TECHNICAL COOPERATION HIGHLIGHTS

2022-2023

ESCAP
Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific

*The shaded areas of the map indicate ESCAP members and associate members.**

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is the most inclusive intergovernmental platform in the Asia-Pacific region. The Commission promotes cooperation among its 53 member States and 9 associate members in pursuit of solutions to sustainable development challenges. ESCAP is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations.

The ESCAP secretariat supports inclusive, resilient and sustainable development in the region by generating action-oriented knowledge, and by providing technical assistance and capacity-building services in support of national development objectives, regional agreements and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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TECHNICAL COOPERATION HIGHLIGHTS

2022-2023

ESCAP / TR / 10

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FOREWORD

Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana

Under-Secretary-General of United Nations
and Executive Secretary of ESCAP

2030 is around the corner, and our promise to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals still stands.

ESCAP continues to do its part in monitoring progress and supporting countries to deliver on our collective commitments for a sustainable, inclusive and resilient region.

Every push to move the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ahead goes a long way in our region, which is home to nearly two thirds of the world's population.

Yet the path forward is not without challenges, barriers and even detours.

Staying the course for implementing this interconnected and multilateral agenda requires hard work and above all, strong partnerships.

The 2022-2023 edition of the Technical Cooperation Highlights tells the story of inspiring and enduring partnerships that bring together our comparative advantages and that scale up good practices to leave no one behind, to make economic growth inclusive, to advance climate action and to reduce disaster risks.

This new edition of the Technical Cooperation Highlights reflects the spirit of collaboration as we hear directly from our partners about why we have been successful in keeping our collective promise to the region.

ESCAP will continue to keep an eye on data, capacity and resource gaps to bridge them for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Just as important, ESCAP's achievements will continue to inspire hope and expand the sustainable development aspirations of the region for a better future.

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIR CAS	Aerospace Information Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences Chinese Academy of Sciences
AIT	Asian Institute of Technology
APDIM	Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BoP	Base of the economic pyramid
CADIS	Central Asian Drought Information System
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
CED	ESCAP Committee on Environment and Development
CGIF	Credit Guarantee and Investment Facility
CRVS	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
CSAM	Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DA	Development Account
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FEMM	Forum Economic Ministers Meeting
FSR	Florence School of Regulation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Gender Marker
GGGI	Global Green Growth Institute
GHG	Greenhouse gases
GISTDA	Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency of Thailand
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit/ German agency for international cooperation
IB	Inclusive Business
iBAN	Inclusive Business Network
ITC	International Trade Centre
IOM	International Organization for Migration

KMI	Korea Maritime Institute
LDC	Least developed country
LNOB	Leave no one behind
MCO	Multi-country Office
MECS	Modern Energy Cooking Services
MSME	micro, small and medium enterprise
NCAP	National Cooling Action Plan
NCBM	National Council for the Blind, Malaysia
NEASPEC	North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation
NEXSTEP	National Expert SDG Tool for Energy Planning
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NHMS	National Hydrological and Meteorological Services
NSO	National Statistical Office
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPD	Organization of persons with disabilities
PAPP	Parental Assistance Payment Programme
PICs	Pacific Island Countries
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PRED	Pacific Roadmap for Economic Development
RAF	Regional Action Framework
RB	Regular Budget
RC	UN Resident Coordinator
RCO	UN Resident Coordinator Office
ReCs	United Nations Regional Commissions
RESAP	Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development
RIMES	Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia
RPTC	Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation
SEforALL	Sustainable Energy for All
SERC	Securities and Exchange Regulator of Cambodia
SIDS	small island developing States
SME	small and medium-sized enterprise
UCLG-ASPAC	United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund

UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlement Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSD/DESA	United Nations Statistics Division/Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNTF Survey	UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation
VLR	Voluntary Local Review
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorogical Organization
XB	Extrabudgetary

ABBREVIATIONS

CO_2	carbon dioxide
COP26	26th United Nations Climate Change Conference
G20	Group of Twenty countries and the European Union

ESCAP AT A GLANCE

53 Member States

9 associate members

4.7 billion people

5 Subregional Offices

5 Regional Institutions

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is the regional arm of the United Nations, playing a unique role as the most inclusive intergovernmental forum for countries and territories of Asia and the Pacific.

ESCAP was established in 1947, and forms the largest of the United Nations' regional commissions (in terms of population served). ESCAP's mandate, as broadly defined in its terms of reference, is to promote economic and social development among countries of Asia and the Pacific.

The Asia-Pacific region faces a rising tide of development challenges in the post-pandemic period. Economic slowdown, unprecedented inflation and uncertainty brought about by geopolitical tensions have set back past development gains. These have also been worsened by a food and fuel price crisis, further compounded by the widespread, rapid and intensifying impacts of climate change.

This fast-evolving development landscape is drastically changing narratives and calling for policy adaptation required to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.ESCAP's distinctive position, promoting multidisciplinary cooperation among countries in the Asia-Pacific region to achieve inclusive and sustainable development, has allowed it to pivot easily to respond to crises that are multi-faceted and transboundary in nature.

HOW WE WORK

From its headquarters in **Bangkok**, ESCAP provides a forum for its member States that promotes regional cooperation and collective action, assisting countries in building and sustaining shared economic growth and social equity. ESCAP disseminates good development practices, facilitates knowledge-sharing and provides technical assistance to member States in the implementation of policy recommendations. The norm setting and policy work of ESCAP ultimately affects people's lives in a positive way by assisting countries to shape and implement a more balanced and inclusive development agenda for the region.

Subregional Offices

1. **South and South-West Asia**, New Delhi
2. **North and Central Asia**, Almaty
3. **South-East Asia**, Bangkok
4. **East and North-East Asia**, Incheon
5. **Pacific**, Suva

Regional Institutions

1. **Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific**, Chiba
2. **Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development**, Incheon
3. **Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization**, Beijing
4. **Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology**, New Delhi
5. **Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management**, Tehran

ESCAP Added Value

ESCAP supports its member States to achieve development results such as:

Effective policies and strategies for integrating the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, mindful of the diversity and different levels of development between countries.

Measuring progress in achieving the SDGs and other internationally agreed development goals.

A stronger, more representative and coherent regional voice to influence internationally agreed development commitments at the global level.

Enhanced capacities to engage in regional cooperation and economic integration mechanisms.

ESCAP Core Functions

● On critical and emerging issues

01 Research and Analysis

02 Consensus-building

03 Technical Cooperation

● Through intergovernmental processes to deliberate and build regional consensus on key development priorities and global norms

● Based on decisions made by member States to support implementation and service capacity development requirements
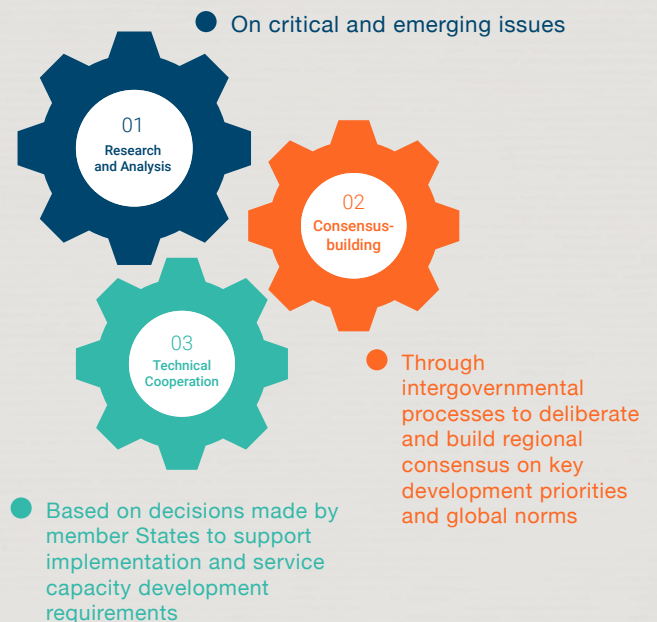
GLOBAL

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

contains 17 goals and 169 targets for protecting the planet, ensuring human prosperity, and fostering peace, to be achieved through revitalizing global partnerships.

REGIONAL

ESCAP
Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific

Regional Road Map for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific was developed by ESCAP member States for Asia and the Pacific and identifies 11 priority areas of regional cooperation for implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

ESCAP AREAS OF WORK

Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development

Trade, Investment & Innovation

Transport

Environment and Development

Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction

Social Development

Statistics

Energy

HOW WE ENGAGE IN TECHNICAL COOPERATION

NORMATIVE & ANALYTICAL WORK

- Mandates
- Intergovernmental Agreements
- Regional Frameworks
- Research & Analysis

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

- Policy Advice
- Training
- Advisory Services
- Policy Dialogue
- Knowledge Networking
- Pilot Projects

REGIONAL IMPACT

NATIONAL IMPACT

Based on the mandates given by member States, its intergovernmental and analytical work, ESCAP designs capacity development interventions. The scope of these interventions can be regional, subregional or at the country level.

At the national level, ESCAP supports member States **under seven thematic areas**, that are linked with the implementation of the global and regional frameworks. ESCAP provides targeted assistance through three complementary modes of support – namely **products and services**, **technical expertise**, and **online platforms and databases** – to help accelerate the delivery of the 2030 Agenda especially for countries in special situations.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Power of partnerships

With its dedicated Goal 17, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the crucial role of partnerships in achieving ambitious global targets, integral for mobilizing and sharing knowledge, expertise, technology, and financial resources, and bringing together national governments, the international community, civil society, the private sector, and other actors. As 2023 marked the mid-point of the 2030 Agenda, it provided an opportune moment to assess progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. While certain goals have seen advancements, the overall pace has been moderate, underlining the critical need to expedite efforts. The success stories presented in this edition of the Technical Cooperation Highlights underscore the significance of collaborative partnerships in navigating the complexities of sustainable development, emphasizing the central role partnerships play in fostering innovation, facilitating knowledge exchange, and promoting inclusive decision-making. The following is an outline of ESCAP's approach to partnerships, offering an overview of its rich collaborations as well as information on the main contributors to and beneficiaries of ESCAP capacity development programmes in 2022-2023.
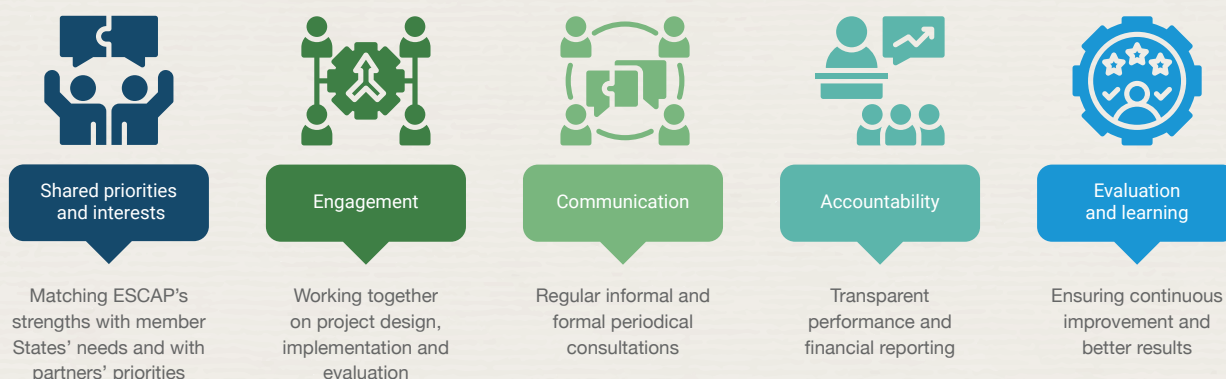
ESCAP as a partner

As part of the UN system, ESCAP provides a neutral and impartial platform and leverages its network and collaborations with other UN agencies, programmes, and funds.

COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES	
UN SYSTEM	ESCAP is the regional arm of the UN development system in Asia and the Pacific. ESCAP supports UN collaboration at the regional level through its role in the Regional Collaborative Platform for Asia and the Pacific in cooperation with the resident coordinators and the UN country teams.
REGIONAL FOCUS	ESCAP has over 75 years of accumulated regional knowledge and expertise. ESCAP tackles unique development challenges, offering tailored solutions for regional and transboundary issues.
INCLUSIVE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PLATFORM	ESCAP, a member State-driven organization, fosters consensus among its 53 members and 9 associate members. ESCAP uses its convening power to drive collaborative dialogue and initiatives to develop and promote regional policy and regulatory frameworks for inclusive sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.
MULTIDISCIPLINARY TECHNICAL AND POLICY EXPERTISE	ESCAP provides multidisciplinary technical and policy expertise to address diverse regional challenges. ESCAP offers tailored programmes that support its member States in finding holistic solutions to complex development challenges.
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPACT THROUGH DIVERSE PARTNERSHIPS	ESCAP is an effective development partner, collaborating with diverse stakeholders to achieve shared development goals through tailored partnership modalities. Through its South-South cooperation initiatives, ESCAP promotes innovative approaches to address challenges and identifies effective solutions that can be scaled up and replicated across the region.

ESCAP's approach to partnerships

ESCAP's approach to partnerships is based on:

Shared priorities and interests	Engagement	Communication	Accountability	Evaluation and learning
Matching ESCAP's strengths with member States' needs and with partners' priorities	Working together on project design, implementation and evaluation	Regular informal and formal periodical consultations	Transparent performance and financial reporting	Ensuring continuous improvement and better results

Partnership landscape at ESCAP

In 2022-2023, ESCAP continued to enhance and to expand partnerships with a focus on accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals addressing thematic issues across its eight programmatic areas of work.

Funding sources

ESCAP provides support to member States through targeted technical assistance and capacity-building activities, funded through two main sources:

60

TOTAL NUMBER OF DONORS IN 2022-2023

Regular budget (RB)

RB resources approved by the General Assembly for the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC) and for the Development Account (DA).

Extrabudgetary funds (XB)

XB received in the form of financial contributions from member States, bilateral donors, other UN agencies, international and regional organizations, regional development banks, foundations, civil society organizations and the private sector.

Top 10 Donors 2022-2023 (US$)

Donor	Amount
Republic of Korea	8,083,538
China	6,086,996
Japan	3,703,303
Bloomberg Family Foundation Inc.	2,722,772
India	1,905,562
Canada	1,657,799
Russian Federation	1,200,000
United Nations Road Safety Fund	993,500
Germany	838,750
Energy Foundation China	792,000
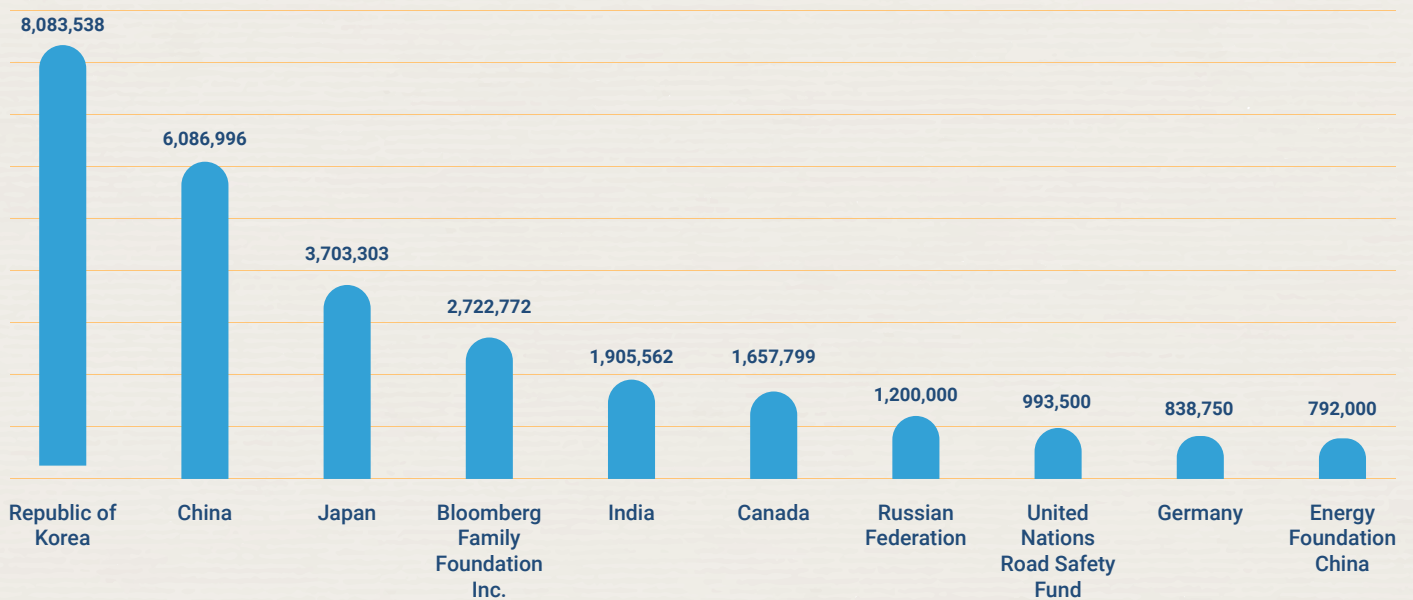
1. The contribution of US$1.2 million from the Government of the Russian Federation for 2023 was received in January 2024.
2. The contribution of 850,000,000,000 Iranian rials was received from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2023. The United States dollar equivalent is yet to be determined.

2022-2023 Funding:

US$32,834,938

XB **69%**
RPTC **21%**
DA **10%**

% Expenditure by Fund Type 2022-2023

Type of Partners

Governments
43

Private Sector and Foundations
6

NGOs & CSOs
20

Multilateral Partners*
35

OUR PARTNERS

Academia
21

United Nations
21
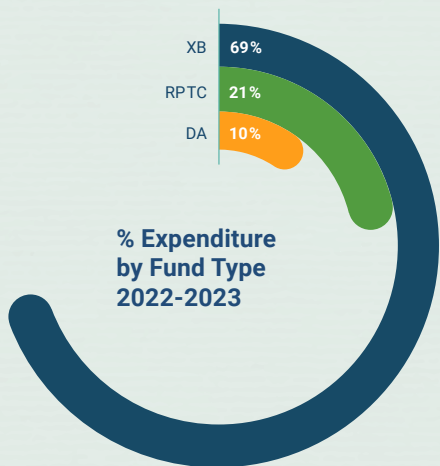
*Multilateral partners are regional and subregional organizations, separate from the UN system, that work towards building regional consensus on shared priorities, addressing common problems and sharing development knowledge and good practices across Asia and the Pacific.

