 Asia-Pacific SDG Progress Report can be accessed at [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/publications/ESCAP\\_Asia\\_and\\_the\\_Pacific\\_SDG\\_Progress\\_Report\\_2020.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/publications/ESCAP_Asia_and_the_Pacific_SDG_Progress_Report_2020.pdf)

### III. Regional challenges, opportunities and responses from the United Nations development system in Asia and the Pacific

The Asia Pacific region stands at a critical crossroads at the outset of the Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals. On its way towards 2030, the region needs ambitious actions to change course and accelerate progress in a range of development challenges such as growing inequalities, runaway climate change, and persisting barriers to women's empowerment. The COVID-19 pandemic and its profound socio-economic impacts are likely to complicate further the trajectory towards sustainable development in the region.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the region was not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.<sup>7</sup> The region has made the most progress in ensuring healthy lives and well-being (Goal 3) and promoting sustainable industrialisation and innovation (Goal 9). However, it has regressed in terms of taking climate action (Goal 13) and conservation and sustainable use of oceans and marine resources (Goal 14).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an adverse impact on progress across the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development. COVID-19 induced economic contraction could push 93 million people to living below the poverty line while exacerbating inequalities, particularly among women and informal workers.<sup>8</sup> The environmental gains from economic slowdown such as improved air quality have been coupled with a surge in plastic waste. As much as 6.7 million students in the region at the primary and secondary level are at risk of dropping out, jeopardizing the hard-earned progress in promoting education for all<sup>9</sup>. The occurrence of COVID-19 itself has coincided with devastating disasters across Asia-Pacific countries, including tropical cyclones and floods, that have resulted in compounded impacts, further pronouncing vulnerabilities<sup>10</sup>.

While imperilling the region's progress to deliver the 17 Goals by 2030, the pandemic makes achieving them ever more imperative. Sustainable and transformative solutions will be needed to address the fault lines which have made the region and its people vulnerable to this pandemic and to build resilience against future shocks.

Many of the solutions require actions beyond a single country's borders. They require cooperation to develop and upscale common solutions. They require bringing together and bridging the connections across stakeholders at all levels. They also require supporting national efforts to implement international norms and standards. Addressing these needs is at the heart of the value proposition of the United Nations development system in Asia and the Pacific and has guided its collaboration towards the 2030 Agenda and recovery from the pandemic.

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<sup>7</sup> *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2021* (United Nations publication, forthcoming).

<sup>8</sup> *The protection we want: Social outlook for Asia and the Pacific* (United Nations publication, Sales No.: E.20.II.F.19)

<sup>9</sup> *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2021* (United Nations publication, forthcoming)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.undrr.org/publication/undrr-asia-pacific-covid-19-brief-combating-dual-challenges-climate-related-disasters>

The United Nations development system in Asia Pacific, working out of regional and subregional hubs, including the central hub of Bangkok, offers a unique value proposition in supporting countries to achieve inclusive, resilient and sustainable development through five main entry points.

- Firstly, through the collective ability to **address regional, sub-regional, transboundary challenges** to sustainable development, ones that transcend borders, such as unregulated migration, air pollution, natural and man-made disasters, conflicts or the transboundary spread of pests and diseases.
- Secondly, by bridging between the global and national levels and **supporting United Nations Country Teams** to help the countries they serve.
- Thirdly, through the role it plays in **developing and scaling up solutions to common challenges** and transferring them to countries.
- Fourthly, by helping ensure implementation and **follow up and review of global and regional norms, standards and frameworks**.
- Finally, **by fostering and facilitating engagement and collaboration with subregional intergovernmental organisations**.

Moreover, since July 2020, the five Issue-based Coalitions set-up by the Regional Collaborative Platform are enabling a coordinated and focused response by the United Nations development system at regional level to key priority areas and cross-cutting challenges in the region. Each Issue-based Coalition, with a joint annual workplan and deliverables, brings together the expertise and resources across the regional entities of the United Nations to provide coordinated support to Resident Coordinators, United Nations Country Teams and Member States. In 2020, the five Coalitions prioritised their actions in support of COVID-19 socio-economic assessments and responses at the national and regional level.

The following sections provide an overview of the key activities and interim results in 2020 in each of the priority areas of action including the work for each Issue-Based Coalition. It provides selected highlights of joint work in the course of 2020, which showcase and illustrate the contribution of the regional United Nations development system in Asia-Pacific in assisting member States accelerate action towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **IV. Highlights of system-wide results at the regional level in 2020**

##### **A. Climate Change Mitigation**

###### *Supporting the region through the Issue-based Coalition*

The Issue-based Coalition on Climate Change Mitigation is structured around the following objectives.

