

# 8

## DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



PROMOTE SUSTAINED, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH, FULL AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK FOR ALL

### I. SUMMARY

Although the aggregate labour market picture for many countries in the Asia–Pacific region was one of positive economic and employment growth in the decades before 2019, the region was still lagging in its capacities to bring all workers closer to conditions of decent work. The firmly rooted disadvantages faced by women in particular start from a young age and continue through the years of labour market experiences. Decent work deficits persist in all countries and have continued to weigh heavily on development trajectories. In the developing economies, workers remain vulnerable to household crises that could push them backwards into poverty, and few countries stood ready with fully functioning social protection systems to stabilize household income levels and ease the impact of economic shocks, such as what was to come in 2020 with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic crisis unfolded in 2020, economies, enterprises and workers in the region have been negatively impacted so that some of the limited gains made in pursuit of decent work and inclusive growth in the previous decade have since been pushed backwards.<sup>1</sup> While many countries of Asia and the Pacific have seen success in limiting transmission and deaths from COVID-19, nearly all have paid a price in terms of increased unemployment, insecurity and poverty. Women, children and migrant workers are among those most likely to suffer as losses cascade through the region. Trends



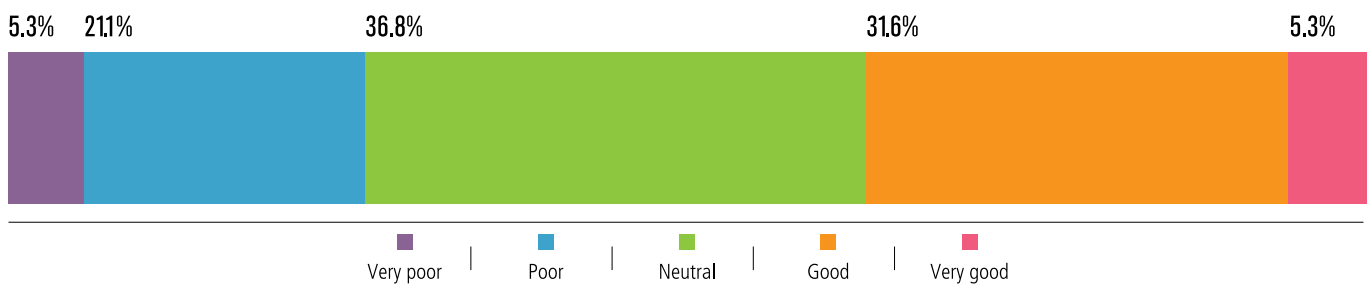
in the future of work that leave women behind are especially being accelerated by the crisis.<sup>2</sup> By adding urgency to the call for acceleration in the design and implementation of durable solutions that will promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, the COVID-19 crisis has the potential to raise the value of social dialogue and to trigger shifts in fiscal expenditure towards the investment areas most needed to reverse negative trends and put SDG 8 on the right path. Among the opportunities is that of fixing key structural obstacles to women's participation in the workforce.

SDG 8 offers a framework for countries to implement a mixture of policies aimed at promoting growth and productivity without harming the environment and generating decent work that respects core labour rights as an effective pathway to inclusive growth. Among the target areas covered are:

- economic policies that pursue higher levels of productivity, including through a focus on high value added and labour-intensive economic sectors, such as services, textiles and garments, manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism and hospitality;
- public policies encouraging formalization and growth of micro, small and medium enterprises through strengthened access to gender-specific financial support services and credit, digital transformation and flexible business models;
- labour policies that aim to reduce unemployment and ensure decent work for all women, men, young people and people with disabilities while ensuring equal pay for work of equal value, as well as the fair redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work;
- ending human trafficking, forced labour and protecting labour rights of migrant workers, women and those in precarious employment through gender-responsive interventions; and
- decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation and promoting resource efficiency, in accordance with sustainable consumption and production strategies and approaches.

