



**RECOVERING FROM COVID-19:  
LESSONS FROM PAST DISASTERS  
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

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**A study led by the United Nations Development Programme Bangkok Regional Hub as part of and in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Issue-Based Coalition for Building Resilience.**

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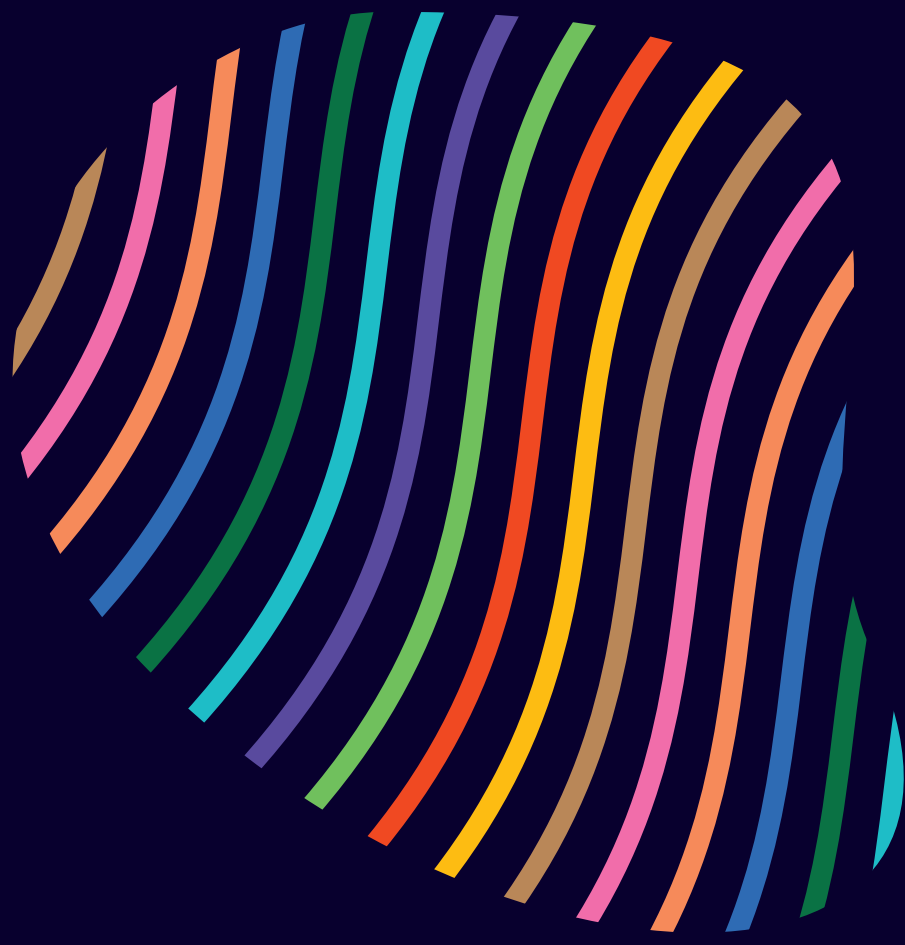
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# ACRONYMS

<b>AIDMI</b>	All India Disaster Mitigation Institute	<b>FBF</b>	Forecast-Based Financing
<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank		
<b>ASEANs</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations		
<b>BARMM</b>	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (Philippines)	<b>GCDS</b>	Global Centre for Disaster Statistics
<b>BIPAD-DIMS</b>	Building Information Platform Against Disasters, Disaster Information Management System	<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>BNPB</b>	National Agency of Disaster Management (Indonesia)	<b>GEC</b>	Green Economy Coalition
<b>BRH</b>	Bangkok Regional Hub (UNDP)	<b>GEJE</b>	Great East Japan Earthquake
<b>BRR</b>	Agency for the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Aceh and Nias (Indonesia)	<b>GGGI</b>	Global Green Growth Institute
		<b>GGKP</b>	Green Growth Knowledge Partnership
		<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information Systems
		<b>GIZ</b>	German Development Agency
		<b>GoB</b>	Government of Bangladesh
		<b>Gov4Res</b>	Governance for Resilience (UNDP)
<b>CARES</b>	COVID-19 Active Response and Expenditure Support (Asian Development Bank)	<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>CAT DDO</b>	Catastrophe Deferred Drawdown Option (World Bank)		
<b>CBM</b>	Christian Blind Mission	<b>IBC</b>	Issues-Based Coalition (United Nations)
<b>CBS</b>	Cell Broadcasting Service (Republic of Korea)	<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology
<b>CPP</b>	Cyclone Preparedness Programme (Bangladesh)	<b>IDPs</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>CRNA</b>	COVID-19 Recovery Needs Assessment	<b>IES</b>	Informal Entrepreneurial Sector
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organizations	<b>IFIs</b>	International Financial Institutions
		<b>IFRC</b>	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
<b>DIBI</b>	Disaster Information Management System (Indonesia)	<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>DPOs</b>	Disabled People Organizations	<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>DRR</b>	Disaster Risk Reduction	<b>IPCC</b>	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
<b>DRT</b>	Disaster Risk Reduction and Building Resilience Team	<b>iPDNA</b>	IT-enabled Post-Disaster Needs Assessment
<b>DTI</b>	Department of Trade and Industry (Philippines)	<b>IRIDeS</b>	International Research Institute of Disaster Science
<b>EOC</b>	Emergency Operations Control (India)	<b>JICA</b>	Japan International Cooperation Agency
<b>EPFO</b>	Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (India)	<b>JRF</b>	Java Reconstruction Fund (Indonesia)
<b>ESCAP</b>	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (United Nations)		
		<b>KSDMA</b>	Kerala Disaster Management Authority (India)

<b>LDCs</b>	Least Developed Countries	<b>RKDP</b>	Rebuild Kerala Development Programme (UNDP India)
<b>LGBTQI</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex	<b>RPBA</b>	Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment
<b>LGUs</b>	Local Government Units (Philippines)		
<b>MERS</b>	Middle East Respiratory Syndrome	<b>SAARC</b>	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
<b>MoDMR</b>	Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (Bangladesh)	<b>SARS</b>	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
<b>MOIS</b>	Ministry of the Interior and Safety (Republic of Korea)	<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>MOOC</b>	Massive Open Online Course	<b>SDMC</b>	SAARC Disaster Management Centre
<b>MPAC</b>	Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity	<b>SEADRIF</b>	Southeast Asia Disaster Risk Insurance Facility
		<b>SFDRR</b>	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
		<b>SIDS</b>	Small Island Developing States
		<b>SMEs</b>	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
		<b>SOD</b>	Standing Orders on Disasters (Bangladesh)
<b>NDCs</b>	Nationally Determined Contributions		
<b>NDMA</b>	National Disaster Management Agency (Malaysia)	<b>UBI</b>	Universal Basic Income
<b>NDMC</b>	National Disaster Management Council (Bangladesh)	<b>UCEP</b>	Universal Coverage for Emergency Patients (Thailand)
<b>NDRCG</b>	National Disaster Response Coordination Group (Bangladesh)	<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations	<b>UNDRR</b>	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>NIDM</b>	India's National Institute of Disaster Management (India)	<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>NRA</b>	National Reconstruction Authority (Nepal)	<b>UNIDO</b>	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
		<b>UNOSSC</b>	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation
		<b>UN-PAGE</b>	United Nations Partnership for Action on Green Economy
<b>ODA</b>	Overseas Development Assistance	<b>UNRISD</b>	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>OPARR</b>	Office of the Presidential Assistant for Rehabilitation and Recovery (Nepal)		
<b>OxCGRT</b>	Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker		
		<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>PDNA</b>	Post-Disaster Needs Assessment	<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>PDS</b>	Public Distribution System (India)		
<b>PEA</b>	Poverty-Environment Action		
<b>PPE</b>	Personal Protective Equipment		



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# SYSTEMIC RISKS: WHAT IS IT AND HOW IS IT CHANGING THE NATURE OF DISASTERS





## **The Asia-Pacific region is the most disaster-prone region in the world, with disaster risks increasing in severity, scale and frequency.**

The novel coronavirus that emerged in 2019, COVID-19, has added to the realized and historical risks that prevail in the Asia-Pacific region, the most disaster-prone in the world. The region has frequently occurring natural hazards including earthquakes, tsunamis, tropical storms, floods, landslides, volcanic eruptions and droughts affecting millions of people every year. From 2011 to 2015, 45 percent of global disasters occurred in the region, leading to a rise in disaster impacts from approximately 0.1 percent in the 1970s to 0.4 percent in recent decades.<sup>1</sup> More recently, in 2019, there was a relentless sequence of disasters with significant damages and losses and more people being displaced. In some countries such as Afghanistan, Indonesia, Iran, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines, these occurred in the same regions that have yet to recover from previous devastating events.

Moreover, the region is experiencing rising socio-economic losses from natural hazards. The annual economic loss for Asia and the Pacific is estimated at US\$675 billion, or around 2.4 percent of the region's gross domestic product (GDP), of which US\$405 billion or 60 percent are drought-related agricultural losses, disproportionately impacting the rural poor.<sup>2</sup> Climate risks account for around 85 percent of these losses. In parts of Southeast Asia and South Asia, the causes and effects of climate risks are located across political borders.

## **Risk drivers are contributing to exposure and vulnerability, reducing capacity and increasing fragility.**

The underlying risk drivers include poverty, inequality and gender inequality, discrimination and marginalization, socio-economic and political exclusion, climate change and variability, unplanned and rapid urbanization, and the lack of disaster risk considerations in land management and environmental and natural resource management, as well as compounding factors such as demographic change, unsustainable uses of natural resources, declining and fragile ecosystems, pandemics and epidemics.

Around 400 million people still live below the international poverty line of US\$1.90 a day and more than 1 billion live on less than US\$3.20 a day. While 1.6 billion people lack access to basic sanitation, an estimated 260 million also lack access to clean water at home. Estimates indicate that more than 4 in 10 people in the region have no access to health care.<sup>3</sup> Each year, disasters displace millions of people around the world, with the majority of the displacement occurring in the Asia-Pacific region. A one-metre rise in sea level could displace 37 million people in Asia, while a three-metre rise would affect 90 million – along with the damage to the physical, economic and cultural capital of urban areas.<sup>4</sup> In 2018, three countries in Asia – China, India and the Philippines – accounted for approximately 60 percent of all new disaster displacements globally, with almost 4 million new displacements occurring in both India and the Philippines in a single year.

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1 ESCAP (2015). *Overview of Natural Disasters and their Impacts in Asia and the Pacific, 1970–2014*. [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Technical%20paper-Overview%20of%20natural%20hazards%20and%20their%20impacts\\_final.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Technical%20paper-Overview%20of%20natural%20hazards%20and%20their%20impacts_final.pdf)

2 ESCAP (2019a). *The Disaster Riskscape Across Asia-Pacific – Pathways for Resilience, Inclusion and Empowerment. Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2019*. Bangkok: ESCAP. [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/publications/Asia-Pacific%20Disaster%20Report%202019\\_full%20version.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/publications/Asia-Pacific%20Disaster%20Report%202019_full%20version.pdf)

3 ESCAP (2020). *Impact and Policy Responses for COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific*.

4 SEI (2019). The 2019 Asia-Pacific Disaster Report shows a region at risk and running out of time, 11 September.

The region is experiencing the world's fastest urbanization rate, accounting for 50 percent (2.3 billion) of the global urban population in 2019.<sup>5</sup> This is projected to increase to nearly 3.5 billion by 2050.<sup>6</sup> Rapidly developing second- and third-tier cities do not have the required infrastructure, services or risk-informed planning and land use management measures in place to safeguard their inhabitants (and their livelihoods),<sup>7</sup> and this unequal access to urban space and services can push poor people to settle in informal settlements in riskier areas that are more hazard-prone.<sup>8</sup>

The impact of disasters among groups is differentiated according to their level of exposure and vulnerability. People living in poverty are more at risk during disasters and from the impacts of climate change because they often live in precarious conditions and high-risk areas and depend on informal jobs and irregular incomes.<sup>9</sup> The risks of disasters endanger the livelihoods of women and girls, particularly those with disabilities, older women and those in minority groups, more than those of men and boys because of the greater social and economic inequalities women face. Women are often denied their rights and have less ownership over resources such as land, property, household assets and savings. This increases the severity of their losses during disasters and limits their ability to rebuild.<sup>10</sup> Persons with disabilities are often found to have difficulties in evacuating their living spaces during disasters and emergencies. For example, the mortality rate of persons with disabilities after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan was twice that of the rest of the population.<sup>11</sup> Many countries in the region are dealing with a range of underlying human rights problems including discrimination, the exclusion of certain vulnerable groups and heavy restrictions on fundamental freedoms including freedom of expression. Disasters invariably exacerbate these existing issues.

## The nature of the risk in the Asia-Pacific region is rapidly emerging to be systemic: it is complex and cascading, interconnected and cyclical.

### Box 1: Systemic risk

A 'systemic risk' is a risk that is endogenous to, or embedded in, a system that is not itself considered to be a risk and is therefore not generally tracked or managed, but which is understood through systems analysis to have a latent or cumulative risk potential to negatively impact overall system performance when some characteristics of the system change.

Source: UNDRR (2019). Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).

The Asia-Pacific Disaster Report<sup>12</sup> identifies four distinct hotspots where fragile environments are converging with critical socio-economic vulnerabilities to create potential cascading crises. The first is located within the transboundary river basins of South and South-East Asia, where poverty, hunger and undernourishment are combined with exposure to intensifying floods that alternate with prolonged droughts. The second surrounds the Pacific Ring of Fire, a path along the Pacific Ocean where major cities, transport and information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and poor populations are exposed to typhoons and seismic and tsunami hazards. The third is the Pacific Small Islands Developing States (SIDS), where vulnerable populations,

5 ESCAP (2019b). The Future of Asian and Pacific Cities 2019: Transformative Pathways Towards Sustainable Urban Development. <https://www.unescap.org/publications/future-asian-and-pacific-cities-2019-transformative-pathways-towards-sustainable-urban>

6 Ibid.

7 World Bank (2015). Investing in Urban Resilience: Protecting and Promoting Development in a Changing World. Washington, DC: World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/25219/109431-WP-P158937-PUBLIC-ABSTRACT-SENT-INVESTINGINURBANRESILIENCEProtectingandPromotingDevelopmentinaChangingWorld.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 IFRC (2015). Gender and diversity for urban resilience: An analysis. [http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/Gender%20and%20Diversity/Urban%20DRR\\_Final.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/Gender%20and%20Diversity/Urban%20DRR_Final.pdf)

11 UNDP Nepal (2016). Disaster, Disability, & Difference: A Study of the Challenges Faced by Persons with Disabilities in Post-Earthquake Nepal. [https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/2016/Disaster-Disability-and-Difference\\_May2016\\_For-Accessible-PDF.pdf](https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/2016/Disaster-Disability-and-Difference_May2016_For-Accessible-PDF.pdf)

12 UNESCAP (2019a).

fragile ecosystems and critical infrastructure are exposed to climate-related hazards of increasing intensities. A fourth emerging hotspot is the sand and dust storm risk corridor which covers parts of South, South-West and Central Asia.

### Box 2: Emergent risk

The term 'emergent risk' is used to describe risks that are poorly understood, but are expected to grow greatly in significance. Unlike other risks, emergent risks do not have a track record which can be used to estimate likely probabilities and expected losses.

The consequences of these alarming risk environments are that in the Asia-Pacific region or at least some subregions, there is more certainty of emergent risks. These carry the potential of diverse types of damage and destruction simultaneously to vital public and economic infrastructure, to life support systems and for those who are highly vulnerable, who have significantly weakened resiliency to any type of shocks. These risks can impact on sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – in an unprecedented way. Restrictions to freedom of expression and the right to accessible information also limit the possibilities of taking early action in particular for slow onset disasters in politically sensitive or new situations, such as epidemics.

The traditional notion of risk – the compounded result of natural and human-caused hazards, vulnerability, exposure and capacity – is thus outdated. The previous concept focuses on elements at risk and risks, which are defined using spatial and temporal characteristics; it does not capture the dimensions of interconnectedness, cascading effects and quantifying uncertainties. The notion of systemic risk is still poorly understood in the region, i.e. that the risks are not local and unique to exposed elements but can cascade to other parts of the 'system' – political and human rights, social, economic and environmental. This interconnectedness cannot be ignored – risks are shared: a change brought about by a disaster in one location can create feedback loops and

have profound, mainly negative, effects in other parts of the region, if not the world.

There is, however, a realization that disaster risks, particularly anthropogenic climate-related risks, will grow in significance and complexity. This will result in the need for systems thinking or a holistic approach. Climate change is increasingly recognized as a systemic risk with potentially catastrophic impacts cascading through financial, ecological and social systems. Historical and catastrophic events in the Asia-Pacific region have had an influence on this evolution of the concept. Extreme weather events and climate variability cascaded into food and water shortages, large-scale saltwater intrusions, forced migration, armed conflict, epidemics and loss of biodiversity. Geological hotspots can produce catastrophic events in the Pacific Ring of Fire, notable of which was the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004. With the presence of many coastal and dense cities near subduction zones and inland fault systems, the probability of high impact and catastrophic events is highly likely.

Two separate disaster events in 2011 illustrate this notion of a systemic risk well. The first was the Great East Japan Earthquake (GEJE). It had complex consequences – an earthquake and a resulting massive tsunami which cascaded into the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident. The economic impacts of the GEJE had contradictory elements. The damages to local economic activities in tsunami-affected prefectures were relatively small, mainly in agriculture and fisheries. These were dwarfed by the severe and widespread economic impacts due to the destruction of energy generation, distribution and other cascading supply chain disruption. The economic costs of the earthquake induced a nuclear accident, which affected Japan's private sector and was compounded by disruption in their supply chain due to widespread flooding in Thailand, a few months later in the same year. The government of Japan estimated the damages at US\$210 billion, or about 4 percent of Japan's GDP.<sup>13</sup> Assessed separately, Thailand's flood helped contribute to a total estimated US\$46.5 billion in economic losses for the first nine months of 2011.<sup>14</sup> From the perspective of systemic risk, economic integration with other countries in the region has contributed to business viability for Japanese companies but also expanded vulnerabilities.

13 World Bank, GFDRR, Government of Japan (2012). Knowledge Note 6-3. Cluster 6: The economics of disaster risk, risk management, and risk financing. Economic Impacts. <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/384311468044674425/pdf/800750drrm0kn6030Box0377295B00PUBLIC0.pdf>

14 World Bank, GFDRR et al. (2011). Thai Flood 2011. Rapid Assessment for Resilient Recovery and Reconstruction Planning. [https://www.gfdr.org/sites/gfdr/files/publication/Thai\\_Flood\\_2011\\_2.pdf](https://www.gfdr.org/sites/gfdr/files/publication/Thai_Flood_2011_2.pdf)

The disaster shocks in these two countries had a combined impact that had far-reaching consequences on global markets and the global supply chain. Roughly 70 percent of Thailand's damage and loss was borne by the manufacturing sector, one of the main drivers of Thailand's exports. This change of exporting capacity risked impacting international trade.

