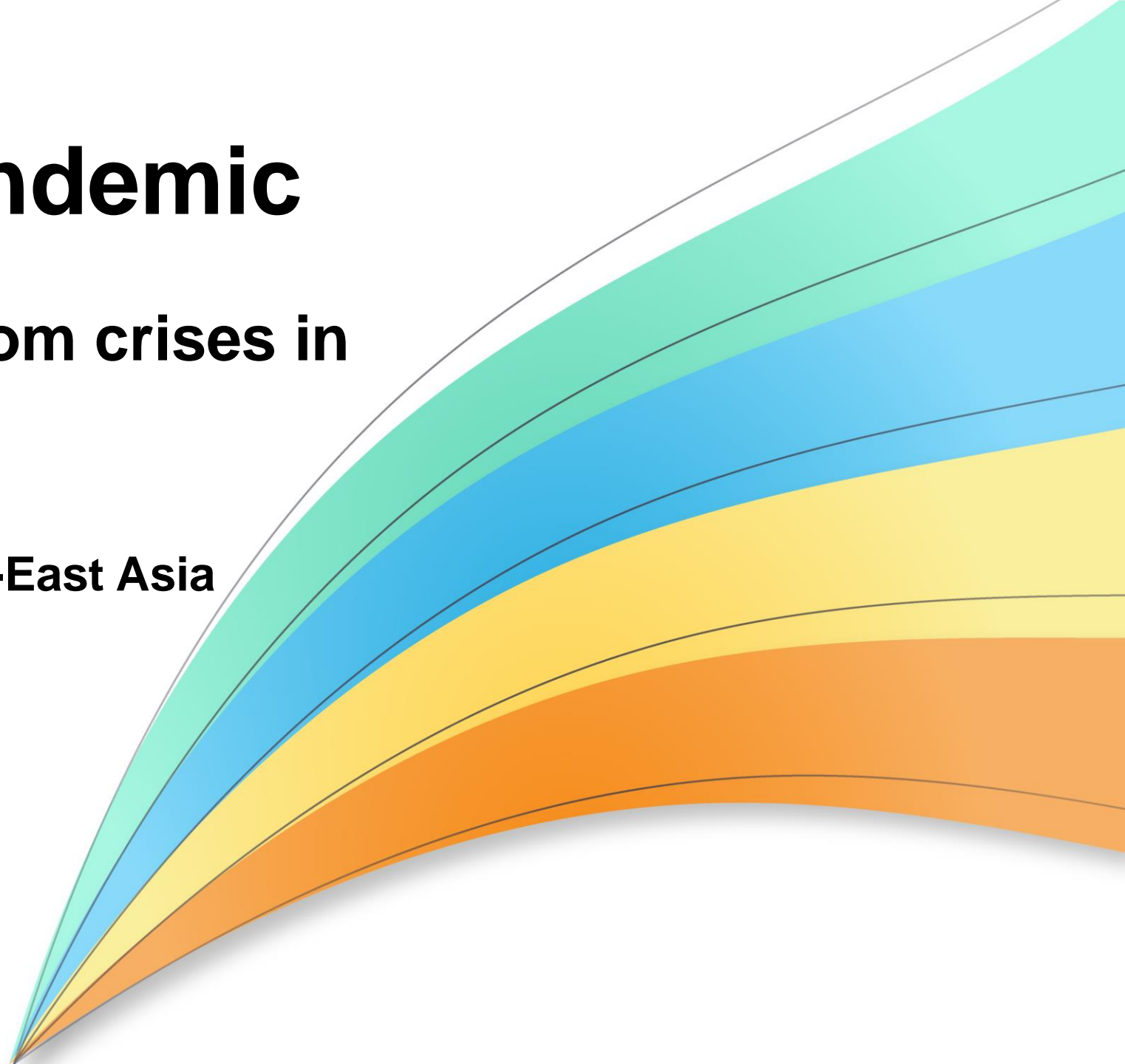


Beyond the Pandemic

Building back better from crises in Asia and the Pacific

Sub-Regional Office for South-East Asia

20 April 2021



1 Managing the pandemic in South-East Asia

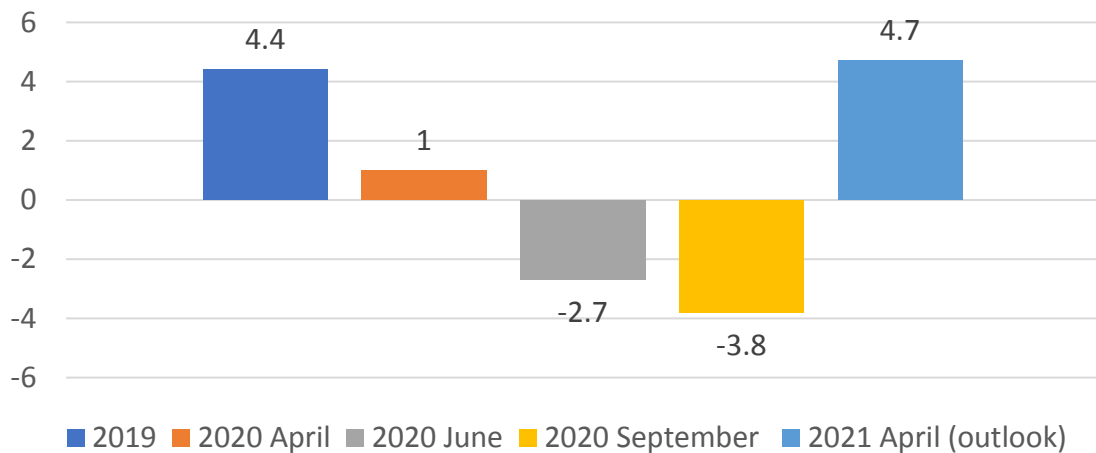
Preparedness dashboard of South-East Asian countries for COVID-19

Low to high	Human Development			Health System			Connectivity		
	Human development index (HDI)	Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI)	Inequality in HDI	Physicians	Nurses and midwives	Hospital beds	Health expenditure	Mobile phone subscriptions	Fixed broadband subscriptions
	(index) 2018	(index) 2018	(percentage) 2018	(per 10,000 people) 2010–2018	(per 10,000 people) 2010–2018	(per 10,000 people) 2010–2018	(% of GDP) 2016	(per 100 people) 2017–2018	(per 100 people) 2017–2018