## II. CURRENT STATUS

**Figure 1:** Perception of progress made on SDG 8, based on a multi-stakeholder ESCAP survey (19 responses)



Source: ESCAP Online survey 2020



## A. AREAS WHERE GOOD PROGRESS IS MADE

Before the COVID-19 virus began its spread in early 2020 and caused widespread economic turmoil, the region was showing progress in the following elements of SDG 8:

- **By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value (target 8.5):** The Asia-Pacific region continued to showcase the world's lowest regional unemployment rate at 4.4 per cent in 2019, compared to the global rate of 5.4 per cent.<sup>3</sup> Employment rates are among the world's highest, at least for men. Full employment has been achieved in many countries, yet there remains significant work to be done in making jobs "decent".
- **Promote labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers (target 8.8):** Tragedies such as the collapse of the Rana Plaza factory in Bangladesh that killed more than 1,000 garment workers in 2013 opened the eyes of the international community to address non-compliance to occupational safety and health (OSH) standards. To counteract deficiencies, countries in the region have made progress towards the implementation of innovative methods to improve labour inspection and promote safe working conditions. The new labour inspection plan in the Lao People's Democratic Republic emphasizes gender responsiveness including in implementing labour inspections in the garment sectors. Efforts of global stakeholder campaigns such as the Vision Zero Fund and local projects such as the Safeyouth@Work project in Viet Nam raise awareness of OSH hazards and bring positive results in the reduction of workplace injuries throughout the global supply chains as reflected in the positive results in target 8.8.
- **Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all (target 8.10):** Between 2011 and 2017 financial inclusion, considered as people older than 15 who have an account at a bank or another type of financial institution, improved in most countries of the region, especially among poor households. In East Asia and the Pacific (excluding high-income countries), the number of adults with an account increased from 55 per cent in 2011 to 71 per cent in 2017. In South Asia, the number of adults with an account increased even faster, from 32 per cent in 2011 to 70 per cent in 2017.<sup>4</sup>

## B. AREAS REQUIRING SPECIFIC ATTENTION AND ASSOCIATED KEY CHALLENGES

The COVID-19 crisis is having a devastating impact on millions of workers and enterprises in Asia and the Pacific, which poses a major risk to the achievement of the SDGs in the region, in particular SDG 8. The crisis is not only resulting in job losses, but also in reduced working hours and associated wage losses. The final impact on unemployment (target 8.5.2) still remains to be seen: While some workers have become unemployed as a result of the crisis, many more have moved into inactivity or have managed to remain in employment, thanks in part to government policies like employment subsidies that have helped enterprises retain employees albeit on reduced hours and reduced wages.<sup>5</sup> Among the increased inactive are many young people who give up on job search attempts during the difficult economic period, thus driving up the number of youth neither in employment nor education or training (NEET) (target 8.6.1). Given the COVID-19-linked setbacks, countries will need to focus on a recovery that aims for a fair, inclusive and secure future of work that aligns to the vision of the SDG 8, with particular emphasis on the following areas:

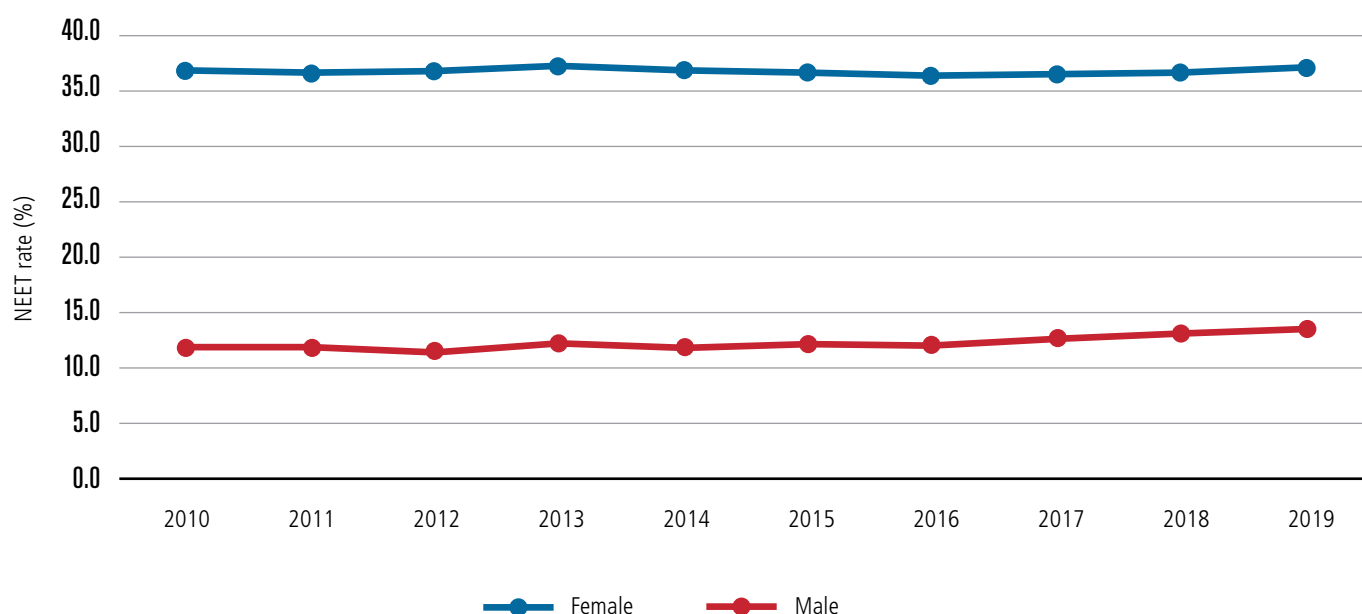
- **Support medium to longer-term economic recovery of jobs and incomes with demand-led employment strategies and supporting macroeconomic measures.** Until the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the region as a whole continued to maintain annual average growth rates (target 8.1: Sustain