These events demonstrated the fragility associated with interconnected enterprises and supply chains. In Thailand, recovering the entire supply chain, not only the industrial estates, was indispensable for reviving the industrial sector, which was a real challenge for recovery planning. It is also worth noting that the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) located outside the industrial estates but also a part of the value chain were more vulnerable to the floods and had less capacity to resume operations without timely financial support.

The interconnectedness of economic systems (market and supply chain), finance, environment resources, information, communication, the promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights which enhance people's well-being (including dimensions of inequalities, access to services such as health, and productivity and livelihoods) defines quality of life as well as vulnerabilities. These conditions of vulnerabilities are on multiple spatial scales and across different timescales. They are exposed to disruptive influences of natural hazards combined with anthropogenic activities such as the loss of biodiversity, ecological systems degradation and unplanned urbanization; and with human and institutional interaction such as inequalities, consumption, lifestyle, unrest and political and financial instability. Countries and communities are required not only to cope with and recover from individual events but rather from complicated and unprecedented crises.

## **Six months into 2020, several countries are experiencing the theoretical nexus of disasters and development translated into a real combination of pandemic and disaster.**

The current effects of COVID-19 and these disasters are an inseparable and composite whole. While COVID-19 is first a health risk, government policies and measures

such as lockdowns, social distancing and travel bans have cascading effects across a range of dimensions including on the economy but also opening up social fissures, increasing inequalities and impacting on a range of human rights. While they have created new poor and new vulnerabilities, it is also undeniable that many of the socio-economic impacts are affecting households that were already extremely vulnerable with limited coping mechanisms. National and local crises are currently exacerbated by the simultaneous sufferings of over 200 countries due to COVID-19.

The causes and physical characteristics of pandemics and disasters are very different. However, both shocks have recently struck in the same geographical space and time in several countries with the virus making its way to high population density areas and having serious impacts on disaster risk and on vulnerable groups (e.g. persons with disabilities, female-headed households and indigenous population groups) and livelihoods. The recent disasters in these countries have further complicated the situation and efforts to plan for recovery will require disentangling the combined effects of the pandemic and disasters. There is also the risk of conflict adding to this entanglement.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the very real challenges that result from the combination of an infectious disease health crisis occurring in countries that are already disaster-prone. These challenges vary, depending on the order in which a country experiences a disaster and a pandemic. On the one hand, countries recovering from the impacts of a previous disaster may struggle to prepare for, respond to and recover from the impacts of COVID-19, which can compound the socio-economic effects of the previous disaster and undermine existing recovery efforts. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic is posing additional challenges to countries that already must prepare and respond to natural and climate change-related hazards. In particular, the response to a hazard that occurs during a pandemic will need to be carefully planned and managed to ensure that it in itself does not become a vector that propagates the spread of the infection. The socio-economic impacts of measures to reduce the health impacts of the pandemic can also fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable and reduce their coping capacities ahead of the next natural disaster.

There are examples of countries in the region that experienced disasters in the years or months before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and where the

impacts of both the virus itself and the government response to contain its spread have either reinforced the socio-economic impacts of the previous disaster or have impeded planned recovery efforts. On the island of Lombok, Indonesian communities are still recovering from a series of earthquakes that occurred in July 2018 and March 2019.<sup>15</sup> The emergence of COVID-19 has affected recovery efforts, with the Indonesian Red Cross issuing a directive halting earthquake recovery activities in Lombok in order to reduce risks of virus transmission among staff, volunteers and the target population.<sup>16</sup>

In April 2020, the small island states of Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu were impacted by Tropical Cyclone Harold. While they were relatively isolated from the health risks of COVID-19 due to early closure of borders, they were already feeling the effects of economic losses due to reduced market demand from tourism, fisheries and global commodities. The extensive damage of assets due to Tropical Cyclone Harold<sup>17</sup> further aggravated the situation.

Countries like Iran, Bangladesh, the Philippines and India were impacted by extreme weather events while cases of COVID-19 were escalating exponentially. Iran was devastated by floods in early 2019 that occurred in 25 of the country's 31 provinces, and which affected more than 10 million people;<sup>18</sup> the country was then hit by more floods in both December 2019 and March 2020, with the latter affecting 19 provinces and causing severe damage to basic infrastructure in both urban and rural areas and causing US\$120 million in damages to the agriculture sector.<sup>19</sup> At the same time in March 2020, 7 provinces in the southern part of Iran had to grapple with the biggest

invasion of desert locusts of the past 50 years,<sup>20</sup> which resulted in damage to around 800,000 hectares of pasture and agricultural land.<sup>21</sup> The first case of COVID-19 emerged in Iran in February 2020 and spread rapidly, resulting in more than 8,000 deaths by 30 June 2020;<sup>22</sup> the risk is that people who were already affected by the impacts of the floods or locusts would be hit again by either the direct health impacts or the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.

Cyclone Amphan, the most powerful cyclone to strike Bangladesh in 20 years,<sup>23</sup> made landfall in May 2020, while the country was under lockdown with over 15,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases.<sup>24</sup> In order to evacuate over two million people to cyclone shelters while enabling them to practise social distancing to prevent further infection, the Government of Bangladesh increased the number of cyclone shelters from 4,000 to 14,000 and reduced the number of average evacuees in each cyclone shelter from 377 (which was the case during Cyclone Bulbul in 2019) to 165.<sup>25</sup> Volunteers from the Government's Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) were in charge of the early warning dissemination to communities and were instructed to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during their activities.<sup>26</sup> The Government of Bangladesh also prepared motorized transportation and evacuated people in small groups to limit person-to-person contact.<sup>27</sup> In India, hundreds of cyclone shelters had recently been turned into COVID-19 quarantine centres for suspected patients and returning migrants, yet the Government of Odisha managed to evacuate around 150,000 people to safer areas.

In June 2020 in the Philippines, Typhoon Vongfong made

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15 IFRC (2020). Emergency Plan of Action Operation Update – Indonesia Lombok earthquakes, 29 May 2020. [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MDRID013ou21\\_0.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MDRID013ou21_0.pdf)

16 Ibid.

17 The ongoing post-disaster needs assessment in Vanuatu may reveal additional insights.

18 OCHA (2019). Islamic Republic of Iran: Floods Response Plan (April 2019). [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20190429-Iran\\_Floods\\_UN\\_Iran\\_Response\\_Plan.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20190429-Iran_Floods_UN_Iran_Response_Plan.pdf)

19 OCHA (2020). Islamic Republic of Iran: Flash Update – As of 31 March 2020. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Islamic%20Republic%20of%20Iran%20-%20Flash%20Update%20-%20As%20of%2031%20March%202020.pdf>

20 Ibid.

21 FAO (2020). Southwest Asia: Desert locust crisis appeal, May–December 2020, Rapid response and scaled-up action. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ca9250en.pdf>

22 Bloomberg (2020). Iran Reports Record Daily Virus Cases as Lockdown Eases. 4 June 2020. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-06-04/iran-reports-record-daily-coronavirus-cases-as-lockdown-eases>

23 ESCAP (2020). Protecting the most vulnerable to cascading risks from climate extremes and the COVID-19 in South Asia. [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Policy%20study-climate%20hazards%20during%20the%20pandemic\\_final\\_v6%20%284%29.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Policy%20study-climate%20hazards%20during%20the%20pandemic_final_v6%20%284%29.pdf)

24 WHO Bangladesh (2020). COVID-19 Situation Report No. #11, 11 May 2020. [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/searo/bangladesh/covid-19-who-bangladesh-situation-reports/who-ban-covid-19-sitrep-11.pdf?sfvrsn=ee79ca3d\\_6](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/searo/bangladesh/covid-19-who-bangladesh-situation-reports/who-ban-covid-19-sitrep-11.pdf?sfvrsn=ee79ca3d_6)

25 Interview with Ahmadul Haque, Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP), Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief of the Government of Bangladesh (MoDMR), Dhaka, 29 June 2020.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

landfall while communities were in quarantine. The virus complicated the country's emergency response, with guidelines needing to be issued by the Government of the Philippines to ensure minimum health standards were maintained, particularly in evacuation centres.<sup>28</sup>

Fragile states suffer from similar risks. In this region, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Pakistan are among the top 25 fragile states. Similar to natural hazards, pandemic risks are likely to increase inequalities and further burden already vulnerable groups. There is also the risk that conflict parties will be quick to capitalize on various opportunities arising from the policy responses to the crisis, which complicate peace and crisis management efforts. Moreover, the economic fallout can put severe strain on already weak state institutions and undermine governance outcomes, thus increasing the risk of conflict. In Afghanistan, the third-most food-insecure country in the world, the closure of borders to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the country is causing concern of a deepening food crisis particularly likely to worsen in the winter months and severely impacting children, the elderly and the most vulnerable groups.<sup>29</sup> In addition, partial lockdowns of varying severity across the country are limiting movements of humanitarian actors to support the most vulnerable.<sup>30</sup> The risks of civil unrest have increased in the region as the impact of the economic crisis and rising inequality mix with long-standing human rights concerns including in relation to social cohesion and discrimination, democratic space, justice and the rule of law. Analysts are predicting a surge in protests in the second half of 2020 with an increasing number of countries at risk of civil unrest.<sup>31</sup>


28 OCHA (2020). Philippines: Typhoon Vongfong (Ambo) Snapshot As of 20 May 2020. [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/200520\\_Typhoon%20Vongfong%20Ambo%20Snapshot.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/200520_Typhoon%20Vongfong%20Ambo%20Snapshot.pdf)

29 Interview with Aga Khan Agency for Habitat, virtual meeting, 18 June 2020.

30 Global Protection Cluster (2020). Afghanistan: COVID-19 Situation Report 05 May 2020. [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Reporte\\_11.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Reporte_11.pdf)

31 See <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jul/17/protests-predicted-to-surge-globally-as-covid-19-drives-unrest>; and [https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/21/how-the-coronavirus-crisis-is-silencing-dissent-and-sparking-repression/?utm\\_source=PostUp&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=23505&utm\\_term=Flashpoints%20OC&?tpcc=23505](https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/21/how-the-coronavirus-crisis-is-silencing-dissent-and-sparking-repression/?utm_source=PostUp&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=23505&utm_term=Flashpoints%20OC&?tpcc=23505)





**“Similar to natural hazards, pandemic risks are likely to increase inequalities and further burden already vulnerable groups.”**

# GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST DISASTERS





When comparing an unprecedented crisis like COVID-19 with past epidemics and pandemics, economic crises, natural hazards, conflict and displacement, it must be acknowledged that the global and regional impacts of COVID-19 is undeniably exponentially more severe.

First, unlike any of these past crises, the extent of impact that COVID-19 has had is devastating across the world, with significant social, economic and political implications for over 200 countries, leaving no continent untouched.<sup>32</sup> COVID-19 is set to generate a loss of at least 1.5 percent in yearly GDP or US\$1 trillion worldwide, which would technically mean a global recession with all major regions affected and a devastating impact on the poorest countries.<sup>33</sup>

Second, government policies and measures to contain the spread of COVID-19, such as lockdowns and travel bans, have had a cascading effects on economies as reductions in global demand and supply, plummeting oil prices, disruptions in the supply chain and reduced regional and global transport connectivity are causing a global economic recession. This is also affecting countries that are relatively isolated from the health risks of the virus, such as Bhutan, Timor-Leste and the Pacific Island countries in the Asia-Pacific region, as they are reliant on tourism and exports. The economic impact in the Asia-Pacific region is likely to be severe: based on estimates between November 2019 and March 2020, GDP growth in the region will decline by nearly 1 percent due to COVID-19.<sup>34</sup> In terms of working hours, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has measured a 7.2 percent decline in working hours across the region due to the impact of COVID-19.<sup>35</sup> Remittance flows are expected to fall in 2020 by 22.1 percent in South Asia and 13 percent in East Asia and the Pacific.<sup>36</sup>

### Box 3: Impact of COVID-19 on tourism and allied sectors in Bhutan

Tourism is a major growth sector in Bhutan as it earns the highest amount of hard currency reserves and provides the largest employment opportunity to a growing number of Bhutanese youth. The travel ban has resulted in significant losses for hotels, travel agencies and informal small businesses that rely on tourism for their income such as sellers of handicrafts, street vendors, porters, trekking companies, restaurants and other related services. Many households have lost their only source of income with job losses or pay cuts revealing that income sources are not diversified for most of them.

Source: NSB and UNDP Bhutan (2020). Rapid Socio-Economic Assessment of COVID-19 on Bhutan's Tourism Sector, An analysis of the vulnerability of individuals, households and businesses engaged in the tourism sector. <http://www.nsb.gov.bt/publication/files/pub1ip5024jn.pdf>

Third, disruptions in the global supply chain have led to huge economic losses with commerce, business and enterprise suffering in every country. Traditional services sectors, such as tourism, retail, hospitality, civil aviation, and some labour-intensive and supply chain-based manufacturing have taken an immediate hit. In the Asia-Pacific region, services and labour-intensive manufacturing comprise over 80 percent of the region's informal sector and SMEs. As they contribute to most of the jobs in the region, the impact is going to be substantial, resulting in increased layoffs and unemployment.<sup>37</sup> An added vulnerability is that workers who do not have skills

32 See the WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) dashboard for dynamic updates: <https://covid19.who.int/>

33 ODI (2020). Covid-19: 'we won't get back to normal because normal was the problem'. 1 April 2020.

34 ESCAP (2020).

35 ILO (2020a). ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Third edition. Updated estimates and analysis. 29 April 2020, p. 3 [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_743146.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_743146.pdf)

36 World Bank (2020). World Bank Predicts Sharpest Decline of Remittances in Recent History, 22 April 2020. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/22/world-bank-predicts-sharpest-decline-of-remittances-in-recent-history>

37 ESCAP (2020).

for non-routine and non-manual jobs could be at greater risk as COVID-19 accelerates digital transformation and automation, displacing routine and manual jobs.

#### **Box 4: Impact of COVID-19 on SMEs and informal enterprises in Bangladesh and Papua New Guinea**

In Bangladesh, the extended lockdown has resulted in major supply chain disruptions and loss of sales that are disproportionately affecting the small and medium-sized enterprises that account for 25 percent of the country's GDP and 70 to 80 percent of non-agricultural sector employment. This sector is also responsible for 30 percent of the total labour force and 40 percent of the manufacturing output. With poor access to finance, poor market linkages, a lack of skilled labour and a lack of export markets, an estimated 68 percent of SMEs are likely to permanently close if the lockdown persists for more than four months.

In Papua New Guinea, this sector, known as the Informal Entrepreneurial Sector (IES), comprises 75 percent of the labour force and 35 percent of the GDP. It has been impacted the worst – 95 percent across rural and urban areas have suffered 100 percent losses due to job losses and increased expenditure on household needs.

Sources: UNDP (2020). Bangladesh Socio-Economic Recovery Framework for Tackling COVID-19, 04 June 2020; UNDP (2020). National Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 on Papua New Guinea, 15 June 2020.

Fourth, both the health risks and the economic impacts of the coronavirus are disproportionately affecting population groups with pre-existing vulnerabilities and socially excluded groups, as well as creating new poor and new vulnerabilities. Due to the nature of the pandemic, older persons and persons with some types of disabilities

are even more vulnerable to health risks due to their pre-existing health conditions and/or not having equal access to health-related information and preventative measures. As over 60 percent of the Asia-Pacific population have limited access to any form of social protection, the vulnerabilities of workers engaged in the informal sector are likely to be exacerbated.<sup>38</sup> The economic impacts coupled with the lack of social protection (such as cash transfers, universal health coverage and access to other basic services) is putting already vulnerable and socially excluded groups at a double disadvantage: particularly women, daily wage workers, migrant workers, persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) persons that are engaged in many of these economic activities.<sup>39</sup> For instance, in Bangladesh, women in informal employment are almost six times more likely than men to see their working hours reduced.<sup>40</sup> Thailand's announcement of lockdown measures led to more than 224,000 cross-border migrants from its neighbouring countries returning to their homes, including Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar<sup>41</sup> (see Annex 1 for more details on the specific impact on different population groups: older persons, children, women, persons with disabilities and people on the move).

Fifth, transport and movement restrictions have led to farmers not being able to bring their produce to market and this, in turn, has led to the stockpiling of unsold food and subsequent income instability across the Asia-Pacific region. Border closures have meant that countries reliant on agricultural imports have had to address increased food insecurity, while exporting countries have suffered livelihood losses. The agricultural sector has been further impacted by foreign workers returning to their countries of origin, leading to labour shortages across the region. In Thailand alone, 700,000 foreign workers have left the country which has then had considerable consequences for agricultural production across the nation.<sup>42</sup> In light of the combination of reduced incomes, disruptions to food supply chains and an already acute food security crisis, the World Food Programme has projected that an

38 ESCAP (2020).

39 See Box 1 for details on the COVID-19 impact on the most vulnerable groups.

40 UN Women (2020). Surveys show that COVID-19 has gendered effects in Asia and the Pacific. 29 April 2020. <https://data.unwomen.org/resources/surveys-show-covid-19-has-gendered-effects-asia-and-pacific>

41 IOM (2020). COVID-19 Response, IOM Regional Office for Asia Pacific, Situation Report 6–27 April 2020. [https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/situation\\_reports/file/iom\\_roap\\_sitrep\\_covid-19\\_6\\_v2.pdf](https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/situation_reports/file/iom_roap_sitrep_covid-19_6_v2.pdf)

42 ESCAP (2020). Webinar on the Impact of Covid-19 on Agriculture in the Asia-Pacific and the Role of Mechanization. 18 June 2020. <https://www.unescap.org/events/webinar-impact-covid-19-agriculture-asia-pacific-and-role-mechanization>

additional 130 million people will be food insecure due to COVID-19, causing a 'hunger pandemic'.<sup>43</sup>

By some estimates, COVID-19 could be comparable to the enduring effects of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis in terms of economic impact.<sup>44</sup> First, both crises come in waves, as knock-on effects from problems in one sector or country rebound and create new problems in other sectors or countries. Second, COVID-19 will also be an employment crisis, with significant implications for supporting workers in mass unemployment. Third, second- and third-order effects of policy actions can be unpredictable but important. Fourth, governments are facing the challenge of having to act rapidly and at a large scale across a wide range of policy areas. Governments have to think in the immediate term and longer term at the same time.<sup>45</sup>

Recovery from COVID-19 is probably more similar to protracted or prolonged crises. The approach to socio-economic recovery therefore has to be dynamic with response, preparedness and recovery being a protracted cyclical approach. For example, as some countries reduce restrictions and move towards recovery, reoccurrence of infections may again call for emergency measures, meaning that the preparedness and dissemination of messages will be a continuing activity.