- i. Raise ambitions on climate action through Nationally Determined Contributions;

- ii. Accelerate action on air pollution in Asia Pacific to move towards achieving World Health Organization (WHO) air quality guidelines by 2030;
- iii. Accelerate the phase out of coal in Asia Pacific, and
- iv. Making COVID-19 related fiscal measures climate responsive.

The Issue-based Coalition is co-led by ESCAP and UNEP, with the participation and contribution of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), ILO, the International Organization on Migration (IOM), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNDP, UNESCO, the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), UNFPA, UNICEF, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), and WHO. Dedicated working groups help advance the first three objectives while all entities contribute to mainstreaming COVID-19-related issues in climate responses. The principals of the two co-lead entities have also issued a joint op-ed to raise awareness on the opportunities for building back better in the aftermath of the pandemic.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Objective 1. Raise ambitions on climate action through Nationally Determined Contributions*

The Working Group on Raising Climate Ambition has leveraged ongoing work in support of nationally determined contributions providing technical assistance to countries on the development of carbon pricing and market mechanisms. ESCAP and UNEP have developed a report on Progress of National Determined Contributions Implementation in Asia-Pacific: Methodological Framework and Preliminary Findings. This is complemented by a guidebook for policy makers on Accelerating the Implementation of the Paris Agreement in the Asia-Pacific region presented at the sixth session of the Committee on Environment and Development of ESCAP.

#### *Objective 2. Accelerate action on air pollution*

The Working Group on Air Pollution coordinated the commemorations on 8 September 2020 of the first International Day of Clean Air for blue skies, as called for by the United Nations General Assembly. The event gathered a wide online audience of approximately 2,200 live viewers and 18,000 views of the recordings on YouTube, as of December 2020. The group is currently developing a joint advocacy strategy to accelerate action on air pollution. On-going and planned activities by members have put a focus on adopting UNEP's 25 clean air measures published in 2019. The group mapped regional and subregional initiatives to explore opportunities for developing an intergovernmental modality on clean air and a regional clean air fund. The group also developed a set of basic 'Climate Science Literacy Materials' to allow access to knowledge and skills on unbiased climate change issues.

#### *Objective 3. Accelerate the phase-out of coal in Asia Pacific*

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<sup>11</sup> Alisjahbana, Armida and Andersen, Ingrid: *Let's not return to the 'old normal'*, published in the Bangkok Post on 16 June 2020, available at: <https://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/1935440/lets-not-return-to-the-old-normal>



In 2020, through a joint work plan, the Working Group on Coal Phase-out has (i) completed a concept note for organising coal phase-out webinars and initiated discussions with UN RCs in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Viet Nam to move these forward; (ii) finalised the concept for a joint publication on coal-phase out; (iii) reached an agreement among working group members to establish coal tracker website, and (iv) initiated a proposal to raise funds for supposing countries to transition out of fossil fuel. In 2021 the working group plans to achieve the following: (i) Conduct joint webinars on coal phase-out in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Viet Nam; and identify second round of countries to take forward the dialogue, (ii) Finalize publication on coal phase-out to provide the current assessment and potential pathways for Asia, (iii) Organize a regional dialogue in conjunction with the third session of the Committee on Energy of ESCAP in February 2021, (iv) Develop two policy papers (“Why phase out?” and “Key steps for phase out and smarting the grid to integrate renewable energy”), (v) initiate discussions with Powering Past Coal Alliance to undertake joint work on accelerate the phasing down and phasing out of coal in Asia and the Pacific, and (vi) establish an expert panel on energy transition to guide the countries on coal phase out.

## **B. Building Resilience**

### *Supporting the region through the Issue-based Coalition*

The Issue-Based Coalition on Building Resilience brings together the work on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. It is co-led by UNDP and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), with the participation and contribution from ESCAP, FAO, ILO, IOM, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), OHCHR, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFCCC, UNFPA, UN Habitat, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, UNIDO, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), UN Women, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and the World Food Organizations (WFP).

The Coalition is structured along four work streams: 1) Integration of health emergencies in disaster risk reduction; 2) Disaster and climate risk analysis; 3) Resilient recovery, and 4) Disaster and climate-related displacement.

The Coalition developed two knowledge products during 2020. One such is the synthesis report “Recovering from COVID-19: Lessons from Past Disasters in Asia and the Pacific”<sup>12</sup>, led by UNDP, which highlights the good practices from the region ranging from collecting and using data to financing arrangements and multi-stakeholder partnerships. Another example is the “Review of COVID-19 Disaster Risk Governance in Asia-Pacific: Towards Multi-Hazard and Multi-Sectoral

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12 Available at : <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/crisis-prevention-and-recovery/recovering-from-COVID-19-lessons-from-past-disasters-in-asia-pacific.html>

Disaster Risk Reduction<sup>13</sup>”, led by UNDRR, identifying the areas where disaster risk governance in the region can be strengthened to buffer future crises. The Coalition also supported the roll out of the guidance note on “Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework”<sup>14</sup> in countries such as China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Timor Leste.