Partnership Arrangements

To ensure it is fit for purpose, every partnership ESCAP engages in has its own unique structure and set-up. Accountability and commitment are at the core of all ESCAP partnership framework agreements. Trust fund agreements aside, which are signed with donors and detail the administrative provisions governing donor contributions to ESCAP's projects, in accordance with the UN Financial Regulations and Rules, the other three most common approaches of formalizing a partnership include:

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): framework agreements with ESCAP's programme partners at the highest level, e.g. with regional or international organizations. They delineate partnerships at the organizational level with the scope of cooperation covering more than one area of ESCAP's work while still focused on specific areas, where there is no transfer of funds;

Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is an agreement reflecting a partnership for a specific activity (e.g. organizing a meeting) where there is no transfer of funds. The main purpose is to clarify the roles and responsibilities of ESCAP and a partner organization in a specific activity;

Letter of Agreement (LOA) covers transfer of funds from ESCAP to a partner institution in order to undertake technical cooperation activities contributing toward the achievement of their respective work programmes.

Number of Partners by Agreement Type

LOA **65**

MOA **41**

MOU **40**

Total number of formal partnership agreements

146

Partnerships in action

259 capacity development projects implemented in 2022-2023

723 Seminars, Workshops, and Trainings

169 Technical Advisory Services

575 Publications and Knowledge Products

% Estimated Expenditure by SDG 2022-2023

| SDG	
SDG 17	18%
SDG 8	10%
SDG 11	9%
SDG 9	8.7%
SDG 13	8%
SDG 7	7.4%
SDG 1	7%
SDG 5	6.7%
SDG 3	4.3%
SDG 10	3.3%
SDG 4	3%
SDG 16	2.8%
SDG 6	2.3%
SDG 12	2%
SDG 14	2%
SDG 15	2%
SDG 2	2%
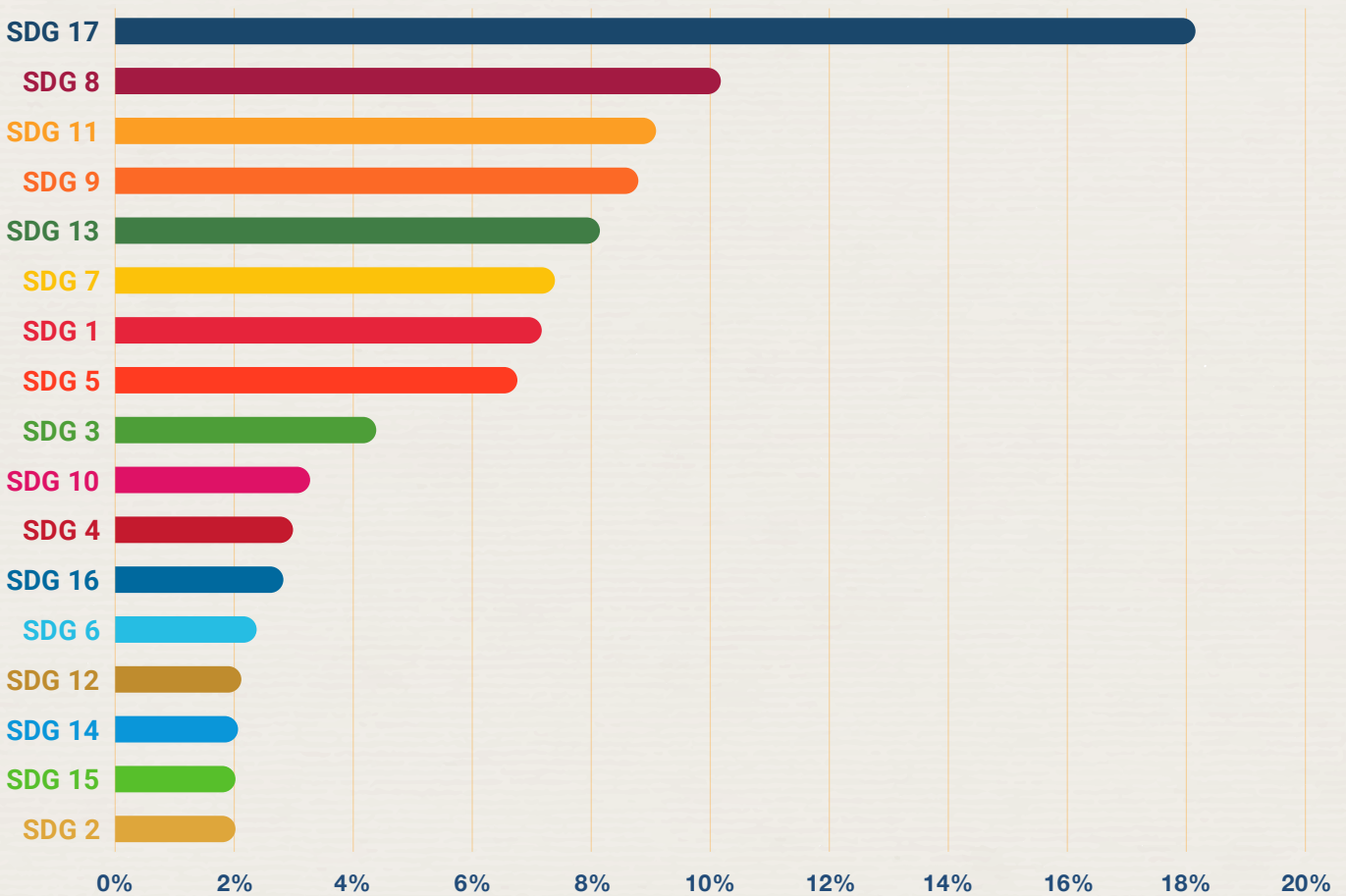
Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women

The gender marker (GEM) is a financial tracking mechanism for gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEEW), which was first pioneered by the OECD-Development Assistance Committee. It is now a systematic requirement for all institutions within the UN system to implement the GEM mechanism to track financial allocation of resources towards GEEW. Recognizing the multiplier effects of GEEW on achieving inclusive and sustainable economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development, UN entities take steps to track resource allocation based on gender equality measures.

ESCAP introduced the GEM in 2019, and as of 2021, it was determined that all ESCAP projects should at least contribute to GEEW in some way and have a minimum rating of GEM1. Through its multidisciplinary platform, ESCAP has had the opportunity to strengthen the gender dimension in its implementation of the SDGs. By enhancing the capacity of staff to mainstream gender in their respective work areas, as well as to identify synergies across substantive areas, ESCAP is ensuring delivery of gender-responsive results across the SDGs.

CODE	DESCRIPTION
GEM 2b	GEEW is the principle objective of the project
GEM 2a	GEEW is a significant objective of the project
GEM 1	Project contributes to GEEW in a limited way
GEM 0	Project not expected to contribute to GEEW

GEM 1: 58%

GEM 2a: 22%

GEM 2b: 14%

% ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE BY GENDER MARKER 2022-2023

GEM 0: 6%
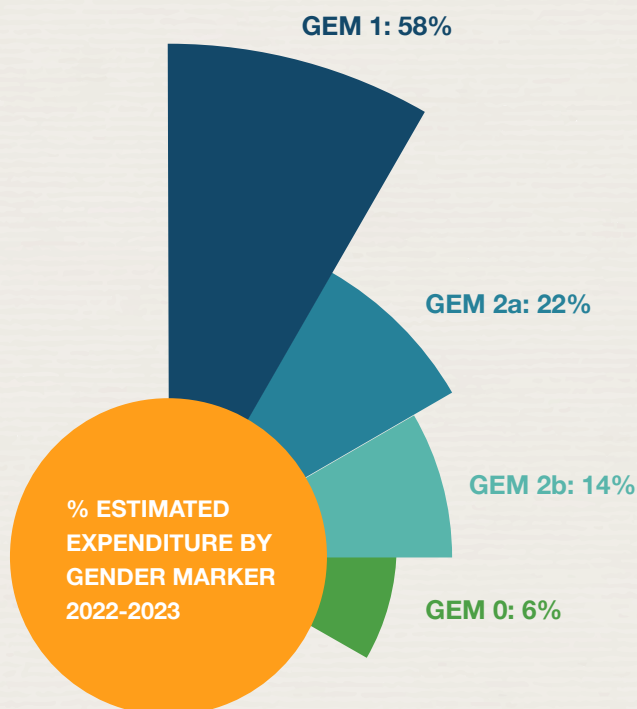
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Working with ESCAP

TECHNICAL COOPERATION HIGHLIGHTS 2022-2023

CHAPTER 1
LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

IN FOCUS:

Co-creating with persons with disabilities for an equitable, inclusive and sustainable future

Partner(s):

Organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), including the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia and Samarthyam, India

Objective:

Provide capacity-building support to member States, organizations of persons with disabilities and other stakeholders on creating disability-inclusive societies.

Partnership Period

2021–present

Target Countries

Asia and the Pacific

Funding Sources

- *Government of China*
- *Government of the Republic of Korea*
- *Rehabilitation International*

SDG	Regional Road Map	Gender Marker
1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17	Leaving no one behind Technology Policy coherence North-South, South-South, international and regional partnerships	GEM2a

An estimated 16 per cent of the world's population live with a significant disability, which includes approximately 750 million people living with disability in the Asia-Pacific region. Despite progress in disability-inclusive development over the past decade, persons with disabilities continue to experience marginalization in socio-economic and political participation. Among countries in which data is available, for example, only 24 per cent of persons with disabilities of working age are employed compared to 62 per cent of those without disabilities, while just 22 per cent of persons with severe disabilities receive disability cash benefits.

Furthermore, the disability community accounts for only 0.8 per cent of national parliamentarians. The intersectionality of disability and other characteristics, such as gender and age, exacerbates existing inequalities and creates new patterns of discrimination against people in vulnerable situations.

Critically, the lack of an accessible built environment, transportation, information, communications and services impedes diverse disability groups from realizing their full potential and contributing to development processes. In three out of the six ESCAP States and territories with data, less than 10 per cent of government buildings are considered accessible. Meanwhile, the World Health Organization has found that for persons with severe disabilities in two of three surveyed Asia-Pacific countries, transportation is the most hindering aspect of the physical environment.

Moreover, among the 13 countries and territories reporting on the accessibility of national government websites, only eight had adjustable fonts, four had adjustable contrast schemes, keyboard accessibility or graphic elements with alternative text, and just one had videos in sign language.[1]

Any development effort that ignores the environmental and attitudinal barriers faced by persons with disabilities cannot result in transformative change for an equitable, inclusive and sustainable future. The meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all stages of policymaking and programming is of crucial importance in removing barriers and addressing the diverse needs of the disability community.

As the figures show, an essential area is the improvement of physical and digital accessibility, which is a prerequisite for building inclusive societies. Investing in accessibility and applying universal design principles calls for effective collaboration between governments, organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and development partners.

> ''
>
> *ESCAP's extensive network and partnerships in the region are a significant advantage. Collaborating with them opens doors to a wide range of stakeholders, including governments, non-governmental organizations, and local communities. This network facilitates smoother implementation, enhances coordination, and allows for a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to development projects.*
>
> *In our project's context, the collaboration with ESCAP holds exceptional significance, especially as we focus on establishing reliable and comparable disability statistics. Recognizing the pivotal role of a robust statistical foundation in evidence-based policymaking for persons with disabilities, partnering with ESCAP becomes crucial. Their unparalleled regional expertise is instrumental as we lay the groundwork for implementing the Post-Incheon Strategy project.*
>
> ,,
>
> **- a partner testimonial from Korea Disabled People's Development Institute**

A holistic engagement method

With support from member States contributing to ESCAP's Multi-donor Trust Fund for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, ESCAP has fostered meaningful partnerships with OPDs to make disability rights real in the region.

The organization's holistic engagement method for these partnerships encompasses three areas: an institutional mechanism, the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities; the involvement of persons with disabilities in intergovernmental processes, such as the final review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022; and technical cooperation with OPDs.

ESCAP established the Working Group to ensure the voices of persons with disabilities are heard and that their views are reflected in regional efforts to advance disability rights and inclusion. Comprising an equal number of governments and civil society organization (CSO) members, the Working Group promotes the effective implementation of the regional frameworks and agreements on disability-inclusive development, such as the Incheon Strategy, the Beijing Declaration and Action Plan and the Jakarta Declaration. The Working Group regularly consults and engages organizations representing diverse disability groups in the provision of technical assistance to ESCAP member States. Through its annual sessions, the Working Group also serves as a platform for governments and CSOs to share good practices, exchange experiences and build synergies.

Furthermore, ESCAP involves OPDs in intergovernmental processes. With multi-stakeholder engagement, the organization conducted a comprehensive final review of the Disability Decade in 2022, to take stock of progress made and to chart the way forward for a new phase of disability-inclusive development in Asia and the Pacific.

To share their insights into the state of regional disability-inclusive development, 24 organizations of and for persons with disabilities participated in an ESCAP survey on the final review. In addition, through an expert meeting and stakeholder consultations, ESCAP solicited feedback and inputs from diverse disability groups on achievements, lessons learned and emerging priorities concerning disability inclusion.

The results of these activities informed the development of the Jakarta Declaration, the outcome document of the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Final Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022.

CSOs, including OPDs, contributed to the meeting's preparation and organization, including through the CSO Steering Group initiated by ESCAP and the CSO pre-event.[2] As well as renewing regional commitment to disability-inclusive development, the meeting fostered consensus on strategic directions for the Decade 2023–2032.
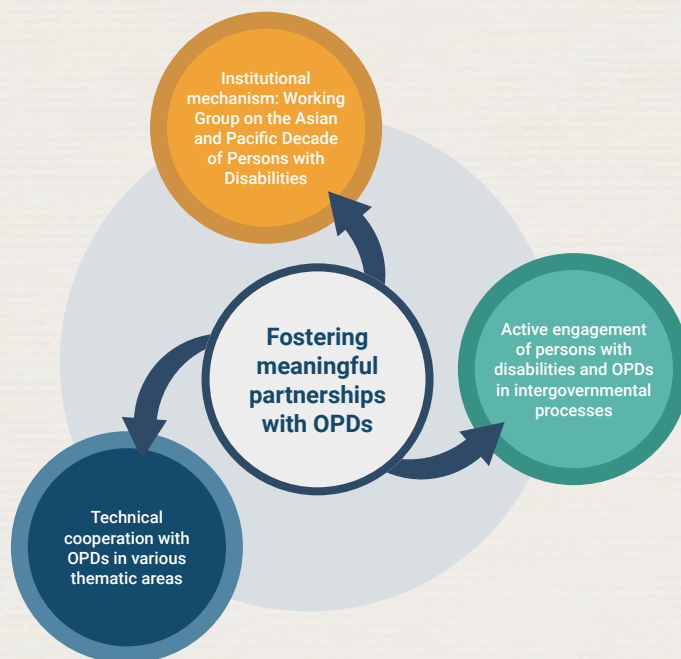
Technical cooperation on local initiatives

To implement local initiatives that empower diverse disability groups and catalyse disability-inclusive policymaking across various sectors, ESCAP forges technical cooperation with OPDs. For example, together with National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM), ESCAP has facilitated disability-inclusive digitalization in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country by building the capacity of persons with disabilities in digital accessibility and ICT skills. Another example is ESCAP's collaboration with Samarthyam to promote accessibility of the physical environment (including buildings, roads and public transport), gender equality and women's empowerment in the state of Rajasthan, India.

By facilitating the alignment of government, civil society and development partner resources, these partnerships generate significant collaborative advantages. The meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in the institutional mechanism, intergovernmental processes and technical cooperation initiatives

ensures a sustainable system to address context-specific vulnerabilities and needs of diverse disability, while responding to the complex and evolving realities in rapidly changing societies.

In the process, OPDs are also sufficiently empowered to build trust with governments and contribute to realizing the shared vision of disability-inclusive development in Asia and the Pacific. As a regional platform for ongoing collaboration and knowledge-sharing, ESCAP amplifies the impact of OPDs' efforts to advance disability rights and helps foster regional consensus on the path towards realizing disability-inclusive development.

Strengthening the accessibility of the digital and physical environment

As one of the six priority areas for accelerated actions identified in the Jakarta Declaration, promoting universal design-based accessibility holds critical significance in realizing disability rights and inclusion. The partnership with National Council for the Blind, Malaysia expedited disability-inclusive digitalization in the country through three key initiatives. Firstly, by strengthening the technical capacity of persons with disabilities in digital accessibility and ICT skills, strategic advocacy and gender-disability intersectionality; secondly, by improving the evidence base of the situation of persons with disabilities during the pandemic and their access to ICTs, particularly women and girls with disabilities; and thirdly, by enhancing the institutional capacity of the Government of Malaysia and OPDs in preparing for Malaysia's accession to the Marrakesh Treaty, which removes barriers to the availability of accessible published works for persons with print disabilities.

Key results of the NCBM partnership include a strategic advocacy training programme, in which the 23 participants (10 women and 13 men) learned how to conduct website accessibility audits, produce documents in accessible formats,[3] and understand the intersectionality of gender and disability, while also improving their strategic advocacy skills. To conclude the programme, NCBM supported the participants in creating government awareness on the importance of accessibility and digital inclusion through a seminar attended by officials from 19 government entities.

In Rajasthan, India, the partnership with Samarthyam catalysed the development of an accessible built environment and public transportation by strengthening institutional capacities, mechanisms and processes for OPDs and government agencies to conduct district-level accessibility audits. To ensure gender perspectives are well reflected in efforts to promote accessibility and disability-inclusive development more broadly, Samarthyam facilitated policy development to address needs of women with disabilities and enhanced their leadership and participation in OPDs.

Key results of the partnership with Samarthyam include training on accessibility audit skills delivered to around 50 OPD members and 50 government officials, including architects and engineers from public works departments. An easy-to-use accessibility audit checklist was translated into Hindi to give participants technical insights into accessibility audits of the built environment and public transportation. The partnership also fostered the establishment of district-level accessibility audit groups comprising OPD members and government officials, which develop and implement action plans to conduct accessibility audits of key government buildings and facilities in each target district.

Insights from our partners

- ▶ Rehabilitation International
- ▶ Samarthyam, India
- ▶ National Council for the Blind, Malaysia
- ▶ Sightsavers, India
- ▶ National Council for the Blind, Malaysia

Community and institutional linkages for long-term impact

The partnerships with NCBM and Samarthyam underscore the significance of promoting linkages between community-level initiatives and policies and institutional processes to create long-term disability-inclusive development.

For example, NCBM's technical support contributed to Malaysia's accession to the Marrakesh Treaty, while Samarthyam established district-level institutional mechanisms for accessibility improvement and supported state and national-level policymaking on women with disabilities. These efforts are generating lasting and far-reaching impact on disability rights and inclusion.

As these two initiatives have shown, the effective participation of the disability community in project design and implementation is essential. Both initiatives were led by persons with disabilities and designed to empower diverse disability groups. By co-creating with persons with disabilities, project activities can be tailored to address the diverse needs of the disability community. In line with the spirit of "nothing about us without us," this participatory approach is also key to ensuring that technical cooperation initiatives remain relevant and responsive to the evolving and dynamic circumstances on the ground. As a result of the partnerships, ESCAP has both strengthened its convening power and established a track record in disability inclusion advocacy.