Singapore	0.935	0.810	13.3	23.1	72	24	4.5	145.7	28.0
Brunei Darussalam	0.845	17.7	66	27	2.3	131.9	11.5
Malaysia	0.804	15.1	41	19	3.8	134.5	8.8
Thailand	0.765	0.635	17.0	8.1	30	21	3.7	180.2	13.2
Philippines	0.712	0.582	18.2	12.8	2	10	4.4	110.1	3.7
Indonesia	0.707	0.583	17.5	3.8	21	12	3.1	119.8	3.3
Viet Nam	0.693	0.580	16.3	8.2	14	26	5.7	147.2	13.6
Timor-Leste	0.626	0.450	28.0	7.2	17	59	4.0	103.2	0.0
Lao People's Dem. Rep.	0.604	0.454	24.9	5.0	10	15	2.4	51.9	0.8
Myanmar	0.584	0.448	23.2	9.6	10	9	5.1	113.8	0.2
Cambodia	0.581	0.465	20.1	1.7	10	8	6.1	119.5	1.0

Source: Adapted from the Human Development Index.

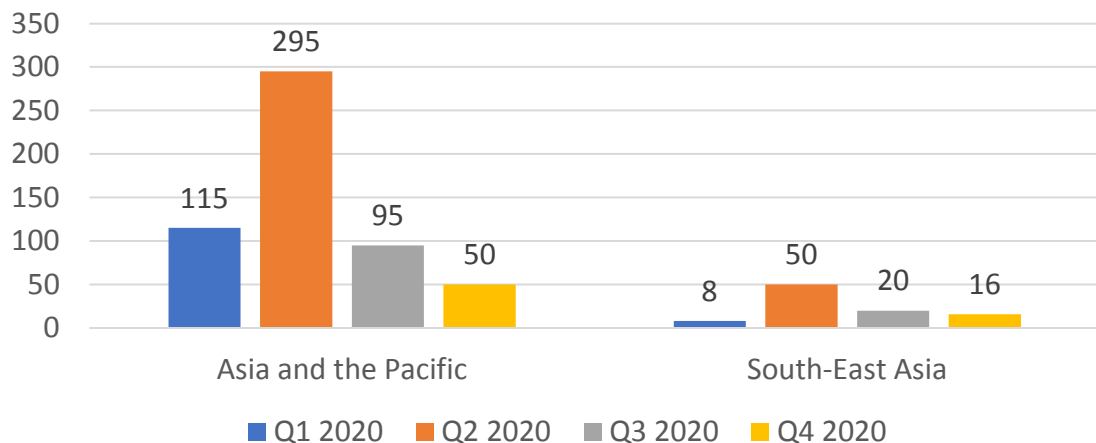
Overall, South-East Asian countries managed to control community transmission of the virus early in the pandemic.