per capita economic growth) that were higher than the global average. Yet already in 2019, the pace of economic growth had slowed in most countries from the previous year. The region's output growth was estimated at 4.3 per cent in 2019, down from 5.3 per cent in 2018, with the decline led primarily by large countries like China, India and Russia Federation.<sup>6</sup> The COVID-19 crisis has caused a severe contraction in economic growth throughout the region resulting in the first negative economic growth rate seen for decades and a drop of nearly 7 percentage points from the growth rate of 2019.<sup>7</sup> The downturn is considerably stronger than during the global financial crisis in 2008–09, when growth remained positive and fell 4 percentage points from the start of the crisis. Supporting economic recovery will require a pro-employment recovery strategy that includes promoting employment creation in strategic sectors; restoring a conducive business environment and reinvigorating productivity growth; diversifying the economy and encouraging structural transformation; and making best use of technological advances.<sup>8</sup>

- **Substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training (target 8.6):** The situation for young people with regard to their shares not in employment, education or training (NEET) has not shown the substantial improvement aimed for under target 8.6. Rather, NEET rates for both young men and women have increased slightly at the regional level between 2010 and 2019 (figure). At the country level, the NEET rate decreased by 2–4 percentage points in Armenia, Myanmar, Philippines and Sri Lanka between 2017 and 2019. On the other hand, the rates increased in many other countries (Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Samoa and Tonga). In some Pacific Island and South Asian countries, youth NEET rates remained higher than 30 per cent, largely due to the exclusion of young women from education and labour market opportunities. Youth disengagement is likely to increase as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Evidence from labour force surveys already shows that young people have been disproportionately affected by unemployment and working-hour losses compared to adults during the crisis.<sup>9</sup> To prevent a further worsening in NEET rates, governments should consider balancing the inclusion of youth in wider labour market and economic recovery measures, with youth-targeted interventions to maximize effective allocation of resources.

**Figure 2:** Share of youth population (15-24) neither in employment, education or training, Asia and Pacific region



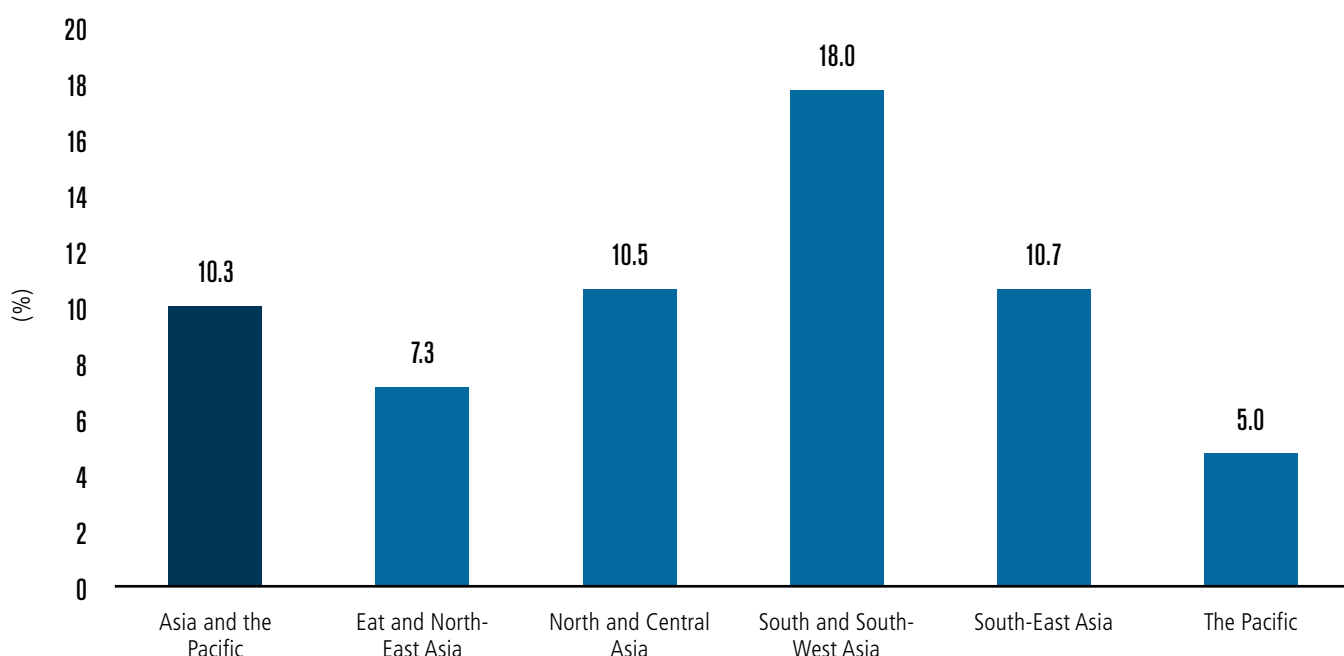
Source: ILOSTAT database, accessible at [www.ilo.org/ilostat](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat)

