

Concept Note

North-East Asia Development Cooperation Forum 2020:

Experience and Challenges of North-East Asian Countries on Development Cooperation in the face of the COVID19 pandemic

15-16 October (Virtual meeting)

9:00 am (Moscow) / 2:00 pm (Beijing) / 3:00 pm (Seoul / Tokyo)

Organized by

ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office,
China International Development Research Network (CIDRN),
Japan Society for International Development (JASID),
Korea Association of International Development and Cooperation (KAIDEC), and
Russian Association of International Development Assistance Experts (RAIDAE)

In partnership with

ADB-PRC Regional Knowledge Sharing Initiative

Theme and Background of the 2020 Forum

The outbreak of COVID-19 at global scale is a painful reminder of how deep, complicated and connected the world is. Socio-economic impacts of the pandemic spread across national borders on all fronts including public health, global supply chains, tourism, manufacturing, etc. As a result, the global economy is projected to shrink by 5% (as of June 2020, IMF) prompting governments to launch large economic stimulus packages to support the livelihoods of their population, leading to increased fiscal deficits.

Key players of development cooperation in North-East Asia, i.e. China, Japan, Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation, are no exception. Their economies are projected to record negative economic growth in the range of 1-2% in the Republic of Korea to 8-10% in the Russian Federation while the size of fiscal COVID response packages are expected to amount to a few percent to over 20% (Japan) of their GDP, according to the projections by OECD.

Besides the severe challenges of balancing the responses to the domestic health emergency and economic stability, pressures on fiscal space raise concern over the future of North-East Asia's support to developing countries. Many developing countries, while devising their own measures to the pandemic,

need further support to respond to the pandemic as well as to build back better in post-pandemic recovery.

Development cooperation agencies, tasked to support long term development under normal circumstances, now face demand for emergency support and humanitarian assistance. In some countries, humanitarian and health emergency support are provided through different channels. In others, existing components of emergency assistance are enforced, or the existing support are “re-purposed” to meet the immediate needs.

As the pandemic is far from over, uncertainties also remain in North-East Asia in terms of the required scale, capacity and direction of emergency support as well as the post-pandemic landscape of development cooperation, although countries such as China and Republic of Korea have already indicated their enhanced support for developing countries in response to the pandemic.

Despite these daunting challenges, COVID-19 also demonstrated a real case of national interest coinciding with universal value as “no one is safe until everyone is safe”. In this regard, cooperation among the key players of development cooperation in North-East Asia should be strengthened, as effective delivery of the regional / global public goods serves both national and international benefits.

Given the above background, the North-East Asia Development Cooperation Forum will focus on subregional responses from the perspective of development cooperation in supporting other developing countries to overcome the impact of the pandemic. It will highlight the current and future landscape of development cooperation in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, assessing impact of COVID-19 in developing countries, and subregional cooperation to counter COVID-19.

Expected outcome

The Forum 2020 is expected to produce a series of policy briefs on subregional support in responding and recovering from COVID19 through development cooperation, focusing on the following topics.

- ***New landscape of development cooperation in post COVID-19:*** the near-term future of development cooperation by North-East Asian countries, and what developing countries should expect in post COVID-19 era
- ***International Cooperation to cope with COVID-19:*** how international cooperation (e.g., development cooperation, humanitarian assistance) in the North-East Asian countries helped in responding to COVID-19
- ***Impacts of COVID-19 in developing countries:*** A quantitative assessment of COVID-19 impact in developing countries and how it could be applied in development cooperation strategies of COVID-19 response
- ***NEA’s Development cooperation to counter pandemics:*** North-East Asian countries’ development cooperation in responding to COVID-19 emergencies and its role in strengthening national regional and global capacity for future shocks.

Lead authors for preparation of the four policy briefs will be identified. A series of small group meetings among experts in each area will be organized to have in-depth discussion and receive inputs for the briefs to be presented at the Forum.

Format of the Forum

Overall arrangement

- The Forum, which will be organized virtually, will invite a broad range of participants, including speakers from aid agencies, to exchange views on the four topics.
- The Forum will have a brief presentation on each topic by the lead author, while other participants, particularly from development cooperation agencies (e.g., CIDCA, KOICA, JICA, ADB etc) and partner countries, can share their perspective and/or provide additional information and insight along the topic.

Proposed participants

- Members of partner networks (CIDRN, JASID, KOICA, RAEDAE)
- Development cooperation practitioners (e.g., CIDCA, JICA, KOICA, ADB) and international organizations
- Interested officials from the member countries
- Researchers from development cooperation partner countries

About the North-East Asia Development Cooperation Forum

The Forum was initiated by ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office to facilitate analytical discussions on policies and practices of development cooperation in North-East Asia as well as potential areas of collaboration among North-East Asian countries.

Since the first Forum in November 2014 in Seoul, the Forums have been organized as joint endeavour of partners in the North-East Asia, namely China International Development Research Network (CIDRN), Japan Society for International Development (JASID), Korea Association of International Development and Cooperation (KAIDEC), as well as a group of Russian researchers that became Russian Association of International Development Assistance Experts (RAEDAE) since its formal establishment in 2016.

The Forums brought together researchers and practitioners of development cooperation from the four countries as well as recipient countries in Asia.

The past Forums were jointly organized by ENEA Office and the partner networks taking turns in hosting the Forums most often with other local partners¹.

- **Republic of Korea** - Seoul in 2014 and 2018, in collaboration with KAIDEC
- **Japan** - Tokyo in 2015 and 2019, jointly hosted by JASID and JICA Research Institute
- **China** – Suzhou in 2016 jointly hosted by CIDRN and Department of International Cooperation in Development Research Center (DRC) of the State Council of China
- **Russian Federation** - Moscow in 2017, Russian Association of International Development Assistance Experts (RAIDAE) and the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA)

Partners profile

ESCAP ENEA Office is a subregional office of ESCAP, covering 6 member states (China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, and Russian Federation) and 2 associate members (Hong Kong, China and Macao, China).

China International Development Research Network (CIDRN) is a network of Chinese scholars interested in international development from different disciplinary backgrounds such as international relations, development studies, economics and other related fields have formed an informal network to share their research both amongst themselves and with policymakers in China, and beyond.

Japan Society for International Development (JASID) is an academic society that tries to bring together knowledge and experience about international development and cooperation from multiple disciplines, ranging from economics and management to politics, sociology, anthropology, agriculture, technology, medicine, and so forth.

Korea Association of International Development and Cooperation (KAIDEC) is an academic association of scholars from academic institutes in multidisciplinary subjects, government personnel working in development cooperation, private sector business personnel in charge of overseas investment, and field workers of NGOs.

Russian Association of International Development Assistance Experts (RAIDAE) is association of researchers and practitioners of development cooperation in Russian Federation officially established in 2016. The association was initiated by the researchers who participated in the first North-East Asia Development Cooperation Forum in Seoul in 2014.

¹ <http://www.unescap.org/events/north-east-asia-development-cooperation-forum>