The Coalition delivered capacity building activities. These include a regional orientation for members of the Coalition and the Regional Peer Support Group on the aforementioned global guidance; an orientation webinar on COVID-19 recovery needs assessments as part of post-disaster needs assessments for 74 members of the regional United Nations development system, and a Virtual Regional Exchange on Disaster-Induced Displacement in collaboration with governmental representatives from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Mongolia, Philippines and Sri Lanka and 276 participants from 18 Asian countries to inform the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Internal Displacement. Moreover, a virtual discussion was organized on 4 December 2020 between 12 Resident Coordinators in the region and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons on the findings and recommendations of her report to the General Assembly entitled “Internal displacement in the context of the slow-onset adverse effects of climate change”.

Finally, a joint work stream was established with the Issue-based Coalition on Climate Mitigation focusing on raising the ambition of nationally determined contributions and green recovery.

#### *Building resilience to transboundary climate-induced disasters*

The latest analysis by ESCAP and the ASEAN Secretariat reveals a statistically significant increase in temperature over the past 40 years. The report “Ready for the Dry Years: Building Resilience to Drought in Southeast Asia”, in its second edition, highlights that no ASEAN Member State will be spared from the disruption that this transboundary slow onset disaster brings to livelihoods and food security. This urgency was enhanced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The analytical findings helped to inform the “ASEAN Declaration on the Strengthening of the Adaptation to Drought” adopted in October 2020. The United Nations development system in the region collaborated also to support the ASEAN Community in developing the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response Work Programme 2021-2025, endorsed at the 8th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management.

Key to building resilience to climate-induced disasters is shock responsive social protection. To this end, FAO, ILO, UNICEF, and WFP, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), launched the “ASEAN guidelines on disaster responsive social protection to increase resilience” in October 2020, endorsed by three ASEAN sectoral bodies. The guidelines were also highlighted

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13 Available at <https://www.undrr.org/publication/review-covid-19-disaster-risk-governance-asia-pacific-towards-multi-hazard-and-multi>

14 <https://www.undrr.org/publication/integrating-disaster-risk-reduction-and-climate-change-adaptation-un-sustainable>

in the ASEAN COVID-19 comprehensive recovery framework and implementation plan given its relevance to COVID-19 response.

As a coordinated approach towards country support on national disaster risk reduction strategies, UNDP and UNDRR collaborated to support the Philippines in updating the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan in October 2020. Moreover, the two entities and partners assisted 29 countries in Asia and the Pacific in developing national disaster loss databases. Technical support was delivered to Pacific Islands countries and territories to develop Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement with the coordination of UNDP and UNDRR.

### **C. Inclusion and empowerment**

#### *Supporting the region through the Issue-based Coalition*

The Issue-based Coalition on Empowerment and Inclusion is co-led by ILO and UNICEF, with the participation and contribution from ESCAP, FAO, OHCHR, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNDRR, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNFPA, the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV), and WFP. The Coalition developed knowledge products and delivered capacity building activities for Resident Coordinators and United Nations country teams.

As governments across the region were taking social protection measures to respond to the crisis, the Coalition developed a timely regional analysis of the initial responses and how to transform short-term measures into comprehensive social protection system.<sup>15</sup> With a focus on sectors where livelihoods were lost, including those of vulnerable populations, the report also provided clear policy messages and recommendations for Resident Coordinators and United Nations country teams across the Asian and Pacific region.

Building on the regional synthesis, the Coalition organized an exchange between the Coalition, regional experts and Resident Coordinators on the impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable and marginalised groups and responses across sectors.

With the increased use of cash by Governments and humanitarian actors in response to COVID-19 and other emergencies, the Regional Cash Working Group, co-chaired by WFP, OCHA and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, facilitated regional sharing of knowledge, experience and new developments and organized joint training with the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group.

#### *Informing and facilitating the endorsement of an Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation on Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific*

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<sup>15</sup> “Social protection responses to COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific: The story so far and future considerations”, available at [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_753550.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_753550.pdf)

While the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the critical importance of social protection, only 46 per cent of Asia-Pacific's population is covered by at least one social protection scheme. At the same time, the level of investments on social protection across the regions is less than half of the global average.