Note: Regional grouping does not include countries of central Asia



- **Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services (target 8.3).** The COVID-19 crisis has drawn attention to the particular vulnerabilities of workers in the informal sector. While harshly affected by working hour losses, many informal workers remained outside the realm of government assistance programmes and were thus especially exposed to income losses and increased poverty. For the region as a whole, labour income declined by 10.3 per cent in the first three quarters of 2020, according to ILO estimates (figure). Some countries in the region were able to adapt existing social assistance programmes to informal workers and firms.<sup>10</sup> Maintaining the support for informal workers and enterprises in the longer term is an issue of heightened importance in the region, where still two in three workers remain in informal employment. On top of these trends, research has confirmed the severe impact of the COVID-19 crisis on SMEs and the particular vulnerability of women-owned enterprises. In UN Women’s May 2020 survey of female entrepreneurs in Asia and Europe, 90 per cent said their business was negatively affected by COVID-19 and 50 per cent reported spending less time on business activities due to increased caregiving responsibilities.<sup>11</sup> Nearly all the SME leaders interviewed in the report said they were concerned about whether they could get funding for future development. Several female entrepreneurs said they had difficulties getting funding even in normal circumstances. Such accounts are in line with research that women-owned SMEs face gender-specific barriers to success,<sup>12</sup> and since COVID-19 is hitting SMEs particularly hard, female entrepreneurs will face more difficulties raising funds post-pandemic.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 3:** Share of labour income lost due to working-hour losses during the first three quarters of 2020 (before income support measures), relative to same period 2019



Source: ILO estimates

Note: ESCAP regional groupings applied



## C. INTEGRATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY CONSIDERATIONS

COVID-19 has exacerbated the challenges that women habitually face and is thus expected to impact negatively progress towards target 8.5 (Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value) as well as gender outcomes in other SDG 8 targets. Gender pay gaps, unequal distribution of unpaid care work, discrimination in access to decent jobs, violence and harassment – none of these are new issues, but the disproportionate impacts on women in the current crisis raise the level of urgency to tackle the barriers that result in such unequal outcomes. On top of this, trends in the future of work, such as automation and digitalization, pose a disproportionate threat to jobs done by women as women's time constraints due to household duties, lack of technological education, lack of access to devices, and traumatizing cyber harassment can prevent them from becoming as proficient in ICT skills as men.<sup>14</sup> Unless swift and large-scale actions are taken to upskill women in ICT and create pathways for integration into technology sectors, women will be left behind. Delivering on a transformative agenda for gender equality requires the implementation of a package of integrated, inclusive and transformative policies and measures, informed by the relevant international labour standards.

SDG 8 holds the global promise of people-centred and green economic development. It is closely linked to economic, social and cultural rights, in particular the right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work, the prohibition of slavery, forced labour, and trafficking of persons, equal rights of women in relation to employment, the prohibition of child labour and equal labour rights of migrant workers, which States have committed to under international human rights law. Yet progress toward human-rights issues such as labour rights under target 8.8 (Promote labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers) can be hampered by a lack of governance, weak institutions and conflicting political commitments. Several countries in the region – those with dialogue structures or initiatives in place – have successfully used social dialogue processes to address not only labour policy issues but also to shape the responses to the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>15</sup> Consensus-based policies are needed not only for economic recovery but also for labour market governance based on international labour standards to counteract conflicts that can affect productivity and become hurdles in the recovery process.