Read more:

ESCAP "Make the Right Real!" portal

Contact:

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SNAPSHOT:

A voluntary national review that leaves no one behind

The United Nations Economists Network[4] has identified rising inequalities as a global megatrend decelerating progress towards inclusive and sustainable development. In the furthest behind groups in the Asia-Pacific region, for example, up to half of all children are stunted and up to 70 per cent of individuals under 35 have not completed secondary education. Meanwhile, in the furthest behind groups in some regional countries, 90 per cent of adults do not have a bank account and three out of four households do not have access to clean fuels.

In this context, inequality of opportunity is of particular concern as it worsens inequality of outcomes such as income and wealth over generations. The 2030 Agenda acknowledges this nuance by calling on member States to monitor progress on access to opportunities and leave no one behind (LNOB) in the process. This is a challenging task as monitoring progress entails regularly collecting and analyzing a wide array of data and statistics on all SDGs. Without tools to measure inequality of opportunities and identify population groups most in need of support, the effectiveness of policy interventions may be low.
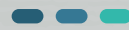
Partner(s):
UN Resident Coordinator Office in Mongolia

Objective:
To strengthen the capacity of member States to generate and mainstream LNOB evidence in their policies and strategies.

Partnership Period
2018–2023

Target Countries
Mongolia

Funding Sources
United Nations Development Account

SDG
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 16, 17

Regional Road Map
Data and statistics
Leaving no one behind

Gender Marker
GEM2a

There is substantial room for collaboration between United Nations entities and governments in the area of evidence-based policymaking that leverages innovative tools to analyze data and generate actionable insights. Based on this, ESCAP has developed an easy-to-use online diagnostic tool, the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) Platform, which covers 30 Asia-Pacific countries and highlights inequalities in 19 SDG indicators spanning SDGs 1 to 8, and 16 and 17 at the national and subnational levels.

Producing and sharing such granular data regularly helps countries enhance the inclusivity of their policies and mainstream furthest behind groups in their official documents. In this context, Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) offer an opportunity to utilize LNOB evidence as member States take stock of their progress towards the SDGs and commit to accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda with evidence-based policymaking.

To support Mongolia's 2nd VNR, ESCAP continued its close collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) in Mongolia, building on collaboration for the 1st VNR. The partnership with the RCO was instrumental in boosting the technical capacity of the national VNR drafting team to enrich Mongolia's 2nd VNR with actionable quantitative evidence on the 2030 Agenda's LNOB pledge. In 2022, ESCAP and the RCO collaborated on planning and delivering project activities including introductory and technical trainings, which built the capacity of 50 policymakers and technical specialists to produce and use LNOB evidence for inclusive policymaking.

The drafting of Mongolia's 2nd VNR provided an opportunity to apply the findings from the technical training and to enrich the VNR report with LNOB evidence. With ESCAP funding, the RCO facilitated the participation of the VNR drafting team in LNOB trainings to familiarize its members with the methodology and to train them in analysis and presenting findings for Mongolia. Following consultations, ESCAP, together with the VNR drafting team, produced customized LNOB evidence that was mainstreamed throughout the report.

As a result of including LNOB evidence in its 2nd VNR, Mongolia committed to policy actions to reduce inequalities in a variety of SDGs, including access to clean energy. In its next VNR, Mongolia is expected to use LNOB evidence and take stock of how policies committed to in 2023 delivered on the LNOB pledge. Thanks to its open data policy and regular collection of high-quality data, Mongolia stands out as a good practice country to easily adopt LNOB methodology for monitoring policy implementation.

The partnership between ESCAP and the RCO in Mongolia harnessed complementarity in bringing together UN support to Mongolia. The RCO endorsed and promoted ESCAP's involvement in the drafting of Mongolia's VNR, with ESCAP bringing diversity and innovation as an innovative tool was utilized to conduct a stronger VNR with clearer targets. It also led to shared learning, bringing together multiple stakeholders to enhance their capacity in data analysis. A testament to its fruitfulness, the partnership was included in the VNR lab hosted by the United Nations Statistics Division during the 2023 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. A delegation from Mongolia showcased its experience as good practice for deepening data analysis in VNRs. The collaboration with the RCO also opened doors for ESCAP to work with other government offices to further mainstream LNOB evidence in their policies and strategies.

During this period, ESCAP provided similar technical assistance to all VNR countries with up-to-date and available data in the Asia-Pacific region. In each case, the RCOs played a critical role in coordinating national activities with national focal points, including VNR drafting team members and National Statistics Offices (NSOs). Thanks to such partnerships, LNOB evidence was also mainstreamed in the VNRs of Cambodia, Fiji and the Maldives, while technical capacity was built in project target countries in partnership with NSOs and RCOs, including India and Tonga, which are planning to undertake VNRs in 2025.

Read more:

- [ESCAP LNOB Platform](#)
- [An Introduction to LNOB Analysis in Mongolia](#)
- [2nd Voluntary National Review Mongolia (2023)](#)

Contact:

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IN FOCUS:

Addressing the crisis of invisibility

Partner(s):

Multiple stakeholders under the Asia-Pacific CRVS Partnership:
The Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health initiative, CDC Foundation, Civil Registration Professionals of South Asia, Child Rights Coalition Asia, IOM, Pacific Civil Registrars Network, The Pacific Community, Plan International, Statistics Norway, Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, Vital Strategies, UNICEF, UNSD/DESA, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UN Women, World Bank, WHO, World Vision International

Objective:

Support member States to strengthen their Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems, and harness commitment from governments, civil society and the international community to accelerate the improvement of CRVS systems in Asia and the Pacific.

Partnership Period

2013-present

Target Countries

Bangladesh, Fiji, Lao PDR, Maldives, Nauru, Niue, Pakistan, the Philippines, Samoa, Turkmenistan, Vanuatu

Funding Sources

- *Bloomberg Philanthropies*
- *Vital Strategies*
- *United Nations Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation*

SDG	Regional Road Map	Gender Marker
3, 5, 16, 17	Data and statistics Leaving no one behind	GEM2a

A well-functioning civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system helps ensure every person has a legal identity, which enables them to access State benefits and protections. A CRVS system is also the preferred data source for many demographic statistics, for example, multiple indicators of the SDGs directly relate to mortality and fertility, while others rely on population data. To know who is being left behind requires the availability of relevant disaggregated population data.

While the percentage of registered births and deaths in the Asia-Pacific region is rising annually, most countries have yet to reach universal civil registration. One obstacle is the lack of information about the CRVS-related experience of the most marginalized members of society.

Many countries experience lower civil registration completeness rates among certain marginalized and hard-to-reach population groups or geographic areas. Despite these inequalities and their negative impact, this problem often remains a blind spot; the groups affected remain largely invisible if the matter is not investigated.

The latest study from UNICEF on birth registration addressed some of these inequalities, showing that children's characteristics, as well as those of their mothers, could impact the likelihood of their registration. It revealed, for example, that about 80 per cent of children under five whose mothers have at least a secondary education have their births registered, compared to 60 per cent of children whose mothers have no education. This highlights the need for countries that are developing plans to increase their registration coverage and completeness to specifically address the question of inequality.

Furthermore, global data on civil registration completeness indicates that migration status, residence location and income level significantly impact registration rates. UNICEF's study on birth registration also highlighted some of these inequalities, showing that globally, children from the lowest income households are 25 per cent less likely than their highest counterparts to be registered.[5] In South Asia, 86 per cent of children under five are registered in the richest households, but that proportion falls to 53 per cent among the poorest. Migrant families and rural communities are also more prone to exclusion.

In 2021, ESCAP worked with Child Rights Coalition Asia and World Vision to conduct consultations with youth and civil society,[6] which highlighted significant concerns about civil registration access. Most participants with positive registration experiences came from stable urban homes, were citizens of their home countries and were born in hospitals, while children, teens and their families without these socioeconomic advantages struggled to register. Many of the consultation participants stated that lack of registration was an intergenerational concern. Without a marriage certificate, many unregistered parents did not see the importance of registering their children.

▶ In addition, many people struggled to obtain death certificates without birth certificates.

Given the importance of CRVS systems and the demand from countries for support, ESCAP initiated capacity development work in this area in 2013 with a focus on developing guidelines and technical support for CRVS inequality assessments.

Partnership for system transformation

To support member States to strengthen their CRVS systems and harness commitment from governments, civil society and the international community to accelerate the improvement of regional CRVS systems, ESCAP has convened the CRVS Partnership for Asia and the Pacific since 2012. The Partnership comprises United Nations programmes and funds, subregional partners and international development partners. United Nations partners include UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and IOM, international development partners include Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Health Organisation (WHO), Vital Strategies and the Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health initiative, and among the subregional partners are the Pacific Community, the Pacific Civil Registrars Network and the Brisbane Accord Group.

Each partner contributes a unique skill set and can often utilize each other's existing relationships in and knowledge of countries.

As exemplified through the Regional Action Framework on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific, joint messaging to countries has also had a significant impact on country commitment. Furthermore, due to the Ministerial Declarations and the Regional Action Framework, there is a high level of trust and accountability among partners. The CRVS Partnership meets regularly while partners engage in frequent bilateral communication.

Overall, regional CRVS initiatives aim for transformational development, for which multiple partners contribute essential complementary resources – particularly technical expertise – that together create the levers required to deliver system transformation.

As convenor of the CRVS Partnership for Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP has been instrumental in facilitating partner coordination, joint activities and extensive advocacy work across the region. The organization also facilitated high-level political commitment from countries through the Ministerial Conferences on CRVS held in 2014 and 2021 and the Regional Action Framework. Partners work in close collaboration at the country level to support State activities to achieve the shared goals and targets of the Asia Pacific CRVS Decade, 2015–2024. In addition to convening the CRVS Partnership, ESCAP engages in more in-depth national-level partnerships for specific activities, such as inequality assessments, which are the focus of the organization's current project.

REGIONAL ACTION FRAMEWORK (RAF)

Goals

Civil Registration — 5 NT

Legal Documents — 2 NT

Vital Statistics — 8 NT

National Targets (NT)

Implementation Steps

Coordination mechanism

Comprehensive assessment

National targets set

Monitoring and reporting plan

Inequality assessment

National strategy developed

Focal point assigned

Reporting to ESCAP

Note:

The Regional Action Framework on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific outlines 3 goals, each with a set of targets (15 in total) and 8 implementation steps for countries to follow while improving their national CRVS systems. The framework facilitates collaborative action at the local, provincial, national and international levels by enabling multiple stakeholders to align and prioritize their efforts under the agreed upon goals and targets.

Insights from our partners

- ▶ Bloomberg Philanthropies
- ▶ Asia-Pacific Vital Strategies
- ▶ Fiji Bureau of Statistics

Let's really get everyone in the picture

To facilitate the implementation of CRVS inequality assessments using secondary data sources, ESCAP's current project provides technical support and capacity strengthening to national statistical offices (NSOs) and other relevant national stakeholders in Bangladesh, Lao PDR, Fiji, Samoa and the Philippines. This involves building capacity for demographic analysis to conduct future inequality assessments as part of regular monitoring, as well as strengthening capacity for dialogue with policymakers to ensure the results are used for policy formulation.

The project built on an initiative ESCAP implemented in early 2021 under the theme of "Inequalities in CRVS: Let's really get everyone in the picture". The series of seminars and meetings brought together experts from national governments, academia and development partners to develop guidelines and technical support for countries to assess inequalities by using secondary data sources, as well as indirect demographic methods for estimating vital events.

In-depth inequality assessments for inclusive civil registration

Fiji was one of the first countries to embark on an in-depth quantitative inequality assessment, examining differentials by sex, age, ethnicity and mother's marital status. The information was used to inform future research and policy interventions to bridge gaps in registration between the country's different population groups. Among the key findings was that despite the

importance of timely birth registration, many parents in Fiji delay the registration of their child's birth until they have reached school age.

In an effort to improve birth registration, the Fiji Government conducted the Parental Assistance Payment Programme (PAPP) from August 1, 2018 to July 31, 2020. Under this programme, parents received a cash payment at the time of registration, and a second when the child started preschool. The inequality assessment report and associated policy brief found that the PAPP had a very clear positive impact on birth registration. These findings have been presented to the Fiji Government with a view to initiate further incentives to ensure ongoing birth registration.

Meanwhile, in Lao PDR, the Government has made the development of a universal and effective CRVS system a national priority and has incorporated it into the long-term Lao Population and Development Policy (2019-2030). This is largely due to the commendable efforts of relevant line ministries to strengthen the CRVS system through various initiatives supported by ESCAP and other international organizations, such as UNFPA, World Bank, UNICEF and the Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems at the Development Research Centre. With strong support and commitment from all relevant ministries and the international development community, the Government has set the ambitious target of achieving 70 per cent birth registration completeness and 60 per cent death registration completeness by 2024. However, despite these positive developments, recent statistics show that the completeness rate of civil registration is still low.

Lao PDR's inequality assessment report is an integral part of this effort. The report provides a picture of Lao PDR's civil registration completeness and the associated inequalities, which lay out possible key drivers behind low birth registration. This will allow the country to work towards solving these remaining challenges to really get "everyone" in the picture.

To ensure progress in civil registration is truly universal and fully inclusive, the Ministerial Declaration to "Get Everyone in The Picture" in Asia and the Pacific recognized the need to address disparities in civil registration completeness and coverage, such as gender-related barriers to registration. Hence, the Regional Action Framework for the Asia-Pacific CRVS Decade 2015–2024 (ESCAP resolution 71/14) calls on countries to assess any CRVS-related inequalities experienced by population subgroups. Doing so is an essential step to getting everyone in the picture and key to the realization of the 2030 Agenda in terms of both data and social protection.

Read more:

- Asia-Pacific CRVS Partnership
- Regional Action Framework on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific
- Implementing Inequality Assessments and Strengthening Demographic Analysis Capacity

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## Statistics Division

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SNAPSHOT:

Partnering to enhance evidence-based
Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)

For the effective use of SDG data and indicators, countries at times struggle with interagency coordination, capacity and technical challenges. Challenges in coordination often result from unclearly defined roles and responsibilities of government agencies for providing data and metadata on SDG indicators. Indeed, many countries lack a functioning coordination mechanism for SDG data.

Challenges in capacity are sometimes encountered as the SDG indicator framework is complex, and countries may not have the capacity to analyze and visualize the data. Furthermore, SDG data presents multiple technical challenges, such as inconsistency between national and global data, selection of indicators and lack of national target values. Finally, choosing the methodology for analyzing the complex indicator framework is often not straightforward.

To help overcome these challenges and support member States to effectively use indicators and data for SDGs implementation, and especially to conduct Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), ESCAP has worked closely with Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) and multi-country offices (MCOs) in nearly 20 countries in the Asia-Pacific region since 2020. The collaboration involved multiple modalities, including informal and formal communication, online meetings, virtual seminars, technical advisory missions and national workshops for SDG leads, national statistical offices (NSOs) and line ministries.
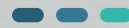
Partner(s):

UN Resident Coordinator Offices

Objective:

Increasing the capacity of national governments to effectively use evidence in follow up and review of the national progress towards the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda.

Partnership Period

2020–2023

Target Countries

Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu, Viet Nam

Funding Sources

- *Government of China (supported Brunei Darussalam and Fiji)*
- *United Nations Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation*

SDG

All

Regional Road Map

Data and statistics

Policy coherence

Leaving no one behind

Gender Marker

GEM1

The RCOs and MCOs played a significant role in initiating contact with government counterparts, providing the national context of countries to tailor support to government priorities, coordinating with national and international stakeholders at the country level, coordinating input from the UN Country Team, supporting planning and implementation of country-level missions and workshops, and advocating for effective communication of the VNR results. In most other cases, single entity support would not have resulted in country-owned and quality progress assessment in the VNRs.

The partnership resulted in significant improvement of the evidence base for formulating national commitments and priorities for achieving the SDGs. For example, Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu and Viet Nam presented their VNRs by applying a harmonized approach for assessing progress against their national SDG targets.

Furthermore, through the partnership, countries were able to use ESCAP's National SDG Tracker to select the most relevant SDG indicators, complement them with their national indicators, set national target values, and apply a harmonized methodology and visualization to develop national SDG progress dashboards.

The partnership also enhanced national coordination mechanisms for SDG data, identified SDG data gaps and mobilized political support to fill the gaps, while also enhancing the role of NSOs in data coordination and management. For example, Fiji, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan and Viet Nam have increased their national coordination for SDG data; improved their government culture of evidence-based SDG implementation; created a stronger role for NSOs for data coordination; improved national ownership of SDG indicators; and enhanced understanding of SDG data gaps.

To provide two concrete examples, Tajikistan has created a new mechanism for data coordination co-chaired by its Statistical Agency and National Coordinator for Development Council, while in the Philippines, an initiative was introduced to engage local governments in the development of provincial SDG catch-up plans, based on the subnational SDG progress dashboards.

ESCAP's partnership with the RCOs and MCOs has strengthened national data coordination as well as the capacity of Asia-Pacific countries to effectively utilize SDG indicators, leading to substantial progress in evidence-based VNRs.