As the waves of the pandemic rise and fall, lessons from countries in South and East Asia that seem to have passed the peak of the pandemic transmission can be useful for other countries to reduce future risks from this crisis. While acknowledging the differences, valuable lessons can also be drawn from past disasters. For the Asia-Pacific region, these are drawn mainly from past epidemics and natural hazards. With the exception of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake (as discussed earlier), most of the disasters have been national or local in scope and consequences. However, they provide useful insights into what types of recovery practices can be applied to COVID-19 recovery and how disaster preparedness and risk reduction can ensure that recovery from the pandemic is resilient, inclusive and dynamic.

### Box 5: Complexities of pandemics and conflicts

Previous infectious diseases have seen reduced transmission in conflict areas, likely due to fewer gatherings and interactions between people, but after the conflict was resolved and the areas entered the recovery phase with reduced movement restrictions, the disease rapidly spread.<sup>46</sup> For instance, during conflict periods in African states, HIV transmission was expected to increase because of disruptions to essential social and health services and to protective social and family networks. However, studies have shown that the relationship between HIV and conflict is more complex. For instance, after a decade-long conflict in Sierra Leone ended in 2002, the prevalence of HIV was only 0.9 percent, lower than many of the neighbouring countries that were not involved in conflicts, such as Guinea where the prevalence of HIV was over 2.1 percent. During post-conflict periods and recoveries in African states, transportation resumed and huge influxes of people, including refugees, displaced people and migrants from rural areas, moved to urban areas to seek employment. As formerly separated populations congregated again, increased HIV cases were reported from post-conflict countries, such as Mozambique and South Africa, likely due to the concentration of large numbers of people in already crowded cities combined with damaged or inadequate health infrastructure in post-conflict states.

Sources: Becker, J.U., Theodosis, C. and Kulkarni, R. (2008). HIV/AIDS, conflict and security in Africa: rethinking relationships. *Journal of the International AIDS Society*, 11(1), pp. 1–7; Hanson, B.W., Wodak, A., Fiamma, A. and Coates, T.J. (2008). Refocusing and prioritizing HIV programmes in conflict and post-conflict settings: funding recommendations. *AIDS* (London, England), 22(Suppl 2), p. S95.

43 DEVEX (2020). WFP chief warns of 'hunger pandemic' as COVID-19 threatens food security. 22 April 2020. <https://www.devex.com/news/wfp-chief-warns-of-hunger-pandemic-as-covid-19-threatens-food-security-97058>

44 ODI (2020).

45 OECD (2020). COVID-19 and international trade: Issues and actions. <http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/covid-19-and-international-trade-issues-and-actions>

46 Interview with International Organization for Migration, virtual meeting, 10 June 2020.

# LESSON 1. CAUGHT UNAWARE: COUNTRIES NEED TO ANTICIPATE AND PLAN FOR PANDEMICS AND DISASTERS



*Each country has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic differently due to variations in governance mechanisms and health response capacities. Many countries in the Asia-Pacific region responded in an ad hoc manner, due to lack of experience in pandemic preparedness and recovery at scale.<sup>47</sup>*

Global frameworks are committed to addressing pandemics and health risks, but progress has been slow. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 is devoted to “good health and well-being”, with an emphasis on “early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks”. The Paris Agreement and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Assessment Reports highlight that climate change exacerbates health risks including pandemics. **Five years ago, UN member states extended the definition of risk to include biological hazards when they adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR).** This was a result of a push from countries which had experienced Ebola, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The links between managing epidemics and disasters are further highlighted by the Bangkok Principles for the implementation of the health aspects of the SFDRR.<sup>48</sup> These principles were built on the shared need for risk assessment, surveillance and early warning systems, resilient infrastructure, and coordinated incident management.

A preliminary desktop review of Asia-Pacific disaster risk management legislative frameworks by IFRC, looking at the integration of public health emergencies (epidemics and pandemics) and disaster law, found that while most countries’ disaster risk management legislation includes

reference to epidemics, pandemics and/or infectious diseases, or takes a broad definition of hazard which can be interpreted to cover public health emergencies, the majority of laws do not have the necessary details or specificity on how disaster risk management mechanisms need to work in public health emergency response, with little guidance on the institutional arrangements and coordination mechanisms required.

**Box 6: Predicting the pandemic**

If it is true to say “what’s past is prologue”, then there is a very real threat of a rapidly moving, highly lethal pandemic of a respiratory pathogen killing 50 to 80 million people and wiping out nearly 5 percent of the world’s economy. A global pandemic on that scale would be catastrophic, creating widespread havoc, instability and insecurity. The world is not prepared.

Source: Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (2019). A world at risk: annual report on global preparedness for health emergencies.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction calls for a substantial number of member states to have a national strategy for disaster risk reduction by the end of 2020. However, according to a desk review of disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), only 81 countries report having these in place to date. Not many of these strategies include pandemic threats.<sup>49</sup>

47 Interview with UNDP Disaster Risk Reduction focal points, virtual meeting, 1 June 2020.  
48 UNDRR (2016). Bangkok Principles for the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/47606\\_bangkokprinciplesfortheimplementati.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/47606_bangkokprinciplesfortheimplementati.pdf)  
49 World Economic Forum (2020a). What COVID-19 tells us about the changing nature of disaster risk, 23 April 2020. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/here-are-the-biggest-risks-we-re-facing-right-now-the-covid-19-crisis-reveals-how-to-stop-them/>

# LESSON 2. HEALTH FIRST: A FASTER AND STRONGER HEALTH RESPONSE IS CRITICAL TO CONTAIN PANDEMICS



Several Asian countries, regions and states have prior experience of dealing with respiratory and zoonotic diseases such as SARS (2003), avian influenza H5N1 (2005), swine flu H1N1 (2009), MERS (2015) and the Nipah virus<sup>50</sup> (2015). Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, Viet Nam and the state of Kerala, India: all have learned from their past experiences and were able to respond and contain the spread of COVID-19. **What these governments had in common were early detection of the disease and adapting to changing situations based on health surveillance systems, extensive risk management and communication that were able to influence the public response and local and community actions.**

Robust systems of testing, contact tracing, isolating and treatment helped to contain the spread considerably. After the 2015 MERS crisis, the Republic of Korea developed a legal framework for fast-tracking approval of emergency test kits.<sup>51</sup> As soon as the first confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported, the framework enabled the government to immediately reach out to medical companies for mass production of new test kits, and to fast-track them for approval in just two weeks. This allowed the country to quickly identify and isolate COVID-19 patients.

In Thailand, all 77 provinces have a communicable disease control unit.<sup>52</sup> Over one million health volunteers, mostly women, working all over the country, made house calls informing people of the pandemic and checking on the health of the elderly. The Board of Investment has offered tax incentives to commercialize new research into medical technologies and is aiming to promote Thailand as a new regional and global medical hub.<sup>53</sup>

Since the early 2000s, Viet Nam has invested heavily in its health care system including public health and

### Box 7: The first and most direct impact of COVID-19 is on the health sector

In several Asian countries, as the numbers of COVID-19 confirmed cases are growing and the treatment of patients and containment of the virus become the top priorities, health facilities and health workers are becoming overwhelmed. For instance, in Pakistan, the already limited number of health care providers and facilities has driven the country to focus on responding to only emergency care or COVID-19 related cases. It is expected that this would divert funding from basic health, routine immunization and reproductive health programmes as well as reduce access for the poor and vulnerable groups that rely on free and subsidized care. The lockdown and social distancing have also undermined the work of community health workers. Disrupted supply chains are likely to create shortages of essential medicines. Health workers, including women who comprise a sizable proportion of the workforce in this sector, are at risk to the virus themselves and at the time of this study, over 200 health workers were affected by COVID-19 in Pakistan.

Source: UNDP Pakistan (2020). COVID-19: Pakistan Socio-economic Impact Assessment & Response Plan (Version 1 May 2020). <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/covid19/Pakistan%20-%20COVID-19%20Socio-economic%20Impact%20Assessment%20and%20Response%20Plan%201%20May%202020.pdf>

was the first country recognized by the World Health Organization to be SARS-free in 2003,<sup>54</sup> following which it increased investments in public health infrastructure, including developing a national public health emergency operations centre and a national public health

50 Nipah virus is a zoonotic virus and can be transmitted through contaminated food or directly between people.

51 DEVPOLICY (2020). South Korea's COVID-19 response: hard lessons on saving lives, 9 June 2020. <https://devpolicy.org/south-koreas-covid-19-response-20200609-1/>

52 Bangkok Post (2020). 7 secrets of Thai Covid-19 success, 23 June 2020. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/1939416/7-secrets-of-thai-covid-19-success>

53 Nikkei Asian Review (2020). Thailand drums up post-COVID-19 investment in medical supplies. 22 May 2020. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Editor-s-Picks/Interview/Thailand-drums-up-post-COVID-19-investment-in-medical-supplies>

54 Our World in Data (2020). Emerging COVID-19 success story: Vietnam's commitment to containment, 30 June 2020. <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-exemplar-vietnam>



surveillance system. Viet Nam's aggressive response to contain COVID-19 was accompanied by a multimedia public communications effort, based on science and clear facts as known at each stage, engendering trust in the government.<sup>55</sup> These measures are also crucial as they help to stem stigma and discrimination.

A pre-pandemic innovation in Kerala was to create clinics and a registry for respiratory disease which helped to spot conversion to COVID-19 and detect community transmission.<sup>56</sup> When the outbreak started, each district was asked to dedicate two hospitals to COVID-19, while each medical college set aside 500 beds.

While the examples above illustrate how strong health systems helped to respond to and contain the virus, the reverse is also true for countries that do not have adequate health facilities or robust systems in place. This was the case in West Africa when the Ebola crisis hit in 2014 as weak national health infrastructure and systems had a major impact on the rapid spread of the virus. A key lesson learned was that the first priority is stopping transmission of the virus, which requires timely efforts to support resilient health systems by additional qualified health personnel, beds, PPE equipment, contact tracers, vehicles, medical and laboratory equipment and supplies and facilities.<sup>57</sup>

55 IMF (2020) Vietnam: A Remarkable Response with Limited Means, 28 June 2020 (podcast). [http://imfpodcast.imfpodcasts.libsynpro.com/vietnam-a-remarkable-response-with-limited-means?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](http://imfpodcast.imfpodcasts.libsynpro.com/vietnam-a-remarkable-response-with-limited-means?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)

56 *The Guardian* (2020). The coronavirus slayer! How Kerala's rock star health minister helped save it from Covid-19, 14 May 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/14/the-coronavirus-slayer-how-keralas-rock-star-health-minister-helped-save-it-from-covid-19>

57 UNDP (2015). Recovering from the Ebola Crisis, July 2015. <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/crisis-prevention-and-recovery/recovering-from-the-ebola-crisis--full-report.html>





**LESSON 3.  
PREVENTING A SOCIO-  
ECONOMIC CRISIS: RAPID  
FUNDING IS PIVOTAL  
TO PROTECT THE MOST  
VULNERABLE**



*At this point, there is great uncertainty about the COVID-19 pandemic's severity and length. Thus, countries are still engaged in short-term measures aimed at fiscal stability. Eventually, longer-lasting economic measures will be formulated. The economic impacts due to COVID-19 described above have led to governments enacting immediate measures to support or protect the most economically vulnerable sectors and population groups.*

During the Ebola outbreak, what began as a health crisis quickly escalated into a humanitarian, social, economic and security crisis. More people died from the interruption of social services and economic breakdown than from the virus itself.<sup>58</sup> The MERS outbreak in the Republic of Korea had a significant impact on tourism and travel-related sectors resulting in an economic loss of US\$2.6 billion.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, when COVID-19 hit, the Republic of Korea as early as February 2020 announced a first financial stimulus package, followed by three more and an emergency relief payment to households with income levels that fall in the bottom 70 percent.<sup>60</sup> It prioritized boosting domestic consumption and demand by protecting the most vulnerable, micro-business owners, low-income workers and those working in restaurants, wholesale, retail, tourism and travel.

Although only two districts were affected by the Nipah virus in Kerala, travel advisories were issued and tourism, a significant contributor to the state's economy, was badly hit. Economic activity came to a standstill in affected areas. Learning from this experience, as the state of Kerala went into lockdown because of COVID-19, several measures were taken to protect the most vulnerable – a relief package was announced, welfare payments were made to the elderly and workers, the date for state pension payments was moved up, interest-free loans

were provided, food was delivered to schoolchildren reliant on free meals, a community kitchen scheme was set up to feed the public, essential supplies were distributed for free, and relief camps were set to house and feed migrant workers who were unable to return to their homes.

These previous epidemics highlight the need to combine effective health interventions with social protection measures that are inclusive for at-risk populations in any adequate government policy response.

#### Box 8: Differences and similarities between past pandemics and COVID-19

The impact of COVID-19 differs from past pandemics in the following ways:

- It is global, affecting every continent in the world.
- Even countries that have not suffered the health risk of the pandemic are experiencing the economic impacts of the global supply chain disruption, border closures and travel bans.
- Economic sectors are exponentially more affected than with previous pandemics.
- The pandemic is threatening to create new poor as small businesses become bankrupt, affecting SMEs, migrant workers and informal workers in a profound way.

Similarities between COVID-19 and past pandemics:

- Testing, contact tracing and isolating can help contain the virus.
- Policy measures have an impact beyond health and especially on economic sectors, hence fiscal stability measures are important.
- Clear public communication, messaging and advocacy campaigns are important to build trust, avoid panic and prevent social stigma and discrimination.

58 United Nations (2020a). A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19, April 2020. <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/UN-framework-for-the-immediate-socio-economic-response-to-COVID-19.pdf>

59 Joo, H., Maskery, B.A., Berro, A.D., Rotz, L.D., Lee, Y.K. and Brown, C.M., 2019. Economic impact of the 2015 MERS outbreak on the Republic of Korea's tourism-related industries. *Health security*, 17(2), pp. 100–108.

60 The Government of the Republic of Korea (2020). Tackling COVID-19: Health, Quarantine and Economic Measures: Korean Experience, 31 March 2020. <https://ecck.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Tackling-COVID-19-Health-Quarantine-and-Economic-Measures-of-South-Korea.pdf>

61 MIT Technology Review (2020). What the world can learn from Kerala about how to fight covid-19, 13 April 2020, <https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/04/13/999313/kerala-fight-covid-19-india-coronavirus/>



# LESSON 4. GET THE EVIDENCE: DATA AND ASSESSMENTS MUST GUIDE RECOVERY



*Large-scale recovery programmes are increasingly based on evidence-based assessments and recovery frameworks. As COVID-19 has had a significant impact on economic loss and livelihoods across several sectors and population groups, several countries are conducting socio-economic impact assessments and developing national socio-economic recovery frameworks.*

Assessments provide the necessary data and evidence for planning response and recovery. For long-term recovery planning, the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) and the Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment (RPBA) are currently the most widely used internationally agreed methodologies for conducting assessments of damage, loss and needs after a disaster or conflict. They assess the impact of disasters and conflicts on various sectors and population groups and develop a recovery strategy that aims at building resilience and promoting inclusion. The process of conducting a PDNA or RPBA is also significant as it brings together all relevant government ministries and organizations, international and bilateral agencies and other partners to conduct a joint and harmonized assessment, thereby avoiding gaps and duplication and burdening the affected population with multiple assessments. In the last 10 years, over 60 PDNAs<sup>62</sup> have been conducted which have been invaluable for multisectoral recovery planning, mobilizing resources and partnerships for recovery, identifying modalities for implementing and monitoring recovery, and integrating disaster risk reduction measures to address underlying risks and vulnerabilities.

The PDNA conducted in Nepal following the 2015 earthquake stands out as an example of excellent collaborative direction and interagency coordination that led to exemplary outputs.<sup>63</sup> The PDNA was conducted under the leadership of the Government of Nepal involving more than 250 technical experts through 23 technical sector teams headed by Joint Secretaries of

Government Ministries.<sup>64</sup> Local governments and civil society were included through district consultations. The assessment identified damage, loss and recovery needs of US\$6.9 billion towards which US\$4.1 billion was pledged at an international donor conference. Following the PDNA recommendations, the government created the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) with supporting legislation and operational procedures tailored to meet specific recovery needs.

The United Nations system, the European Union and the World Bank have developed the COVID-19 Recovery Needs Assessment (CRNA) that has been adapted from the PDNA methodology. This methodology assesses the economic losses and human and social impacts on the most vulnerable groups and proposes a recovery strategy. Countries in the region may consider using this methodology for additional or more in-depth sectoral assessments as needed.

62 UNDP (2016). Disaster Recovery: Challenges and Lessons. <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/climate-and-disaster-resilience-/disaster-recovery--challenges-and-lessons.html>

63 World Bank, GFDRR et al. (2018). Post-Disaster Needs Assessment PDNA – Lessons from a Decade of Experience, 2018 [https://www.gfdrr.org/sites/default/files/publication/Final\\_PDNA\\_Evaluation\\_Report.pdf](https://www.gfdrr.org/sites/default/files/publication/Final_PDNA_Evaluation_Report.pdf)

64 Ibid.



**LESSON 5.  
SHOW ME THE MONEY:  
DIVERSE FINANCING  
ARRANGEMENTS HELP  
TO SUSTAIN LONG TERM  
RECOVERY**



*Socio-economic recovery from COVID-19 will require significant funding. Several governments in the region are reallocating their budgets and mobilizing resources from bilateral donors, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and other sources.*

**Ex post sources of funding (based on results rather than forecasts), such as budget reallocations, donor assistance, domestic credit, external credit, tax increases and special funds are typical sources of funding available to governments after large-scale disasters.** The 2004 tsunami was one such disaster for Indonesia that triggered an unprecedented response from domestic and international communities in countries affected by the tsunami. It is estimated that about US\$7.7 billion was committed by the amalgamation of funds from the Government of Indonesia, bilateral and multilateral donors, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and communities both within and outside Indonesia towards the reconstruction programme.<sup>65</sup> Since then, Indonesia has developed several alternative financing measures for disaster management using integrated strategies like blended financing, multi-donor funding and its own national disaster reserve fund to finance recovery. Moving forward, with support from the World Bank, Indonesia is developing disaster risk financing and insurance mechanisms that could ease the burden on the state budget, create reserves for future disasters and play a critical role in protecting public assets and accelerating recovery.

In addition to other sources, remittances generated by the Nepalese diaspora to families in earthquake-affected districts were a significant source of funding and the National Reconstruction Authority set up remittance facilities to support housing and small businesses.<sup>66</sup>

Following the 2018 floods in Kerala, in addition to government budget reallocation, the state government proposed innovative measures for raising resources such as lottery for recovery needs, a digital crowd-funding platform to attract funding from the state's diaspora around the world, voluntary reconstruction funds at the local level, widening the tax base, introducing new taxes including a carbon tax, and establishing a reconstruction bond.<sup>67</sup> Several countries also invest in ex ante risk financing instruments that include reserves or calamity funds, budget contingencies, contingent debt facility and risk transfer mechanisms.<sup>68</sup> The Pacific Island countries are exploring the creation of the Pacific Disaster Reserve Fund.