To make progress in this direction, many countries in the region will benefit from strengthening their bipartite workplace consultations and cooperation mechanisms and collective bargaining for seeking and implementing together solutions to the specific challenges facing enterprises and workers, including migrant workers. Among the biggest challenges facing social dialogue is the deficit in respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, in particular for workers' rights to organize. Trade union density in the region remains low. Workers' rights to organize is hampered by external factors including restrictive legislation, widespread informal employment and anti-union attitudes among employers and even governments. Additionally, in order to promote inclusive economic recovery from the pandemic, there is a need to ensure that all migrant workers, women, men, and persons of diverse gender identities are included in national and local crisis response plans to the full protection of the labour law, with access to the same treatments as nationals across all sectors of work, in line with international standards.<sup>16</sup>

## III. PROMISING INNOVATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

- While progress in meeting target 8.5 on lowering gender pay gaps is slow at best, the topic is gaining greater prominence on national political agendas through the campaigns and action of the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC), launched in 2018. EPIC is a global initiative driven by stakeholders committed to reduce the gender pay gap and make equal pay for work of equal value a reality across all countries and sectors. Led by the ILO, UN Women and OECD, the Coalition engages with governments, employers, workers and their organizations, the private sector, civil society and academia to take concrete steps to accelerate the closing of the gender pay gap.



- Numerous countries in the Asia-Pacific region are embedding sustainable consumption and production (SCP) policies in national development plans or designing dedicated plans for this purpose, thus offering hope for progress on target 8.4. Positive examples include the Philippines National Development Plan 2017-2022, which highlights the need to develop and implement SCP policies and initiatives; the Sustainable Singapore Blueprint, which aims to encourage a low carbon lifestyle; Viet Nam's Green Growth Action Plan, 2014-2020, and the Eleventh Malaysia Plan, 2016-2020, with its dedicated chapter on re-engineering economic growth for greater prosperity. One innovation in operationalizing target 8.4 is the adoption of environmental taxes in Viet Nam. Informal workers can also promote greater resource efficiency and the transition to a circular economy related to target 8.4. Apart from Governments, businesses can also promote more sustainable consumer products and behaviours for example by giving product trials for consumers to overcome concerns about the quality of sustainable goods.<sup>17</sup>
- To overcome barriers to progress towards target 8.3, informal workers need to be organized and their organizations need to be legally recognized and officially represented in collective bargaining, policy-making and rule-setting processes. They need to be able to participate in the development of appropriate policies, laws and regulations that recognize, validate and integrate their work and livelihoods. In this regard, WIEGO has demonstrated success in working with membership-based organizations (MBOs) of informal workers, including domestic workers and street vendors, to develop local capacity to access resources and engage in collective bargaining to protect their interests and improve income security among members.
- Contributing to progress in achieving targets 8.3 and 8.4, the interlinked issues of innovation, entrepreneurial activity and resource efficiency have seen recent advances with UN Women's new flagship business incubator programme, The Industry Disruptor, which helps entrepreneurs of all genders and female-benefitting enterprises in co-creating solutions for a more sustainable fashion industry. Active in India and Europe, the campaign has fostered exchange and collaboration of more than 100 entrepreneurs, founders, mentors, investors and industry partners.<sup>18</sup> Promoting sustainability in the fashion industry must necessarily adopt an environmental lens in an industry responsible for 10 per cent of annual global carbon emissions, more than all international flights and maritime shipping combined.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, about 75 million people work directly in the fashion and textiles industry, of which about 80 per cent are women; many are subject to exploitation and verbal and physical abuse, and often working in unsafe conditions, with very little pay.<sup>20</sup> Run in collaboration with The DO School, H&M, Tchibo and Governments, the Industry Disruptor is part of a wider initiative of WeEmpowerAsia, a UN Women programme funded by and in partnership with the European Union. The programme aims to catalyze action for gender equality and women's full and equal participation in the economy while creating a gender-inclusive trade ecosystem between Asia and Europe.<sup>21</sup>
- Small and medium-sized enterprises companies in Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Viet Nam, have built more resilient value chains by adding sustainability at the core of their business strategy in the areas of tea trading, dairy production, adhesives production among others. Actions that should impact favourably on progress towards target 8.4 in these countries were undertaken with the Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production Network to promote sustainability in business operations.<sup>22</sup>
- Developing employability and entrepreneurial skills for youth through volunteering offers promise for further employment creation for young people and progress towards target 8.6. Several pilot volunteering programmes in Cambodia led to the creation in 2019 of the first national Volunteer for My Community (VMC) programme, spearheaded by Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of Cambodia with substantive technical assistance from UN Volunteers.<sup>23</sup> Youth volunteerism has become part of the country's 2019-2023 Education Strategic Plan, National Employment Policy 2015-2025 and National Policy on Youth Development. The VMC programme reached close to