Read more:

- Voluntary National Reviews

Contact:

Statistics Division

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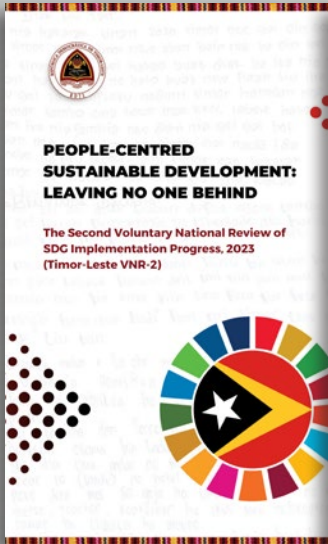
Timor-Leste, 2023

Viet Nam, 2023
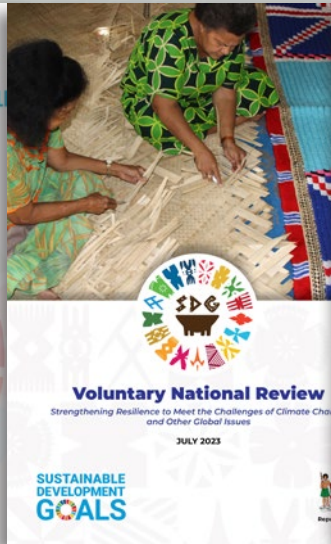
Fiji, 2023

Brunei Darussalam, 2023
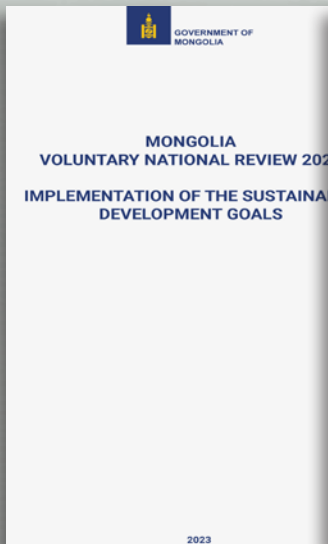
Mongolia, 2023
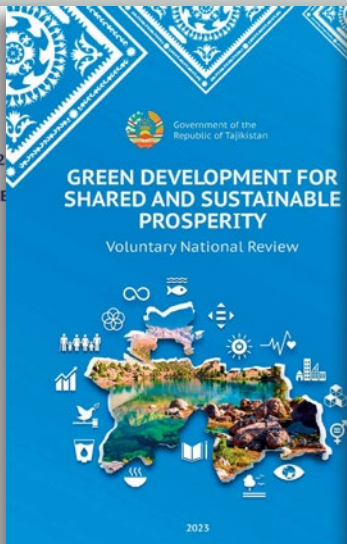
Tajikistan, 2023
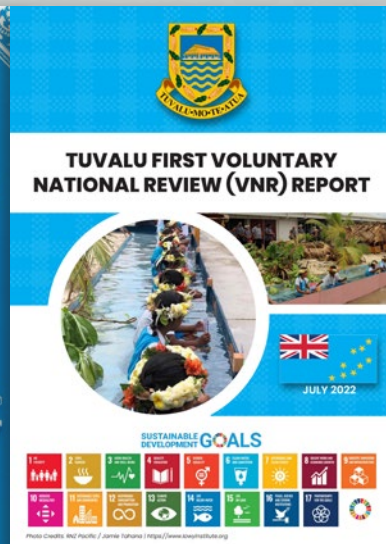
Tuvalu, 2022

CHAPTER 2

INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

IN FOCUS:

Building policies that enable and incentivize businesses to leave no one behind

Partner(s):

Association of Southeast Asian Nations Secretariat,
Inclusive Business Action Network

Objective:

To enhance the policy environment for inclusive businesses to enable member States to design and implement policies to promote such business models.

Partnership Period

2019–present

Target Countries

Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam

Funding Sources

- *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*
- *Government of Germany*
- *United Nations Development Account*
- *United Nations Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation*

SDG	Regional Road Map	Gender Marker
1, 8, 9, 17	Technology Leaving no one behind	GEM1

To gain competitive advantage, businesses are increasingly seeking to innovate their business models, as innovation allows companies to radically change the ways they conduct business, capture new markets and expand their footprint in current ones. One important innovation is ensuring business models are inclusive.

As defined by the Inclusive Business Framework of the G20 and Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN), inclusive businesses are companies that "provide goods, services, and livelihoods on a commercially viable basis, either at scale or scalable, to people living at the base of the economic pyramid, making them part of the value chain of companies' core business as suppliers, distributors, retailers, or customers." The term "base of the economic pyramid" (BoP) refers to the world's largest but poorest socio-economic group, which comprises over four billion people representing a range of vulnerable populations. Those at the BoP lack access to basic goods and services and often experience economic and social exclusion.

Systemic Solutions for the relevant problems of the poor and low-income people

INCLUSIVE BUSINESS

Commercially viable, bankable, and for-profit

Innovative to be profitable while impactful

Scale in business operation, social impact and growth

Governments play a key role in promoting inclusive businesses (IB) by recognizing them, facilitating access to finance, providing incentives and creating an enabling ecosystem. However, as this is a relatively new concept, many government officials are not aware of the potential of promoting businesses that are both fully commercial and support low-income groups at scale, nor of how to promote them. In 2019, across Asia and the Pacific, only the Philippines had a strategy to promote inclusive business.

Bringing inclusive business to the forefront of ASEAN policymaking

In response to this problem, and propelled by the 2030 Agenda, ESCAP initiated the Inclusive Business Programme with the aim of expanding the reach and impact of businesses providing affordable goods and services and better livelihoods to low-income people. The programme was initiated in 2019 with pooled funding from the United Nations Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation, United Nations Development Account, and the Government of Germany under the Inclusive Business Network (iBAN) programme, which was funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the European Union, and implemented by the German agency for international cooperation, GIZ.

For this collaborative effort, ESCAP partnered with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), an intergovernmental organization representing ten member States in Southeast Asia, and iBAN. Since January 2023, and the successful conclusion of the final phase of the iBAN initiative, the partnership has been between ESCAP and ASEAN. The former contributes knowledge, policy advice, technical knowhow, financial resources, convening power and a network of partners that extends beyond the ASEAN region. The latter provides enhanced networking opportunities with ASEAN Member States and policymakers and subregional insights. The ASEAN Secretariat also facilitates formal channels to integrate inclusive business into the ASEAN agenda.

Since 2019, ESCAP has provided country-level analysis and policy advice to governments of ASEAN. This work and the resulting partnership between the two organizations has brought inclusive business to the forefront of ASEAN policymaking. This led to economic ministers endorsing the Guidelines for the Promotion of Inclusive Business in ASEAN in 2020, as well as several governments in the region adopting policies to promote inclusive business. ASEAN developed the Guidelines with technical assistance from ESCAP and iBAN, in collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The document outlines how inclusive businesses can be supported at the national level and what institutional frameworks are required to do so, and provides recommendations on how ASEAN policymakers could collectively promote inclusive business at the regional level. The document serves as a useful reference for ASEAN policymakers in formulating national and regional strategies towards achieving a resilient, inclusive, people-oriented, and people-centered ASEAN.

ESCAP and ASEAN's commitment to promoting inclusive business models was further consolidated by ASEAN Economic Ministers adopting the Plan of Action for the Promotion of Inclusive Business in ASEAN in August 2023. In addition, ASEAN scaled up its commitment to inclusive business by hosting an inaugural high-level ministerial meeting on micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) development during the Sixth ASEAN Inclusive Business Summit, in which the Declaration on Promoting Inclusive Business Models: Empowering MSMEs for Equitable Growth was adopted. The synergies between the partners were further highlighted through ESCAP's organization of the Regional Investment Forum for Inclusive Business in Agriculture and Food Systems in conjunction with the Summit. Furthermore, 19 organizations at the Summit pledged to promote inclusive business.

As the work has evolved under this joint venture, and recognizing the contribution of its multiple stakeholders, including national governments, the private sector and other policy actors, over time the combined efforts are creating the levers required to deliver large-scale, systemic or behavioral change.

Insights from our partners

- ▶ ASEAN Secretariat
- ▶ Ministry of Planning and Investment, Viet Nam

A model of effective collaboration

ASEAN and ESCAP have cultivated a high-quality partnership. Both organizations share a compelling vision, mission and objectives in promoting inclusive business models, which foster alignment in priorities and initiative implementation. The collaboration has clear advantages, creating added value that surpasses individual contributions. This advantageous collaboration operates simultaneously at national and regional levels, fostering a reinforcing loop of progress through activities such as national landscape studies, the formulation of national strategies, and the design of policy instruments. Furthermore, transparent communication and a high level of trust among partners underscore the commitment to advancing the inclusive business agenda in the region.

In terms of structuring and setup, the partnership is well-equipped with personnel, financial resources and networks of influence. Throughout the partnership, meetings and work processes were well organized and conducted with inclusive agendas and meticulous documentation. Effective management practices, including an iterative approach to project management and frequent communication, have been pivotal. The partnership has demonstrated adaptability, iterating and adjusting its approach based on experiences and consolidating its strengths through the annual ASEAN Inclusive Business Summits.

This commitment is institutionalized within each partner organization, with key staff engaged and integrated into organizational planning and budgets. This is exemplified by ESCAP's pivotal role in organizing the Seventh ASEAN Inclusive Business Forum in Lao PDR to be held in 2024, along with providing financial resources.

Additionally, partners have reviewed and strengthened their organizational capacity to foster a conducive broader context and enabling environment for sustained collaboration.

Overall, the ESCAP-ASEAN partnership stands as a model of effective collaboration. Its success lies in the shared vision, transparent communication and commitment to inclusivity and adaptability, which are all crucial elements contributing to the advancement of inclusive business practices in the Asia-Pacific region.

An evolving partnership

Looking across the region, as of the end of 2023, Cambodia and Viet Nam have adopted a strategy or programme to promote inclusive business, and Malaysia has conducted a pilot programme to support it. Meanwhile, Indonesia and Thailand have conducted studies to inform the development of a strategy to promote inclusive business.

The progress described above demonstrates that the partnership has successfully inserted inclusive business in the policy agenda of the ASEAN community and several ASEAN member States. As a result, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have approached ESCAP to expand the programme to India, with a focus on the agriculture and food sector. ESCAP is also exploring opportunities to support policies that promote inclusive business in other countries across Asia and the Pacific.

The partnership continues evolving and adapting, and ESCAP and the ASEAN Secretariat have agreed to support the implementation of the Plan of Action. ESCAP will play a key role in this, including in the development of a model ASEAN inclusive business accreditation system. The organization will continue building on this partnership to support inclusive business policy change at scale.

Viet Nam (2023)
- Prime Minister adopted the 2022-2025 Program on Support for Private Enterprises in Sustainable Business
- Developed IB accreditation system with plans to pilot in 2024
- Provided IB coaching to enterprises

Malaysia (2022)
- Launched the landscape study of IB
- IB Value Chain Development Initiative provided IB coaching to companies

Cambodia (2022)
- Hosted the Fifth ASEAN Inclusive Business Summit

Lao PDR (2023)
- Committed to organize the Seventh ASEAN Inclusive Business Summit during its chairmanship of ASEAN

Thailand (2023)
- Conducted landscape study of IB
- Held National IB Investment Forum

Indonesia (2023)
- Hosted the Sixth ASEAN Inclusive Business Summit

Read more:

- [Landscape Study of Inclusive Business in Cambodia](#)
- [Landscape Study of Inclusive Business in Viet Nam](#)
- [Landscape Study of Inclusive Business in Malaysia](#)

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SNAPSHOT:

Enhancing opportunities for Pacific economic development

Most Pacific countries are projected to reach their pre-pandemic GDP by end of 2024. In 2022, inflation remained elevated, impacting the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable people. Meanwhile, debt distress levels in the Pacific remained high but are expected to decline in most countries as fiscal pressures ease and governments implement fiscal consolidation plans.

The importance of accelerating the region's economic priorities and aspirations is highlighted in the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent (2050 Strategy), the Pacific's sustainable development blueprint. To contribute to these aspirations, ESCAP worked with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) to support members at the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM) in 2022, to approve a concept note for the Blue Pacific Economic Strategy (now the Pacific Roadmap for Economic Development or PRED). The concept note outlined the key economic tenets that would shape the economic strategies and pathway to deliver the 2050 Strategy.

During the development of the PRED, ESCAP provided financial resources and technical knowledge in three areas. Firstly, it supported analytical studies related to economic development issues and opportunities in the Pacific that aim to grow and diversify the economic base, strengthen and improve financial and fiscal resilience and harness the full potential of blue and green economies captured in the PRED concept note.

Partner(s):
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

Objective:
To foster greater economic policy coherence among Pacific member States, while advancing prosperity through growth and diversification, financial and fiscal resilience and blue and green economies.

Partnership Period
1994–Present

Target Countries
Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, New Caledonia and Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, French Polynesia

Funding Sources
United Nations Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation

SDG	Regional Road Map	Gender Marker
8, 10, 17	Policy coherence Leaving no one behind Connectivity for the 2030 Agenda	GEM1

Secondly, it assisted with the analysis and forecasting data used as key scene setting for the FEMM agenda item "Regional Update on Economic State of Play and Outlook 2023". Thirdly, it provided technical and advisory services to help ensure a better understanding of the regional and global contexts, and to develop opportunities for PIFS to share the PRED-related progress in regional, subregional and national platforms.

Since FEMM 2022, ESCAP has further assisted PIFS and worked with member States through consultations and drafting of background papers to analyze the Pacific's economic issues linked to fiscal policy, debt sustainability and economic diversification. With this backdrop, ministers at FEMM 2023 recognized the value of the PRED as a means to foster the greater policy coherence required to address pervasive issues, including fiscal imbalances, debt sustainability and inflation. They also reaffirmed the importance of the Pacific Roadmap's alignment with national strategies, and agreed to support its development through the Pacific Economic Sub-Committee.

As a follow up to FEMM 2023, ESCAP and PIFS organized the first national policy coherence consultation, titled "Tonga Policy Coherence for Implementation of the Tonga Strategic Development Framework II, SDGs & 2050 Strategy Implementation Plan". The consultation resulted in a better understanding of two forward looking policy matters: a) establishing linkages in national development coordination across ministries to guide frameworks around SDGs and the 2050 Strategy; and b) preparing a basis for implementing these strategic interventions so that policy coherence becomes the anchor of enhancing voices in the regional and global discourse.

To improve the understanding of economic performance analysis and growth outlook in the context of multi-sectoral linkages, ESCAP supported the PIFS's technical documentation and reports, while improving officials' knowledge and perspectives by providing analytical substance. In turn, through its collaboration with PIFS, ESCAP has gained an in-depth understanding of the Pacific landscape and its policy dynamics. The collaborative advantage has resulted in creating collective legitimacy, ownership of the process, a knowledge base and a mechanism for joint programming, learning experiences and capacity-building across the Pacific.

By cooperating to enhance synergies, the ESCAP-PIFS partnership has aligned programmes and resources around the SDGs with the 2050 Strategy, while bringing together government officials and stakeholders to share experiences and lessons for developing regional collective action and solutions in the Pacific. By synergizing ESCAP's regional technical expertise and PIFS' Pacific leadership and knowledge base, the partnership has brought forward new ideas and action to enhance economic resilience in the post-pandemic era.

The above activities leverage over four decades of partnership between ESCAP and PIFS, in collaboration with the UN development system in the Pacific. The partnership's longevity has created a high level of trust among the partners and allowed them to seamlessly combine both complementary and similar resources in ways that indirectly deliver traditional development impact more effectively, efficiently, innovatively and at greater scale.

Read more:

- 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent
- A Review of Pacific Roadmap for Economic Development (PRED) Concept Note
- Regional Update on Economic State of Play and Outlook

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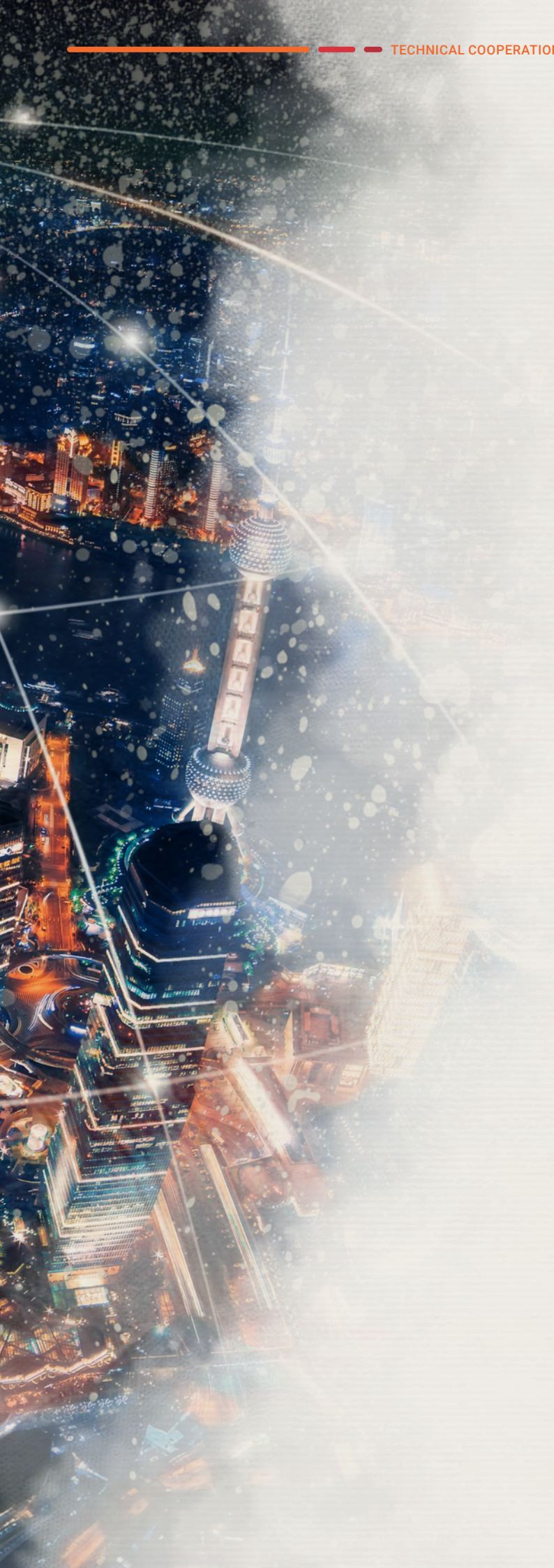
CHAPTER 3
CONNECTIVITY

IN FOCUS:

Road maps help guide the sustainable
energy journey of developing countries

Partner(s):

Ministries of Energy

Objective:

To strengthen capacities of policymakers in countries of the region to develop and implement energy transition policies for the achievement of SDG 7.

Partnership Period

2018–present

Target Countries

Armenia, Bhutan, Fiji, Georgia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR , Micronesia (Federated States of), Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam

Funding Sources

- *Energy Foundation China*
- *United Nations Development Account*
- *United Nations Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation*

SDG	Regional Road Map	Gender Marker
7, 13, 17	Energy Climate change Connectivity for the 2030 Agenda	GEM1

Nowhere is the transition to sustainable energy more pressing than in Asia and the Pacific. The region is responsible for more than half of global greenhouse gas emissions, and as its economies are powered largely by fossil fuels, climate change is exacerbating poverty and jeopardizing sustainable development.

The region is also falling short on achieving many of the targets under SDG 7: "Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all". The shortfall is most evident in the region's developing countries, particularly the least developed, landlocked countries and small island States. According to an ESCAP report released in 2018, regional progress was insufficient to reach all of the SDG 7 targets by 2030, and urgent action was required to set these targets on track.[7] Adding to the complexity, the region is increasingly battered by climate-induced disasters that are growing in intensity and frequency. These events pose substantial challenges to the social and economic fabric of countries and hinder sustainable development efforts. The fallout from these disruptions is profound, affecting livelihoods, critical connectivity infrastructure and essential services.

In this crucial moment, swift and decisive actions are needed to create a sustainable and secure energy future. The emphasis must be on transitioning from fossil to renewable energy systems, becoming much more efficient in the use of energy and ensuring universal access and connectivity to modern energy sources. This massive undertaking can only be accomplished through strategic partnerships that harness the collective knowledge, technical expertise and financial resources of diverse stakeholders.