GDP growth rate in South-East Asia (% per year)



Source: Adapted from the Asian Development Outlook 2020 Update

Equivalent full time job losses in South-East Asia (millions)



Source: *Can this time be different? Challenges and opportunities for Asia-Pacific economies in the aftermath of COVID-19* (ESCAP, 2020)

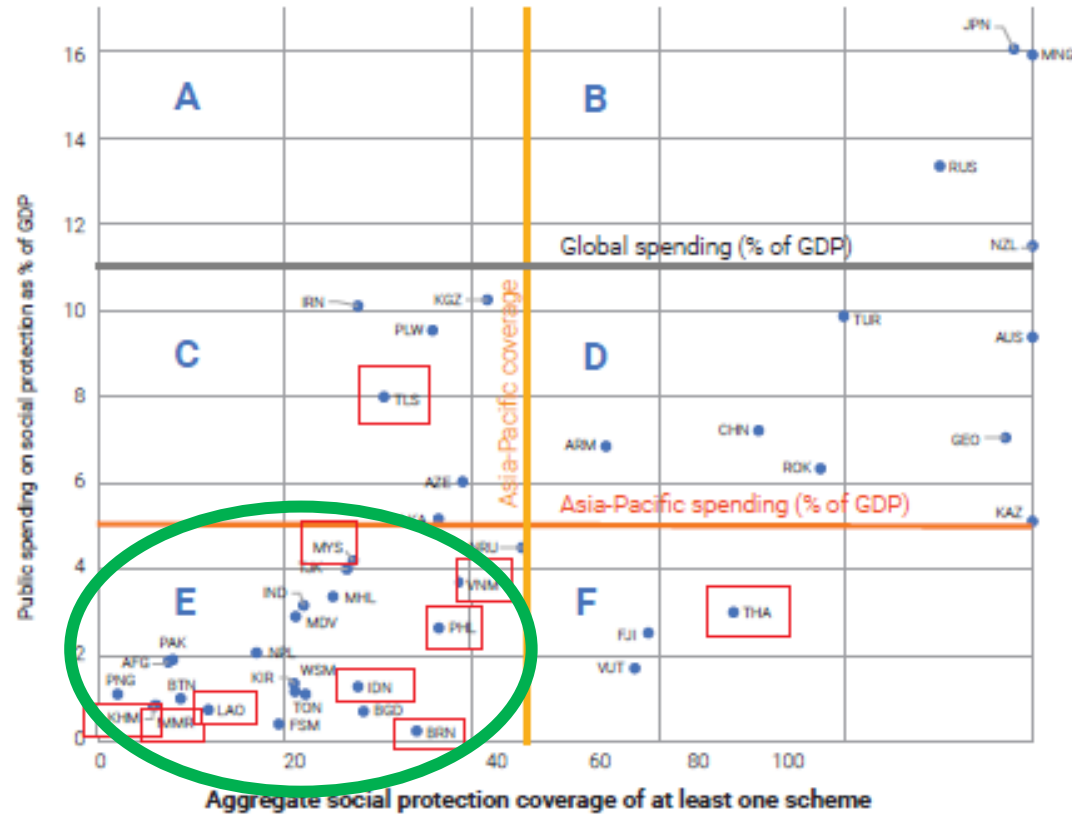
Note: Based on 48 hours per week

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.**

Relationship between social protection spending and coverage



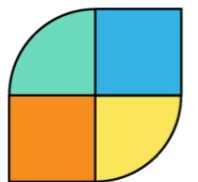
Source: International Labor Organization, World Social Protection Database

Note: Brunei (BRN), Cambodia (KHM), Indonesia (IDN), Lao PDR (LAO), Malaysia (MYS), Myanmar (MMR), Philippines (PHL), Singapore (SGP), Thailand (THA), Timor-Leste (TLS), Viet Nam (VNM)

Note: Area C (On track for spending but not coverage), Area E (Off track), Area F (On track for coverage but not for benefit levels)

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.