1,000 young people and benefitted 5,800 persons in the community. The online survey with 137 youth volunteers indicated that already 52 (38 per cent) of young volunteers were employed at the end of the project period.

- The importance of the private sector to drive inclusive COVID-19 recovery and contribute to progress on target 8.5 has been highlighted through uptake and implementation of UN Women and UN Global Compacts Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), a set of principles guiding companies to become more gender-inclusive throughout their value chains. Despite the pandemic's devastating impacts on business in the region, commitment to the WEPs gained significant traction, with the number of signatories in the Asia-Pacific increasing from 580 in 2019 to nearly 1,000 in 2020. Driving commitment to the WEPs, UN Women has also been accelerating implementation and action through initiatives such as the 'WEPs Activator' training program,<sup>24</sup> currently being piloted with a cohort of European companies with supply chains in the Asia-Pacific, as well as the UN Women Asia-Pacific WEPs Awards,<sup>25</sup> the first-ever regional awards initiative recognizing exemplary practice for gender equality aligned to the Women's Empowerment Principles. Showcasing best practice examples across six categories, including COVID-19 Action for gender equality, the WEPs Awards received more than 400 applications from 250 companies in 17 countries in the region.
- With regard to target 8.7, continued progress has been made with the ratification of fundamental ILO Conventions. Universal ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) was achieved in 2020 when ratifications came through in the last remaining Asia-Pacific countries. Alliance 8.7, the global partnership on SDG target 8.7, is increasingly active in the region with the Pathfinder Countries – Fiji, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam – taking on leadership roles both regionally and globally. With the COVID-19 pandemic posing a real risk of reversing decades of progress in the elimination of child labour, the 2021 UN Year on the Elimination of Child Labour is an opportune moment to continue efforts on the elimination of child labour in the region and to highlight some of the impacts of the pandemic on children.

## IV. PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

The outcomes of the round table on Sustainable Development Goal 8 were informed by the relevant goal profile and focused attention on the following action areas for Asia and the Pacific.

1. **Be inclusive in setting and strengthening the institutional mechanisms for decent work-led sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth.** Given its breadth, making progress on Goal 8 necessitates the integrated planning of a broad array of actors including ministries of economy, environment and labour, local governments, trade unions, employers' organizations, and the private sector, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and civil society. A particular emphasis should be made to ensure that also the voices of marginalized groups are included in the decision-making process. Gender-responsive economic stimulus packages and other economic support should target not only big business but also be channeled to self-employed workers and affected employees, including in the informal sector, and to small and medium enterprises who underpin the economy in Asia and the Pacific. Specific attention should be aimed at sectors such as manufacturing, tourism, and hospitality, which have been particularly vulnerable to the economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis.
2. **Strengthen labour market institutions for effective and inclusive labour market governance.** Key labour market institutions include legislation and regulations on employment and social protection, freedom of association, anti-discrimination, occupational safety and health, unacceptable forms of work, minimum wages, and collective bargaining. These labour market institutions, when properly





enforced, are critical to supporting recovery from the current COVID-19 crisis and serve as the basis for the achievement of Goal 8 and also interlinked Goals such as the eradication of poverty (Goal 1), achieving gender equality (Goal 5), reducing inequalities (Goal 10), climate action (Goal 13) and promoting just institutions (Goal 16). Special consideration is needed to extend the reach of labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for vulnerable groups, such as women, youth, persons with disabilities, home-based workers, and migrant workers. Governments in countries of destination and countries of origin as well as employers and hiring agencies should provide all migrant populations, irrespective of their migration status, the full protection of their human rights during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond, without prejudice and discrimination and in compliance with international law and relevant UN and International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions. Particular focus is warranted on the promotion and ratification of: Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97), Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143), and Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). Also related to strengthening institutions is the call to increase the capacity of national statistics offices to ensure regular collection of regular labour force surveys, or other household surveys needed to monitor decent work and inclusive growth, with adequate disaggregation for monitoring Sustainable Development Goal indicators as applicable to all target groups.