**Several countries in the region have taken diverse approaches to social protection.** For instance, in India, under the programme 'Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojana', free food was provided via the Public Distribution System (PDS) and direct cash transfers of \$US13 for pensioners, widows and persons with disabilities and \$US 19.60 for women were authorized; 8.69 million of the nation's farmers and agricultural workers received regular transfers of \$US26.25. The Labour Ministry has also allowed over 60 million subscribers to the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) to withdraw funds of up to three months of their basic pay to ease the financial burden on citizens while lockdown restrictions remain in place.<sup>69</sup>

Malaysia has created a new monetary assistance scheme to provide MYR 600 per month (US\$135) for a period of up to six months for employees given no-pay leave. Japan has made alterations to its Employment Adjustment Subsidy qualifications to encourage employers and businesses to retain staff. Indonesia has created a new 'Pre-employment Card Programme' aimed at developing the skills of two million young workers via a single payment of IDR 500,000 to cover the costs of the scheme such as transport and accommodation during

65 Masyrafah, H. and McKeon, J.M.J.A (2008). Post Tsunami Aid Effectiveness in Aceh. Washington/Indonesia: Wolfensohn Center of Development at the Brookings Institution/World Bank Indonesia. [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/11\\_aceh\\_aid\\_masyrafah.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/11_aceh_aid_masyrafah.pdf)

66 National Reconstruction Authority (Government of Nepal) (2016). Nepal Earthquake 2015: Post Disaster Recovery Framework 2016–2020. <https://gfdrr.org/sites/default/files/publication/Nepal%20PDRF%20Report%20%289%29%20Final%202016.pdf>

67 Government of Kerala (India) et al. (2018). Kerala: Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Floods and Landslides – August 2018 <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/crisis-prevention-and-recovery/post-disaster-needs-assessment--kerala.html>

68 The Catastrophe Risk Deferred Drawdown Option (CAT DDO) is a financial instrument that offers countries eligible for support from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) immediate liquidity of up to US\$500 million or 0.25 percent of their GDP (whichever is less), in case of a natural disaster. The instrument was designed by the World Bank to provide affected countries with bridge financing while other sources of funding are being mobilized.

69 See the ILO dashboard: COVID-19 and the world of work: Country Policy Responses. <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/lang--en/index.htm>



the period of training.<sup>70</sup> In the Philippines, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has created a PHP 1 billion ‘Enterprise Rehabilitation Financing’ facility to support micro and small enterprises which have suffered severe sales losses.

While stimulus packages have been deployed to bolster economies throughout the Asia-Pacific region, with additional funds provided by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) via the ‘COVID-19 Active Response and Expenditure Support (CARES) Program’, many of the region’s economies, especially those which are heavily dependent on tourism are in particular need of ongoing economic support to sustain livelihoods and prevent mass unemployment. Economic support for early recovery for these countries is essential. **Insurance bailouts, tax incentives and other business support schemes are vital to keeping the tourism sector afloat.**<sup>71</sup> Financial support can also be leveraged in the form of the World Bank’s international CAT DDO (Catastrophe Deferred Drawdown Option) financial support schemes. Samoa, which already suffered from a measles outbreak in 2019, has accessed US\$6 million from CAT DDO to counter both COVID-19 and measles outbreaks. Maldives has also made use of the World Bank’s DDO facility, with US\$10 million made available for COVID-19 measures.

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70 ILO (2020b). Social protection responses to the Covid-19 crisis – Country responses in Asia and the Pacific. 25th March 2020. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_739587.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/briefingnote/wcms_739587.pdf)

71 Asian Development Bank (2020). An Updated Assessment of the Economic Impact of COVID-19. ADB Briefs No. 133. May 2020, p. 15. <https://www.adb.org/publications/updated-assessment-economic-impact-covid-19>



**LESSON 6.  
BE THE LEADER:  
DEDICATED NATIONAL  
LEADERSHIP IS  
ESSENTIAL TO ACHIEVE  
EFFECTIVE RECOVERY**





*Socio-economic recovery from COVID-19 will require countries to identify or establish institutional arrangements that can carry out long-term recovery while at the same time responding to and preparing for additional waves of the pandemic or the emergence of other types of shocks or crisis such as natural hazards, conflict or displacement.*

**Several disasters have challenged existing institutional arrangements, as recovering from a major disaster event can take anywhere between 5 and 10 years, thereby requiring dedicated capacity to lead, coordinate, manage, implement and monitor a recovery programme.** A recovery programme must also contribute towards development goals, especially reducing poverty and inequality and preventing future disaster risks by “building back better”. Depending on the scale and impact of a major disaster and the coping capacities of a country to recover from one, several countries have considered different governance models for recovery. For instance, the scale and impact of the 2004 tsunami and the 2015 Gorkha earthquake were so severe that it led Indonesia and Nepal respectively to set up time-bound dedicated recovery agencies to coordinate and implement the recovery programmes. Even today, the Agency for the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Aceh and Nias (BRR) is considered a best practice – the agency is credited with coordinating and executing a large-scale reconstruction programme that improved living conditions and reduced poverty to pre-tsunami levels in Aceh.<sup>72</sup> Learning from the BRR model, in Nepal, the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) was established

in 2016 for a five-year period to manage the owner-driven reconstruction programme that followed the earthquake. Following Typhoon Haiyan, the Office of the Presidential Assistant for Rehabilitation and Recovery (OPARR) was created as a temporary lead agency to coordinate government agency implementation.

**In several countries, efforts to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus have been led and managed by institutions that have a mandate for responding to biological disasters, including National Disaster Management Organizations.** For example, in Malaysia, the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) and the Health and Economic Council have been supporting the National Security Council who was responsible for the health crisis.<sup>73</sup> In Indonesia, the President formed the COVID-19 Acceleration Task Force, with the Head of BNPB (National Agency of Disaster Management) as the lead. Similar task forces were established for 25 provinces assigned to lead prevention, response and recovery activities.<sup>74</sup> The Indonesian Law on Disaster Management 2007 outlines responsibilities among various stakeholders, while a range of both national and regional agencies are responsible for the implementation of the legal framework and institutional arrangements. Additionally, the Ministry of Finance allocated national resources directly to line ministries and has a contingency budget for use in national emergencies.<sup>75</sup>

In India, the Ministry of Home Affairs used its authority under the Disaster Management Act 2005 to issue an order to all other Ministries and government departments to implement its guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19.<sup>76</sup> In the Indian state of Kerala, while the Health Ministry was the nodal Ministry, the Emergency Operations Control (EOC) room comprised of personnel

72 World Bank (2008). *Aceh Poverty Assessment 2008 – The Impact Of The Conflict, The Tsunami And Reconstruction On Poverty In Aceh*, p. 8. <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/347081468267333853/pdf/421010Aceh0PovInt0P010437501PUBLIC1.pdf>  
73 Interview with J. Mahmood, 18 June 2020.  
74 IFRC (2020). Emergency Plan of Action Operation Update – Indonesia: Lombok earthquakes. 29 May 2020. [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MDRID013ou21\\_0.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MDRID013ou21_0.pdf)  
75 World Bank (2019). Strengthening the Disaster Resilience of Indonesian Cities – A Policy Note. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32459/Strengthening-the-Disaster-Resilience-of-Indonesian-Cities-A-Policy-Note.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y>  
76 Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs (2020). No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A). Dated 24th March, 2020. [https://www.ndmindia.nic.in/images/gallery/MHA%20order%20\(final\).pdf](https://www.ndmindia.nic.in/images/gallery/MHA%20order%20(final).pdf)

from Health, Police, Fire and Disaster Management took critical decisions and the Crisis Management Team met every day. The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) was responsible for data collection, analysis and preparation of maps for containment zones.<sup>77</sup> Additionally, in preparation for the monsoon season and potential floods, an “Orange Book” specifying actions to be taken by each government department at different levels was issued. To enable social distancing, relief camps have been pre-identified at the village and panchayat level to be set up in multiple buildings.

As several countries continue to deal with waves of the pandemic as well as plan for socio-economic recovery, Governments will need to institutionalize arrangements to lead, manage and coordinate the long-term recovery efforts. Given the multidimensional risks which countries are currently facing, disaster management and recovery mechanisms will need to closely engage with a broad range of actors, including representatives from vulnerable groups, on human rights (such as National Human Rights Institutions) and gender equality to ensure their efforts address and respond to vulnerability, inequality and marginalization in society.

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77 Interview with KSDMA, 13 June 2020.



**LESSON 7.  
STRONGER TOGETHER:  
ENGAGING LOCAL  
GOVERNMENTS AND  
COMMUNITY FOR  
INCLUSIVE RESPONSE**



*Similar to other large-scale disasters, COVID-19 recovery will require multiple stakeholders to work together including subnational levels of government and particularly affected communities, as social behaviours play a significant part in containing and preventing the spread of the virus. Adopting a rights-based approach<sup>78</sup> would strengthen the recovery and ensure greater participation by those affected and accountability from national and local authorities.<sup>79</sup>*

#### **Box 9: The Government of Bangladesh's response to Cyclone Amphan during COVID-19**

In Bangladesh, the Standing Orders on Disasters (SOD) clearly outlined both the roles and responsibilities for the Government and the participation and coordination between a wide range of stakeholders, and this contributed to the country's success preparing for and responding to Cyclone Amphan while also containing the spread of the coronavirus. Facing the twofold challenge of an existing health crisis and a forthcoming disaster, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) recognized the need for profound interventions. In early March 2020, when the first COVID-19 cases were confirmed in the country, the GoB devised a contingency plan, which included increasing the number of existing cyclone shelters. Given the increased risks from the COVID-19 pandemic, immediately after Cyclone Amphan was detected, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) mobilized field-level administrators, and before the cyclone made landfall, the Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) board initiated evacuation procedures as outlined in the COVID-19 contingency plan, mobilizing local CPP volunteers.

The GoB's various ministries and agencies mobilized as mandated by the SOD. The National Disaster Response Coordination Group (NDRCG), chaired by the Minister of the MoDMR and comprised of secretaries of various ministries, also held a meeting to re-evaluate the disaster situation, mobilize resources and ensure the effective dissemination of warning signals. An interministerial coordination meeting was then held among local governments, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, and the Ministry of Water Resources in order to help local governments to address the multidimensional nature of the disaster in their responses. As disaster management and relief facilities are decentralized to the local level, the MoDMR coordinates between different departments, line agencies, local government bodies and communities. NGO coordination meetings were also held to support effective responses on the ground. In May 2020, when Cyclone Amphan made landfall, the Prime Minister held an emergency meeting of the National Disaster Management Council (NDMC), which is multisectoral and interdisciplinary, and includes public, private, civil society and UN agency representatives.

Based on the experience responding to Cyclone Amphan, the GoB aims to further strengthen the capacities of different government institutions, develop hazard-specific geographical maps to identify additional temporary shelters, and provide adequate and accessible water and sanitation facilities in the identified shelters, keeping in mind the need to construct shelters that are inclusive and child, women and disabled-friendly. The GoB also acknowledges the need for a revised disaster management protocol that is compatible with COVID-19 and which could be used to formulate recovery plans from the impacts of Cyclone Amphan. Furthermore, the upcoming monsoon season poses the subsequent challenge of managing massive floods with protracted inundation. When compared to cyclones, monsoons tend to have prolonged impacts on rural livelihoods and incomes, thus requiring pre-emptive planning to reduce casualties and ensure access to government relief.

Sources: Government of Bangladesh (2010). Standing Order on Disasters. [https://modmr.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/modmr.portal.gov.bd/policies/b1a0c9e8\\_cd46\\_41f0\\_b532\\_5664a0713496/SOD-2010.pdf](https://modmr.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/modmr.portal.gov.bd/policies/b1a0c9e8_cd46_41f0_b532_5664a0713496/SOD-2010.pdf); Interview with the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, virtual meeting, 30 June 2020.

78 See Checklist for a HRBA to socio-economic country responses to COVID-19 [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Events/COVID-19/Checklist\\_HR-Based\\_Approach\\_Socio-Economic\\_Country\\_Responses\\_COVID-19.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Events/COVID-19/Checklist_HR-Based_Approach_Socio-Economic_Country_Responses_COVID-19.pdf)

79 <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/policy-brief-impact-covid-19-south-east-asia>



Large-scale recovery programmes involve many stakeholders including national and subnational levels of governance, international agencies, NGOs, the private sector, technical agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs) and the community itself. For example, in the Philippines, during the early response phase, local governments at the municipal level prepared for Typhoon Haiyan's expected landfalls by establishing command centres, prepositioning food packs, and holding local disaster management council meetings. Local governments also played a role in response efforts led by international organizations. UN agencies supported local government units (LGUs) as a cornerstone for public service delivery, empowering 40 of the most affected LGUs through direct grants with planning assistance and financial oversight.<sup>80</sup>

An excellent example of community engagement is from Indonesia: following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, Indonesia scaled up its pre-existing community-based projects and developed a large-scale community-driven housing reconstruction programme, known as *Rekompak* (the Community-Based Settlement Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Project). Through the participatory mapping of risks, local investment planning and owner-driven reconstruction of housing, the *Rekompak* model enabled local communities to thrive again, and in the long term, become more resilient and safer. By empowering the affected community in planning and implementing their own recovery, especially their livelihoods, communities have a high level of trust in the government. As the government also manages the recovery funds, it brings a high degree of transparency and accountability into the recovery efforts.<sup>81</sup> Additionally, vulnerable groups like women played an important role in recovery. For instance, higher levels of women's participation in the *Rekompak* reconstruction projects in Aceh, Nias and Java led to higher levels of satisfaction with the quality and design of both community infrastructure and private housing. Economic regeneration was also accelerated

by women's participation in livelihood recovery. In Java, women managed nearly 50 percent of the JRF (Java Reconstruction Fund) livelihood recovery-supported enterprises.<sup>82</sup>

Less than a month after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami hit Peraliya, Sri Lanka, around 20 young people from Peraliya formed a community group to alert fellow villagers to hazards like tsunamis, and to help with the clean-up effort. With support from individual donors, the group established the Peraliya Community Early Warning Center which by 2015 had set up nine public address systems around the village and built a network of hundreds of youth volunteers. The young people disseminate tsunami and storm warnings after they are received by the center's office, either through the public address system for general alerts which consists of loudhailers mounted on iron poles, or via mobile phone for more targeted messages to fishermen, for example. The center also launched a Youth Volunteer Resilience Group in 2014, which holds community meetings to raise awareness about extreme weather and changing climate patterns.<sup>83</sup>

The Government of Kerala's management of the Nipah outbreak and the 2018 floods is unique in many ways as it follows a people-centred approach undertaken through multilevel planning. It is a highly decentralized approach with district officials, elected local leaders, NGOs, CSOs, cooperatives and the *Kudumbashree*<sup>84</sup> playing an integral role in development planning in the state. After the 2018 floods, Inter-Agency Groups were set up in 14 districts to facilitate NGO participation coordinated by Sphere India; around 390 NGOs in the state were called on to support the Government's response to COVID-19. Building on the volunteer network of 350,000 volunteers, the state mobilized even more to help with social responsibilities such as cleaning and sanitizing public places. In addition, the mainstream media is co-opted as a partner in public health emergencies, a practice from the time

80 UNICEF (2014). One Year After Typhoon Haiyan, Philippines: Progress Report. [https://www.unicef.org/appeals/files/UNICEF\\_Philippines\\_Typhoon\\_Haiyan\\_1\\_Year\\_Progress\\_Report\\_-\\_Dec2014.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/appeals/files/UNICEF_Philippines_Typhoon_Haiyan_1_Year_Progress_Report_-_Dec2014.pdf)

81 GFDRR (2019). Guide to: Engaging local actors in disaster recovery frameworks. <https://www.gfdrr.org/sites/default/files/publication/Engaging%20Local%20Actors%20in%20Disaster%20Recovery%20Frameworks%20-%20Final.pdf>

82 MDF-JRF (2012). MDF-JRF Working Paper Series: Lessons Learned from Post-Disaster Reconstruction in Indonesia. More than Mainstreaming: Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women through Post-Disaster Reconstruction. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/17633/839020NWP0Box382108B00PULBIC00no4.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

83 Perera, A. (2015). Youth-led disaster alerts protect Sri Lankan tsunami village – TRFN. Reuters. 2 March 2014. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-disaster-risk-tsunami/youth-led-disaster-alerts-protect-sri-lankan-tsunami-village-trfn-idUSKBNOLY0UL20150302>

84 Kudumbashree is the poverty eradication and women empowerment programme implemented by the Government of Kerala. Following the 2018 floods, Kudumbashree members and volunteers participated in activities including cleaning campaigns, offering shelters, food distribution and psychological counselling.



Kerala faced the threat of HIV in the 1990s. During the COVID-19 outbreak in the state, these measures helped as the community trusted the Government by coming forward to provide needed information, volunteering to provide resources and following the directions of the government.<sup>85</sup>

While there is a clear trend towards decentralization, subnational institutions' degrees of autonomy and levels of responsibilities vary depending on the country context.<sup>86</sup> For instance, despite the existence of Thailand's Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Act 2017 and National Disaster Risk Management Plan 2015, during COVID-19 local governments needed to first confirm the delegation of authority from the national government before being able to provide cash transfers to the most vulnerable groups.<sup>87</sup> On the other hand, in Indonesia, the network of Disabled People Organizations' (DPOs) COVID-19 response supported the government<sup>88</sup> to understand the impacts of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities through conducting a nationwide rapid needs assessment.<sup>89</sup> The Indonesia government agreed to use the assessment to improve policy on disability inclusion for the COVID-19 response and recovery.<sup>90</sup>

#### Box 10: Differences and similarities between past natural disasters and COVID-19

The impact of COVID-19 differs from past natural hazards in the following ways:

- It is global, affecting every continent in the world.
- There is no physical damage but economic losses and socio-economic impacts are substantial.
- New poor and new vulnerabilities are created with a devastating impact on informal workers, small businesses, migrant workers and people on the move.
- There has been a fall in remittances.

Similarities between COVID-19 and past natural hazards:

- It has disrupted access to services and service delivery.
- There is a higher demand for health services and critical infrastructure such as electricity and ICT.
- It affects key sectors of the economy such as agriculture, education, commerce, industry and transport.
- People with pre-existing vulnerabilities and socially excluded are particularly vulnerable, e.g. older persons, children, women, indigenous people, LGBTIQI persons, persons with disabilities, minorities, migrant workers and refugees.
- It exacerbates pre-existing issues around discrimination and racism.