In order to bridge this gap, ESCAP and ILO assisted Member States in the development of the Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation on Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific, which was adopted at the sixth session of Committee on Social Development of ESCAP in October 2020<sup>16</sup>. The Action Plan was developed by government nominated experts from more than 15 countries in the region with support from ESCAP and ILO. It spells out 15 national actions and three regional actions to enhance the implementation of comprehensive social protection measures in countries of the region. Support to countries and United Nations country teams to implement the Action Plan is being extended through the Issue-Based Coalition on Inclusion and Empowerment and Resident Coordinators Offices.

The development of the Action Plan and the deliberations at the Committee were informed by the joint ESCAP-ILO report titled "The protection we want: Social Outlook for Asia and the Pacific". The report identifies the emerging megatrends affecting the social protection systems in the region and the structural gaps in the design and delivery.

#### *Supporting the continuation of quality education in the context of COVID-19*

Collaboration among regional United Nations entities in Asia and the Pacific was stepped-up in 2020 to protect the rights to education during the unprecedented COVID-induced disruption and ensure progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4.

UNESCO, UNICEF and Cambridge Education, supported by the Working Group on Education 2030+, conducted a rapid assessment of the impact of and responses to COVID-19 in education in Asia and the Pacific and developed case studies for effective national responses. As the spread of COVID-19 increased, UNESCO, UNICEF and other development partners developed and launched a survey to gain a better understanding of situations, practices and challenges faced during COVID-19-related school closures and re-openings.

Central to the work of the Working Group on Education 2030+ in 2020 was also the five-year regional review of progress in achieving Goal 4 in the region, contributing to the global review of progress towards the Education 2030 Agenda. The review was conducted through a participatory process consisting of national surveys and collection of case study, expert group reviews and sub-regional consultations. Inspired by the regional process, countries such as Malaysia and Myanmar have formulated plans for their national review of progress. The final regional review report, scheduled for 2021, will inform Member States' deliberation at the Ministerial Meeting on Education 2030.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.unescap.org/events/committee-social-development-sixth-session>

Additionally, the Working Group on Education 2030+ organized in September 2020 a regional online consultation to discuss and collect regional inputs from Member States, partners and key stakeholders for the Extraordinary Session of the Global Education Meeting, to help assess the impact of COVID-19 and monitor progress towards the achievement of Goal 4. A regional online knowledge portal on Goal 4-Education 2030 was also developed by the Working Group members.<sup>17</sup> In this regard, UNESCO, UNICEF and WFP, in collaboration with the World Bank and other partners, have supported the translation and adaptation of numerous global technical and operational tools in diverse languages of the Asia-Pacific region for action in the education sector to respond to, and recover from COVID-19. Lastly, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP and other partners worked with governments to support safe school reopening and operations in the context of the pandemic and avoid students dropping out of school, including a series of regional webinars to support exchange of national experiences and lessons learned.

### *Upscaling digitalisation and bridging the digital divide*

As recommended by the Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation, every adult should have affordable access to digital networks by 2030. Despite significant investment in information and communication technology (ICT), this goal is still far from achieved.

In order to accelerate the deployment of digital technologies in agriculture in the region, FAO and ITU organized the Digital Agriculture Solutions Forum 2020 for Asia and the Pacific under the theme "Bridging the digital divide and bringing digital agricultural innovations to smallholders and small-scale enterprises". FAO also launched in 2020 a new digital village initiative in Asia and the Pacific, as part of a global 1000 digital village initiative.

The Smart Villages project implemented by UNOPS and ITU is establishing digital village platforms that function as an integrated and flexible solution for the provision of connectivity and digitally-enabled services (developed and provided by local providers) necessary to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 on women's access to health, information, education, and economic opportunities. Expressions of interest have been received from the governments of Fiji, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu while preliminary study has taken place in parts of Vanuatu. In Indonesia the World Bank has expressed interest in supporting the Ministry of Villages to further replicate and upscale the model. Efforts are also underway to replicate the solution in Pakistan and in the Pacific.

ITU and UNICEF are also rolling out the Giga Initiative in the region, to connect every school in the world to the internet and every young person to information, opportunity, and choice. A webinar on "Greater Schools Connectivity in the Asia and the Pacific: One Step Towards Better Education" was organized in August 2020 and helped identify the challenges and possible solutions such as mapping schools, developing access, availability of funding and e-learning solutions.

