COVID-19 Policy Responses Tracker

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It was early May this year, I got an email saying that a Policy Brief was published by the ESCAP Division responsible for Macroeconomic analysis. They had put together a neat database showing how countries in the region were responding to the pandemic. However, they didn’t know how to make this data available online.
Since my team had recently launched the redesigned data portal on the SDGs, the Asia-Pacific SDG Gateway, and had improved our skills to create data visualizations for the web, I told them: alright, let’s work together and build something.
The first dashboard was published with containment measures and macroeconomic policies. Then colleagues from across ESCAP approached me with the data on their own subject-matters and asked if it would be possible to integrate them into the Tracker. Now we have a collection of national policy responses from across Asia-Pacific, all in one place. It is one of the most visited pages in the ESCAP website. This was a rewarding experience for me because the Tracker was put together within days and tapped into the expertise of several specialists across the organization.
Lessons Learned

Start small and expand gradually

First, we started small and gradually added more content. We didn’t wait to have all charts ready before we launched the tracker.

Build bridges across domains and teams

Second, the multidisciplinary work has built bridges and opened doors for collaboration with other teams at ESCAP. We even started an interest group on data and visualization.

Develop capacity to react to new scenarios

Third, once you build the first data portal, as we did with the SDG Gateway, it becomes easier to create new ones for specific purposes. Data and visualization skills allow you to quickly respond to new scenarios.