85 *The Indian Express* (2020). What nation can learn from Kerala: Lockdown is not enough. Preparedness, decentralisation, are key, 17 April 2020. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/coronavirus-covid-19-kerala-curve-6365935/>

86 IFRC (2019a). Law and Disaster Preparedness and Response: Multi-Country Synthesis Report. [https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/11/DPR\\_Synthesis-Report\\_EN\\_Screen.pdf](https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/11/DPR_Synthesis-Report_EN_Screen.pdf)

87 UNDP Thailand Country Office (2020). Enhancing capacity of local governments in livelihood recovery in Thailand (CO proposal, April 2020).

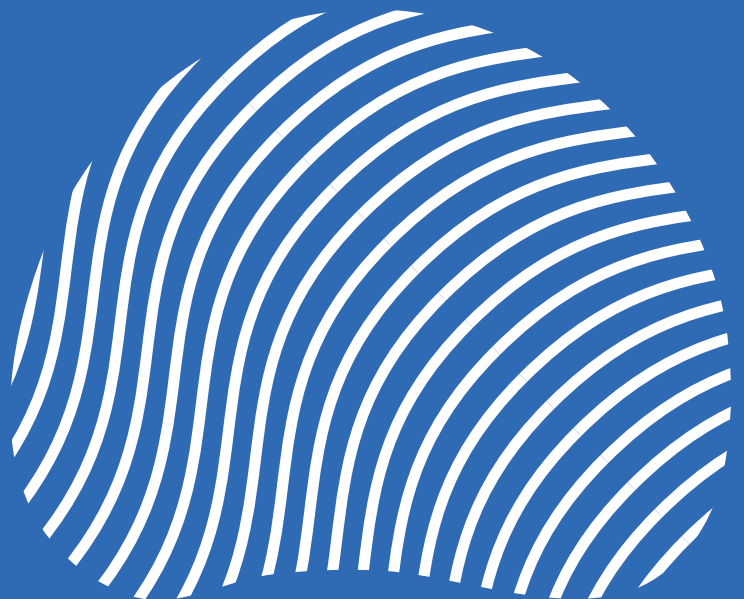
88 CBM Indonesia (2020). Executive Summary Rapid Assessment: COVID-19 Impact on Persons with Disabilities (Jaringan DPO Respon COVID-19).

89 Interview with CBM Indonesia, virtual meeting, 25 June 2020.

90 CBM Indonesia (2020).



**LESSON 8.  
BUILD FORWARD:  
GREENER, SMARTER,  
BETTER!**



*COVID-19 is an opportunity to “Build Forward Better” as the international community and governments are calling for the need to move towards a new normal designed on the pillars of resilient and inclusive development.*

The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami was a game-changer for reconstruction and recovery. It was clear that recovery should be an improvement to, rather than a return to pre-disaster conditions. In order to reduce risks and vulnerabilities and enhance capacities, it was important to Build Back Better, now known as Build Forward Better. Indonesia’s Agency for the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Aceh and Nias (BRR) implemented such measures in rebuilding physical infrastructure, designing community-led programmes, empowering marginalized constituents and integrating risk reduction across all interventions. These measures led to building trust with previously marginalized communities in a former conflict-ridden area. Opportunities to improve facilities to meet beneficiary needs included building better quality housing with sanitation facilities.<sup>91</sup> The Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 defines post-disaster recovery as the restoration and improvement where appropriate, of facilities, livelihood and living conditions of disaster-affected communities, including efforts to reduce disaster risk factors.<sup>92</sup> The principles of Build Forward Better are incorporated in the PDNA methodology, both quantitatively in calculating recovery needs and qualitatively in improving human development indicators. In support of the massive housing reconstruction in Nepal following the earthquake, masons and construction workers were trained in safe construction practices, affected communities were engaged in designing and constructing their own homes, and shelter hubs were constructed for them to access quality materials and tools.

Perhaps one of the best recent examples from the Asia-Pacific region is the Rebuild Kerala Development Programme (RKDP), a resilient recovery policy framework developed following the Kerala floods and landslides PDNA in 2018. The RKDP rests on four pillars for a “Green and Resilient Kerala”: 1) Integrated water resources management, 2) Eco-sensitive and risk-informed approaches to land-use and settlements, 3) An inclusive and people-centred approach and 4) Knowledge, innovation and technology.<sup>93</sup>

91 BRR of Aceh-Nias (2010). 10 Management Lessons for Host Governments Coordinating Post-disaster Reconstruction. <https://www.recoveryplatform.org/assets/publication/BRR%2010%20Management%20Lessons%20for%20Host%20Governments.pdf>

92 ASEAN (2016). ASEAN Disaster Recovery Reference Guide. [https://asean.org/?static\\_post=asean-disaster-recovery-reference-guide](https://asean.org/?static_post=asean-disaster-recovery-reference-guide)

93 Government of Kerala (India) et al. (2018).





**LESSON 9.**  
**USE THE DATA: DISASTER**  
**DATA CAN HELP**  
**COUNTRIES DEAL WITH**  
**CHANGING RISKSCAPES**



*The notions and concepts of exposure, vulnerability, capacity and resilience can apply to both traditional disasters, as well as epidemics and pandemics. Their manifestations, however, can vary. Each type of hazard is characterized by its location, intensity, frequency and probability. There has been significant scientific progress made in mapping and modelling of these characteristics for earthquakes, floods, cyclones and even droughts.*

There has been a significant shift in the understanding of disasters in the last 25 years. This change in approach to understanding disasters can be seen from observing progress from the Yokohama Strategy and Action Plan of 1994, which only made a reference to technology and data without any further details, to the 2015 SFDRR that established 7 targets with specific indicators to measure their progress over a 15-year period.

With the changes in understanding of disasters – from one-time emergencies which required immediate relief and response until the next event to the several recent events such as Cyclone Amphan affecting Bangladesh and India during COVID-19 – the role of data and information has also evolved significantly over the past decades. This was seen in recent responses to COVID-19 while preparing for upcoming cyclones. Before Cyclone Amphan and Nisarga hit, impact-based forecasting was used to help governments to identify communities at high risk of COVID-19 and the cyclones, and targeted interventions were made in Mumbai. Disaster hotspots were also used in Mumbai, which has large slum areas, to identify risks of the coronavirus.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, disaggregated data is important for enabling governments to identify and provide adequate support that can meet the different needs of various groups, including women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

#### Box 11: Managing risk

The challenge is to move from managing disasters themselves to managing risk. Poverty, rapid urbanization, weak governance, the decline of ecosystems and climate change are driving disaster risk around the world. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction with its seven targets for the prevention of disasters and reducing disaster losses is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Source: UNDRR (2019). Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).

**Governments have learned significant lessons in managing disasters and have identified the need for data and information to aid policy and decision-making.** A major turning point was the 2004 tsunami from which affected countries incurred huge economic losses. Realizing the difficulties of making decisions in the absence of data and information, the affected countries (and later other countries) started setting up national disaster loss and damage databases. These databases record the disaggregated impacts of disasters and their disaggregated impacts on populations and sectors; this makes it very useful for countries to identify ‘high-risk hotspots’ based on the past disaster events. In most countries, these national disaster loss and damage databases have registered disaggregated data from the last 20 years (in Cambodia) to as long as 40 years (Sri Lanka).

These nationally owned databases are maintained and routinely updated by their respective government agencies with data about new disasters and their impacts. Some databases are available online, such as from Cambodia (<https://bit.ly/2W3kpZe>), Myanmar (<https://bit.ly/2SCB8k4>), Sri Lanka (<https://bit.ly/3bONFbA>) and Maldives (<https://bit.ly/2zfC3zS>). These databases have helped to identify risks which were not known earlier.

91 BRR of Aceh-Nias (2010). 10 Management Lessons for Host Governments Coordinating Post-disaster Reconstruction. <https://www.recoveryplatform.org/assets/publication/BRR%2010%20Management%20Lessons%20for%20Host%20Governments.pdf>

92 ASEAN (2016). ASEAN Disaster Recovery Reference Guide. [https://asean.org/?static\\_post=asean-disaster-recovery-reference-guide](https://asean.org/?static_post=asean-disaster-recovery-reference-guide)

93 Government of Kerala (India) et al. (2018).

94 ESCAP (2020). Protecting The Most Vulnerable Amidst COVID-19 And Cyclone Amphan. 27 May 2020. <https://www.unescap.org/blog/protecting-most-vulnerable-amidst-covid-19-and-cyclone-amphan>



For example, the Cambodian database CAMDI revealed that lightning kills a significant number of people in the country at a similar rate to deaths by floods, which is known to be the number one disaster causing deaths in Cambodia. Indonesia has used past data to generate a Historical Disaster Risk Index which became the basis for allocating funds to different provinces for pursuing disaster risk reduction. Building on these efforts and experiences and the emerging needs of the country to

meet its policy and decision-making needs, Indonesia initially set up its national disaster loss and damage database (DIBI, <https://bit.ly/3aOyaPN>) but later set up an online geospatial disaster information management system, InaRISK (<https://bit.ly/305hJeA>), which allows visualization of risk across the country.

**Box 12: InaRISK, Indonesia**

InaRISK is an online geospatial portal established by the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) of Indonesia. It builds on the experience of the Disaster Information Management System (DIBI). InaRISK analyses cross-sectoral data from multiple sources and uses data visualization to identify potential risks of disasters, affected populations and potential losses to increase awareness and support decision-making. For example, it enables the Government of Indonesia to develop and improve disaster management plans and action plans at the national and subnational levels based on extensive baseline and hazards data already integrated on the portal. Realizing the value of InaRISK, the Government subsequently developed the android-based mobile app **InaRISK Personal** which enables real-time information in the event of a disaster and the potential risk at a given location. Since InaRISK was already embedded in the Government's data management system, it is currently being used to register COVID-19 cases. While the InaRISK portal helps to track and monitor the spread and intensity of COVID-19, it also helps to better understand the impacts together with the existing vulnerabilities in various parts of the country to help the Government plan effective responses to COVID-19 and plan a resilient recovery.

Source: InaRisk: <https://bit.ly/305hJeA>

There has been significant scientific and technological progress made, such as the use of geographic information systems (GIS), in mapping and modelling of earthquakes, floods, cyclones and droughts. With such technologies, predictions of location, frequency, intensity and losses are possible. Therefore, preparedness, and to some extent, risk reduction are viable options based on this knowledge. **Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) tools can help with understanding health-related emergency risks.** Despite data limitations and standards for the pandemic, several indexes are being developed or COVID-19 is being added to the existing indexes. Several national and international health databases on COVID-19 are also being developed. Those that utilize the existing development indexes are introducing a social vulnerability lens. The INFORM COVID-19 Risk Index consists of the dimensions: hazard and exposure, vulnerability and lack of coping capacity.<sup>95</sup> The Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT)<sup>96</sup> systematically collects information on several different common policy responses of governments to respond to the pandemic on 17 indicators. Malaysia also developed a Global COVID-19 Index against established criteria that can rank countries.<sup>97</sup> The index covers 184 countries and is open data. Reliable and standard data across different countries and locations will need to be developed over time. Disaster data has significant scientific backing and the standardization of data is relatively high.

Learning from different disasters in the past, risk zoning techniques have been helpful to identify different risks by regional area, such as using historical flood data to identify areas that are more vulnerable to floods.<sup>98</sup> Learning from this experience, these techniques were also used to map the risks of COVID-19, specifically in China, where it was successfully implemented, helping to reduce and prevent the spread of the virus. In this approach, areas

95 See INFORM's COVID-19 Risk Index at <https://ifrcgo.org/inform-covid/>  
96 See the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker at <https://covidtracker.bsg.ox.ac.uk>  
97 See the GCI Dashboard at <https://covid19.pemandu.org>  
98 Chen, N., Yao, S., Wang, C. and Du, W. (2019). A method for urban flood risk assessment and zoning considering road environments and terrain. *Sustainability*, 11(10), p. 2734.

are categorized by different colours to match the different levels of risk: red, orange and green zones to represent high, medium and low levels of transmission risk. Some countries have successfully adopted this model, such as India that in less than 50 days adopted the risk-zoning technique as a key model to ease lockdown restrictions. This operational strategy has shown the capacity of taking evidence-based actions, calibrating policy actions and delivering accurate public information. In that sense, through the gradual enlargement of the green areas, it enables building public support, providing an opportunity to recover in an efficient way from the consequences of a disaster.<sup>99</sup>

### **Box 13: Retrofitting the IT-enabled Post Disaster Needs Assessment (iPDNA) for COVID-19**

UNDP Philippines has initiated the development of an IT-enabled post-disaster needs assessment tool or iPDNA, after Typhoon Haiyan, to facilitate faster data collection of losses and damages, and to provide timely and evidence-based formulation of recovery plans. The iPDNA tool or digital application is currently based on a national guideline and was adapted from the earlier version of global PDNA Guidance Notes, albeit leaning towards disasters. A beta version was tested and deployed in real conditions in the aftermath of typhoons Ompong [Mangkhut] in September 2018 in Baguio City, Tisoy [Kammuri] in December 2019 in Albay province, and the Taal Volcano eruption in January 2020. As the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic worsened, digital solutions became an immediate imperative for community coping and institutional crisis response. Thus, the current iPDNA application is 'retrofitted' in an accelerated and urgent way through the UNDP country office's vision for a digital transformative strategy which supports the 'PintigLab' – an ongoing effort to support a government data warehouse. PintigLab will enable various data and information coming from different sources to be analysed at the data warehouse to produce timely and fit-for-purpose analytics that will be useful for decision-making.

99 ESCAP (2020). Indexing Risk To Recover From COVID-19. <https://www.unescap.org/blog/indexing-risk-recover-covid-19>



**LESSON 10.  
INNOVATE, INNOVATE,  
INNOVATE!**



*The systemic risks revealed by the impacts of COVID-19 have highlighted the importance of innovative approaches and ways of thinking. Some of them are based on existing innovative approaches, such as innovations related to Disaster Risk Reduction, and others have resulted from initiatives to overcome challenges presented by the COVID-19 crisis.*

These innovations have originated not only from governments and UN agencies, but also from groups including NGOs, CSOs, academia, individuals and entrepreneurs, and the private sector, often working together to support people and the most vulnerable groups. For example, in the Republic of Korea, the Cell Broadcasting Service (CBS), used to inform the public of the occurrence of disasters, was used to send alerts to the public on the pathways of COVID-19 infections.<sup>100</sup> When a disaster occurs, local governments can use the CBS to send emergency alert messages to residents' mobile phones, with short messages on emergency situations and guidelines and a customized warning alarm that goes off in the disaster area.<sup>101</sup> From previous disasters, including the 2016 Gyeongju earthquake and the 2017 Gangneung forest fire, the Korean government realized the effectiveness and the importance of the CBS, which can help disaster response authorities to avoid missing out on the critical window of opportunity during disasters. Furthermore, local governments' ability to send the emergency alert messages without approval from the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) also enabled them to provide rapid responses to people in need. The CBS does not use the general SMS text messaging system so local governments can send messages to the public based on their locations without any obstacles. Municipalities used the CBS to send emergency alert messages and inform the public of locations where a COVID-19 confirmed patient had been so that people could quickly check if there had been any overlapping in their movements and get tested.

**Risk communication has been critical for responding to public health emergencies, especially fast-spreading pandemics like COVID-19.** A partnership between international organizations and the private sector led to the WhatsApp Coronavirus Information Hub, getting real-time health information to billions of people around the world. The Hub provided simple, actionable guidance for health workers, educators, community leaders, local governments and local businesses that rely on WhatsApp to communicate, offering general tips and resources for users around the world to reduce the spread of rumours and connect with accurate health information.<sup>102</sup>

**Innovative approaches were also implemented to support communities affected by COVID-19.** Rural communities living in the state of Sabah in Malaysia have not been directly affected by COVID-19; however, the enforced movement control order has restricted them from obtaining essential items from and selling their products (such as vegetables and fish) to nearby towns. It also prevents them from being able to receive cash aid from the government because doing so requires a full day's trip to go to nearby banks or ATMs which have only limited cash available.<sup>103</sup> To support villagers in the state's rural areas (Kampung Buayan) to be able to sell their products, a grassroots NGO (PACOS Trust) used WhatsApp to advertise the products and connect villagers with authorized transportation so that they can deliver the products to towns. In other remote areas in the state, local representatives, NGOs and religious groups cooperate to support the most vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities and the elderly. In order to ensure that these groups could receive government aid on an equal basis and could overcome challenges related to limited access to communication or delivery services, local representatives mobilized volunteers to collect lists of beneficiaries by going from house to house and set up calls so that they could also receive the aid. NGOs and religious groups focus their support on migrant workers, undocumented persons and squatters who may not be able to receive the government's social protection measures. The State government is further focusing on increasing internet connectivity and has launched the SabahPay platform which provides e-government services and marketing opportunities for local products.<sup>104</sup>

100 Lee, Dae-Joong (2020). UNDRR/WHO webinar: How Korea has flattened the curve on COVID-19 through ICT. United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and World Health Organization Webinar Presentation. Available at: <https://www.undrr.org/event/undrr-gets-who-and-global-policy-house-webinar-lessons-covid-19-pandemic-emerging>

101 The Government of the Republic of Korea (2020). How Korea Responded to a pandemic using ICT: Flattening the curve on COVID-19. <http://overseas.mofa.go.kr/viewer/skin/doc.html?fn=2020042108422072&rs=/viewer/result/202007>

102 UNDP (2020). COVID-19: WHO, UNICEF and UNDP Partner with WhatsApp to Get Real Time Health Information to Billions around the World. 18 March 2020. <https://www.undp.org/content/brussels/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/whatsapp-launches-coronavirus-information-hub-to-support-health.html>

103 UNDP (2020). Community-Led Resilience and Response System: The Case for Sabah. 19 June 2020. <https://www.my.undp.org/content/malaysia/en/home/blog/2020/community-led-resilience-and-response-system-the-case-for-sabah.html>



**Innovative approaches to combat the impacts of COVID-19 have been initiated at the grassroots level in Viet Nam.**<sup>105</sup> Recently a Ho Chi Minh City-based entrepreneur, Hoang Tuan Anh, installed the first ‘Rice ATM’, which provides free rice for people in need, including those who are out of work.<sup>106</sup> The ATM provides 1.5 kilograms of rice to each person, and they can apply and withdraw from the ATM using their smartphones. The first Rice ATM distributed five tons of rice in its first two days of operation, and other charities and entrepreneurs quickly established similar Rice ATMs across the country.