ESCAP has been supporting its member States to rise to the challenges in achieving SDG 7 through its intergovernmental mechanisms, research and analysis and capacity-building functions. To support efforts in this area, it has forged partnerships with national governments, academia, think tanks, the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

The next step for SDG 7 road maps

One standout partnership initiative is the development of the National Expert SDG Tool for Energy Planning (NEXSTEP), to support the development of national SDG 7 road maps. The programme was initiated in response to ESCAP's findings on the SDG 7 gaps across the region and the subsequent ministerial declaration made at the 2nd Asian and Pacific Energy Forum in 2018. Through the declaration, ministers called on ESCAP to support member States on request in the development of individual SDG 7 road maps. NEXSTEP sets out both a methodology and a scalable initiative for member States to partner with ESCAP to achieve this.

Drawing on data, modelling, scenario analysis and national expert inputs, the tool enables policymakers to make informed policy decisions to support the achievement of SDG 7 and emission reduction targets. The SDG 7 road maps are created through a combination of data collection, analytical work, consultation workshops and technical training sessions outlined by NEXSTEP.

THE NATIONAL EXPERT SDG TOOL FOR ENERGY PLANNING (NEXSTEP) TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL SDG 7 ROAD MAPS

STEP 1:
ENERGY AND EMISSSIONS MODELLING

To help develop scenario-based pathways with technological interventions and financial resources needed to implement those pathways.

STEP 2:
ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

To identify the most economically feasible options/interventions.

STEP 3:
SCENARIO ANALYSIS

To prioritize the scenarios that are feasible for implementation in the national context.

OUTPUT

Policy recommendations as contained in SDG 7 Road maps

To date, 16 countries and 9 subnational jurisdictions (cities and provinces) have partnered with ESCAP for this initiative. Its success is evident in the level of participation, with 25 road maps developed. The experiences of countries that partnered with ESCAP for the development of their respective road maps have been shared in policy dialogues and intergovernmental meetings, prompting further engagement by new countries.

Important hallmarks of successful partnerships

The partnership approach for this program involves important hallmarks that map to the collaborative advantage and partnership difference for traditional development:

Complementarity – The complementarity of skills and perspectives brought to the collaboration by ESCAP and each member State has been noteworthy. ESCAP could offer modelling and analysis tools, while each country brought local context and understanding to the challenge of sustainable energy implementation.

Critical Mass – The replication of the methodology across multiple countries brought economies of scale while incorporating lessons learned from precedent countries.

Holism – The scope of analysis drew on SDG 7 targets and extended beyond traditional areas covered by ministries of energy to encompass clean cooking, electric vehicles and building design, encouraging a holistic view of the sustainable energy challenge. The national dialogues initiated as part of NEXSTEP brought together diverse stakeholders in each country to address the intersection of these challenges.

Shared Learning – Through working with participating states, ESCAP enhanced its capacity to apply this to new countries. In addition, training on the NEXSTEP methodology for a selected group of energy experts was undertaken within each government. A standard feature of each partnership, the training ensures that capacity to undertake further modeling and customization of energy scenarios and planning is retained within each country.

Scale – The development of a replicable and scalable initiative made better use of resources and allowed the investment in the NEXSTEP methodology to be maximized through its application in as many countries as possible.

Partnership building with care

As the NEXSTEP initiative progressed, it gained greater legitimacy and accumulated more knowledge and capacity that could be applied to subsequent partnerships. In addition, ESCAP has placed great care in its approach to partnership building, ensuring all partners fully embrace the programme's shared vision, mission and objectives, and are empowered to contribute to the partnership. In this regard, partners have consistently demonstrated collective leadership and commitment.

To address the initiative's sustainability, following the completion of each road map, ESCAP works with countries to implement selected recommendations. This taps into the organization's technical and capacity-building roles and encourages synergies between countries with similar policy recommendations.

These synergies can establish the basis for new regional cooperation initiatives, especially in areas such as clean cooking, electric vehicles and energy efficiency. These areas represent some of the common themes emerging from NEXSTEP analyses in different countries.

Insights from our partners

- ▶ Energy Foundation China
- ▶ Department of Energy, Bhutan
- ▶ Department of Resources and Development, Federated States of Micronesia

A standout collaboration in Bhutan

One exemplary NEXSTEP follow-up partnership is a multi-institutional collaboration initiated by the Royal Government of Bhutan. Encompassing the government, private sector, other UN agencies and research institutions, the partnership is working to deliver an innovative clean cooking project in the country. The project has strengthened ties between Bhutan and Singapore through a bilateral cooperation agreement and set a remarkable precedent for successful partnerships in the field of sustainable energy.

The partnership's key members include the UK Aid direct-funded programme Modern Energy Cooking Services (MECS), the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the Clean Cooking Alliance, and Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL). Without the collaborative efforts of these diverse partners, this complex and innovative project would not have been possible.

Multisectoral support and collaboration

Since NEXSTEP's inception, the programme has resulted in the completion of 25 national and sub-national sustainable energy road maps. The unwavering support from and collaboration among ministries, the private sector, research institutions and think tanks have led to immediate policy changes in some countries and fostered innovative thinking in others. Examples include:

- In Fiji, the Department of Energy (DoE) and Ministry of Economy developed a new energy policy that aligns with global goals and targets. The *SDG 7 Road Map for Fiji* developed in collaboration with the DoE served as the foundation for this new energy policy. Some of its recommendations, such as required renewable energy growth, were used to set the policy's long-term goals and targets.

- The partnership between ESCAP and the Pacific community has facilitated capacity-development in the Pacific Island countries (PICs). In 2022, the partnership brought together experts and policymakers from five PICs to discuss the potential for reducing regional reliance on imported energy resources. During this policy dialogue, challenges related to price and supply shocks that the PICs face were discussed, and opportunities to use more local energy resources, such as renewable energy, were identified.

- The road map development has led to extended collaboration with over ten national and local agencies. These road maps have triggered further collaboration opportunities on various aspects of the energy sector. For example, joint efforts are underway to identify opportunities and obstacles in promoting electric vehicles in public transport systems in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. Meanwhile, Pakistan is assessing the feasibility of phasing out coal from power generation, following a joint research project undertaken with ESCAP as a follow up to the road map.

- Cambodia's Ministry of Environment developed the first ever National Cooling Action Plan (NCAP), aiming to develop enabling policy mechanisms to reduce cooling energy load.

- SDG 7 road maps are currently being developed by the energy ministries in Armenia, Micronesia (Federated States of), Kiribati, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Uzbekistan. A special focus of these road maps is to support recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic through strategic planning of the sustainable energy transition that can stimulate economic growth and enhance social benefits, including public health, jobs and a clean environment.

The strength and effectiveness of partnerships have been vital in driving ESCAP's technical cooperation and SDG 7 road map development initiatives. The wisdom, experience, dedication and cooperation of various stakeholders have led to tangible policy changes, innovative projects and transformative developments in the pursuit of sustainable energy goals. These successful partnerships serve as inspiring models for future endeavours to tackle the challenges of the sustainable energy transition.

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SNAPSHOT:

Empowering countries to enhance trade facilitation and evidence-based policymaking

Amid the persistent challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical turbulence, high inflation and supply chain disruption, international trade has suffered from increased trade costs and uncertainties. However, trade facilitation aimed at enhancing efficiency through streamlined and digitalized processes, can help to lower trade costs and increase economic welfare, particularly in developing and emerging economies. For example, digitalization makes contactless and inclusive trade possible, lowering the barriers that could disproportionately impact groups with special needs, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and women traders.

The UN Regional Commissions (ReCs) for Africa (ECA), Europe (ECE), Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and Western Asia (ESCWA) and United Nation Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) conducted the 2023 edition of the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation (UNTF Survey), to review the progress of trade facilitation-related reforms in their respective member States. Conducted biennially since 2015 by the ReCs with ESCAP as the lead institution, the UNTF Survey is a pivotal initiative within the framework of the Joint UN Regional Commissions Approach to Trade Facilitation. The framework aims to present a unified and global perspective among the ReCs on critical trade facilitation issues.
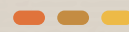
Partner(s):

UN Conference on Trade and Development and UN Regional Commissions

Objective:

To review the progress of trade facilitation related reforms, which will support evidence-based policymaking and reduce the time and cost of trading across borders.

Partnership Period
2015–Present

Target Countries
Global

Funding Sources

- *Government of France*
- *Government of the Republic of Korea*
- *United Nations Development Account*
- *United Nations Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation*

SDG

1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 12, 17

Regional Road Map

Connectivity for the 2030 Agenda
North-South, South-South,
international and regional partnerships

Gender Marker

GEM2a

The UNTF Survey seeks to empower countries and their development partners to enhance comprehension and monitoring of progress in trade facilitation, support evidence-based policymaking, identify good practices and determine capacity-building and technical assistance needs.

To realize this, it is imperative that data be collected over an extended period and from as many countries as possible. For the 2023 UNTF Survey, data collection, validation and aggregation were carried out with the participation of 163 countries, underscoring the robust collaboration among the ReCs as well as with UNCTAD.

As the lead institution of the global initiative, ESCAP manages the validation of the global dataset and coordination among the ReCs and UNCTAD, leads the delivery of global, regional, and subregional reports and manages the website, among other roles.

The UNTF Survey involves two partnership categories: "full partners," comprising ReCs and UNCTAD; and "other partners," such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), International Trade Centre (ITC), and Asian Development Bank (ADB), which offer limited support based on focus and coverage. For example, ADB collaborates on the biennial Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation publication, incorporating UNTF Survey analysis and relevant trade facilitation issues.

For the 2023 UNTF Survey and related reports, ESCAP was supported by regional partners including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat, Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Institute, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the Commonwealth Secretariat, which expanded the project's outreach and provided in-kind and financial contributions for reports and subsequent activities.

Not only do the partnerships ensure the successful conduct of the UNTF Survey, they also play a crucial role in advancing efficient and sustainable trade facilitation. The partnerships also enable discussion and collaboration on potential projects to address emerging needs for capacity-building and technical assistance, while also supporting global, regional, subregional and national policies relating to trade facilitation.

The UNTF Survey serves the interests of policymakers while also proving valuable to development organizations, industry associations, academia, research institutes and other relevant stakeholders. For example, using UNTF Survey preliminary results, ESCAP and the ASEAN Secretariat conducted the Next Generation Trade Facilitation for ASEAN course, which culminated in the *Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation in ASEAN 2023* report. Furthermore, through ESCAP's partnership with PIFS, which has been in place since 2021, the Survey has served as a foundation for ongoing collaboration in trade facilitation areas. Through this partnership, ESCAP has actively engaged in subregional discussions among the Pacific Islands and has been invited to become a founding member of the Pacific E-Commerce Alliance.

As they emphasize the need for further advancement in paperless and cross-border paperless trade, the Survey findings also support ESCAP's work under the Framework Agreement for the Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. A UN treaty adopted by ESCAP in 2016, the Framework Agreement entered into force in 2021 to continue supporting countries' advancements in cross-border paperless trade. As a dedicated intergovernmental platform, the Framework Agreement and the long-standing UNTF Survey, both built on a strong partnership-based approach, provide stable and effective trade facilitation support to member States.

The outcomes of the UNTF Survey, along with its related reports and interactive website, as well as the partnerships on which these outcomes are based, all contribute to the advancement of SDGs, in particular SDG 17 and its target 17.6 on enhancing North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation. The UNTF Survey seeks to empower countries and their development partners to enhance comprehension and monitoring of progress in trade facilitation, support evidence-based policymaking, identify good practices and determine capacity-building and technical assistance needs.

Read more:

UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation

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SNAPSHOT:

A partnership for connecting through the ocean

Maritime and port activities are a key enabler of all dimensions of sustainable economic, social and environmental development and of deeper regional integration. They are also the gateway for international trade, handling over 80 per cent of world trade.[8] They are particularly vital to vulnerable countries such as small island developing States (SIDS), where maritime transport provides a lifeline for the local economy and social development, and where climate change increasingly threatens transport connection reliability.

In 2022, Asia-Pacific countries accounted for 42 per cent of global international trade, underscoring the region's central role in the global trade network.[9] Among the region's total population of 4.7 billion people, 4.5 billion live in 37 coastal countries that are directly connected to maritime transport, excluding 12 landlocked countries.[10] However, considering the active inland water transport of these 12 countries, in reality the entire population of the Asia-Pacific region is affected by maritime transport. Additionally, approximately 45 million people living in Pacific Island countries are entirely dependent on maritime transport. In many countries, however, inadequate maritime port infrastructure is hindering economic development and the risk of disasters in port areas is increasing due to climate change.

Partner(s):
Korea Maritime Institute

Objective:
Advancing regional cooperation policies on sustainable maritime connectivity in Asia and the Pacific.

Partnership Period
1998–present

Target Countries
Asia-Pacific region maritime countries

Funding Sources
- *Korea Maritime Institute*
- *Government of the Republic of Korea*
- *United Nations Development Account*

SDG	Regional Road Map	Gender Marker
9, 13, 17	Climate change Connectivity for the 2030 Agenda	GEM1

There is an urgent need for joint efforts, cooperation and support for the region's developing countries to address these challenges. To do so, long-term research and cooperation are essential, and rather than advancing projects solely at the international organization level, it is necessary to form partnerships with institutions that have expertise, experience and human resources to solve these issues together.

To advance regional cooperation policies on sustainable maritime connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP has partnered with the Korea Maritime Institute (KMI) since 1998.

Established in 1984 as a national research institute in the Republic of Korea, KMI has supported the country's economic development and advancement of its shipping and port industry. It has done so by assisting the establishment of shipping and port policies and conducting research and international cooperation in this field. Due to KMI's policy support and specialized research, the Republic of Korea has been able to generate world class shipping companies and international logistics hubs, which have become a solid foundation for the country's economic development.

The partnership between ESCAP and KMI can be considered both a traditional development partnership while also pursuing transformational development goals. Both partners share the objective of revitalizing maritime transport in the Asia-Pacific region, while also striving to make the maritime transport system more efficient, environmentally friendly and inclusive. ESCAP has a wide network and rich experience in intergovernmental cooperation, along with related personnel, organizations and facilities, while KMI has specialized researchers and experts in maritime transport, along with related budgets and resources. By cooperating to address maritime transport issues using their mutually complementary resources, the two partners can achieve greater results than what each could have achieved individually.

Since signing their agreement for technical cooperation in 1998, ESCAP and KMI have continued their collaboration without interruption. ESCAP has worked with its member States in the Asia-Pacific region to identify maritime transport issues and collaborated with KMI to resolve them, forming partnerships and conducting joint projects. In this regard, ESCAP has been responsible for overall project management, policy recommendation formulation, consultation, collaboration with member States and organizing conferences and workshops, while KMI has handled specialized data research and analysis, report writing and financial support.

In total, 33 technical cooperation projects that address a comprehensive range of regional maritime port issues have been conducted. These projects include container traffic forecasting; maritime transport safety; efficient coastal shipping; decarbonization of maritime transport; resilient maritime strategies; free trade zones and port hinterland development; port tariffs; dry port planning and sustainable port development. Since 2020, ESCAP and KMI have particularly focused on the Pacific Island countries, which are highly vulnerable to external impacts such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, making maritime transport cooperation and support in these areas a priority.

These technical cooperation projects have resulted in the publication of reports, technical support to member States, hosting conferences among member States, and capacity-building and training for policymakers. Through these efforts, member States have been able to form a consensus on the direction for resolving these issues, and countries in need of support have received policy suggestions and technical assistance, enhancing the capabilities of all stakeholders, including policymakers.

In 2023, ESCAP and KMI rearticulated their partnership to provide substantive and financial support to the region's maritime dialogue by helping to establish the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Sustainable Maritime Connectivity. The Forum, held in May 2023 in Bangkok, focused on the South-East Asia region, and will be followed by subregional editions for the Pacific in 2024, East and North-East Asia in 2025, and South and South-West Asia in 2026.

The Forum's establishment is considered highly significant as it will allow for periodic discussions and collaborative efforts on various maritime transport-related issues, and the continuous strengthening and success of the ESCAP and KMI partnership is anticipated.

Read more:

- [Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Connecting to Global Supply Chains through Inter-Regional Land Corridors and Maritime Routes](#)
- [Report on Facilitating Sustainable and Resilient Port Operations and Developments in the Pacific Small Island Developing States: 2023](#)
- [A Study on the Implementation Strategy of the Green Shipping Corridor in Asia and the Pacific](#)
- [Status report on the SAMOA Pathway and Improving Sustainable Maritime Connectivity in the Pacific Region](#)
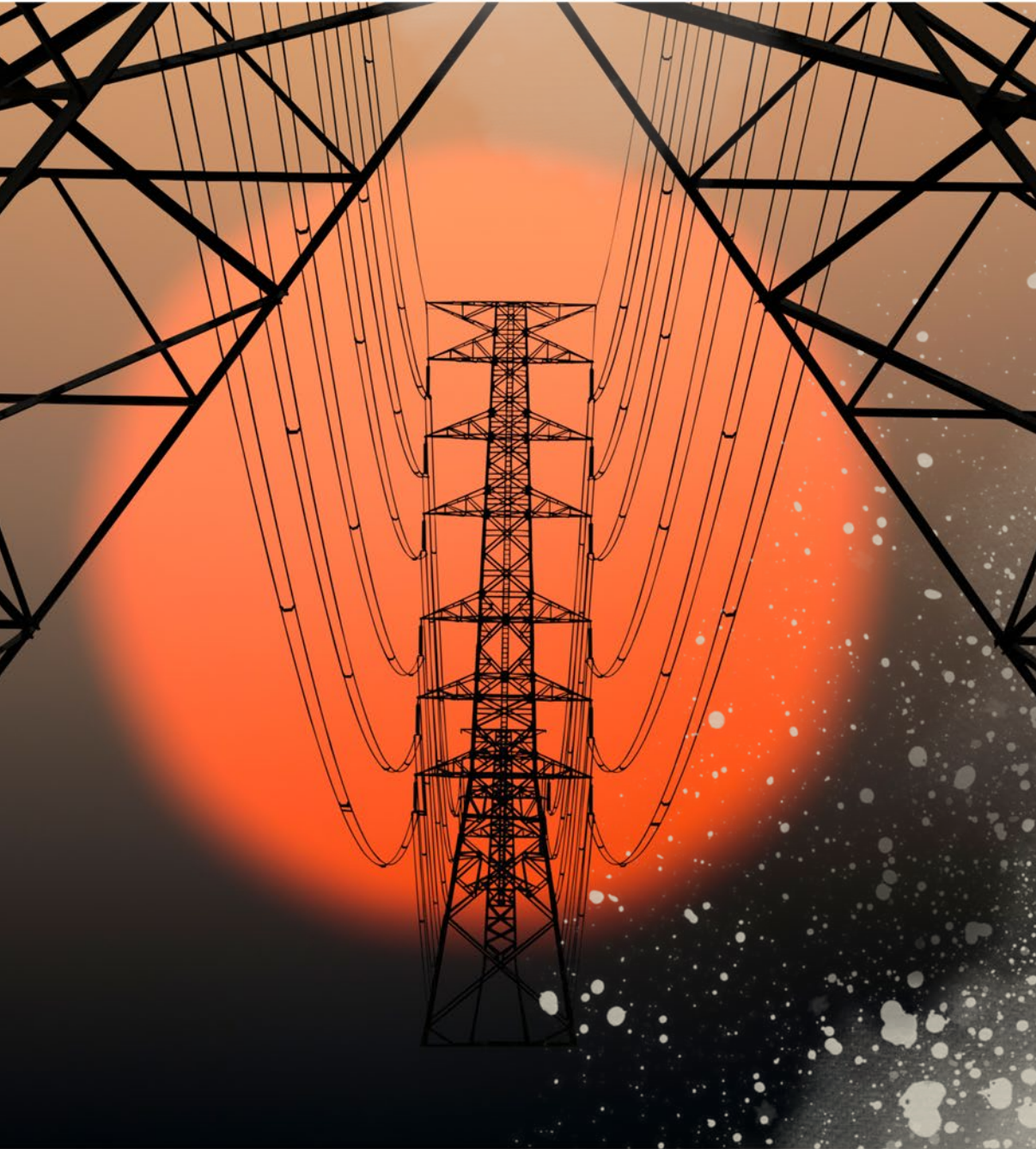
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SNAPSHOT:

Cross-border and regional power system integration to help achieve the energy transition

With a total population of 4.7 billion people in 2021, Asia and the Pacific is the world's fastest-growing region.[11] An increasing population, rapid economic growth and expanding urbanization are driving significant growth in energy demand. However, 125 million people in the region remain without electricity access and 1.2 billion without access to clean cooking fuels.[12] Energy transition can help address these challenges, including eliminating energy poverty, increasing economic growth and social development, improving energy security and mitigating climate change. Cross-border energy connectivity initiatives present opportunities to integrate more renewable energy and help achieve SDG 7 targets and a secure and affordable energy transition.