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<sup>17</sup> Accessible at: <https://apa.sdg4education2030.org/>

### *Supporting the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development*

The Asia Pacific Indicator Framework for Voluntary Monitoring of Progress Towards the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development of the commitments contained in the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, developed jointly by ESCAP and UNFPA, was endorsed at the sixth session of the Committee on Social Development of ESCAP in October 2020. In addition to providing technical guidance on monitoring of progress towards the Programme of Action and the Ministerial Declaration, drawing primarily from SDG indicators, the framework supports national reporting and analysis of progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

### *Scaling up advocacy and partnerships for food security and nutrition*

Current trends in food insecurity, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, are contributing to increasing the risk of child malnutrition, as food insecurity affects diet quality, including the quality of children's and women's diets. The joint statement issued by FAO, UNICEF, WFP and WHO on nutrition in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in Asia and the Pacific in April 2020 called upon government and other stakeholders to take action to protect the nutritional status of the most vulnerable families and individuals across the region, while implementing appropriate infection prevention control measures.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2020, led by FAO and drafted in collaboration with WFP, UNICEF and WHO, provides data and analysis of trends in the region and recommendations that assist governments to make healthy diets affordable for everyone and set in motion a transformation of existing food systems to make them resilient and sustainable.

WFP in collaboration with FAO, UNICEF and WHO supported nine countries in identifying priority actions to address childhood wasting in the region in support of the Global Action Plan on Wasting. At the subregional level, UNICEF and WFP provided support to the implementation of the ASEAN Post-2015 Health Development Agenda Cluster 1: Promoting healthy lifestyles. This includes the development of guidelines on a school nutrition package starting in 2021 based on a concept note endorsed by the ASEAN Member States in 2020. The two entities also provided support to the development of standards for the implementation of an integrated management of malnutrition. In South Asia, United Nations partners have supported the Network to Improve Nutrition.

## D. Human Mobility and Urbanization

### *Supporting the region through the Issue-based Coalition*

The Issue-based Coalition on Human Mobility and Urbanization is co-led by IOM and UN-Habitat, with the participation and contribution of ESCAP, FAO, ILO, ITU, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNDRR, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), UN Women and WFP.

The Coalition helped mainstream the issues of human mobility and urbanization in the COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, building on the recommendations put forth by the Secretary-General in his policy briefs on COVID-19: People on the Move (June 2020) and COVID-19 in an Urban World (July 2020).

The Coalition conducted a mapping exercise and published a compendium entitled “COVID-19 in Focus: Activities, studies and rapid assessments on Human Mobility and Urbanization and COVID-19”. The synthesis consolidates key initiatives by members of the Coalition to tackle the pandemic in various countries to inform United Nations country teams and other stakeholders.

Members of the Coalition led the commemorations of World Cities Day on 31 October 2020 and the associated launch of the Asia-Pacific Regional Guidelines on Voluntary Local Reviews<sup>18</sup> in collaboration with the Penang Platform for Sustainable Urbanization. Members of the Coalition provided support to the commemoration of the International Migrants Day on 18 December 2020, including the launch of the Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2020. and a webinar on cities and migration organized by United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific.

### *Strengthening the evidence base for managing human mobility*

In support of the Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the United Nations Regional Network on Migration for Asia and the Pacific prepared the Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2020,<sup>19</sup> with contributions from ESCAP, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UN Women and WFP. The report provides a baseline assessment of the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration in Asia-Pacific to facilitate deliberations by Member States and stakeholders at the Regional Review in 2021.

To establish an evidence base for child marriage in humanitarian settings, UNFPA and UNICEF partnered with the Women's Refugee Commission and the Centre for Humanitarian Health at

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18 Asia-Pacific Regional Guidelines on Voluntary Local Reviews”, available at [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Asia-Pacific%20Regional%20Guidelines%20on%20VLRs\\_0.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Asia-Pacific%20Regional%20Guidelines%20on%20VLRs_0.pdf)

19 “Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2020”, (ST/ESCAP/2801), available at <https://www.unescap.org/resources/asia-pacific-migration-report-2020>.

the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health to conduct two country studies on child marriage in humanitarian settings in Bangladesh and Nepal.

## **E. Human Rights, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**

### *Supporting the region through the Issue Based Coalition*

The Issue-based Coalition on Human Rights, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment is co-chaired by OHCHR, UNFPA and UN Women, and includes ESCAP, FAO, ILO, IOM, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNDRR, UNEP, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNODC and WFP. The work in 2020 primarily focused on supporting United Nations Country Teams to assess the impact of COVID-19 and mainstreaming human rights and gender equality in the response and recovery.

The Coalition developed a number of tools, including the "Guidance on including gender equality and human rights in rapid assessments and socio-economic surveys on the impact of COVID-19"; a repository of resources on human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment for COVID-19 response; as well as standard presentation on the integration of human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment in responses and recovery with related key messages.