In order to support policymakers to strengthen their responses to COVID-19, the Governance Lab at the New York University Tandon School of Engineering, in partnership with other institutions, launched a free massive open online course (MOOC), titled “Collective Crisis Intelligence”. The course consists of 15 mini lectures from leading global experts experienced in major disasters, including the Fukushima nuclear plant disaster of 2011, the Ebola crisis of 2014, the Zika outbreak of 2016, and

the coronavirus.<sup>107</sup> Examples of courses include: chatbots and social media strategies for crisis, data visualization and mapping, and defining actionable problems.<sup>108</sup>

The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of the existence of business continuity plans for continuous public service delivery. The Philippines’ Local Government Units in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) use Zoom teleconferencing<sup>109</sup> for remote work access in order to coordinate efforts on the crisis response and to maintain services to their citizens during COVID-19 lockdowns.<sup>110</sup> The BARMM area has more than 370,000 forcibly displaced individuals<sup>111</sup> from decades of conflicts and disasters, and is prone to both earthquakes and weather-related hazards.<sup>112</sup> The area also has a weak health care system.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, it is imperative that LGUs in the BARMM area are able to maintain their core functions to contain the spread of the virus as well as to respond to any natural disasters that may occur during this period of crisis.

#### Box 14: Effectiveness of the private sector’s business continuity plans during disasters

The Great East Japan Earthquake (GEJE) caused 656 private companies to go bankrupt within a year according to a report published by the World Bank. However, among those private companies, only 12 percent were located in the Tohoku region while the others were located in different regions of Japan. Most of the bankruptcies were attributed to indirect loss or damages caused by disruptions in their supply chains due to the absence of business continuity plans. Even when private companies are not directly affected by disasters, they are still at risk of bankruptcy due to the disruption of the supply chain. One lesson learned from past catastrophic events such as the Great Hanshin-Awaji (Kobe) Earthquake, Hurricane Katrina, the GEJE and the Thailand flood is that when the private sector is better prepared, it plays an important role in reducing national and regional economic damage. At the time of the GEJE, the ratio of companies with a business continuity plan was low across Japan and differed according to the size of companies. Among large companies, 40 percent had prepared business continuity plans while 12 percent of medium-size enterprises had done so before March 2011. Approximately 80 to 90 percent of those companies that had business continuity plans in place before March 2011 confirmed that their plans were effective during the response and recovery phase of the GEJE.

Source: World Bank/IBRD (2014). Learning from Megadisasters – Lessons from the Great East Japan Earthquake. <https://www.gfdrr.org/sites/default/files/publication/Learning%20from%20Megadisasters%20Lessons%20from%20the%20Great%20East%20Japan%20Earthquake.pdf>

104 Ibid.

105 UNDP (2020). Brief #2: Putting the UN Framework For Socio-economic Response to COVID-19 Into Action: Insights. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Brief2-COVID-19-final-June2020.pdf>

106 UNDP Vietnam (2020). Emergency innovation key to COVID containment is central to recovery in Viet Nam. <https://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/presscenter/articles/frmEmergencytoInclusiveInnovation.html>

107 *GlobeNewswire* (2020). Online collective intelligence course aims to improve response to COVID-19 and other crises. 7 April 2020. <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/online-collective-intelligence-course-aims-170723167.html>

108 See Collective Crisis Intelligence at <https://covidcourse.thegovlab.org/>

109 Zoom licenses were provided by the Australian Embassy in the Philippines and the UNDP Philippines Country Office

110 UNDP Philippines (2020). UNDP Supports BARMM Connectivity Amid COVID-19 Through Teleconferencing Access. 4 June 2020. <https://www.ph.undp.org/content/philippines/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/202-/undp-supports-barmm-connectivity-amid-covid-19-through-teleconferencing.html>

111 UNHCR Philippines (2020). Stay and Deliver: Responding to COVID-19 in the Philippines. 6 July 2020. <https://www.unhcr.org/ph/19591-jun2020-enevs-mindanao.html>

112 IFRC (2019b). Philippines: Mindanao Earthquakes Emergency Operation update no 1. Emergency appeal No MDRPH036. <https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/philippines-mindanao-earthquakes-emergency-operation-update-n-1-emergency-appeal>

113 Philippines Humanitarian Country Team (2020). COVID-19 Humanitarian Response Plan: Philippines. 11 May 2020 Revision. [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/200511\\_COVID-19%20Philippines%20HRP%20Revision%20Final.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/200511_COVID-19%20Philippines%20HRP%20Revision%20Final.pdf)



**Universal Basic Income (UBI) can increase people's coping capacities and ability to recover from shocks of all kinds.** UBI is a regular payment from a government to all individuals in order to enable them to be able to meet their basic needs,<sup>114</sup> providing a modest minimum of guaranteed economic security while also providing adequate incentives to work, save and invest.<sup>115</sup> The payment is provided without any conditions attached regardless of whether the recipient earns additional income or not. The concept gained attention in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and has picked up steam in the context of the global economic crisis caused by the coronavirus.<sup>116</sup> Though critics of the UBI argue it will increase governments' fiscal burdens,<sup>117</sup> the severe socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 have led governments to reconsider the importance of providing blanket economic security, because not addressing the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic now is likely to result in greater inequalities and negative social consequences which could cost governments significantly more over the long-term.<sup>118</sup>

The discourse on UBI has shifted from its conceptual efficacies to how countries could potentially fund and implement UBI, at least to mitigate the immediate fallout of the pandemic and accelerate socio-economic recovery. The *Human Development Report 2019* suggests that governments could cut energy subsidies, in particular subsidies for fossil fuel, and invest these savings in the form of a UBI, noting that such a stimulus would be progressive and benefit poor and marginalized groups most of all.<sup>119</sup> Another proposal is to strengthen multilateral efforts at the global and regional levels to demand multinational corporations to pay their fair share of taxes, which could be used to provide a modest UBI, distributed in countries around the world.<sup>120</sup> A UNDP-led study estimates that it would cost from \$199 billion per month to provide a time-bound, guaranteed basic income to the 2.7 billion people living below or just above

the poverty line in 132 developing countries, and that it would be financially viable, with a six-month Temporary Basic Income requiring just 12 percent of the total financial response to COVID-19 expected in 2020, or the equivalent of one third of what developing countries owe in external debt payments in 2020.<sup>121</sup>

#### Box 15: The feasibility of UBI in Bangladesh in the context of COVID-19

A study on the effectiveness and feasibility of a Universal Basic Income in Bangladesh in the context of COVID-19 identified that the Government of Bangladesh could potentially afford to implement it.<sup>122</sup> The study found that before COVID-19, over 40 percent of households were categorized as poor and vulnerable, but that the impacts of the pandemic could be expected to increase this to nearly 60 percent of households. The majority of workers in Bangladesh are employed in the informal sector and there is no unemployment insurance in the country to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on livelihoods. The study identified that providing an income support of US\$29 (BDT 2,500) per month to each household for a six-month period would cost less than 2 percent of the country's GDP in 2019 and providing this support for a year would cost less than 4 percent of GDP. Given these findings and the urgency of addressing the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, the study argues that it is better to provide income support to all households now than risk delays by requiring the support to be means tested or targeted to select households.

Source: UNDP Bangladesh Country Office (2020). Rethinking Social Protection Responses to the Covid-19 Crisis: Issues and Policy Priorities for Bangladesh, June 2020.

114 SBS dateline (2020). Will a Universal Basic Income save post-pandemic Asia 26 June 2020. [https://www.sbs.com.au/news/dateline/will-a-universal-basic-income-save-post-pandemic-asia\\_1](https://www.sbs.com.au/news/dateline/will-a-universal-basic-income-save-post-pandemic-asia_1)

115 World Economic Forum (2020b). Universal basic income is the answer to the inequalities exposed by COVID-19. 17 April 2020. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/covid-19-universal-basic-income-social-inequality/>

116 SBS dateline (2020).

117 Ibid.

118 World Economic Forum (2020b).

119 UNDP (2019). Human Development Report 2019 – Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today: Inequalities in human development in the 21st century. <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2019.pdf>

120 World Economic Forum (2020b).

121 UNDP (2020). Temporary Basic Income: Protecting Poor and Vulnerable People in Developing Countries. <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/transitions-series/temporary-basic-income--tbi--for-developing-countries.html>





**Digital finance has also been revealed as valuable for supporting access to money for populations in need, as many people have seen their current income interrupted due to business shutdowns.** For instance, during the Ebola crisis, Sierra Leone stood out for effectively implementing digital payments to its response workers, improving the security, transparency and efficiency of payments, including shortening payment time from one month to around one week. In the process, the country saved more than US\$10 million by eliminating double payments, reducing fraud, removing costs of cash transportation and security, and cutting travel costs for response workers. In doing so, digital payments strengthened Sierra Leone's capacity to contain the Ebola disease, treat those infected and ultimately save lives.<sup>122</sup> Drawing on these lessons and responding to the current COVID-19 outbreak, the Better Than Cash Alliance<sup>123</sup> is currently responding to requests from governments (such as those of Bangladesh, Colombia and Ghana) to accelerate the digitalization of payments.

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122 Better Than Cash Alliance (2016). Saving Money, Saving Lives: A Case Study on the Benefits of Digitizing Payments to Ebola Response Workers in Sierra Leone. [https://btca-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/186/english\\_attachments/BTCA-Ebola-Case-Study.pdf?1502739794](https://btca-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/186/english_attachments/BTCA-Ebola-Case-Study.pdf?1502739794)

123 The Better Than Cash Alliance is a multilateral partnership of 75 members that aims at digitizing payments, advancing the transition from cash to digital payments. The United Nations Capital Development Fund serves as the secretariat of the Alliance.



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COVID-19 SOCIO-ECONOMIC RECOVERY

*“The Great Reset is a welcome recognition that this human tragedy must be a wake-up call. We must build more equal, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change and the many other global changes we face.”*

*– António Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations, New York.*



# 1. INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

**Promote international cooperation in managing the cascading economic effects that countries face due to linkages with global production and the global value chain.** The shock induced by COVID-19 is modelled as a policy intervention that constrains production simultaneously in almost all countries in the world. Each country is hit by a local shock induced by the virus at home, and by a shock through the input linkages induced by the spread of the coronavirus abroad. The economic effects of a pandemic crucially depend on the extent to which countries are connected to global production networks, which have a clear role in magnifying the effects of the production shock. The economic effects of the COVID-19 shock are different across sectors, regions and countries, depending on the geographic distribution of industries in each region and country and their degree of integration in the global production network. The value chain approach is unique to Asia, which is home to the most developed production networks in the world – reflected in extensive participation by most economies. Growth in connectivity, a key factor of a stronger global value chain, has been disrupted by the pandemic and is to stagnate for the next few years.

**Take steps to anticipate waves of the pandemic that would prolong the recession and set back recovery.** Uncertainty remains in several key areas, including the rate of spread of the disease across and within economies, the need for further lockdown measures, and the ability of government policies to protect households, vulnerable groups and firms from the economic and social consequences of the crisis. This crisis is coming in waves, as knock-on effects from problems in one sector or country can create new problems in other sectors. It should be noted that taking steps to anticipate possible

viral transmission ‘hotspots’ and effectively promote inclusive and accessible hygienic living and working environments can significantly reduce the risks of a second viral peak.

**Develop a globally coordinated stimulus package for developing countries.** Such a package should create the conditions in developing countries to tackle the disease and its human impacts, including by reversing stagnating bilateral aid and increasing access to concessional finance. Development cooperation should also work to build resilience over the longer term. This should enable developing countries to prepare for anticipated and unanticipated risks, including those related to health, climate and conflict, and lock in sustainable development gains.

**Recognize that the transformation of the underlying risk factors is a global and not just a national challenge.** The COVID-19 pandemic reveals what other disasters also reveal. Without reducing inequality, poverty and exclusion, those most affected will see their risk increase. This calls for a redirection of expenditures to increase investments in economic, social and cultural rights, including health, social protection, food, water and housing, in particular for the most marginalized. The pandemic, however, has also starkly revealed the weakness, if not absence of, effective mechanisms for the governance of risk on a truly global scale. Hopefully, the pandemic will provoke a global and regional political debate that goes well beyond the search for a vaccine.

**Promote global and regional collaboration on health systems to effectively tackle pandemics.** The pandemic has revealed the absence of an effective global health governance system.<sup>124</sup> Supporting regional health

124 Gray, R (2020). Q&A: Coronavirus has shown the need for a global health system – but revealed its weaknesses too. 4 June 2020. Horizon: The EU Research & Innovation Magazine. <https://horizon-magazine.eu/article/qa-coronavirus-has-shown-need-global-health-system-revealed-its-weaknesses-too.html>

systems and cross-border controls to enable swift and effective pandemic management could have reduced the rate and spread of the virus. While scientists around the world are collaborating to find antiviral treatment, the global vaccine alliance, GAVI,<sup>127</sup> has taken a notably inclusive and broad approach, attempting to collaborate and work internationally with the pharmaceutical industry, supply chain actors, funding agencies and implementing partners.

**Recognize the need for a dynamic and highly coordinated international recovery model.** Due to the continually shifting and global character of the COVID-19 pandemic, countries are in different stages of experiencing, responding and recovering from it. There is a lot that countries can learn from each other's experiences and many have begun sharing information and joining efforts in the fight against COVID-19. It is equally important that they remain united in addressing its lasting consequences as well. Approaching the virus as a common regional and global enemy incentivizes greater bilateral and multilateral support. This will be critical as donor economies continue to suffer from the ongoing economic downturn. High-income countries must view international support for recovery not simply as humanitarian support, but rather an opportunity to redress the systems and conditions that fostered inequalities of vulnerability and risk in the first place. There is also investment needed in capacity, such as data collection and sharing data for ongoing surveillance of current and future events.<sup>128</sup>

**Utilize existing regional cooperation mechanisms at the regional level to support the pandemic response.**

At the regional level, ASEAN has prepared a region-wide response, named the "ASEAN Collective Response to the Outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019", along with the ASEAN Economic Ministers' statement on "Strengthening ASEAN's Economic Resilience in Response to the Outbreak of the COVID-19". This statement calls for collective action to work with external and developmental partners. The statement focuses on leveraging technology, digital trade and trade facilitation platforms such as the 'ASEAN Single Window', to foster supply-chain connectivity and to allow businesses, especially SMEs, to continue operations amidst the COVID-19 outbreak. The statement further emphasizes the need to improve long-term supply chain resilience and sustainability, particularly through the implementation of the "Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025". ASEAN has been engaging in further collaboration with the European Union, the United States, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, to establish various kinds of recovery support systems. The leaders of the ASEAN Member States issued a statement<sup>129</sup> calling for a post-pandemic recovery plan and proposed the establishment of the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund.<sup>130</sup> The SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) Disaster Management Centre (SDMC), India's National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), the Government of India and ESCAP organized a series of webinars on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to support building resilience to the cascading impacts of disasters through regional cooperation in South Asia.<sup>131</sup>

127 Gavi: The Vaccine Alliance hosted a Global Vaccine Summit on 4 June 2020. See <https://www.gavi.org/vaccineswork/how-world-changed-4-june>

128 International Recovery Platform (2020). COVID-19 Recovery – Policy Brief. [https://www.recoveryplatform.org/assets/publication/Covid19\\_Recovery/COVID-19%20Recovery%20Policy%20Brief.pdf](https://www.recoveryplatform.org/assets/publication/Covid19_Recovery/COVID-19%20Recovery%20Policy%20Brief.pdf)

129 ASEAN (2020). Declaration of the Special ASEAN Summit on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). 14 April 2020. <https://asean.org/storage/2020/04/FINAL-Declaration-of-the-Special-ASEAN-Summit-on-COVID-19.pdf>

130 OECD (2020). COVID-19 crisis response in ASEAN Member States. 4 May 2020. [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=129\\_129949-ehsuqs87y&title=COVID-19-Crisis-Response-in-ASEAN-Member-States](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=129_129949-ehsuqs87y&title=COVID-19-Crisis-Response-in-ASEAN-Member-States)

131 ESCAP (2020). Protecting the most vulnerable to cascading risks from climate extremes and the COVID-19 in South Asia. [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Policy%20study-climate%20hazards%20during%20the%20pandemic\\_final\\_v6%20%284%29.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Policy%20study-climate%20hazards%20during%20the%20pandemic_final_v6%20%284%29.pdf)

# 2. GOVERNANCE

**Assess the wider socio-economic impacts of the crisis and the capabilities to manage needs.** The socio-economic assessments conducted so far do not adequately link with other multi-hazard and multidimensional global problems including climate change, income inequality, human rights and conflict that have relevance to planning recovery. The COVID-19 Recovery Needs Assessment (CRNA) adds flexibility and a simplified approach to planning pandemic responses, ongoing preparedness needs and recovery needs with costs. The flexible methodology allows it to be adapted to the context and needs of individual countries and complements existing assessments already undertaken or underway. Whichever the assessment utilized, countries should pull together information from multiple sectors to support a coherent strategic plan of action rather than multiple and potentially disparate sector-by-sector approaches.<sup>132</sup>

**Establish pandemic recovery coordination and implementation arrangements.** Pandemic recovery requires a sustained effort that begins during the

ongoing and dynamic period of pandemic control, and which is prepared to manage future waves of increasing and decreasing transmission activity. Existing recovery coordination arrangements should be assessed to determine whether policies or authorities require adaptation to accommodate any unique pandemic-related needs. This may differ from country to country, for instance, the national disaster management organizations in several countries have played an effective role in coordinating pandemic responses; however, recovery may require the involvement of additional line ministries that may need to be coordinated by the planning and/or finance ministries.

**Strengthen risk governance by incorporating biohazards, including epidemics, as part of integrated risk management.** Strengthening the legal and institutional frameworks for disaster preparedness and response and incorporating pandemics in them will significantly reduce the impacts, both in terms of loss of life and socio-economic effects. National and local disaster risk reduction laws, strategies and plans are

**Box 16: UNDP’s Governance for Resilience (Gov4Res) project: Integrating disaster risk into development plans**

The Gov4Res project, formerly called the Pacific Risk Resilience Programme (PRRP), works with Pacific Island nations to consider the risks from climate change and disasters and incorporate them in their development plans. Running “business not as usual”, the project developed and incorporated a model for “risk governance” to enable risk-informed development at all levels of governance. This approach is delivered through a partnership between the Government of Australia and UNDP, drawing on extensive testing of mainstreaming approaches in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. Communities have become more resilient to climate change and disasters when routine government, community and other planning processes take these risks into account. Results of the project include risk-informed submissions to public sector investment programmes for capital projects, and training courses on climate change and disaster risk–informed planning and budgeting.

Notes: For the model on risk governance, see Selby, S. and Jiwonji, M. (2016). Risk Governance—Building Blocks for Resilient Development in the Pacific: A Policy Brief. United Nations Development Programme.

Sources: UNDP (2018). Moon Shots & Puddle Jumps: UNDP Innovation Facility Year in Review. <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/development-impact/undp-innovation-facility-year-in-review.html>

132 International Recovery Platform (2020).

essential for implementing and monitoring a country's risk reduction priorities by setting implementation milestones, establishing the key roles and responsibilities of government and non-governmental actors, and identifying resources.<sup>133</sup> They should also be considered a critical step in the recovery process, as the better a country is able to prepare for and respond to disasters, pandemics and the entanglement of both, the more the socio-economic impacts can be reduced. In turn, the requirements for recovery will be correspondingly lessened, meaning that resources and investments for the recovery can be better targeted to vulnerable groups and particularly affected sectors. Strengthening the engagement of human rights and gender equality actors in institutions, frameworks and plans can ensure a stronger rights-based and inclusive approach in disaster preparedness and response at national and local levels.