Many subregions in Asia are actively seeking to integrate their power systems across borders and increase renewable energy deployment, with varying degrees of success. A lack of regulatory harmonization across countries is a key obstacle, and in most cases, the capacity to specifically address cross-border integration topics remains limited. In addition, there have been few efforts to bring regulators together to share experiences and best practices in cross-border energy connectivity.
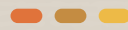
Partner(s):

European University Institute - Florence School of Regulation

Objective:

To improve the ability of regulators and other stakeholders to support cross-border and regional power system integration.

Partnership Period
2021–2023

Target Countries
Asia-Pacific region

Funding Sources
Government of China

SDG
7, 17

Regional Road Map
Connectivity for the 2030 Agenda
Energy

Gender Marker
GEM1

To improve the ability of regulators and other stakeholders to collaborate and support cross-border and regional power system integration, ESCAP has partnered with the European University Institute - Florence School of Regulation (FSR). Mandated to be a centre of excellence for independent discussion and knowledge exchange, its expertise lies in various aspects of energy sector-related regulatory policies, economic regulation and legal frameworks. FSR experts are drawn from top universities, as well as policymaking and regulatory institutions in 12 countries.

FSR organizes tailor-made courses for broad audiences, and has the ability to bring best practices and experiences from across the globe to the Asia-Pacific region, including successful regulatory models, solutions to similar challenges and effective and efficient regulatory frameworks. There is no equivalent organization to FSR within the Asia-Pacific region.

While FSR brings regulatory knowledge and experience in an international and regional context, ESCAP's role in the project begins with its mandate to support increased power system connectivity across the region. In 2021, ESCAP member States endorsed the Regional Road Map on Power System Connectivity. Road map Strategy 4 focuses on the need to coordinate, harmonize and institutionalize policy and regulatory frameworks, and calls for the establishment of forums and associations to support regulatory collaboration in areas such as harmonization, capacity-building and knowledge sharing. Furthermore, ESCAP has developed a strong network of stakeholders and has significant experience in working with national actors on topics related to energy transition and energy connectivity.

The partnership's objective was to develop a set of capacity-building toolkits to support cross-border and regional power system integration, which were primarily aimed at regulators but also utilities, policymakers and private sector stakeholders. As part of the toolkits' development, three training sessions were organized focusing on East and North-East Asia, South and South-West Asia and North and Central Asia respectively, during 2022 and 2023. The session topics covered areas including renewables integration and its impacts on electricity markets, regulatory governance of power systems and electricity connectivity, and models for regional market integration and cross-border transmission expansion, with topics determined according to member States' needs and relevance to the subregion.

Further key activities of the partnership include the 1st and 2nd Asia-Pacific Regulatory Forums on Power System Connectivity, conducted virtually in July 2022 and June 2023 respectively. Discussion topics covered governance, regulatory collaboration to enable renewables integration, energy pricing and energy security and battery storage, among others. Bringing together more than 80 participants from the Asia-Pacific region, each Forum supported the establishment of an informal community of regulators and facilitated knowledge sharing between regulators across subregions.

ESCAP's regional mandate was instrumental to the successful organization of the Forums, which were broadly inclusive of regulatory stakeholders from across Asia and the Pacific, while also attracting the participation of relevant public and private sector stakeholders. Through the partnership with FSR, ESCAP was able to deliver relevant capacity-building to regulators in the targeted subregions while also developing a coherent, foundation-building approach to engaging regulators on the topic of energy connectivity – developing a 'common language' on connectivity that regulators could leverage in their national, subregional and regional engagements.

Overall, the partnership contributed to advancing the SDG 7 objectives in the context of ensuring sustainable, reliable and modern energy systems in Asia and the Pacific, as regulations for renewable energy integration was one of the key topics during the Forums and the capacity-building trainings. Recommendations to structure future projects include the continuation of the Forums and development of tailor-made subregional courses for regulators addressing specific connectivity challenges.

Read more:

Toolkits available at the [ESCAP Community Space](#)

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CHAPTER 4
CLIMATE ACTION

IN FOCUS:

Strengthening local leadership for sustainable urban development

Partner(s):

United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific

Objective:

To reduce the negative impacts of growth and improve human well-being in urban environments through building the capacity of member States to strengthen climate action and sustainable resource use, realize sustainable urban development and eliminate pollution and waste.

Partnership Period

2004–present

Target Countries

Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, the Philippines and Thailand

Funding Sources

- *Government of Germany*
- *Government of the Republic of Korea*
- *United Nations Development Account*
- *United Nations Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation*

SDG	Regional Road Map	Gender Marker
11, 12, 13, 17	Management of natural resources Climate change Policy coherence North-South, South-South, international and regional partnerships	GEM1

The Asia-Pacific region continues to urbanize rapidly. In 2019, for the first time, most of its population was considered urban, and it is expected that by 2050, 70 per cent will live in cities.[13] While cities provide great employment and social development opportunities, the megatrend of rapid urbanization across the region has created significant challenges, such as increased energy and resource demands and plastic and air pollution. Indeed, the world's most polluted cities are in Asia. Urban sprawl has also put pressure on biodiversity and changed the rural-urban dynamic.

Amid these challenges, climate change has resulted in increased risks of storms and typhoons, flooding and displacement of vulnerable populations, especially in coastal communities. As land values increase and housing costs skyrocket, the affordability of cities for residents has become out of reach for many. The region's urban slum population is nearly 600 million,[14] and cities are facing significant challenges to address infrastructure and housing gaps.

For many cities, a lack of awareness and institutional and financial capacity is limiting their ability to properly plan urban futures, and too often local leaders lack access to tools and resources to guide their communities towards more sustainable development pathways. Therefore, it is essential these leaders gain knowledge to develop local actions, promote more sustainable urban development and align their activities with the SDGs.

A shared vision

To reduce urbanization's negative impacts, increase local leadership capacity to implement sustainable urban solutions and improve human well-being in urban environments, ESCAP has partnered with United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific (UCLG-ASPAC). Established in 2004, the network of over 200 cities promotes strong and effective local governments through learning exchange and capacity-building, advocacy and policy research. It also manages programmes and initiatives including the ASEAN Mayors Forum and the regional secretariat of the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy Southeast Asia.

ESCAP and UCLG-ASPAC share a vision for strengthening local governments' abilities to build sustainable communities, while contributing to global climate, sustainable development and urbanization agendas. Since the partnership's establishment, the organizations have collaborated on a range of activities, most notably the Asia-Pacific Mayors Academy and development of Voluntary Local Reviews and local air pollution action plans. Through these ongoing collaborations and provision of complementary resources to joint initiatives, ESCAP and UCLG-ASPAC have supported cities to help achieve their shared vision.

Asia-Pacific Mayors Academy

Established in 2019 by ESCAP, United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat), UCLG-ASPAC and other regional partners, the Asia-Pacific Mayors Academy is the joint initiative's key activity. Building on a long-standing relationship and high level of trust, the partners co-develop and co-deliver the practical executive training programme for newly-elected or appointed mayors from across the region. Each partner contributes time and in-kind resources to the Academy, including technical expertise, to support its structure, recruit participants, evaluate programme applications and manage curriculum components. UCLG-ASPAC's network of cities and knowledge of local transitions have been instrumental in identifying eligible mayors who would benefit from engagement in the programme.

Two six-month Academy classes were held over the 2022 to 2023 period, involving a total of 19 mayors from Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, the Philippines and Thailand. Utilizing ESCAP and UN-Habitat's flagship report, The Future of Asian & Pacific Cities as the core 'curriculum', partners jointly built the capacities of mayoral fellows to develop local initiatives that incorporate the report's thematic pillars (Urban and Territorial Planning; Urban Resilience; Smart Cities and Technologies; and Urban Finance). Cross-cutting guidance on cities and COVID-19 recovery was also presented during the online modules.

Insights from our partners

- ▶ German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)
- ▶ United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific
- ▶ City Mayor of Anilao, the Philippines

Reflecting local priorities and regional guidance

The Academy ensured that mayoral fellows could develop initiatives that reflect local priorities while also incorporating the normative guidance produced by ESCAP and UN-Habitat. Generally convening online every two weeks, partners served as Academy faculty and coordinators and invited additional experts to present lectures and useful case studies. Facilitated dialogues among the mayors also allowed for peer-to-peer exchanges.

Throughout the six-month courses, each of the mayors developed an initiative that incorporated their learnings to be presented to their communities. The initiatives focused on a range of urban issues, such as climate resilience, flood management, smart city solutions and waste management. Each initiative outlined evidence to support actions, multistakeholder governance, planning and policies, resilience and technical assistance and financing, and included initial timelines for implementation.

The mayor of Fuvahmulah in the Maldives, for example, developed an initiative on municipal services digitalization through an online portal for citizens. Meanwhile, the mayor of Kochi, India developed an initiative to address flooding in the city, including through short- and long-term activities such as regular cleaning of canals and preparation of a flood management master plan.

Preparing cities for Voluntary Local Reviews

Following ESCAP's development of the regional Voluntary Local Review (VLR) guidelines, several mayors who participated in the Academy have led their communities through the VLR process. The first city in

the region to apply the VLR guidelines was Subang Jaya, Malaysia in 2021, whose mayor was a fellow of the first class (2019–2020). Building on this success, the city of Sepang, Malaysia completed its first VLR in 2023, following the mayor's participation in the 2022 class. During the same period, the mayors of Naga in the Philippines and Nakhon Si Thammarat in Thailand also completed VLRs.

As part of the VLR process, Sepang outlined its vision to be a 'Clean, Green, Smart and Sustainable Township by 2030', and conducted a rapid assessment of all plans and strategies to align existing plans with the SDGs. This process resulted in a focus on Sepang's core services that contribute to SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). For each of these priority SDGs, specific local strategies were defined to guide local action to achieve the city's vision.

Utilizing ESCAP's guidelines, UCLG-ASPAC also directly supported the city of Surabaya, Indonesia to develop its first VLR in 2022. In Nepal, the city of Dhulikel, whose mayor is President of UCLG-ASPAC, also conducted its VLR in 2022. Each of the VLRs identified local progress towards the SDGs and opportunities to align local and national strategies.

Beyond the Academy

In addition to its curriculum objectives, the Academy aims to expose new mayors to the range of resources, networks and experts available to assist them in their sustainability journey beyond their engagement in the Academy itself. As one of the regional networks, UCLG-ASPAC supports such efforts and has included mayoral fellows in its regular Congress and organization of the ASEAN Mayors Forum, providing them with further opportunities to expand their knowledge and to access resources.

In 2022, for example, the mayor of Fuvahmulah, Maldives, then a fellow in the Academy, expressed interest in engaging in an ESCAP project to support cities to develop local air pollution action plans. UCLG-ASPAC coordinated with the city of Jambi, Indonesia to also join the project.

ESCAP provided direct support to Fuvahmulah, while UCLG-ASPAC jointly delivered assistance to Jambi in the development and implementation of a science-based air pollution city action plan. As a result, both Fuvahmulah and Jambi successfully delivered on-the-ground interventions to reduce air pollution in a beneficiary-driven process, and UCLG-ASPAC was instrumental in supporting local implementation efforts.

The strong partnership between ESCAP and UCLG-ASPAC that drives the Asia-Pacific Mayors Academy continues to provide significant benefit to mayors and cities across the region, while also stimulating more specific local actions, such as VLRs and air pollution plans. These actions are only made possible through the engagements and relationships built through the joint initiative. As the partnership expands and reaches more mayors, the collective efforts to create more sustainable cities will generate further successes.

In recognition of the partnership's approach to sustainable urban development, the German agency for international cooperation, GIZ, included both organizations in a project titled Urban-Act: Integrated Urban Climate Action for low-carbon and resilient cities, which is funded through the International Climate Initiative.

By supporting a transformation of urban development in China, Indonesia, the Philippines, India and Thailand towards low-carbon and resilient development, the project will contribute to the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement. Launched at the Seventh Session of the ESCAP Committee on Environment and Development in December 2022, Urban-Act will continue to 2027.

ASIA-PACIFIC MAYORS ACADEMY

OBJECTIVES

Provides tool, strategies, and models to improve city planning and management approaches

Foster exchange, peer-learning, and cooperation between city leaders to enhance their leadership capacity

Provide a framework for short- to medium-term planning and action towards adoption of more sustainable development pathways

MODULES

Module 1: Cities 2023: Leadership in planning, managing and financing sustainable urban development

Module 2: COVID-19 Response and Recovery: Roles and actions of local governments

Module 3: How to Plan Sustainable Development Pathways: Urban and territorial planning

Module 4: How to Build Urban Resilience

Module 5: Towards Smart and Inclusive Cities

Module 6: How to Finance Sustainable Urban Development

Read more:

- Asia-Pacific Mayors Academy
- ESCAP Urban Air Pollution
- ESCAP Regional Guidelines for Voluntary Local Reviews
- ESCAP SDG Localization

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SNAPSHOT:

Improving air quality through agricultural mechanization

The burning of straw residue by farmers is a common practice in many countries of the Asia-Pacific region. The cultivation method of staple crops such as rice results in an abundance of straw after harvesting, and as it is often perceived as having little or no value and can interfere with subsequent crop planting, farmers try to clear the straw residue from the field. With limited resources and a tight schedule for the next crop cycle, farmers often consider crop burning the most convenient and cheapest option.

This practice results in severe consequences for agricultural production and the environment as it leads to soil deterioration, greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. With the help of appropriate agricultural machinery, farmers can adapt their practices towards the reuse of straw residue for purposes such as fertilizer, cattle feed and base material/substrate for growing mushrooms. However, there is a need to test and promote integrated models of utilizing straw with a focus on enhancing the performance of relevant machinery in specific national or local contexts. As the average size of landholdings in Asia is only one hectare, particular attention is required for addressing the needs of resource-poor smallholder farmers.

Partner(s):

- Pilot in Cambodia: Department of Agricultural Engineering of Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and Swisscontact
- Pilot in China: China Agricultural University in collaboration with local farmers' cooperative and local government entities
- Pilot in Indonesia: Gadjah Mada University
- Pilot in Nepal: Purwanchal Campus, Tribhuvan University
- Pilot in Viet Nam: Sub-Institute of Agricultural Engineering and Post-Harvest Technology

Objective:

Improved crop residue management and air pollution monitoring for sustainable and climate-smart agriculture.

Partnership Period

2019–Present

Target Countries

Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Nepal, Viet Nam

Funding Sources

- *Pooled Extrabudgetary (XB) - Institutional support for the Asian and Pacific Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (CSAM)*

SDG

1, 2, 12, 13, 17

Regional Road Map

Climate change
Management of natural resources
Data and statistics
Technology
Finance
Policy coherence
North-South, South-South, international and regional partnerships

Gender Marker

GEM1

Moreover, least developed countries face especially difficult constraints. In addition to weaknesses in rural infrastructure and agricultural research and extension services, they have limited capacity to manufacture machinery and equipment and rely predominantly on imports, which are often inappropriate for local conditions. For instance, Cambodia and Nepal are relatively small markets for agricultural machinery and farmers may not be aware of new and innovative technologies. Finance and loan services in rural areas are also limited, constraining access to machinery.

To improve crop residue management and air pollution monitoring for sustainable and climate-smart agriculture, since 2019 ESCAP has partnered with development agencies, local and national government institutions, farmers' cooperatives, universities, research centers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to deliver the Regional Initiative on Integrated and Climate-Smart Management of Straw Residue through Mechanization-based Solutions. As part of the initiative, pilot projects have been conducted in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Nepal and Viet Nam.

Within ESCAP, the initiative is implemented by the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (CSAM), one of the organization's regional institutions. CSAM promotes agricultural mechanization in support of the related SDGs, and has a unique comparative advantage in enabling South-South and triangular cooperation in this area. The project has been implemented in collaboration with ESCAP's Environment and Development Division, which has expertise in the area of air pollution monitoring.

CSAM provided funding for the trials of the mechanized solutions, made it possible for the pilot teams to share their knowledge and practices and learn from each other, and promoted wider replication of the improved technologies and practices. Furthermore, the field trial results documentation, subsequent adaptation of the technologies and demonstration sessions provided the technical basis for continued replication at other regional sites. These aspects were also showcased beyond the beneficiary countries using CSAM's convening role in the region and by leveraging ESCAP's intergovernmental platforms.

The Regional Initiative has enabled farming community and change agents at the pilot sites to implement improved technologies and practices for integrated straw residue management, as well as evidence-based decision-making supported by innovative air pollution monitoring approaches. This can be seen from the 53.7 per cent increase in the amount of sustainably utilized straw from the pilot sites in Cambodia, Indonesia, and Nepal from 7.92 tons/ha/season to 12.17 tons/ha/season.

