



Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 : ESCAP Framework



INTRODUCTION

The unprecedented socio-economic crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic calls for unparalleled multi-sectoral responses. This health crisis has upended people's lives. Containment measures to control the pandemic have adversely affected economies and societies. The Asian and Pacific region is no exception.

ESCAP has developed a framework to support the socio-economic response of its 53 members and 9 associate members to the COVID-19 pandemic. The framework provides regional and subregional solutions in the context of the UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 and in line with the "Regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific".

The overarching principle of the framework supports efforts to build back better through integrated policy responses aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. To ensure a concerted regional approach for sustainable recovery from the crisis, ESCAP calls for regional cooperation among member States as well as collaboration among entities of the United Nations development system, subregional organizations, private sector, think tanks, academia and civil society to implement this framework.

ESCAP'S OFFER – FRAMEWORK OF SUPPORT

ESCAP's offer to member States builds on its mandates and revolves around three main streams of work:



PROTECTING PEOPLE AND ENHANCING RESILIENCE

Protecting and investing in people and enhancing the resilience of societies and communities, especially women and vulnerable population groups.

- Strengthen social protection and improve access to health care systems and basic services through policy advisory services and technical assistance underpinned by analysis.
- Enhance emergency preparedness and resilience to disasters including by using geospatial techniques to identify communities vulnerable to COVID-19.





SUPPORTING ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Supporting sustainable and inclusive economic recovery through fiscal and monetary stimuli in line with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

- Assess the scope and scale of necessary policy measures, based on a clear understanding of the various channels of economic impact.
- Analyze policy measures that have been announced and propose those which should be considered, while bearing in mind governments' financing and implementation constraints.
- Assess key implications of proposed policy measures so that the policy trade-offs are understood, desired impacts sustained, and the social and environmental objectives of the 2030 Agenda promoted.



RESTORING SUPPLY CHAINS AND SUPPORTING SMEs

Restoring and building resilience in supply chains through regional and subregional coordination on trade, investment, transport and digital connectivity, and supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

- Facilitate paperless trade and trade digitalization and promote the role of foreign direct investment to strengthen supply chains.
- Assess the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on availability and affordability of international transport and logistics services.
- Restart and rehabilitate SMEs with a focus on access to finance, integration into global value chains and development of e-commerce.



BUILDING BACK BETTER



Building back better is the overarching principle of the framework and an integral part of any policy response. Without enhanced resilience, inclusivity and sustainability, external shocks will continue to threaten people's lives and livelihoods. The following measures are essential to building back better and will be the basis for the interventions through these streams of work:

- Use the Leaving No One Behind methodology to identify those furthest behind in accessing opportunities in Asia and the Pacific.
- Analyse policy packages and propose guidelines to ensure compatibility with social inclusivity and climate resilience.
- Enhance sustainability of transport connectivity, including urban public transport, as well as digitalization and facilitation of freight transport operations.

- Improve ICT resilience and address the digital divide including through co-deployment of fibre optic cable along infrastructure networks to lower costs and reach geographically remote communities.
- Develop integrated policies to promote decarbonization, energy efficiency, reduction of pollution and climate change mitigation.
- Protect and restore ecosystems as a means of building resilience to future pandemics, including through cooperation on air pollution and biodiversity conservation.



STRENGTHENING REGIONAL COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION



As the COVID-19 pandemic calls for borderless solidarity, the framework will rely on multilateral, regional and subregional cooperation and multi-stakeholder collaborations. Let us embed regional and subregional cooperation in the three streams of work as an integral part of “Building back better”.

- Leverage the intergovernmental platforms of ESCAP--the Commission, Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development as well as its Ministerial Conferences and Committees.
- Work with subregional organizations and entities.
- Engage with United Nations entities, including the United Nations Resident Coordinators and country teams, and the five issue-based coalitions.
- Work with development partners, including private sector, think tanks, academia and civil society.



HOW WILL ESCAP DELIVER?

