North-East Asian Multistakeholder Forum on Sustainable Development Goals: Turning the pandemic crisis into collective SDG actions

Session 3: SDGs in action – Sharing experiences of multistakeholder engagement for shared goals and response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Pre-Session (28 October) on
Building Inclusive and Resilient Society
with particular focus on the SDGs 8, 10, 12, 16, 17 (and optionally 5)

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Pre-Session (28 October) on
Building Inclusive and Resilient Society

Moderator: Mr. Sangmin Nam, Deputy Head, ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office
Rapporteur: Prof. Yasushi Katsuma, GSAPS, Waseda University

Presentations

• Tackling COVID-19 Youth Employment Crisis in Asia and the Pacific,
  – Mr. Felix Weidenkaff, Employment Specialist, ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team for East and South-East Asia and the Pacific

• Governance on Digitalization: A Lesson Learned from G20/C20 Experience, SDGs and COVID-19,
  – Mr. Masaki Inaba, Japan Civil Society Network on SDGs

• Promoting Inclusive and Resilient Society in Mongolia,
  – Ms. Tserenkhand Biderya, Vice-coordinator of the Mongolian CSOs Network on SDGs

• The School Meals Movement: Practice and Experience,
  – Ms. Natalia Radoman, Russian NGO “The School Meals Movement”
Vulnerable Groups supported / Issues highlighted

1. Youth employment in Asia Pacific
2. Governance on digitization
3. COVID-19 impact in Mongolia
4. Improving school meals
Vulnerable Groups / Issues, and Measures / Initiatives Taken

1. Youth employment in Asia Pacific

• The COVID-19 crisis negatively impacts the youth via (I) job disruptions, (ii) disruptions in education and training, and (iii) difficulties in transitioning from school to work.

• ILO study found young workers are more likely employed in hardest hit sectors by COVID-19, such as wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing, real estate, accommodation and food service activities.
Vulnerable Groups / Issues, and Measures / Initiatives Taken

1. Youth employment in Asia Pacific

- **Young women** are particularly exacerbated by uneven distribution of unpaid household and care work.
- Job disruption with COVID-19 and technological advancement (increased demand for higher-skilled workers) can further widen the inequality.
- Various models of support for youth employment across the region – e.g., subsidy to reduce the cost of hiring.
Vulnerable Groups / Issues, and Measures / Initiatives Taken

2. Governance on digitization

- SDG Goal 16 & digitization: Contradictions between democracy and digital transformation governance. While digital transformation is ongoing at global level, democratic governance system have not gone beyond the nation-state.

- Civil society of G20 countries identified key concerns
  - Privacy, consumers’ rights, labour rights;
  - Environmental concerns (mineral resources); etc.
Vulnerable Groups / Issues, and Measures / Initiatives Taken

2. Governance on digitization

• At G20 in 2019 in Japan, “Digital Economy Working Group” identified key areas of challenges in digitization, highlighting the lack of democratic governance.

• Civil society groups (initiated by Asian People’s Exchange) developed “A Comprehensive Framework on Appropriate Technology Choice for Sustainable Development” to advocate for SDG aligned technology choice.
Vulnerable Groups / Issues, and Measures / Initiatives Taken

3. COVID-19 impact in Mongolia

- Decline in business sales, disruption of supply chains due to border closures; shorter work hours or unpaid leave; An increase in food prices, including meat, flour, and dairy products.
- Self-employed and agriculture households suffer due to disruptions in logistics and falling livestock product trading.
- Domestic violence increased (psychological stress)
- **Digital divide in education**: Poor and rural households are less likely to have access to online education materials.
3. COVID-19 impact in Mongolia

- **Government**: Increased social protection benefits (food voucher, money for children) and enterprises are free from income tax and social insurance premium payment during the period of quarantine.

- **Civil Society**: Promoting community participation; SDG Localization; Community-level trainings on how to create a cash saving group.
4. Improving school meals

- Many students in Russia do not like free school meals, creating a food waste problem.
- The movement started with parents concerned about quality of school meals, now developed to large network across Russia.
- Requesting to change the school menu involves dialogue with school authority, local authority or business sector.
Challenges

• Youth employment - With job polarization amid technological advancements, entry-level jobs by young people have a greater proportion of automatable tasks.

• Governance of digitization - Digital Economy Working Group 2019 identified 5 areas of challenges: (i) rights issues, (ii) social concerns, (iii) environmental concerns, (iv) equity issues, and (v) governance

• To build inclusive and resilient society – CSO to support government to implement SDGs.

• To do so, CSOs face challenges in building their capacity and experiences, strengthening governance system, enhancing sustainable monitoring and evaluation.
Recommendations

Increase Employment among Young People

• Prioritized support measures:
  – youth-targeted wage subsidies and public employment programs,
  – digital inclusion for equitable access to education, training and employment,
  – access to capital, combined with non-financial services for young entrepreneurs

• Large-scale and targeted measures to increase youth employment and to support education-to-employment transition

• cross-cutting policy consideration: Reaching the most vulnerable youth
Recommendations

Improving Governance on Digitization

• Adopt principles & guidelines to protect the rights.
• Develop a comprehensive framework on appropriate technological choice for sustainable development
• Transboundary nature of digital economy requires global governance mechanism
• CSOs need to raise more voices about technological innovation to develop a sustainable society
Recommendations

Build Inclusive and Resilient Society

• maintain financial prudence,
• support small & medium enterprises (SMEs),
• strengthen governance system (including social service delivery),
• mobilize the whole of society action
Recommendations

Protect Vulnerable Groups

• Migrant workers, often excluded from social protection system, should be protected.
• Food security should be ensured: Border closure affect food supply of vulnerable households.
• Digital divide should be solved, making sure all children have access to on-line education.
• Protect victims of domestic violence, especially women and children.
• Victims of COVID-19 should not be stigmatized.
Thank you for your attention!