Beyond the Pandemic

Building back better from crises in Asia and the Pacific

Sub-Regional Office for South-East Asia
20 April 2021
Managing the pandemic in South-East Asia

Overall, South-East Asian countries managed to control community transmission of the virus early in the pandemic.
However,

Measures instituted to stop the spread of the virus, such as border controls and travel bans, decimated economic activity and interrupted trade and supply chains.

• Economic damage was amplified in South-East Asia due to its heavy dependency on inbound tourism and deep integration in the GVC.
Limited access to and coverage from social protection magnified the scale of inequality.

- Vulnerable people, such as informal workers and migrants, were hit the hardest.

- Significant gender impacts were also seen through rising gender-based violence and a greater burden for women of unpaid care.
### Policy Recommendations

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<td>Enhance regional cooperation</td>
<td>Establish or mobilize existing sectoral mechanisms to help countries jointly recover from the pandemic and plan for future crises</td>
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<td>Build universal social protection throughout the life cycle</td>
<td>Embed social protection in national development agendas, include vulnerable population groups as beneficiaries, and allocate resources through a mix of contributory and non-contributory benefit schemes</td>
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<td>Invest in a sustained socioeconomic recovery aligned with the SDGs</td>
<td>Ensure sufficient fiscal space by considering measures such as debt relief options</td>
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<td>Promote trade facilitation, digitization, and harmonization</td>
<td>Fully embed social and environmental concerns into global supply chains</td>
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<td>Safeguard environmental health</td>
<td>Adopt regional agenda for planetary health</td>
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Adopting Policy Recommendations in South-East Asia

• Economic impact is focused on sectors linked with retail, hospitality, transport, and labor-intensive manufacturing – sectors that have strong presence of vulnerable groups, such as informal, migrant, and female workers, most likely not benefitting from social protection schemes.

• High government spending to address the immediate economic and health crisis coined with global private consumption and tax collection decrease has led to high levels of public debt.

• Rapid digitization to address the pandemic has shown widening digital and gender divide in accessing and utilizing the Internet.

• Many environmental practices have become obsolete in the face of the pandemic, threatening the advances of the climate and environmental actions in the region.

• Regional cooperation mechanisms, such as cross-border paperless trade, exist to support countries restore and improve trade, investment, and digital connectivity in the process of building back better.
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