2 Policy Recommendations

Enhance regional cooperation

Establish or mobilize existing sectoral mechanisms to help countries jointly recover from the pandemic and plan for future crises

Build universal social protection throughout the life cycle

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

Invest in a sustained socioeconomic recovery aligned with the SDGs

Ensure sufficient fiscal space by considering measures such as debt relief options

Promote trade facilitation, digitization, and harmonization

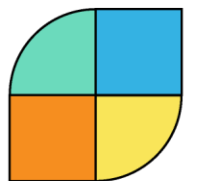
Fully embed social and environmental concerns into global supply chains

Safeguard environmental health

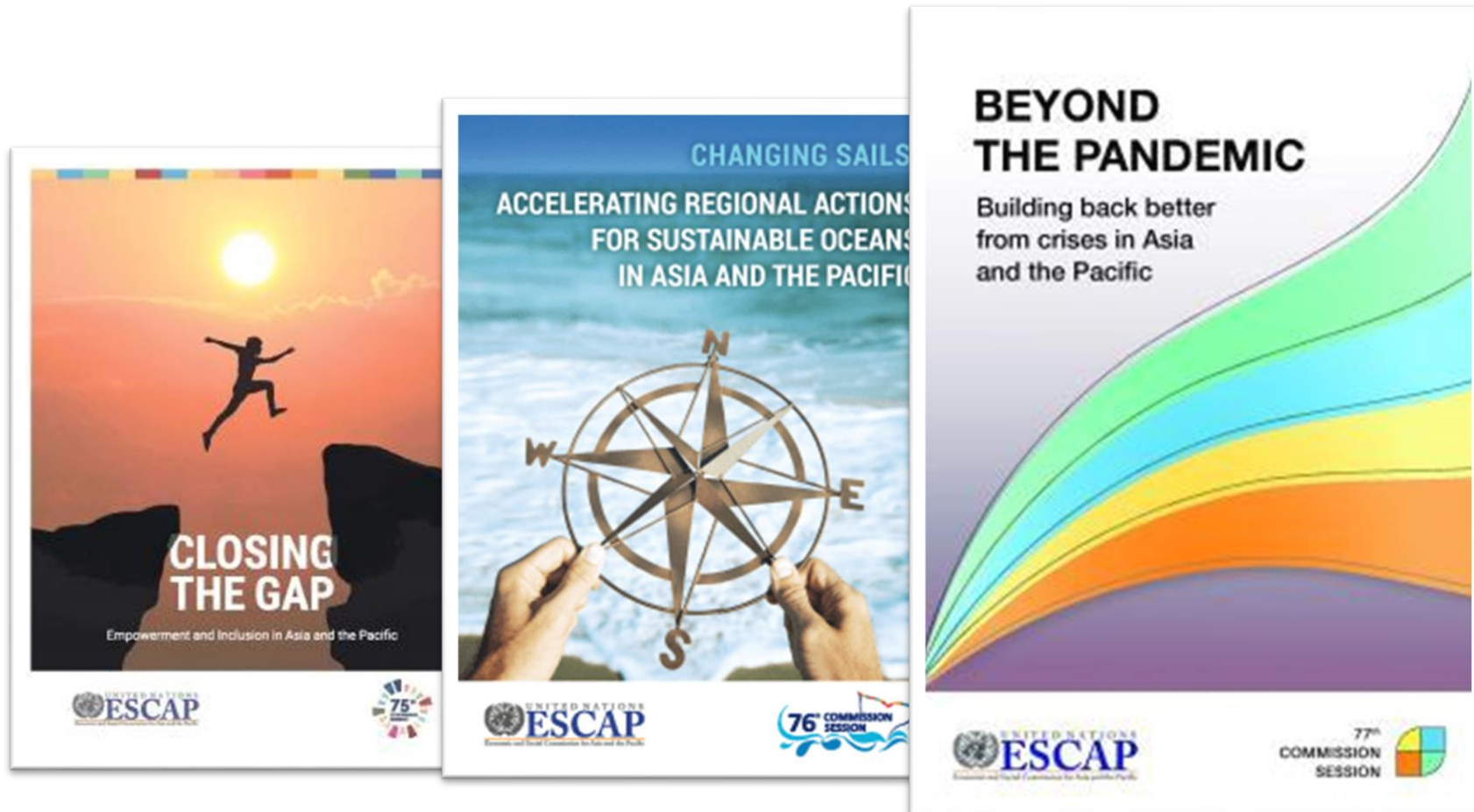
Adopt regional agenda for planetary health

3 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.



THANK YOU



<https://www.unescap.org/publication-series/theme-study>

THANK YOU

Follow us



www.unescap.org



UNITEDNATIONSESCAP



UNITEDNATIONSESCAP



UNESCAP



UNESCAP



UNESCAP



CS77