In August 2020 the Coalition convened the region's first e-training for United Nations Country Teams across Asia and the Pacific on the Gender Equality Marker and its application in the proposals to the United Nations COVID-19 Multi-Partner Trust Fund, and the UN INFO platform. The training, coordinated by UN Women, helped the United Nations at the country level better track investments in gender equality and women's empowerment and collect comparable data. It also provided an opportunity to deepen knowledge of the UN INFO platform to support the tracking of country-level support to governments to implement the 2030 Agenda. Approximately 100 participants from 9 Country Teams<sup>20</sup> attended. After the training, the Country Team in Indonesia decided to roll out the Gender Equality Marker under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator's Office, with the support of the Country Team's Gender Theme Group.

In December 2020, the Coalition conducted a social media campaign leading up to Human Rights Day, highlighting the theme "Build Back Better: Putting Human Rights at the Core of the Recovery". This included joint messages posted by Coalition members over ten days, the sharing of over 30 stories from across the region illustrating the overall theme, culminating in a regional public online event discussing how to build back better with human rights at the core from the perspective of youth, environmental and indigenous peoples' defenders, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and questioning (LGBTIQ) activists, and persons with disabilities or health concerns. The event also launched a year-long regional campaign on building back better.

The Coalition also supported three United Nations country teams with capacity-building activities, including trainings and briefings on human rights, gender equality and leave no one behind. Beneficiaries in 2020 included country teams in the Maldives, Myanmar and Thailand,

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<sup>20</sup> In Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Papua New Guinea and Viet Nam.



particularly in the development of Common Country Analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Frameworks. These regional experiences will be reflected in the United Nations Common Learning Package on a Human Rights-Based Approach.

### *Enhancing the evidence base for actions against gender-based violence*

Violence against women and girls remains an impediment to women's economic empowerment and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. Under the UNiTE working group, UNFPA, UN Women and UNICEF jointly developed Guidelines for Responsible and Representative Reporting of Violence against Women and Violence against Children<sup>21</sup> along with a summary guidance for media personnel.<sup>22</sup> The guidelines were disseminated through three consecutive webinars targeting United Nations personnel, media professionals and civil society organisations.

UNFPA, UN Women and UNICEF also jointly partnered on a regional, multi-country initiative to explore existing examples of collaboration and integration of violence against women and violence against children policies, services and programmes as well as challenges and future opportunities for collaboration in the region with a focus on four countries - Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, and Viet Nam. The four country study reports were launched through a high-level virtual event which concluded with a regional call to action.<sup>23</sup>

Given the high demand for data on gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, UNFPA partnered with UN Women and WHO to jointly develop the tool "Data Collection on Violence against Women and COVID-19: Decision Tree" to guide data collectors through the various considerations, viable options and alternative data sources, ensuring participants' safety or the data's integrity.

### *Examining and strengthening reproductive health services during the COVID-19 pandemic*

The policy brief of the Secretary-General on impacts of COVID-19 on women<sup>24</sup> highlighted the risk to women's health due to the disrupted delivery of sexual and reproductive health service. To this end, WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF joined forces to analyse the disruption of sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health services due to COVID-19 in South-East Asia. The analysis was followed by development strategic and operation guidance for governments and other partners to address service gaps and ensure the continuity of such services during the pandemic.

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21 Available at : <https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en/publications/guidelines-responsible-representation-and-reporting-violence-against-women-and-violence>

22 Available at : <https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en/resources/responsible-representation-and-reporting-violence-against-women-and-violence-against-media>

23 Available at : <https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en/publications/ending-violence-against-women-and-children-east-asia-and-pacific>

24 Available at <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406>

UNFPA, UNESCO, UNAIDS, UNICEF, and UNDP also collaborated with YouthLEAD and the Y-PEER Asia Pacific Center to provide the 2020 update for the report on Young People and the Law: Laws and Policies Impacting Young People’s Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the Asia-Pacific region.

In order to inform policy and accelerate efforts to upscale and strengthen comprehensive sexuality education across the region, UNFPA, UNESCO and the International Planned Parenthood Federation collaborated to produce a regional review on the status of comprehensive sexuality education in the region, covering 21 countries in Asia and nine in the Pacific, which provides a strong evidence base on the reach and impact of comprehensive sexuality education across the region.

### *Providing direct support and empowering women-led micro, small-and medium-sized enterprises*

More than 90 per cent of enterprises in Asia and the Pacific are micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises, constituting a vital source of income and employment. But many of these enterprises are not able to access the finance or digital skills they need to grow. Supporting these enterprises, in particular those owned or led by women, is critical for the achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2019, ESCAP and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) launched the Women MSME FinTech Innovation Fund with the financial support from the Government of Canada, the Dutch Development Bank and Visa Inc. This fund has invested in 10 innovative pilot solutions that will support nearly 6,000 women enterprises across six countries in 2020-21.