Further key results of the project include 1,000 tons of wheat and maize straw from the pilot site in China sustainably utilized, amounting to an equivalent emissions reduction of 1,579 tons of CO_2 per year; while in Viet Nam, the pilot's indoor mushroom growing technology was demonstrated as superior to the traditional outdoor method, producing higher mushroom yield and quality, and reducing production costs.

ESCAP's Regional Initiative on Mechanization Solutions for Integrated Management of Straw Residue, which has been extended to new countries under the current project, was identified as a good practice in South-South and triangular cooperation by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation in 2022.

Read more:

- [Research paper on 'Air Pollution and Greenhouse Gas Emissions from the Agricultural Sector in South and Southeast Asia'](#)
- [Brief on 'Reducing the Need to Burn: How Applying Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization in Cambodia can Improve Air Quality'](#)
- [Brief on 'Reducing the Need to Burn: How Applying Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization in Indonesia can Improve Air Quality'](#)
- [Brief on 'Reducing the Need to Burn: How Applying Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization in Nepal can Improve Air Quality'](#)
- [Brief on 'Reducing the Need to Burn: How Applying Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization in South and Southeast Asia can Improve Air Quality'](#)

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SNAPSHOT:

Supporting city-led climate actions in North-East Asia

The roles of cities in addressing climate change challenges faced by the entire world are critical, as cities are responsible for 70 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).[15] More than half of the global population lives in cities, and by 2050, it is expected that more than two-thirds will live in urban areas. Therefore, cities are critical players of climate actions to realize global climate commitments, such as the 2015 Paris Agreement, to substantially reduce CO_2 emissions and build resilience to the changing climate conditions.

In North-East Asia, there are already many local-level efforts to address climate change, engaging citizens, businesses and other stakeholders in line with national pledges on climate actions. As climate mitigation is a global common goal that must be supported by collective local actions, the experiences of city-led climate initiatives should be shared to allow cities to learn from each other and to accelerate collective efforts.

To provide a platform for multi-sectoral stakeholders to share experiences, information and ideas and identify collaborative opportunities, and to support these stakeholders to move towards low-carbon cities through capacity-building activities, ESCAP has partnered with Incheon Metropolitan City in the Republic of Korea under the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC).

Partner(s):

Incheon Metropolitan City, Republic of Korea

Objective:

To expand the partnership for promoting climate action at the city level and create synergies among existing city initiatives pursuing low carbon cities in and beyond North-East Asia.

Partnership Period

2010–present

Target Countries

China, Mongolia, Japan, Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation

Funding Sources

- *Government of China*
- *Government of Mongolia*
- *Government of the Republic of Korea*
- *Incheon Metropolitan City*

SDG	Regional Road Map	Gender Marker
13, 17	Climate change	GEM1

The partnership was forged in 2010 when the ESCAP Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia was established in Incheon. Together, the partners implement technical cooperation initiatives, most recently the Low-Carbon Cities programme, in collaboration with a diverse range of institutional and government partners.

As part of the Low-Carbon Cities programme, ESCAP and Incheon Metropolitan City have organized the International Forum on Low-Carbon Cities annually since 2021. Through leveraging the networks of each partner, the Forums have brought together a diverse range of local climate action stakeholders, including government officials, city representatives and networks, academia, civil society, youth and the private sector. While ESCAP invited government representatives, UN agencies and international organizations to the Forums, Incheon Metropolitan City brought its sister cities in North-East Asia, local governments, institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Republic of Korea.

With a focus on city-led efforts to reduce GHG emissions in line with national and global climate goals, the Forum discussions have included nature-based solutions, circular economies, green financing, stakeholder engagement including the youth and the private sector, the roles of cities and city networks, and technology and innovation for local climate actions. Through the joint platform, many cities have shared their experiences and discussed how cities could better support national and global climate efforts. The Forums have also encouraged effective public, private and people partnerships, contributing to SDG 17.

Building on the partnership with Incheon Metropolitan City, ESCAP's initiatives on low- carbon cities have also expanded to activities such as training workshops on science, technology and innovation for low-carbon and resilient cities; convening of the 2023 Incheon International Education Forum; a session on city-led climate innovations at the 8th Asia-Pacific Urban Forum; and a knowledge product covering best practices on low-carbon cities in North-East Asia.

Overall, ESCAP's partnership with Incheon Metropolitan City has contributed to the acceleration of collaborative activities in support of SDG 13. These activities include reducing GHG emissions, awareness-raising and building human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation. This is evidenced by Incheon's announcement of its goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045 — five years ahead of the national target of the Republic of Korea — at the 2nd International Forum on Low-Carbon Cities in 2022. As a follow-up, the academic and scientific research institute, Incheon Institute, is developing the city's master plan for carbon neutrality and green growth, which is expected to be launched in 2024.

At the 26th Senior Officials Meeting held in November 2023, member States of NEASPEC acknowledged the successes of ESCAP and Incheon's partnership, and expressed their willingness to collaborate on promoting knowledge sharing and peer learning for the transition towards low-carbon cities. The impact of the partners' collaborative work can also be seen in the noticeable increase in the number of organizations that participated in ESCAP's climate actions initiatives and forums, from 143 in 2021 to 220 in 2023.

In the longer-term, the partnership is expected to enhance cooperation on transboundary environmental challenges and strengthen the capacity of policymakers and other stakeholders to ensure environmental sustainability for the achievement of the SDGs.

Read more:

- 1st International Forum on Low Carbon Cities, 23-24 November 2021 (virtual)
- 2nd International Forum on Low Carbon Cities, 6-8 December 2022, Incheon, Republic of Korea (hybrid)
- 3rd International Forum on Low Carbon Cities, 29 August 2023, Incheon, Republic of Korea

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SNAPSHOT:

Accelerating sustainable finance in Asia's emerging markets

Climate change has broad-ranging implications for economies, fiscal and debt positions, the financial system, the environment and society. ESCAP estimates that the cost of attaining a 2°C scenario for the Asia-Pacific region will amount to only 0.1 per cent of gross domentic product (GDP) annually, or 4 per cent by 2050. In contrast, the most negative business-as-usual scenario could cost the region 26.5 per cent of its GDP by 2050. Within this context, ESCAP estimates the investments needed to enhance regional climate resilience through mitigation and adaptation is approximately US$ 373 billion per year by 2030. However, the region is facing a more constrained fiscal space due to rising sovereign indebtedness and interest rates coupled with a slowdown in economic growth.

Since 2010, ESCAP has partnered with the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), a treaty-based international organization promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth in developing countries and emerging markets. In 2021, the two organizations began technical cooperation work on green financing in Cambodia and Sri Lanka, which has resulted in two projects: Financing the Green Transition, established in 2022 to enable policies and financing mechanisms to support a green low-carbon future; and Scaling Up Climate Finance in Asia-Pacific, established in 2023 to enable policies and financing instruments to support climate adaptation and mitigation.

Partner(s):

Global Green Growth Institute

Objective:

To strengthen the policy and regulatory environment of Least Developed Countries in the region, enabling the development of green financing instruments and policy measures to accelerate climate mitigation and adaptation financing activities.

Partnership Period

2010–present

Target Countries

Cambodia, Sri Lanka

Funding Sources

United Nations Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation

SDG	Regional Road Map	Gender Marker
13, 15, 17	Finance Climate change	GEM1

The strength of the partnership between ESCAP and GGGI lies in the complementary resources each organization brings to the table. As a United Nations entity, ESCAP has enabled the project team to engage the highest levels of government on climate finance policy-related issues, while GGGI contributes unique expertise and hands-on experience in climate finance projects and private sector partnership. Together, the partners have created platforms for collective learning and capacity-building, increased the diversity of project personnel and their innovation capacity, and formed a collective of development partners working to achieve similar goals.

Furthermore, in 2021, ESCAP and GGGI jointly launched a green and climate finance knowledge product on the sidelines of the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26). Following this, in 2022 ESCAP co-hosted a thematic bond training with the National Bank of Cambodia, which resulted in the Securities and Exchange Regulator of Cambodia (SERC) requesting GGGI's and ESCAP's support to capacitate Cambodia's sustainable bond market, leading to the Cambodia Sustainable Bond Accelerator programme. In 2023, ESCAP and GGGI launched the Cambodia Sustainable Bond Accelerator initiative in partnership with SERC, the Credit Guarantee and Investment Facility (CGIF) and GuarentCo. Parallel to this, in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and Finance of Cambodia, ESCAP has also initiated a joint training programme on sovereign sustainability bond issuance, with GGGI and UNDP.

In Sri Lanka, ESCAP has led the development of Sri Lanka's Green Bond Framework, which can be used to support debt restructuring, or for sovereign bond issuance once debt sustainability has been reestablished. The cabinet approved the framework in 2023 and requested that ESCAP and GGGI co-finance the second party opinion of the framework, which is a key step in moving towards green bond issuance. Additionally, the two organizations have conducted two training programmes for the government and private sector on the issuance of green/blue bonds. At the ASEAN level, ESCAP and GGGI were selected by the ASEAN Senior-level Committee Task Force on Sustainable Finance to co-lead the development of the ASEAN Green Map, with funding from the ASEAN-Korea Financial Cooperation Centre. This green finance mapping initiative began in December 2023 and will continue through 2024.

Marking significant milestones in just three years, results of the partnership include the Comprehensive Policy Framework on the Development of Government Securities 2023–2028 in Cambodia, which provides specifications on the 'issuance of government thematic bonds' including green, social, sustainability and sustainability-linked bonds in alignment with the SDGs, while Sri Lanka's green bond framework second party opinion is scheduled for completion by mid-2024. Both governments are now equipped to issue sustainable debt based on their unique needs.

Overall, through policy papers and training programmes, ESCAP and GGGI have deepened green financing knowledge across Asia and the Pacific. As sustainable finance is relevant to all SDGs, the partnership reinforces ESCAP's commitment to the 2030 Agenda throughout the region.

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CHAPTER 5
DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND RESILIENCE

IN FOCUS:

Building resilient agriculture through technical cooperation on geospatial information systems

Partner(s):

Aerospace Information Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (AIR CAS, previously known as the Institute of Remote Sensing the Digital Earth, or RADI)

Objective:

To strengthen the capacity of member States to use satellite data and geospatial information for effective development of climate resilient agricultural practices, drought monitoring and early warning systems.

Partnership Period

2013–present

Target Countries

Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Thailand

Funding Sources

- *Aerospace Information Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (AIR CAS)*
- *Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency of Thailand (GISTDA)*
- *Government of the Russian Federation*

SDG	Regional Road Map	Gender Marker
1, 2, 6, 13, 15, 17	Disaster risk reduction and resilience Management of natural resources Climate change North-South, South-South, international and regional partnerships	GEM1

Building resilient agricultural systems is critical to addressing the interlinked challenges of climate change, poverty and hunger in the Asia-Pacific region. The region is home to over 155.2 million people who live in extreme poverty (i.e., on less than $2.15 a day)[16] and to over 370 million undernourished people.[17] In 2021, 563 million people or 12 per cent of the region's population depended on agriculture as a primary source of livelihood.[18] In countries such as Cambodia and Lao PDR, the number is as high as 70 per cent[19] and 61 per cent[20] of the population, respectively.

The agriculture sector contends with myriad challenges, such as ensuring food security and adequate nutrition for a growing population, supporting the livelihoods of millions of farmers and producers, and doing so in an environmentally sustainable way.[21] Geospatial information systems can enable decision makers and policymakers — and ultimately, farmers — to address these challenges and build resilient agricultural systems. However, establishing these systems requires investment in infrastructure and in building technical capacities, which are still beyond the reach of some of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Over a decade of partnership for climate resilient agriculture

Considering the economic and social value of the agricultural sector in many countries in the region, it is of vital importance to enable these States to leverage advances in space science and technology applications for building the sector's resilience to climate-related impacts. In this regard, since 2013, ESCAP has partnered with the Aerospace Information Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (AIR CAS), along with other regional cooperation partners,

as part of broader efforts to implement the projects under the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development (RESAP). By leveraging South-South cooperation to solve common challenges, the partnership is encouraging spacefaring countries and emerging spacefaring countries to leverage each other's resources, including Earth observation data and operational tools, knowledge, experiences, technical expertise and networks.

Together, ESCAP, AIR CAS and regional cooperation partners are creating the levers that will deliver systemic transformation to help build a climate-resilient agricultural sector.

Beginning in Mongolia with the development of a drought monitoring system called DroughtWatch Mongolia, the partnership expanded to help build the resilience of agriculture to climate risks in the Lower Mekong Basin in 2019. At that time, ESCAP and AIR CAS joined forces with the Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency of Thailand (GISTDA) to provide satellite data and deliver hands-on training to its neighboring countries, Cambodia and Lao PDR. In 2021, the partnership's scope of work extended to the implementation of the Central Asian Drought Information System (CADIS) in Kyrgyzstan, where drought events have intensified and increasingly threaten crop production and the economy.

The programme interventions comprise a technical component, which involves enhancing, expanding and calibrating a crop monitoring system to national conditions, through data and applications that combine ground-based information with satellite data; and a training component, which enhances technical skills in processing, interpreting and using data for crop monitoring and early warnings.
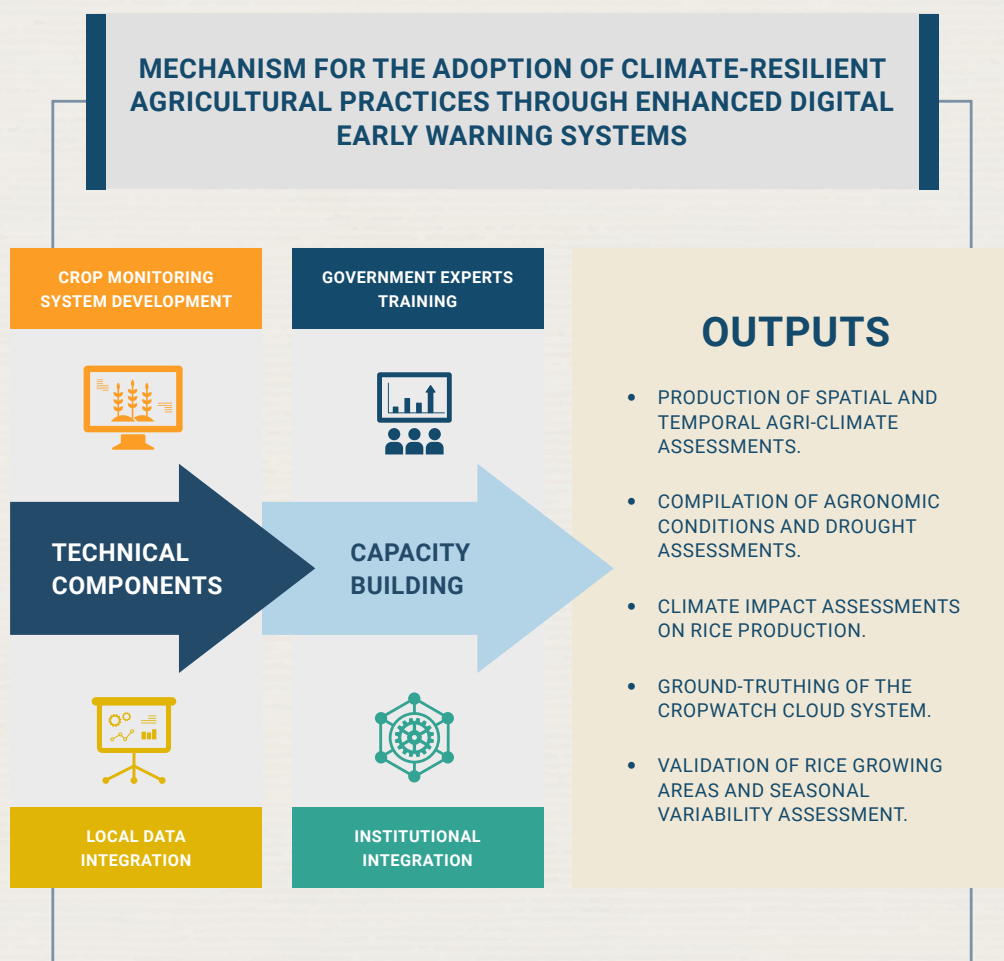
Insights from our partners

- ▶ Aerospace Information Research Institute, Chinese Academy of Sciences
- ▶ Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency, Thailand
- ▶ Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Cambodia
- ▶ Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Lao PDR
- ▶ University of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan

The agencies participating in the programme vary across countries, but generally, the training component targets line agencies responsible for agriculture, natural resource management, forestry, innovation, science and technology and emergency response.

As well as focusing on disaster risk reduction, resilience and climate change, RESAP works on natural resources management, social development, connectivity for the 2030 Agenda and energy, as contained in the *Asia-Pacific Plan of Action on Space Applications for Sustainable Development (2018–2030)*, which guides and aligns RESAP's work with the SDGs.

MECHANISM FOR THE ADOPTION OF CLIMATE-RESILIENT AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES THROUGH ENHANCED DIGITAL EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

CROP MONITORING SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

GOVERNMENT EXPERTS TRAINING

TECHNICAL COMPONENTS

CAPACITY BUILDING

LOCAL DATA INTEGRATION

INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRATION

OUTPUTS

- PRODUCTION OF SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL AGRI-CLIMATE ASSESSMENTS.

- COMPILATION OF AGRONOMIC CONDITIONS AND DROUGHT ASSESSMENTS.

- CLIMATE IMPACT ASSESSMENTS ON RICE PRODUCTION.

- GROUND-TRUTHING OF THE CROPWATCH CLOUD SYSTEM.

- VALIDATION OF RICE GROWING AREAS AND SEASONAL VARIABILITY ASSESSMENT.

Complementary strengths

Since RESAP's inception over a decade ago, ESCAP has focused on three key areas: research and analysis, capacity-building and technical support, and regional knowledge sharing. Through its research and analytical work, ESCAP has provided the basis for intervention design, defined the development problem that geospatial systems can address, and identified synergies with broader sustainable development solutions. The organization has also helped guide the institutional and policy aspects of introducing and adopting geospatial systems for agriculture, such as providing advice on user engagement and the institutional and policy transformations required to make their applications effective.

ESCAP also takes the lead in designing, coordinating and delivering capacity-building activities at the national and regional levels to support the primary beneficiaries.

In addition, it has facilitated countries with more advanced crop monitoring systems to share their experiences and knowledge through regional workshops, knowledge exchange and digital platforms, most notably the Geospatial Good Practices Database and Dashboard. To inspire innovation, beneficiary countries have also been provided forums to share their experiences with other countries in the region.

