

Summary of discussion on Human wellbeing and capabilities

held on 1st April 2020 in preparation for the 7th Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)

Expand access to social protection and health care for all

Enhancing human wellbeing and capabilities requires political commitment and sustained investments in health care, social protection and education. It also requires access to basic services and needs, such as water and sanitation. The obvious reason being that without capabilities, risks and impact of disasters and crises, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, increase dramatically. The ongoing unprecedented crisis also demonstrates that countries with well-functioning universal health care and social protection systems are better positioned to address the pandemic, particularly in mitigating the impact on vulnerable individuals and households, including on migrants, persons with disabilities and older people. Social solidarity, within and between countries, is therefore central for coping with such crises.

Address vulnerabilities through broad-based cooperation and inclusive policies

Currently, less than 4 in 10 people in Asia-Pacific have access to social protection and only 6 in 10 people have access to affordable health care. A foundation for closing these gaps and improving human wellbeing and capabilities for all is to build strong institutions, underpinned by good governance, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral collaboration as well as regional cooperation. A majority of people, often women, remain unprotected with low irregular incomes and limited access to basic services. Responses must therefore adopt gender-sensitive approaches as well as address stigmatization, discriminatory norms and practices, including unpaid care work.

This webinar and associated entry point profile was organised by ESCAP, in coordination with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).