ESCAP and UNCDF also partnered to support the Impact Investment Exchange’s award-winning Women’s Livelihood Bond Series, the first-ever multi-country gender bond series in the region listed on a stock exchange. In 2020, US\$27.7 million in private capital were raised. This will support 180,000 underserved women and women entrepreneurs in the Asia-Pacific region to respond, recover from, and to build resilience in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ESCAP and the Secretariat of the World Trade Organization (WTO) have partnered with UN Women, UNDP, Resident Coordinators Offices and national chambers of commerce and industry in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal to develop a training program and web portal designed to help women entrepreneurs in South Asian least developed countries to use e-commerce and digital marketing to promote their business.

### *Examining the financing gaps among disadvantaged groups*

In order to reduce financing gap for disadvantaged groups, such as smaller businesses, women and rural populations in the region, ESCAP in partnership with UNCDF and UNDP conducted country studies and developed national reports in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Nepal, Samoa, Singapore, Viet Nam and the Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions of China.

## F. Supporting the Means of Implementation

### *Providing coordinated technical support to better harmonise SDG data and statistics*

SDG data and statistics is one of the key areas of technical support to United Nations Resident Coordinators and country teams. In 2020, the Working Group on Data and Statistics reached out to 24 United Nations country teams in the region and established regular contact and information flows. This allowed for flexible and rapid response and sharing of information between the regional and national level.

The Working Group on Data and Statistics has also focused on harmonization and alignment of data and statistics on the Sustainable Development Goals and also been the source of technical support for Resident Coordinators and National Statistics Offices including to navigate the impacts of COVID-19 on statistical operations.

An Asia-Pacific Stats Café series was established to bring in-depth technical discussions to the wide statistical community of Asia and the Pacific. The 25 cafés organized in 2020 were attended by over 3,000 participants. The series has explored a wide range of statistical issues, including in the context of the pandemic, in response to member States' requests such as households surveys, civil registration and vital statistics, using remote sensing data and adopting big data. Discussions and exchanges during the series, organised by working group members ILO, ESCAP, UNFPA, UNICEF, were also enriched by the expertise of partners such as ADB, the Statistics Division of the United Nations Secretariat, and the World Bank. The series has led to further demand for technical assistance by national statistical systems. Its format has allowed for better outreach to junior and mid-level staff in national statistical systems and engaged a much larger number of countries than face-to-face events.

### *Mobilising Volunteers as the first responders to the COVID-19 crisis at the national level in Asia and Pacific*

Responding to the pandemic crisis, UNV initiated several partnerships with other United Nations entities to focus on people-centered approach and early recovery through volunteerism. 25 skilled United Nations Volunteers were deployed to United Nations agencies in support of information and communications and the assessment of socioeconomic impacts.

At the national level, UNV and UNDP have supported the Ministry of Youth and Sports of India in the establishment of District Youth Coordinators in 58 districts in India supporting frontline personnel, creating awareness, countering misinformation and making sure that people in their communities had the necessary preventive materials as well as access to food and basic needs during the lockdown.

In Nepal, UNV, UNICEF, UNDP and WHO worked with the Resident Coordinator's Office to counter misinformation and ensure an effective response to the pandemic, establishing the Volunteer for Action (V4ACTION) network, consisting of over 500 volunteers from all seven

provinces of Nepal. The initiative is providing a platform for meaningful engagement of young people so that they can be educators and change agents among their peers and communities to create awareness about COVID-19 with accurate and verified information.

In Pakistan, the national United Nations Youth Volunteers set-up to assist in civic rights and voter education, was mobilized to scale up health-related outreach across the country.

In Thailand, the “V-Force Thailand” online volunteer network was mobilized to conduct research and create infographics and translate crucial information about COVID-19.

## **V. Engagement with regional and subregional fora, organizations and other stakeholders**

### *Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations (2021-2025)*

Cooperation between the United Nations and ASEAN was further strengthened through the adoption of the new ASEAN-UN Plan of Action for 2021-2025 at the 11th ASEAN-UN Summit in November 2020. The process of formulating the Plan of Action was coordinated by ESCAP with the participation of FAO, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UNFCCC, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNODC, UNOSSC, UNV, UN Women and WFP.

The Plan of Action is aimed at implementing the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the UN, which was adopted by the Leaders of ASEAN and the UN Secretary-General at the 4th ASEAN-UN Summit on 19 November 2011 in Bali, Indonesia. It will continue to pursue the goals and objectives set forth in the Declaration in the next five years (2021-2025) within the framework of the Comprehensive Partnership, building upon the achievements in the implementation of the first ASEAN-UN Plan of Action (2016-2020).