**Use COVID-19 recovery as an opportunity to preserve development gains.** Especially in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), recovery is an opportunity to expand productive capacities and catalyse drivers of economic resilience, such as inclusive education, economic diversification, jobs creation, climate change adaptation and more. Such policies should be based on strengthening national development governance that incentivizes the allocation of domestic and foreign resources (public and private) for industrial and technological upgrading while ensuring social and environmental protection. Preventing billions more from sliding further into poverty as a result of the crisis will require governments to rapidly adapt, expand and scale up social protection measures, such as cash transfers, food assistance, and social insurance schemes and child benefits to support families.<sup>134</sup> Some have noted that the recovery from this event presents an opportunity to “reboot” the pursuit of the SDGs and the Sendai Framework.<sup>135</sup>

**Empower local governments and communities in the new social contract for recovery.** Decentralized approaches can contribute to inclusive disaster risk reduction, better identification of people's needs, bottom-up planning and the empowerment of local communities.<sup>136</sup> Countries should therefore prioritize building the capacities of subnational institutions as a long-term strategy for risk reduction<sup>137</sup> from multiple disasters and establish coordination mechanisms to enable national governments to coordinate or assist subnational institutions when a disaster exceeds their capacity or affects more than one subnational jurisdiction.<sup>138</sup> Active, free and meaningful participation and empowering the community, civil society organizations, local organizations and representatives from marginalized groups is also significant to build public trust in governments' recovery efforts as well as promote adherence to social behaviour measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic. Effective participation requires people to be informed with information in accessible formats, involved in decisions that affect them and respecting and protecting human rights, including the right to information, freedom of expression and of the press, freedom of association and of assembly, is therefore key.

**Take action to address root causes that leave certain groups particularly vulnerable in times of crises.** While the immediate crisis response requires targeted measures to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable, lessons learned from disasters repeatedly reveal that underlying structural inequalities cause certain groups to be disproportionately affected. This points to the importance of taking longer-term action to ensure the implementation of laws, policies and practices that promote equality and combat discrimination in access to resources, services and power, as well as address stigmatization and stereotypes.

133 See UNDRR's Global Assessment Report, GAR 2019, at <https://gar.undrr.org/report-2019>

134 United Nations (2020a).

135 International Recovery Platform (2020).

136 See UNDRR's Global Assessment Report, GAR 2019, at <https://gar.undrr.org/report-2019>

137 Wilkinson, E., Twigg, J., Weingartner, L., Peters, K., Kirbyshire, A., Lovell, E., Masson, V.L., Patel, S. and Bernard, G. (2017). Delivering disaster risk reduction by 2030: pathways to progress. London: Overseas Development Institute.

138 IFRC (2019a).

# 3. SOCIAL PROTECTION

**Develop and promote social protection measures that cover workers in informal employment, unpaid care jobs and non-standard employment who are more vulnerable to disasters and their social and economic impacts.** Social protection, including cash transfers, universal health coverage and access to other basic services, have been critical for post-disaster recovery, and also central to the COVID-19 response. Governments should rethink social protection measures, including universal health coverage and universal basic income, as a means of extending the coverage of the social safety net to close the gaps. As a good example, Thailand applied its public health system, UCEP (Universal Coverage for Emergency Patients), to COVID-19 patients which covers all Thais and foreigners with a valid working permit, enabling patients to seek treatment at their nearest private or state hospital free of charge.<sup>139</sup>

**Ensure that social protection measures are inclusive and accessible for all, addressing inequalities and vulnerabilities perpetuated before disasters.** As a key driver for achieving the ambition of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind, social protection should be risk-informed, addressing multidimensional vulnerabilities against disasters, avoiding irreversible effects on human capital, and empowering vulnerable households and individuals towards long-term resilience. An inclusive social protection programme should effectively reach the furthest left behind, looking beyond the perspective of income poverty and considering various factors that exacerbate vulnerability and are specific to particular groups, including persons with disabilities, indigenous populations, LGBTQI persons, older persons, migrants, refugees and people living with HIV. However, while these populations are disproportionately affected by disasters, their respective needs and capacities are

not well reflected in social protection programmes. For example, according to a rapid socio-economic impact assessment in Viet Nam, 30 percent of persons with disabilities were made unemployed due to COVID-19; and among those who work, 59 percent received a pay cut. However, they are at risk of being ineligible to receive allowances from the social welfare package announced by the Government, especially for those working in the informal sector. This is because only persons with disabilities certified with significant support needs are automatically entitled to the package, while those with minor disabilities but who are also in need of financial support are left out.<sup>140</sup> In other instances, some persons with disabilities with significant support needs do not receive sufficiently support. For example, the Indonesian Ministry of Social Affairs allocates around US\$14 (INR 300,000) per month to people who are poor and also with disabilities with significant support needs.<sup>141</sup> This amount is far from enough because the more complicated health conditions result in higher living costs, including additional costs for medical expenses and support services. Furthermore, this amount will not be enough to ensure that persons with disabilities can participate in social and economic activities on an equal basis because of the lack of accessible infrastructure and social services and the prevailing stigma. It is suggested that governments reassess social protection schemes including their criteria, accessibility and effectiveness, so that vulnerable individuals and households are well-covered under better-informed programmes.

**Ensure that social protection measures are gender-responsive, tackling both women's and men's distinctive realities and needs, especially because women are overrepresented in the informal sector and unpaid care work and have increasing responsibility for childcare in the pandemic.** Meanwhile, the financially

139 ILO (2020c). Social protection responses to the COVID-19 crisis: Country responses and policy considerations. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---soc\\_sec/documents/publication/wcms\\_742337.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---soc_sec/documents/publication/wcms_742337.pdf); *The Thaiger & The Nation* (2020). New Covid-19 specialist hospital to open as Thai government steps up response. 16 Mar 20. <https://thethaiger.com/coronavirus/new-covid-19-specialist-hospital-to-open-as-thai-government-steps-up-response>

140 UNDP Viet Nam et al. (2020). Rapid assessment of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities in Viet Nam. [https://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/library/democratic\\_governance/ImpactPwDs.html](https://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/library/democratic_governance/ImpactPwDs.html)

141 Interview with CBM Indonesia, virtual meeting, 25 June 2020.

supported application of a ‘gender lens’ to social protection is essential to strengthen both SMEs and the informal economy. With a logical and rights-based focus on the most vulnerable, social protection measures have already proven vital in efforts to facilitate recovery across the Asia-Pacific region. Positive examples include Fiji where the government has taken decisive action to maintain the functioning of local markets and keep female market vendors safe both from COVID-19 infection and from gender-based violence. Papua New Guinea has similarly supported female market workers via the provision of key health and hygiene material and also through the use of various forms of information and communication technology to inform them about health issues connected to the spread of the virus. This is essential since women across the developing world often have less access to the internet.<sup>142</sup> Notably, the Government of Indonesia has made investments and taken steps to promote the use of digital technology to counteract the sudden economic stress on households and small and medium-sized enterprises.<sup>143</sup>

**Develop short- and medium-term measures with a view to extending social protection coverage and protecting people from longer-term impacts of the pandemic as well as future shocks.** In the aftermath of disasters, governments can initiate new interventions or scale up existing social safety programmes, such as social insurance systems, in order to meet the immediate needs of affected populations, and thereby enabling them to recover quickly. The consideration and selection of measures should be based on assessments and a clear understanding of the affected areas, vulnerabilities of affected individuals and households, and whether the programme is capable and well-suited to respond to the needs. Special attention should be given to people who are affected but do not meet the conditions of regular social safety nets. Governments can enable the assistance in many forms, such as direct cash transfers, subsidizing employers for employment retention, or providing upskilling and reskilling trainings

which were very useful in the COVID-19 response.<sup>144</sup> Governments could also revisit existing programmes of public investment in different sectors to examine if they can be scaled up or adapted to create more jobs. For instance, the Pakistan government sought to incorporate a 30 percent increase of daily wage employment in its environment rehabilitation programme, the “10 Billion Trees”, after COVID-19 hit the country’s economy and the livelihoods of its people.<sup>145</sup>

**Complement social protection measures with longer-term financial support.** It should be noted that strengthening disaster risk-informed social protection is an ongoing effort, and should be incorporated in long-term recovery with constant fiscal support, so that the vulnerabilities revealed by disasters are better tackled and communities are better prepared for future shocks. For instance, it is well known that social protection schemes that are focused on employment or skills development, such as small business training and support, are considerably less effective if not planned with longer-term financial support taken into consideration (e.g. Ebola responses and in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria).<sup>146</sup>

142 UN Women (2020). The First 100 Days of Covid-19 in Asia and the Pacific: A Gender Lens, p. 7. <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/the-first-100-days-of-the-covid-19-outbreak-in-asia-and-the-pacific>

143 IMF (2020). Courage under Fire: Policy Responses in Emerging Market and Developing Economies to the COVID-19 Pandemic. 3 June 2020. <https://blogs.imf.org/2020/06/03/courage-under-fire-policy-responses-in-emerging-market-and-developing-economies-to-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

144 ILO (2020c).

145 UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Innovation Centre (2020). Naheed Shah Durrani – The Green Stimulus planting 10 billion trees and creating jobs. 10 July 2020. <https://medium.com/@undp.riic/naheed-shah-durrani-green-stimulus-planting-10-billion-trees-and-creating-jobs-b9c43e1654a0>

146 UNDP (2020). Lessons from evaluations: UNDP support to Livelihoods Restoration and Job Creation in Crisis Countries. <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/reflections/livelihoods.pdf>



# 4. GREEN ECONOMY

**Promote a renewed vision for recovery based on a more dynamic concept of climate resilience and environmental sustainability.** The UN Secretary General has provided six “climate-related actions” that will help guide how countries incorporate climate change resilience into their pandemic recovery efforts.<sup>147</sup> The guidance includes that recovery should deliver new jobs and businesses through a clean, green transition; public funds should flow to sustainable sectors and projects that help the environment and the climate; and climate risks and opportunities must be incorporated into the financial system as well as all aspects of public policymaking and infrastructure.

**Provide tax incentives to reduce carbon emissions.** Stimulus and recovery efforts should address the underlying causes of systemic risks, through inclusive, practical and targeted reforms and investments which balance socio-economic and environmental priorities. For instance, the tax-reform component of stimulus packages can create new tax rates for fuel, energy or carbon, and different incentives to reduce carbon emissions. The recent dramatic decline in global oil prices provides a clear opportunity to revisit the subsidies currently in place in many countries and the chance to redirect these resources to more efficient and sustainable ways to reduce poverty or enhance inclusive and equitable growth, while also advancing a move away from fossil fuels.<sup>148</sup>

**Align recovery programmes with revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).** Recovery programmes could be aligned with the revised NDCs (the intended national reductions in greenhouse gas emissions) that are to be submitted in 2020 to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This provides an opportunity to enhance the overall level of ambition of the NDCs.<sup>149</sup> International support for economic recovery in the world’s lower-income countries could be channelled towards implementation of the NDCs. This crisis would hopefully help to draw attention to and integrate climate-focused action into national economic policy.

**Build Back Greener.** The Partners for Inclusive Green Economies<sup>150</sup> have developed “COVID-19: Ten Priority Options for a Just, Green & Transformative Recovery”.<sup>151</sup> Among several recommendations is the need to develop and actively use national green economy plans, ‘Green Deals’, green industrial strategies and green COVID-19 recovery plans to build long-term resilience and prosperity. It also calls to adequately addressing underlying systemic risks that will require sustained effort beyond stimulus and early recovery phases, including longer-term public spending and private investment. Tools such as the sustainability checklist<sup>152</sup> developed by the World Bank and the Quality Assurance Checklist for joined-up programming to build resilience (see Box 17), developed by the United Nations, help to assess programming interventions. One of the key lessons from the 2008 global recession and its recovery is that the failure to enact basic market reforms and develop supportive policies placed many green projects at a

147 UN (2020). Climate Change and COVID-19: UN urges nations to ‘recover better’. <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/un-urges-countries-%E2%80%98build-back-better%E2%80%99>

148 World Bank (2020). Thinking Ahead for a Sustainable Recovery from COVID-19. 30 March 2020. [https://www.preventionweb.net/news/view/71103?utm\\_source=LinkedIn&utm\\_campaign=PreventionSavesLives](https://www.preventionweb.net/news/view/71103?utm_source=LinkedIn&utm_campaign=PreventionSavesLives)

149 Scott A. and Locke A. (2020). How to build back greener in the Covid-19 recovery. ODI blog. 11 May 2020. <https://www.odi.org/blogs/16943-how-build-back-greener-covid-19-recovery>

150 Partners for Inclusive Green Economies is an initiative involving UN Environment, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), the Green Economy Coalition (GEC), the Green Growth Knowledge Partnership (GGKP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Poverty-Environment Action for SDGs (PEA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Partnership for Action on Green Economy (UN-PAGE) and the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD).

151 Partners for Inclusive Green Economies (2020). COVID-19: Ten Priority Options for a Just, Green & Transformative Recovery, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/PIGE-COVID-10PriorityOptionsforaJustGreenTransformativeRecovery.pdf>

152 World Bank Group (2020). Proposed Sustainability Checklist for Assessing Economic Recovery Interventions, April 2020. <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/223671586803837686/Sustainability-Checklist-for-Assessing-Economic-Recovery-Investments-April-2020.pdf>

disadvantage.<sup>153</sup> The World Bank's sustainability checklist is a set of key questions which can be applied to any list of projects or policies, from cash transfers to direct investments in new infrastructure which are proposed as part of a stimulus package. It focuses on need over two timescales: short-term needs to deliver jobs, boost incomes and economic demand as quickly as possible, and the longer-term need to deliver sustainable growth and prosperity.

**Prioritize the need for critical infrastructure.** The resilience of critical infrastructure, such as hospitals, schools, transport and ICT, should be prioritized. It is estimated that making infrastructure resilient to multiple disasters and the impacts of climate change will require an additional investment of US\$434 billion per year.<sup>154</sup> This amount may need to be even greater in some subregions such as the Pacific Small Island Developing States. Resilience is fostered not just by science-based decisions and coordination, but also via increased redundancy and stockpiling to ensure a buffer exists for when a particular system collapses. Disaster-illiterate economic policy tends to see redundancy as inefficiency due to the required upfront costs, but the experience of disasters and pandemics have revealed the huge difficulty in scaling up production of essential supplies during a crisis. But in order to cope with COVID-19 and alleviate, if not prevent, future emergencies, supply chains need to be more local for at least some critical items. In tandem, governments and businesses will have to broaden their crisis planning to ensure the timely availability of items essential to limiting pandemic risks.

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153 World Bank (2020). Planning for the economic recovery from COVID-19: A sustainability checklist for policymakers. World Bank Blogs. 14 April 2020. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/climatechange/planning-economic-recovery-covid-19-coronavirus-sustainability-checklist-policymakers>

154 ESCAP (2019). Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific: Ambitions beyond growth. <https://www.unescap.org/publications/economic-and-social-survey-asia-and-pacific-2019-ambitions-beyond-growth>

## **Box 17: Quality assurance checklist for joined-up programming to build resilience**

### ***General***

- Ensured that the principles for resilience-building have been adhered to in all stages of programming
- Ensured that resilience-building support does not generate new risks or impact negatively on systems and stakeholders

### ***Understanding multidimensional risks and context***

- Jointly identified, analysed and prioritized from a comprehensive range of risks, vulnerabilities and capacities for a given system in target location(s)
- Jointly analysed overall trends in development or humanitarian situation, and enabling environment
- Jointly analysed, in an inclusive manner, the power and inequality dimensions that are driving risks, and the differentiated vulnerabilities and capacities of different groups (women, men, youth, elderly, people with disabilities, minority groups, etc.) as part of a given system at risk

### ***Supporting resilient systems***

- Ensured that support establishes linkages across and within sectors and related systems (e.g. natural resource management, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, governance of land, women's rights and leadership)
- Engaged people, groups and stakeholders at different levels (individual, household, local, district, city, regional, national, international) that are part of a given system (e.g. livelihoods system)
- Strengthening resilience capacities
- Ensured the approach provides a good mix of interventions that build absorptive, adaptive, anticipative, preventive and transformative capacities across and within sectors, as well as managerial/leadership skills
- Ensured actions to raise risk awareness and knowledge among different groups
- Considered different timescales of interventions that address the most urgent humanitarian needs, drivers of risk, and root causes of vulnerabilities with medium- to long-term development and investment interventions

### ***Involving multiple stakeholders, coordination and partnerships***

- Considered human rights, access to basic services, and livelihood options for different groups through people-centred approaches that enhance diversity and flexibility
- Ensured inclusive and collective processes, coordinated action and partnerships among multiple stakeholders and different groups to agree on joined-up actions and build partnerships
- Included action to support different groups of people and their organizations to take the lead in resilience-building activities, and hold government and/or private sector actors to account for their actions or lack of actions in resilience-building

### ***Learning and adapting***

- Catered for spaces for learning and adjusting resilience-building activities and strategy with partners and with other stakeholders
- Fostered new visions, relationships, networks, ideas and understandings of resilience-building

Source: United Nations (2018). UN Common Guidance on Helping Build Resilient Societies (version December 2018).

# 5. DIGITAL DISRUPTION AND INNOVATION

**Move from stand-alone sectoral databases to online integrated data systems.** Most countries have sectoral databases that are not connected to each other. For instance, disaster and climate data management systems are usually not connected with the health-related data management systems and wider socio-economic data managed by National Statistical Offices and other agencies. Such data is required for risk-informed evidence-based development planning. With the need to better understand and address complex systemic risks, efforts should be made to move away from stand-alone sectoral databases to integrated data systems in collaboration with key sector agencies. Such a data system should be available online to enable universal access, transparency of data and accountability. Moreover, the data systems should be contextualized to country needs depending on factors such as capacity, technology, literacy levels, language and socio-economic conditions.

**Help identify the poor, excluded, vulnerable and marginalized populations for better understanding and targeting of recovery needs.** The socio-economic impacts of the pandemic are exacerbating existing

vulnerabilities of populations that are usually at risk to natural hazards and are creating new vulnerabilities. It is important to map the vulnerable groups in each country to help better understand the multiple risks they are facing. Once these groups are identified and mapped, digital solutions can be developed in the context of the “new normal” and to reach the most vulnerable. Mapping of the vulnerable groups will provide better understanding for targeting messages and selecting appropriate channels of communication, including setting up dedicated portals for vulnerable groups.