3. **Accelerate occupational safety and health as a fundamental labour right.** The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the importance of proactive occupational safety and health preventive measures. Upgraded occupational safety and health measures and renewed commitment for protecting all workers, including informal workers, migrant workers, and frontline health care providers, from future pandemic and emerging occupational safety and health hazards and risks are required. Governments, workers' and employers' organizations and civil society organizations must work together to ensure the activation of prevention and mitigation strategies in outbreak areas with inadequate resources, such as in informal settlements of migrant populations. Collaborative interventions should include the provision of essential emergency needs such as food, medical treatment, and water sanitation and hygiene, including sanitary products as well as consideration for the provision of flexible working arrangements, paid leave, and housing.
4. **Step up investments in human capital to provide all people the opportunities to realize their full potential throughout the lifecycle.** While education for all, lifelong learning and building technical and core skills are themes featured under Goal 4, they also serve as key input to human development as well as the decent work and economic growth outcomes of a country. The pandemic has elevated the importance of inclusive reskilling, especially for workers in impacted sectors like tourism and manufacturing who could be trained for future growth sectors. What is more, the crisis has laid bare the situation of youth not in employment, education, or training as well as the persistent inequality in education and training systems throughout the region linked to the digital divide. For this reason, and in the context of rapid technological advances, progress in Goal 8 will necessitate increasing investments in people's capabilities and strengthening formal and non-formal education and training capacities with particular attention to boosting capabilities within vulnerable populations including women. This can include a universal entitlement to lifelong learning that enables people to acquire market-relevant skills and to reskill and upskill, while also increasing investment in the institutions, policies, and strategies for delivery of labour market programmes and employment services that will support people to navigate the increasing number of labour market transitions over the course of their lives.<sup>26</sup>
5. **Progressive policy reforms through social dialogue are required to promote a "just transition" towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all.** With economic prosperity and social progress in the region threatened by environmental degradation and climate change, there is an urgency to act on climate change. The transition to a low greenhouse gas economy is expected to lead to a net creation of jobs, including green jobs. Substantial progress can be made to reduce



the global material footprint through greater resource efficiency in the key sectors of agriculture, food, construction, and infrastructure. Reversing the increased rate of material extraction requires an adoption of a new economic model that decouples economic growth from environmental degradation. To achieve a positive impact at the required scale, decoupling needs to be at the heart of national economic planning. Green and inclusive policies should therefore be integral to COVID-19 socio-economic recovery plans and stimulus packages. This may require technical, legal, and financial assistance and the implementation of public industrial policies in support of the transition to low greenhouse gas economies, with increased levels of research, innovation, and enhanced social, environmental, and economic sustainability. As more countries are encouraged to adopt broad and comprehensive policy frameworks on the green economy, attention will need to focus on implementation especially in view of ensuring that no one is left behind in the transition process.

6. **Design coherent and integrated strategies to ensure the dignity of work for all, including for informal workers and those in precarious employment.** Certain countries in the region have initiated strategies to formalize the informal economy in line with the ILO Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2015. The guidelines of R.204 highlight the formulation of appropriate macroeconomic and skills policies; simplified registration procedures; extended scope of, and compliance with, labour laws; improved access to credit; and offering incentives, such as tax incentives, and extending social protection coverage to all categories of workers, including migrant and domestic workers. Technological advances and the growing digital economy demand the further extension of digital infrastructure, social protection, and regulation of new forms of work that have the potential to erode the quality of jobs for an increasing number of workers. More immediately, as part of their short- and longer-term COVID-19 recovery, companies must include gender-sensitive measures to ensure that women are not left behind in the workplace and across their entire value chains at a challenging time. The Women's Empowerment Principles, established by UN Women and the UN Global Compact since 2010, provide guidance and tools for companies that are committed to this agenda.
7. **Develop and implement frameworks to recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid and underpaid care work, advance equal pay and enhance public investment in care infrastructure.** There is an opportunity to professionalize and create secure and decent work opportunities in the care economy in the region. This can be accomplished by creating women led/owned enterprises in care work and supporting the transition of care workers from informal to the formal economy through training, education, and certification. To remove barriers that prevent women's labour force participation and free more women up to work for pay requires: promoting gender-just skills training; expanding affordable childcare; ensuring safe public spaces, transport and workplace facilities; sharing unpaid work more equally between men and women through, for instance, policies promoting parental leave and flexible working; deploying digital technologies; and, most importantly, creating incentives to shift social norms that perpetuate women and girl's roles as family caregivers towards shared responsibilities between women and men.<sup>27</sup> Also linked to Goal 8 and the aim for inclusive growth is the call for accelerated action to put in place and enforce equal pay with gender based anti-discrimination legislation, including pay transparency measures. Particular focus is warranted on the promotion and ratification of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and the Violence and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 (No. 206).