The ASEAN-UN Plan of Action 2021-2025 provides a framework for both the UN and ASEAN to develop programmes and activities with ASEAN. This is a key planning document for UN entities to deliver on joint actions on the ground for people, planet and prosperity.

In particular, the Plan of Action comes at a time when efforts need to be redoubled in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular in light of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Importantly, the Plan of Action supports the implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework.

The Plan of Action also further strengthens the commitment of the United Nations and ASEAN to human rights. It recognizes the need to uphold human rights principles in preventing and combatting trafficking and smuggling of persons; refers to collaboration in responding to cyber related threats in ways that respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms; countering online misinformation and disinformation as well as online attacks or

'hate-speech' to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms; and also aims to mainstream gender equality principles and promoting and protecting human rights in the advancement of the 2030 Agenda. Moreover, the annual dialogue between the United Nations and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights identified several new areas for potential collaboration.

### *Ensuring the delivery of quality education and health services during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Pacific*

Through the Pacific Joint Incidence Management Team for COVID 19, UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA collaborated with the Pacific Community (SPC) to develop protocols for delivering essential services during the pandemic, as well as in providing technical advice on key public health measures. With UNICEF support, SPC also procured essential supplies and equipment including personal protective equipment.

UNICEF and UNFPA, together with SPC, provided technical support to the Governments of Kiribati, Tonga, Samoa and Tuvalu in implementing the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, a tool to collect key SDG-related data. In spite of challenges posed by COVID-19, preparation of the surveys progressed during 2020 also in Fiji, Vanuatu, Nauru and the Federated States of Micronesia, for implementation in 2021.

UNICEF and SPC also partnered to strengthen collection and analysis of disability data through censuses and household surveys. Analyses of disability data were produced for Kiribati, Tonga and Samoa, and are underway for Fiji, Tuvalu and Nauru. Technical and financial support was also provided for the Tonga Disability Survey, one of a few surveys conducted in Pacific to understand disability and vulnerability among children and adults.

A Pacific Inclusive Education Review was conducted in 2020 by the Pacific Regional Inclusive Education Taskforce consisting of representatives of the Federated States of Micronesia and Niue, the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, SPC, the University of the South Pacific, the Pacific Disability Forum, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, and the Australia-Pacific Training Coalition.

A comprehensive package of support for young children and families in the Pacific was developed as part of a 10-year work plan (2019-2029) of the Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Development, a multi-sectoral, inter-governmental body comprised of representatives from the education, finance, health and social welfare sectors across the Pacific in partnership with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, UNICEF, the Government of New Zealand and the World Bank. The work plan establishes a multi-sectoral coordination mechanism that supports the alignment of national priorities, plans and policies to support early childhood development adapted to each country context.

### *Supporting the deliberations of the 2020 Economic Forum of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia*

ESCAP and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) have assisted countries in Central Asia strengthen regional cooperation to address the socio-economic effects of the pandemic, in partnership with Resident Coordinator Offices and United Nations Country Teams. The 2020 Economic Forum of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), held in November 2020, adopted the Bishkek Declaration called “Strengthening Regional Cooperation to Support Socioeconomic Recovery in the Wake of COVID-19”. The Declaration calls for the strengthening of regional cooperation in trade, transport and digital connectivity, continue efforts to accede to and effectively implement United Nations legal instruments, conventions and agreements related to trade and transport, enhance seamless digital connectivity, enhance fiscal resources and mobilize additional financial resources, recognize need for more integrated approach of structural economic transformation.

## **VI. Conclusion and way forward**

As devastating as the pandemic has been, it opens up new opportunities. The unprecedented innovation and courageous responses during the crises reveal a new level of dynamism in Asia and the Pacific which can potentially trigger an encompassing transformation towards sustainable development. And while there may be uncertainties in the pathway for recovering from the pandemic, the end goal is clear with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals as the compass shared across countries and stakeholders.

To assist the region in realising the opportunity for transformative change, the collaboration across the regional United Nations development system will need to continue to grow, building on the momentum of the on-going reform process. The results in 2020 at the regional level highlighted in the report demonstrates a strong foundation for more efficient and coherent collaboration across the United Nations development system. The rapid mobilisation of the expertise and resources of the regional United Nations entities, including through the new Regional Collaborative Platform and existing regional partnerships, was essential to delivering the 2020 results, respond to emerging challenges and requests for support by Resident Coordinators, United Nations Country Teams and Member States. The results also illustrate the shared value added the regional system can bring to countries in Asia and the Pacific and their people in achieving the common goal of sustainable development.

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