To complement ESCAP's resources and capacity-building expertise, AIR CAS brings its wealth of technical expertise in dynamic crop monitoring powered by machine learning and cloud computing technology. Under the RESAP framework, AIR CAS has built the capacity of beneficiary countries to use its flagship cloud-based tool CropWatch, without requiring the countries to invest in the tool's infrastructure, operations or maintenance.

AIR CAS provided the financial resources to carry out the activities in the Lower Mekong Basin, while the Government of Russian Federation provided funds and deployed expertise to Kyrgyzstan.

Through its South-South cooperation approach between spacefaring countries and emerging spacefaring countries, and by engaging a range of regional cooperation partners, such as GISTDA, the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) and ASEAN

Research and Training Center for Space Technology and Applications, ESCAP and AIR CAS have created a strong mechanism for collective learning and capacity-building. By combining their complementary resources, they are successfully introducing innovative ideas and maximizing their impact in beneficiary countries. Ultimately, their collaborative efforts have enabled RESAP to develop country-specific science-based tools and services that improve crop monitoring and build resilient agricultural sectors.

Furthermore, the programme's interventions have led to more coherent UN system interventions at the country level. While implementing the RESAP activities in Cambodia, ESCAP has been able to bring together relevant UN agencies implementing related initiatives, including the UN Resident Coordinator Offices, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

MECHANISM TO STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY OF TARGET CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES TO USE SATELLITE DATA AND GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION FOR EFFECTIVE DROUGHT MONITORING AND EARLY WARNING

TECHNICAL COMPONENTS

01 Analytical studies
Conduct an analytical study to find good modalities and practices on drought information systems globally and regionally.

02 Stakeholder consultations
Organize key stakeholders' meetings to design the draft plans to build a pilot Central Asia drought information system.

03 System development
Build a pilot Central Asia drought information system in selected pilot country(ies).

CAPACITY BUILDING

01 Specialized trainings
Conduct capacity building training programmes to use and manage a pilot drought information system with development of operation manuals.

02 Knowledge sharing
Share outputs and key findings of the project with stakeholders at international and regional meetings.

OUTPUTS

01 Operational system
Target stakeholders in selected Central Asian countries have access to a pilot drought information tool for monitoring drought and issuing early warnings.

Lowering the barrier of entry to geospatial systems

By gaining access to the latest science, applications of cutting-edge technologies and international expertise through the programme, beneficiary countries have been able to leapfrog to new digital innovations and geospatial information systems applications without investing in space infrastructure. As a result, they

have been able to adopt innovative solutions that make geospatial data for crop monitoring accessible, affordable and actionable to inform people, policies and practices.

In the long run, the widespread use of these monitoring systems in decision making is expected to result in agricultural systems that are resilient to the impacts of climate change, and that crop damage

due to pests and extreme weather and climate events can be better managed to minimize their adverse impacts.

During years when the production shortfall is expected to be substantial, the advance information and early warnings generated through the monitoring systems will serve as critical input for anticipatory actions to avoid food insecurity.

Through its various initiatives and interventions, the ESCAP-AIR CAS partnership, as well as the support of regional cooperation partners such as GISTDA and the Scientific Research Center of Space Hydrometeorology of Planeta of the Russian Federation, have lowered the barrier of entry to adopting geospatial agricultural drought and crop monitoring systems in countries that need them most. As a result, the target countries have gained access to drought and crop monitoring systems that integrate data from earth observation and other sources, as well as the capabilities to process and manage them.

Utilizing these systems, the beneficiary countries can now monitor agricultural drought and crop health and estimate yields, identify hotspots where rice production is at risk and identify production-suitable areas. These types of information are critical to reduce production damage and losses, optimize yield and develop climate change adaptation strategies.

Ultimately, the RESAP partnership is equipping countries with the expertise, tools and knowledge needed to mitigate present and future threats to rice production and ensure food security. As climate change intensifies, continued support is needed to scale the partnership to assist countries that are at risk of being left behind.

Read more:

- Asia-Pacific Plan of Action on Space Applications for Sustainable Development (2018-2030)
- Building the Central Asia Drought Information System in Kyrgyzstan (2023)
- Space+ for our Earth and Future

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SNAPSHOT:

55 years of partnership to achieve
Early Warnings for All

Climate change-induced disasters pose an increasingly serious threat to Asia and the Pacific. The region remains the most disaster-prone in the world, with 2 million people having lost their lives to disasters since 1970. Over 140 disasters struck the region in 2022, leading to over 7,500 deaths, affecting over 64 million people and causing economic damage estimated at US$ 57 billion.[22] Decades prior, Tropical Cyclone Bhola in November 1970 resulted in 300,000 deaths in Bangladesh, while Tropical Cyclone Nargis in May 2008 led to 140,000 deaths in Myanmar.[23] The devastating impacts of transboundary weather events necessitate subregional approaches to strengthen early warning systems.

In 1968, ESCAP partnered with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) to establish the Typhoon Committee, an intergovernmental body that promotes and coordinates the planning and implementation of measures to minimize the loss of life and material damage caused by typhoons emerging from the Western Pacific Ocean. Following the world's deadliest tropical cyclone on record, Tropical Cyclone Bhola in 1970, ESCAP and WMO again joined forces to establish the Panel on Tropical Cyclones, which supports countries across the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.

Partner(s):

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

Objective:

To promote and coordinate the planning and implementation of measures to improve cyclone early warning systems.

Partnership Period

1968–present

Target Countries

Asia-Pacific region

Funding Sources

Governments of :

- *Bangladesh*
- *Germany*
- *India*
- *Italy*
- *Japan*
- *Nepal*
- *the Netherlands*
- *the Philippines*
- *Sweden*
- *Switzerland*
- *Thailand*
- *Türkiye*

SDG

1, 2, 9, 11,13, 17

Regional Road Map

Disaster risk reduction and resilience
Climate change
Technology
Finance
North-South, South-South,
international and regional partnerships

Gender Marker

GEM1

Both the Typhoon Committee and the Panel on Tropical Cyclones work to establish collective early warning systems, resulting in low-capacity, high-risk countries such as Bangladesh and Myanmar accessing extended lead times from neighboring National Hydrological and Meteorological Services (NHMS), thus saving lives in the face of natural hazards.

Together, ESCAP and the WMO have facilitated the merging of complementary skills, the pooling of resources and sharing of risks, allowing for synergy, scale and connection in the implementation of technical cooperation activities. For example, the ESCAP Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness has supported both the Typhoon Committee and Panel on Tropical Cyclone mechanisms through dedicated programme funding. Furthermore, the Synergized Standard Operating Procedures for Coastal Multi-hazard Early Warning Systems programme, also funded by the ESCAP Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness, developed shared resources to support countries targeted by both mechanisms to operationally shift from single to multi-hazard approaches.

Furthermore, the partnership has led to the creation of collective legitimacy of knowledge and standards, the critical mass needed to deliver otherwise impossible

outcomes and a mechanism for collective learning and capacity-building, with the aim of transformational development for early warning systems. For example, to produce joint analysis in support of regional efforts to strengthen climate resilience, the two organizations, along with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia (RIMES), provided strategic input to the inaugural G20 Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction. As a result, the group of 19 countries and the European Union (G20) members proposed the group's priority to support global early warning systems through regional cooperative approaches.

In recognition of the success of regional cooperative efforts to strengthen early warning systems in Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP has been mandated to develop and implement a regional strategy in support of the global and national-level Early Warnings for All initiative, which is co-led by WMO and UNDRR.

Insights from our partners

▶ World Meteorological Organization

Overall, 55 years of the ESCAP/WMO-led intergovernmental mechanisms have resulted in substantial reduction in loss of lives due to transboundary typhoon events. The reduction can be directly correlated to the increase in capacity and accuracy of shared transboundary early warning systems, which directly support the region's low-capacity, high-risk countries. The Panel has successfully tracked and monitored countless tropical cyclones from formation to landfall through cross-border collaboration, involving real-time data sharing and risk information exchange across the common ocean basin. The positive outcomes in managing two recent cyclones emphasize the Panel's effectiveness:

On 14 May 2023, accompanied by sustained winds of 180–190 km/h, violent gusts, torrential rainfall and flooding, Cyclone Mocha made landfall in Myanmar in a highly vulnerable context of compounding poverty, inequality and environmental degradation. However, the recorded casualties by Cyclone Mocha remained at 145, compared to nearly 140,000 by Cyclone Nargis, which was as powerful as Cyclone Mocha.[24]

On 26 June 2023, Cyclone Biparjoy, with wind speed of 140 km/h, hit densely populated areas of Gujarat State on India's west coast. Despite its ferocity, no casualties were recorded.[25]

The accuracy of early warnings leading to targeted evacuations during cyclones Mocha and Biparjoy saved tens of thousands at risk. Furthermore, most countries working with the Typhoon Committee and Panel on Tropical Cyclones are engaging in joint advocacy for national climate policies to be risk-informed, shifting from single to multi-hazard approaches and promoting the interoperability of systems.

These achievements, as well as the institutionalization of impact-based forecasting, are further examples of the transformational change that the ESCAP/WMO partnership has resulted in across the Asia-Pacific region, leading to a reduction in the loss of lives and economic impacts of natural hazards.

Read more:

- Typhoon Committee
- Panel on Tropical Cyclones
- Early Warnings for All Initiative
- 50th Anniversary of Panel on Tropical Cyclones

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SNAPSHOT:

Building resilience to sand
and dust storms

Sand and dust storms can detrimentally impact both food security and human health, which leads to substantial economic and environmental losses while also damaging crucial infrastructure in agriculture, energy and transportation. Despite being essential for various ecosystems, these storms pose significant risks to society and the environment, directly jeopardizing the achievement of 11 out of the 17 SDGs.

In India, for example, over 500 million people face exposure to medium and high levels of poor air quality due to such storms, with similar challenges affecting 173 million people in Pakistan, 62 million in the Islamic Republic of Iran and 40 million in China.[26] Proportionally, more than 80 per cent of the total populations of Turkmenistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran experience medium and high levels of poor air quality caused by these storms. The cities in Southwestern Asia have the highest exposure, with nearly 60 million people enduring over 170 dusty days annually in 2019.

Moreover, lives and livelihoods are directly at risk, as extensive farmland areas in Turkmenistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan are affected by dust deposition, which often contains a high salt content, damaging plants and reducing crop yields. Additionally, dust deposition in critical areas such as the Himalaya-Hindu Kush mountain range and Tibetan Plateau threatens fresh water for over 1.3 billion people.

Partner(s):

Barcelona Supercomputing Centre, the Department of Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, European Institute on Economics and the Environment, Finnish Meteorological Institute, Oxford University, Risk Nexus Initiative, Spanish Council of Scientific Research in Barcelona, Tohoku University, UNDRR and WMO.

Objective:

To support policymakers for concerted action at the regional level to reduce risk and strengthen resilience to sand and dust storms.

Partnership Period
2020–2023

Target Countries
Asia-Pacific region

Funding Sources
Pooled Extrabudgetary (XB) - Institutional support for the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management (APDIM)

SDG

1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15

Regional Road Map

Disaster risk reduction and resilience
Climate change
Data and statistics
Policy coherence

Gender Marker

GEM2a

Deposition on glaciers also induces a warming effect, accelerating ice melting and leading to challenges in food security, energy production, agriculture, water stress and flooding. As governments strive to ensure universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy, the risk to electricity generation from sand and dust storms is also expected to escalate.

To assist regional policymakers in taking coordinated action to mitigate risk and enhance resilience against sand and dust storms, the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management (APDIM), a regional institution of ESCAP, produced a comprehensive report titled *Sand and Dust Storms Risk Assessment in Asia and the Pacific*. Drawing on expertise and support from diverse contributors and released in August 2021, the report is the inaugural effort to assess and analyze the extensive geographical risks these storms pose to society and the environment in Asia and the Pacific.

Data for the report was gathered through direct collaboration with various organizations, including the Finnish Meteorological Institute, the International Air Transport Association, the Japan Meteorological Agency, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Sand and Dust Storm Warning Advisory and Assessment System Network and the China Meteorological Administration. Various open-source data was also utilized, including from various NASA offices, national mapping organizations and universities.

The report received significant enrichment and ongoing technical support from experts over several months, including from Tohoku University, the Barcelona Supercomputing Centre, the Finnish Meteorological Institute, the Spanish Council of Scientific Research in Barcelona, Oxford University,

the Risk Nexus Initiative, the European Institute on Economics and the Environment and the Department of Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. APDIM also benefited from reviews and advice from experts within the United Nations system, including the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the WMO. Further peer review was conducted by professors from the Australian National University, the New South Wales Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Farm Business Management and Agriculture, and Massey University's School of Agriculture and Environment.

Based on the key findings of the Sand and Dust Risk Assessment, the report stresses the need for deeper understanding of the risk and impacts of sand and dust storms, alongside improving sand and dust storms risk management by enhancing data and information management, impact-based monitoring and early warning, coordinated risk management, adaptation and mitigation. The report also calls for expanding and enhancing transboundary and regional cooperation.

The report's findings garnered widespread media attention, indicating a high level of interest in the subject matter within the region. The press release about the report launch was published in 27 news outlets and journals across various countries.

Overall, coupled with in-depth subregional and thematic consultations with affected countries, the report contributed to regional awareness raising and established the evidence base on the negative impacts of sand and dust storms. This led to ESCAP's endorsement of the Regional Plan of Action on Sand and Dust Storms in Asia and the Pacific in 2022. The endorsement of the Regional Plan by ESCAP member States reflects the commitment of the countries to take effective measures towards policy development on sand and dust storms risk reduction.

Read more:
- Sand and Dust Storms Risk Assessment in Asia and the Pacific
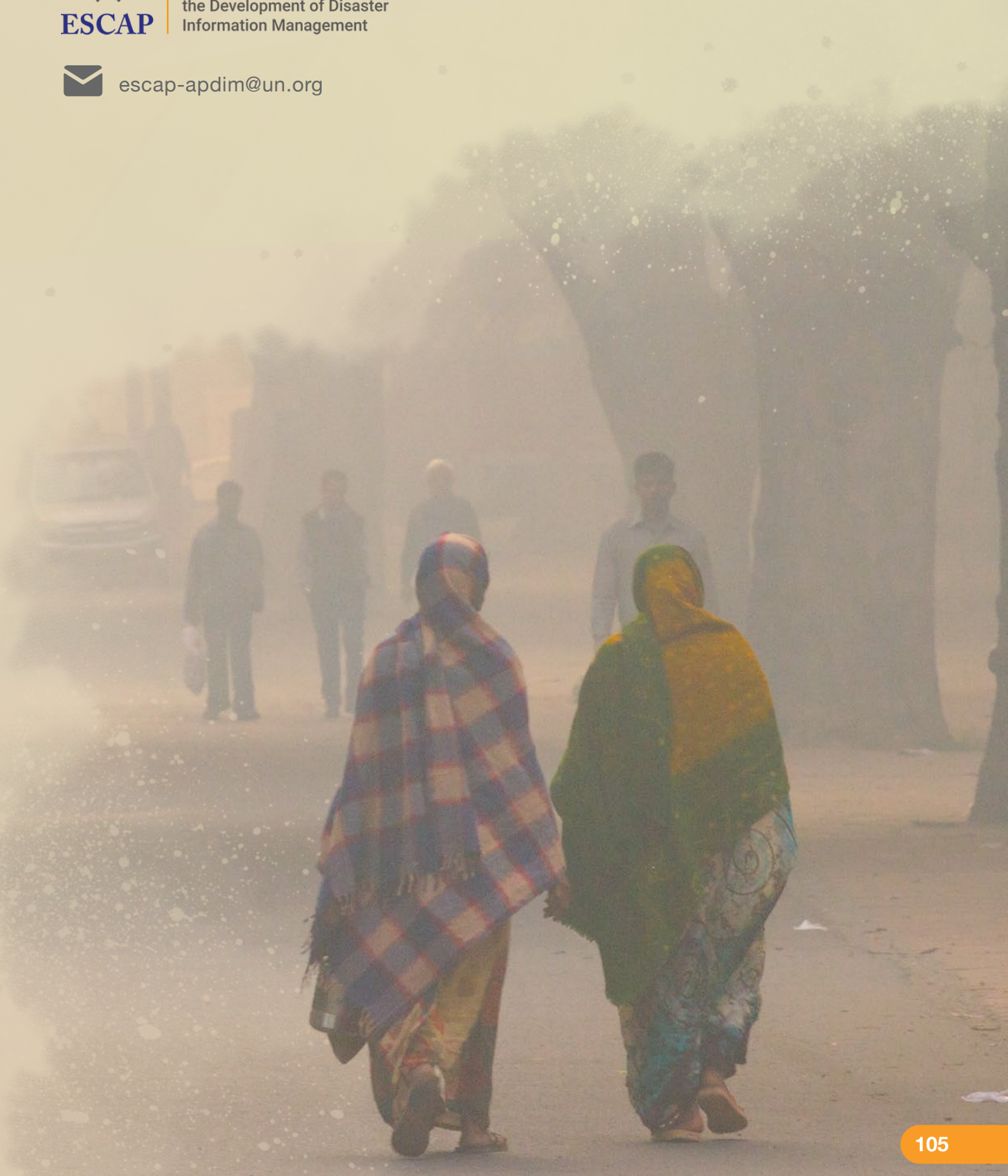- Regional Plan of Action on Sand and Dust Storms in the Asian and Pacific Region

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the Development of Disaster
Information Management

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ANNEX

List of Donors in 2022-2023

BILATERAL DONORS

- Bangladesh
- Brunei Darussalam
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- Canada
- China
- Fiji
- France
- Germany
- Hong Kong, China
- India
- Indonesia
- Italy
- Iran (Islamic Republic of)
- Japan
- Kazakhstan
- Macao, China
- Malaysia
- Maldives
- Micronesia (Federated States of)
- Mongolia
- Pakistan
- Philippines (the)
- Republic of Korea
- Russian Federation (the)
- Samoa
- Singapore
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Thailand
- Timor-Leste
- Tuvalu
- United States of America
- Uzbekistan
- Viet Nam

UNITED NATIONS

- Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- International Organization for Migration
- Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
- United Nations Environment Programme
- United Nations Office for Project Services
- United Nations Office for Project Services - EIF
- United Nations Office for Project Services - NDC Partnership Action Fund
- United Nations Population Fund
- United Nations Road Safety Fund
- United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

- Aerospace Information Research Institute, Chinese Academy of Sciences
- Agricultural Research Centre for International Development
- Asian Development Bank
- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Bloomberg Family Foundation Inc.
- ClimateWorks Foundation
- Energy Foundation
- Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency
- International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease, Inc. (Vital Strategies)
- Korea Disabled People's Development Institute
- Korea Maritime Institute
- Korea Ports and Harbours Association
- Presidential Agency for International Cooperation of Colombia
- Rehabilitation International
- Seoul National University
- Suwon City

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