## ANNEX

The official indicator framework for SDG 8 proposes 17 indicators for and 12 targets. Data sources for SDG 8 include labour force surveys or other household surveys and administrative records. For all SDG 8 indicators, even for those with fair coverage across the countries, data is rarely available for all countries, for all years of interest, and are also frequently missing the degree of data disaggregation expected. To access available data to date, refer to the Asia-Pacific SDG Partnership Data Portal at [data.unescap.org/sdg](http://data.unescap.org/sdg).

Target	Indicator	Status of indicator (Tier)	Latest data available	Comments (Proxies)
<b>8.1</b> Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries	<b>8.1.1</b> Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita	I	2019	Series include estimations based on modeling.
<b>8.2</b> Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors	<b>8.2.1</b> Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person	I	2019	Series include estimations based on modeling.
<b>8.3</b> Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services	<b>8.3.1</b> Proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment, by sex	II	2019	Data availability is less than 50 per cent of countries; a viable proxy is the vulnerable employment rate (share of employed persons categorized as own-account workers plus contributing family workers).
<b>8.4</b> Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, with developed countries taking the lead	<b>8.4.1</b> Material footprint, material footprint per capita, and material footprint per GDP	II	2017	Series include estimations based on modeling.
	<b>8.4.2</b> Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP	I	2017	Series include estimations based on modeling.



<b>8.5</b> By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value	<b>8.5.1</b> Average hourly earnings of female and male employees, by occupation, age and persons with disabilities	II	2019	Data availability is less than 50 per cent of countries.
	<b>8.5.2</b> Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities	I	2019	
<b>8.6</b> By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training	<b>8.6.1</b> Proportion of youth (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training	I	2019	
<b>8.7</b> Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms	<b>8.7.1</b> Proportion and number of children aged 5–17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age	II		Data availability is less than 50 per cent of countries.
<b>8.8</b> Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment	<b>8.8.1</b> Frequency rates of fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries, by sex and migrant status	II	2019	
	<b>8.8.2</b> Level of national compliance with labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) based on International Labour Organization (ILO) textual sources and national legislation, by sex and migrant status	II	2017	Series include estimations based on modeling.
<b>8.9</b> By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products	<b>8.9.1</b> Tourism direct GDP as a proportion of total GDP and in growth rate	II	2019	Data availability is less than 50 per cent of countries.
	<b>8.9.2</b> Proportion of jobs in sustainable tourism industries out of total tourism jobs	III		Indicator deleted in 2020 review of the UN Statistics Commission

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<b>8.10</b> Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all	<b>8.10.1</b> (a) Number of commercial bank branches per 100,000 adults and (b) number of automated teller machines (ATMs) per 100,000 adults	I	2019	
	<b>8.10.2</b> Proportion of adults (15 years and older) with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider	I	2017	
<b>8.a</b> Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries	<b>8.a.1</b> Aid for Trade commitments and disbursements	I	2019	
<b>8.b</b> By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization	<b>8.b.1</b> Existence of a developed and operationalized national strategy for youth employment, as a distinct strategy or as part of a national employment strategy	II	2017	



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

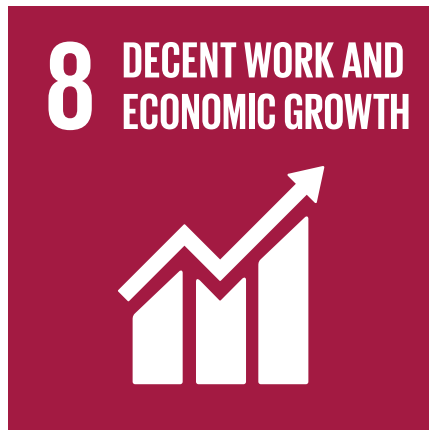
The profile for SDG 8 was developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO), Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, with input from the WeEmpowerAsia Regional Programme of UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Environment Programme and UN Volunteers.

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