South Asia SDG progress Overview
Accelerating SDG Achievement in South Asia in the wake of COVID-19

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Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna
South and South-West Asia Office
ESCAP
South Asia and SDG performance

- Before COVID-19, South Asia, despite robust economic growth and impressive progress in poverty reduction – lagged behind in 15 out of 17 goals (Goal 16 – regressed).
- The subregion is critical for global SDGs – 25% of world population with 36% in extreme poverty and hunger.
- Due to COVID-19: several restrictions imposed by Governments – slowdown in growth, poverty and inequality increase, job losses, gender gap and disparity, etc.
- We see mixed response on SDG performance....
Urgency for Accelerating SDGs in South Asia in the wake of COVID-19

Comparison of South Asia’s pre-pandemic and current SDG Progress

Source: Asia Pacific SDG Gateway
COVID-19 impact ….

- **Growth and employment** *(MSME, informal, tourism, hotel, textiles etc.)*

- **Poverty eradication**
  - Loss of jobs and livelihoods could push up to 132 million people into extreme poverty ($1.9 a day) [UNESCAP-SANEM model]

- **Education**
  - Temporary school closures have kept 391 million students out of school in primary and secondary education & estimated 5.5 million may drop-out of education

- **Inequalities are likely to widen as vulnerable and marginal groups are affected more adversely**
  - through disproportionate impacts on women
  - through more severe impact on people living in urban slums
  - through enhancing the vulnerability of migrant workers, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities

- **Rising food insecurity could have long-term consequences on health outcomes**

- **Cascading disaster risks intensifies vulnerabilities with inter-generational impacts**
COVID-19 and SDGs: Building back better

1. **Sustaining growth through economic diversification and sustainable industrial transformation**
   - Focus on MSMEs to address long-standing concerns of economic diversification and balanced growth. New supply chains emerging.

2. **Raising investments in the core social sectors of health and education**
   - Enhance spending on public health infrastructure
   - In the medium term move towards universal health cover
   - Invest in quality education & skilling of workforce to harness the full potential of youth bulge & its demographic dividend
3. Expanding social protection, closing gender gaps and improving basic infrastructure for addressing inequalities

- Scale up existing social protection programmes & learning from good practices to move towards universal social protection systems
- Closing gender gaps in employment in South Asia can lead to GDP gains as high as 25%, with entrepreneurship contributing around 10%
- Improving basic infrastructure like safe water and sanitation, electricity, ICT and transport can boost aggregate demand, create jobs and alleviate poverty

4. Ensuring food security, agriculture and rural development

- Build sustainable agriculture systems and productivity improvements to boost rural incomes, minimize climate vulnerabilities & risk convergence
- Generate non-farm employment, diversify agriculture value chains, build rural infrastructure
- Ensure sustainable management of natural resources
5. Enhancing environmental sustainability through green recovery programmes & accelerate transition to clean energy, low-carbon pathways

- Inclusive and sustainable urban spaces & sustainable production-consumption pathways
- Accelerate clean energy transition through harvesting renewable energy potential and integrated power grid for low carbon energy delivery systems
- Reforestation programmes, waste recycling, waste-to-energy, micro-hydel, home solar, climate smart farming to decarbonize while creating jobs
Enhancing the means of implementation for post COVID-19 sustainable recovery

Systemic
• Strengthening institutional mechanisms for implementing the SDGs

Financing
• Domestic resource mobilization through taxation reforms and efficiency gains
• Tapping into private finance, including through public, private partnerships and blended finance
• External finance, including innovative financing instruments

Cooperation
• International assistance and development cooperation
  ➢ Capacity Building
  ➢ Trade, transport, energy, disaster, pollution etc.
  ➢ Data, monitoring and accountability
Leveraging Regional Cooperation and Global Partnerships for SDGs

- Increasing relevance of regional cooperation in the aftermath of COVID-19
- Gains from regional economic integration highly relevant for SDGs
- Instruments for Regional Cooperation: Strengthening existing frameworks such as SAARC, BIMSTEC, SASEC, BBIN & broader South Asian Cooperation
  - Knowledge sharing platforms such as the SANS Portal facilitated by UNESCAP & regional think tanks
  - Exploring South-South cooperation
  - Agenda for Broader Regional Cooperation

Intraregional trade in SAARC ($ billion)

- Annual GDP increase in SAARC's four largest economies with skilled labor mobility ($...)

Hydroelectricity capacity in Nepal and Bhutan (GW)

- Medical tourist arrivals to India from SAARC countries (millions)

- Reduction in economic losses from natural calamities in Bangladesh, India and Nepal ($ billion)

- Share of intraregional FDI in total (%)
## Regional Cooperation for SDGs: South Asian Agenda – 8 Pillars

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Regional Cooperation for Health (SDG 3)</td>
<td>Harnessing the potential of intra-regional trade and financial cooperation for post COVID-19 recovery (SDG 8 &amp; 17)</td>
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<td>Strengthening South Asian freight corridors and infrastructure (energy, roads, communications) (SDG 7,9)</td>
<td>Subregional labour market for decent work and safe migration (SDG 1, 8,10)</td>
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<td>Cooperation for food security and climate-resilient agro-ecosystems (SDG 2)</td>
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<td>Digital Technology, ICT Connectivity and Data Systems (SDG 4 &amp; 17)</td>
<td>Building resilience through subregional cooperation, including climate action and natural resources management (SDG 13-15)</td>
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ESCAP: Socio-economic response framework

Research and analysis
- Publications: COVID, LDC graduation, SASDG report
- Reports: Development series, Disaster, Marine pollution, etc.

Technical assistance and policy advisory
- Sustainable graduation
- Women entrepreneurship
- SERF (UNCT), CCA, etc.

Capacity building
- Building back better
- LDC graduation

Knowledge platform
- SASDGF
- SANS
- E-learning course – e-commerce and digital marketing for women-led MSMEs

Regional cooperation
- HLPD
- Think Tanks, CSOs, SAES etc.
- Disaster, pollution, transport, trade, etc.
UNESCAP South Asia Resources

COVID-19 and South Asia: National Strategies and Subregional Cooperation for Accelerating Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Recovery

Towards Sustainable Graduation of South Asian LDCs in the aftermath of COVID-19: Challenges, Prospects and Policy Lessons

Strengthening Freight Transport Corridors of South Asia in the aftermath of COVID-19

Report of High-Level Policy Dialogue on COVID-19 and South Asia: Socio-Economic Impacts, National Strategies and Subregional Cooperation for Building Back Better

Protecting the most vulnerable to cascading risks from climate extremes and the COVID-19 in South Asia

Pathways to manage cascading risks and protect people in South Asia
Key takeaways for stakeholders
Dec. 2019, Dhaka - Real

COVID effect - Dec. 2020, Virtual
THANK YOU

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