**Build, develop and sustain nationally owned sustainable cloud-based geospatial data management systems using national and global data standards.** The capacity at the national level to manage cloud-based data management systems should be enhanced for sustainability. This will ensure that governments are able to make changes and facilitate systems to evolve to meet the current and future needs of the country to undertake descriptive, predictive, prescriptive and discursive analysis for disaster and pandemic risks and contribute towards better understanding of systemic

## Box 18: Global Centre for Disaster Statistics

The Global Centre for Disaster Statistics (GCDS) is a tripartite partnership between UNDP, Fujitsu and the International Research Institute of Disaster Science (IRIDeS) at Tohoku University. GCDS supports countries to strengthen their capacities for disaster statistics, establish a global cloud-based disaster loss and damage data platform and analyse data to provide recommendations to support risk-informed national planning. It strengthens national capacity for disaster statistics to support monitoring the progress in achieving the targets of the Sendai Framework and relevant SDGs. Under the current ongoing pilot phase, which has been operating since 2017, GCDS activities are being implemented in seven countries in Asia: Cambodia, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. For example, InaRisk, an online geospatial portal in Indonesia is helping assess disaster and climate risks in Indonesia. In Nepal, GCDS is helping systematize data collection through the Building Information Platform Against Disasters, Disaster Information Management System (BIPAD-DIMS) to support contingency planning, the humanitarian response and disaster recovery. GCDS is helping develop a data glossary, a comprehensive and standardized list of disaster-related indicators that expand upon Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) indicators and disaggregation to support countries' data collection and analysis. This is supporting national reporting against SFDRR indicators and SDG indicators related to disaster risk reduction. The cloud-based geospatial databases are expected to provide immense possibilities for connecting and sharing data across other online systems. It will also change the way vital information is disseminated and used by duty bearers and rights holders, especially the most vulnerable.

risks. Definitions, protocols and standards, as agreed by the national agencies and in line with global data standards (where applicable), are to be adhered to by all sectors to ensure the interoperability of data and wider utilization across all agencies and stakeholders.

**Exploit new technologies and establish sustainable data ecosystems.** There has been significant development and emergence of new technologies ranging from high-resolution satellite imagery to cloud computing, machine learning and artificial intelligence. With the available computing power and new technologies, it is possible to crunch large and complex data sets using available expertise with data scientists and other disciplines to derive insightful analysis and run sophisticated risk models to generate scenario-based outputs for improved understanding of systemic risks and for better risk-informed decisions. The new technologies can be very powerful in tracking emergencies and the spread of pandemics and in controlling them, as has been observed recently from mobile applications such as Aarogya Setu in India and Thai Chana in Thailand, which are useful in tracking and identifying COVID-19 infections. Strengthening data capabilities for the monitoring and mapping of the pandemic and the identification of hotspots of viral infection is crucial and can be aided by digital technologies.

**Develop partnerships across countries and stakeholders including the private sector to understand systemic risk across thematic areas and geographical boundaries.** While setting up integrated databases and developing

innovative solutions to reach the most vulnerable, it is important that capacities and partnerships are in place that can harness the potential of the new technologies to find suitable solutions. This requires training and capacity building of all stakeholders involved so that over time, digitalization becomes the normal way of working and can be harnessed for building resilience. Much of the know-how is with private sector companies. Tripartite mechanisms at the country level that bring together the government, the private sector and the UN can enhance the move towards greater digitalization. Opportunities for more sophisticated models for engaging the private sector and other key stakeholders to identify opportunities for private sector investments can be helpful in understanding and addressing systemic risks.

**Reduce the digital divide that exists between countries and people.** As several countries imposed lockdown measures that necessitated remote working, there was an explosion in the use of the internet, smart phones, e-commerce, e-learning, digital payments and other digital technologies to carry out many essential activities. It is estimated that by 2021, 60 percent of the Asia-Pacific's GDP will be derived from digital products or services resulting from digital transformation.<sup>155</sup> However, such transformation must be accompanied by increasing access to internet connectivity, internet literacy and accessible technology; otherwise, the digital divide is likely to widen further and exacerbate inequalities both between countries and social groups.

#### **Box 19: Systems thinking approaches to identify multiple risks and solutions in urban areas**

Systems thinking approaches can be used by city governments to identify and integrate risks, including from pandemics, through generating a greater understanding of the underlying causes of vulnerability in a city and the interlinkages between factors. For example in Nepal, UNDP is supporting Waling municipality to prepare an urban resilience roadmap to achieve its long-term vision for sustainable urban development. The city's increasing population has put additional pressure on the ability of the municipality to be able to provide employment opportunities and basic services, including food, water, health, energy, transport and connectivity, all within the context of longer-term and growing environmental and climate risks. Systems thinking will be a useful tool for the municipality to better understand current and future risks, to analyse development priorities across sectors, and to identify key areas of intervention to increase urban resilience. The COVID-19 pandemic has added additional risks and complexities, but the systems thinking approach that is being applied to support the formulation of the roadmap will enable Waling's stakeholders and decision makers to unpack the multidimensional risks and identify appropriate solutions.

Source: Ministry of Population and Environment (MoPE) of Nepal (2017). National Population Report 2017. [https://www.mope.gov.np/downloadfile/National%20Population%20Report%202017\\_1515491881.pdf](https://www.mope.gov.np/downloadfile/National%20Population%20Report%202017_1515491881.pdf)

155 IDC (2018). Unlocking the Economic Impact of Digital Transformation in Asia Pacific. White Paper. November 2018. <https://3er1viui9wo30pkxh1v2nh4w-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/prod/sites/43/2018/11/Unlocking-the-economic-impact-of-digital-transformation.pdf>

# 6. FUNDING TO REDUCE MULTIPLE RISKS

**Adapt development cooperation to build resilience in countries.** Moving forward, development cooperation in all its forms – Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), South–South and triangular cooperation, and action by private sector and philanthropic actors – should be adapted to ensure that it reduces risk, enables recovery and builds resilience.

**Adopt ex ante financing instruments that are efficient and predictable.** COVID-19 underscores the importance of preparedness, especially investing in crisis prevention, risk reduction and planning. Forecast-based financing (FBF) can help to address the threat of multiple future shocks and disasters occurring within the ongoing context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Forecast-based financing is a programme which allocates and allows access to funding for nations which face recurring humanitarian crises and shocks. The goal is to anticipate extreme events and lessen their impact through the early availability of funds, agreed in advance. The benefits to a nation or economy of having advance funding available are significant and, depending on the scale of the finance available, can help to fund a range of government programmes including preventing business closures and ensuring business continuity. Another instrument is the Southeast Asia Disaster Risk Insurance Facility (SEADRIF) that can provide nations with additional funding, support and advice in the context of post-COVID-19 resilience building. SEADRIF is a regional organization which provides nations with financial services and strategic advice to increase resilience and international cooperation in response to disaster and climate risks, with an emphasis on livelihoods, poverty reduction and economic development.

**Promote investment in disaster risk reduction.** The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has been promoting a macroeconomic model for disaster risk reduction investment which was developed and used in partnership with the Pacific Consultants of Japan. The model enables policymakers to understand the risk of natural hazards, the optimal level and economic

efficiency of disaster risk reduction investment (e.g. how much Japan should invest in disaster risk reduction). By using a) economic data, b) disaster-related data and c) deep parameters (constant parameters that are not affected by any policies) as inputs, the model is able to show the relationship between economic growth and disaster damage. Through the Dynamic Stochastic Macroeconomic Sets of disaster-related data, this makes it possible to forecast future economic growth and analyse policies for disaster risk reduction investment in countries.

# ANNEX 1: IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON VULNERABLE GROUPS



## OLDER PERSONS

In the Philippines in 2013, people over 60 years of age represented approximately 7 percent of the population, but accounted for 38 percent of the fatalities caused by Typhoon Haiyan; similarly, in the 2015 Nepal earthquake, 29 percent of people who died were aged over 60, while older people represented only 8 percent of the population.<sup>156</sup>

The nature of the coronavirus is such that older persons and those with co-morbidities are most at risk. Older persons are at a significantly higher risk of mortality and severe disease following infection, with those over 80 years old dying at five times the average rate.<sup>157</sup> In China, approximately 80 percent of deaths occurred among adults aged 60 years or older. Older people's vulnerability is compounded by a number of factors ranging from commonly having underlying health conditions to social isolation which can be exacerbated by COVID-19 social distancing measures. This situation is worsened by the fact that many older persons in the Asia-Pacific region lack social protection.

## WOMEN

Structural inequalities and discrimination towards women result in women being affected differently by disasters than men. Women are less likely to receive information than men, are more likely to be responsible for childcare and elderly care, are more likely to be engaged in informal jobs and are less likely to have access to social protection and insurance. Women have less ownership over resources such as land, property, household assets and savings, which increases the severity of their losses during disasters and limits their ability to rebuild.<sup>158</sup> Evidence from several PDNAs indicates an increase in the risk of gender-based violence and trafficking. But disasters can be opportunities to make needed social

changes. Following the Odisha super cyclone, Gujarat earthquake and tsunami in Tamil Nadu, land and property titles were given directly to women or to both husband and wife, thereby establishing a policy of equal ownership within all social housing programmes. This changed the status of women in communities where men traditionally held exclusive land tenure and property rights.<sup>159</sup>

COVID-19 has a disproportionate impact on women, girls and particularly women and girls with disabilities for the same reasons discussed above, but also in more ways than other disasters. For instance, a lack of information has hindered women's ability to promote hygiene at home and their burden of childcare has increased due to school closures. Women are overrepresented among both older persons and among the paid and unpaid care workers who look after them.<sup>160</sup> A high proportion of women are working within the health care sector, increasing their risk to the virus. Women working as farmers, entrepreneurs, migrant workers and in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises almost immediately lost their jobs. Women are overrepresented in many other industries which have been profoundly affected by the pandemic, such as the hospitality and tourism industry and the manufacture of garments and textiles.<sup>161</sup> Moreover, women's health is adversely impacted by reallocation of resources and priorities, including sexual and reproductive health services. In Southeast Asia, service delivery points have decreased and there has been a substantial scaling down of sexual and reproductive health services.<sup>162</sup> Assessments in Southeast Asia indicate that women are experiencing increased barriers in accessing health care.<sup>163</sup> Women's psychosocial health was also more affected than men's; they are considered to be at risk to increased gender-based violence and face greater stigma and discrimination. Evidence in the Philippines and Thailand shows that increased unpaid domestic and unpaid care work since COVID-19 is another contributing factor to worsening women's mental and emotional health.<sup>164</sup>

156 IFRC (2018). World Disasters Report 2018. <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/world-disaster-report-2018/>

157 United Nations (2020b). Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on older persons. May 2020. <https://www.uneca.org/info/media/news/population/2020/the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-older-persons/doc.html>

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161 UN Women (2020), p. 6.

162 International Planned Parenthood Federation, East & South East Asia and Oceania Region (2020). COVID-19 Response: Situation in East Asia, South East Asia and the Pacific. <https://www.ippfeseaor.org/sites/ippfeseaor/files/2020-04/RDs%20Update%20-%20Final.pdf>

163 See UN Women (2020). Surveys show that COVID-19 has gendered effects in Asia and the Pacific. 23 April 2020. <https://data.unwomen.org/resources/surveys-show-covid-19-has-gendered-effects-asia-and-pacific>

164 Ibid.



## PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

With 690 million persons with disabilities, the Asia-Pacific region has the world's largest proportion of persons with disabilities.<sup>165</sup> Of these, more than 50 percent are women with disabilities. Research in Vanuatu indicates that persons with disabilities were more than twice as likely to have been injured during Tropical Cyclone Pam in 2015. Stigma and discrimination towards persons with disabilities were also heightened. The pre-existing health conditions of some persons with disabilities can place them at high risk from the impacts of COVID-19. Furthermore, persons with disabilities often have lower incomes and limited access to information because of barriers in communication and inaccessible preventative information. This has placed them at greater risk to COVID-19, both in terms of increased health risks and reduced access to continuous care, education and markets.<sup>166</sup>

Main findings from a survey of nearly 1,000 persons with disabilities in Viet Nam showed that 71 percent are engaged in the informal sector, 41 percent with underlying medical conditions are over 60 years, 59 percent faced pay cuts, 30 percent lost their jobs and 30 percent faced challenges in accessing medical care.<sup>167</sup> The Chairperson of the Indonesian Mental Health Association reported to the International Disability Alliance that the current pandemic-related conditions in care institutions for persons with psychosocial disabilities in Indonesia are worrisome, stressing that while there has been outrage in many countries over COVID-19 infection rates in care homes for older people, there has been no such attention paid to persons with psychosocial disabilities in care institutions. In Indonesia, one of the key issues in such institutions is a simple lack of information and connection to the outside world with no media, television or internet connectivity.<sup>168</sup>

## CHILDREN

Children face increasing psychosocial stress in relation to COVID-19 and school closures. These include fears of loved ones becoming ill, anxiety of falling behind in school and missing high-stakes exams. In addition to negative mental health consequences on learners caused by COVID-19, as the protective factor offered by schools is removed, so too is access to essential services offered to vulnerable learners, such as school meals, which put children at greater risk of malnourishment. Children spending large amounts of unsupervised time online are vulnerable to cyberbullying and sexual grooming, while others are at increased risk of gender-based violence due to home confinement and restricted mobility.

Past experience tells us that there are also heightened sexual and reproductive health vulnerabilities and risks when schools close for more than a few weeks, particularly among the most disadvantaged, and among girls. With more and more families under financial stress and many falling into poverty, child labour increases, as do rates of early and forced marriage and early and unintended pregnancy. There are also increased incidents of unplanned or forced sexual activity among adolescents and young people, presenting risks such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV.<sup>169</sup> During a viral outbreak such as COVID-19, children face an increased risk of being separated from their caregivers who may be quarantined or even die, particularly if their caregiver is a grandparent or an elderly relative. Children with disabilities also face increased risks of being taken out of school, dropping out of school because of the loss of support teachers, and of separation or abandonment. Such separations have lasting negative effects on psychosocial health and potentially leave children at risk of abuse.<sup>170</sup>

The longer learners remain out of school – particularly the most vulnerable – the less likely they are to return to school, hurting their life chances and potential. In terms of learning loss, even where stop-gap measures

165 ESCAP (2017). Disability in Asia and the Pacific: The Facts. [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Disability\\_The\\_Facts\\_2.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Disability_The_Facts_2.pdf)

166 Expert interview with CBM International, 12 June 2020

167 UNDP Viet Nam et al. (2020).

168 International Disability Alliance (2020). COVID-19 and the Forgotten People (Indonesia). 16 April 2020. <http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/covid19-indonesia>

169 Expert inputs from UNESCO, 11 August 2020

170 CARE (2020). Gender Implications of COVID-19 Outbreaks in Development and Humanitarian Settings. <https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/publications/gender-implications-of-covid-19-outbreaks-in-development-and-humanitarian-settings>

such as online or remote learning are put in place, the digital divide – itself gendered – means that the most vulnerable will not reap the benefit. Furthermore, where remote learning does not cater to very young learners or the needs of children with disabilities, or uses a language of instruction that may not be the mother tongue of some learners or their families (e.g. ethnic minority or migrant children), inequalities in learning access impacting these vulnerable learners will continue.

Moreover, only 40 percent of children across the Asia-Pacific region have access to mobile internet. For many, this leads to a significant loss of education, rather than simply a suspension or delay.<sup>171</sup> For some, the disruption leads to missing exams and may even lead to children dropping out of education completely. UNICEF states that the risk of COVID-19 transmission may also mean that over 117 million children in 37 countries miss out on life-saving vaccinations for measles and rubella.<sup>172</sup> For example, in the Philippines, vaccination campaigns were halted due to COVID-19 restrictions and two million children below the age of two might not be protected from vaccine-preventable diseases this year.<sup>173</sup>

## PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Travel restrictions have also disproportionately affected people on the move everywhere, especially migrant workers, and those in irregular situations, internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons. Migrants face three interlocking crises that exacerbate their vulnerabilities – a health crisis, a socio-economic crisis and a protection crisis, with movement restrictions trapping people in dangerous situations or forcing them to return home.<sup>174</sup> In many cases, they are at a particular risk of exclusion from public health, social welfare, economic assistance and recovery

programmes, due to legal or practical barriers, especially for those who are undocumented. Many migrants are required to live in dormitories or other crowded working conditions, which increases risk of rapid disease spread and outbreaks. Those at risk of arrest and immigration detention may also be put into crowded and sometimes unsanitary conditions.<sup>175</sup>

Refugees and IDPs generally live in cramped and densely populated areas and with underlying morbidities are at high risk of infection and health issues once infected; with limited access to reliable information and to basic services including health care and sanitation, they are at high risk of spreading the virus.<sup>176</sup> The 855,000 Rohingya refugees who are currently residing in 34 overcrowded, makeshift camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh are highly vulnerable to COVID-19.<sup>177</sup> Perceptions of the host community can further exacerbate the situation if refugees and IDPs are seen as vectors of disease. At the same time, ongoing conflicts and violence in Myanmar results in additional forced displacements and reduced humanitarian access, which puts more people at risk.<sup>178</sup>

There are over 33 million migrant workers hosted in the Asia-Pacific region,<sup>179</sup> including 10 million in the ASEAN region. In addition, over 18 million migrant workers are located outside of their ASEAN countries of origin,<sup>180</sup> including millions of them in the Arab States. Migrant workers are disproportionately represented in informal sectors or have unstable employment, leaving them without social protection or access to basic services in their country of destination. With countries closing their businesses, millions of workers have lost their jobs or faced pay cuts, and millions are returning home to countries with similar economic downturns created by the crisis. Remittance flows are expected to fall in 2020 by 22.1 percent in South Asia and 13 percent in East Asia and the Pacific<sup>181</sup> with dire consequences on migrant families

171 GSMA (2019). The State of Mobile Internet Connectivity 2019. <https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/GSMA-State-of-Mobile-Internet-Connectivity-Report-2019.pdf>

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177 ACAPS (2020). COVID-19 Rohingya Response. Risk report – 19 March 2020. [https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20200319\\_acaps\\_covid19\\_risk\\_report\\_rohingya\\_response.pdf](https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20200319_acaps_covid19_risk_report_rohingya_response.pdf)

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181 World Bank (2020). World Bank Predicts Sharpest Decline of Remittances in Recent History. 22 April 2020. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/22/world-bank-predicts-sharpest-decline-of-remittances-in-recent-historyw>

and communities in terms of remittance-supported nutrition, health, education and income outcomes. Migrants returning to their home countries – or internally to their home states – risk unintentionally spreading the virus to their communities, and the perception of that risk can lead to local discrimination. Domestic labour movement has also been disrupted, particularly as industries in global supply chains are impacted, beyond mere movement restrictions, and forced to cut jobs and pay for workers.

# ANNEX 2: BIBLIOGRAPHY



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