

**Input for the 2025 High-level Political Forum**  
**ESCAP**

**Your assessment of the impacts of the multiple and interconnected crises on the implementation of SDGs 3, 5, 8, 14 and 17.**

The Asia-Pacific region remains off track in achieving SDGs 3, 5, 8, 14, and 17 in part due to interconnected crises, including COVID-19, climate change, economic inequality, environmental degradation, and workforce disruptions.

- SDG 3: COVID-19 reversed life expectancy gains, exposed health system vulnerabilities, and worsened challenges like rising health costs and a strained health-care workforce. Gender norms and inequalities hinder equitable healthcare access, affecting marginalized groups.
- SDG 5: Despite progress in legal frameworks and women's parliamentary representation in the region, challenges like GBV, unpaid care work, and gender disparities in labor market persist. Gender data gaps and intersectional discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, disability, and other factors exacerbate exclusion. COVID-19, climate change, and economic instability intensified these issues, highlighting the need for gender-responsive policies.
- SDG 8: The economic disruptions caused by COVID-19 exacerbated poverty and inequality, particularly impacting informal workers and marginalized communities. Persistent gender inequality in the workforce further complicates efforts to achieve decent work for all, while inadequate social protection and unsafe working conditions remain critical issues in the region.
- SDG 14: Overfishing, pollution, habitat destruction, and ocean acidification threaten fisheries and coastal livelihoods. The region generates 80% of ocean plastic waste and struggles with insufficient marine conservation investment, limited research capacity, and data gaps.
- SDG 17: Declining ODA, rising debt, and limited regional cooperation hinder SDG financing, requiring stronger public-private partnerships. Despite advances in digital connectivity, financial constraints, limited private-sector investment, and high debt burdens impede progress. Data gaps across multiple indicators hinder effective monitoring and progress assessment.

**Three key areas where sustainable, inclusive, science-and evidence-based solutions for achieving the SDGs and leaving no one behind are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2025, also bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets.**

1. Green and Blue Economy Transitions for Job Creation (SDGs 8, 14, 17)
  - o The renewable energy sector already supports 10.5 million jobs in Asia-Pacific and is poised for further expansion.

- o Sustainable fisheries and coastal tourism (over 60% of global fish supplies projected by 2030) provide economic opportunities, especially for Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
  - o Circular economy initiatives in waste management are integrating informal waste workers into formal employment systems, promoting social inclusion.
  - o Green and blue economy transitions will create 180 million new jobs by 2050 while improving health and reducing environmental impacts.
  - o Rapid urban development is another opportunity for job growth, as cities prepare for a projected 350% increase in transport demand by 2050
2. Digital Transformation for Sustainable Development (SDGs 5, 8, 17)
- o Expanding mobile networks and digital financial services has improved access to education, banking, and government services.
  - o AI-driven workforce reskilling programs in Thailand and India are preparing workers for employment in EV manufacturing and green technologies.
  - o Smart fisheries and marine monitoring systems help combat illegal fishing and biodiversity loss.
3. Adaptive Social Protection and Resilient Healthcare Systems (SDGs 3, 5, 8)
- o Indonesia's Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) provides reskilling and social safety nets for workers displaced by coal phase-outs.
  - o Climate-adaptive social protection (ASP) programs in the Philippines integrate disaster relief with long-term healthcare and employment support.
  - o Women-focused economic policies in Nepal and Malaysia are bridging Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education and green job opportunities for gender-equal economic participation.

**Three examples of measures to accelerate progress towards SDGs through well-coordinated actions in key transitions to bring progress to scale (food security, energy access and affordability, digital connectivity, education, jobs and social protection, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution), building on interlinkages between SDGs to ensure cohesive progress.**

- Scaling Climate-Resilient Agriculture & Food Security (SDGs 2, 8, 13, 15); Agroecology programs in India and Cambodia are promoting sustainable farming while protecting smallholder livelihoods. The adoption of precision farming technologies and climate-smart crops is improving food production and reducing land degradation. Strengthening regional food partnerships is also critical in ensuring stable supply chains and food security amid increasing climate disruptions.
- Expanding Clean Energy Access & Affordability (SDGs 7, 8, 13); Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) in EV infrastructure are helping to lower urban emissions while creating new job opportunities.

Additionally, cross-border electricity trade agreements in South and Southeast Asia are enhancing energy affordability and grid stability, fostering regional cooperation.

- Strengthening Digital and Financial Inclusion (SDGs 5, 8, 17); Universal digital ID programs are expanding equitable access to financial services and government assistance. The use of AI-powered early warning systems is improving disaster resilience, particularly for vulnerable communities. Furthermore, gender-responsive digital literacy programs are enabling women and marginalized groups to access economic opportunities, fostering greater inclusion in the digital economy.

**Follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by your intergovernmental body or forum to support implementation of the 2023 SDG Summit Political Declaration and the outcomes of the 2024 Summit of the Future, to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

- ESCAP is aligning regional climate and economic policies by integrating climate resilience into national development plans with the member states. The Asia-Pacific One Health Initiative further strengthens public health policies through climate adaptation strategies.
- To expand financing mechanisms for SDG implementation, ESCAP is promoting blended finance, sustainability bonds, and carbon pricing to support energy transitions and social protection programs. Examples include the ASEAN Green Investment Catalyst (AGIC) initiative to promote sustainable FDI in Southeast Asia.
- On data governance and SDG monitoring, ESCAP is digitizing statistical systems for real-time policy evaluation and enhancing cross-border data-sharing on climate risks, workforce migration, and economic inclusion.
- The Astana Ministerial Declaration on Digital Inclusion and Transformation is a visionary blueprint to address this challenge, fostering high-level regional policy coordination and cooperation. In its resolution 80/1, "Leveraging Digital Innovation for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific," ESCAP encourages members and associate members to advance digital inclusion by ensuring safe, equitable and meaningful digital access for all and also calls to strengthen regional and multi-stakeholder cooperation for the promotion of research and development in digital technologies.
- ESCAP provides significant support to member states in advancing trade digitalization, including through its role as secretariat to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific.
- ESCAP worked with countries to advance the Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation on Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific.

**Recommendations and key messages to be considered for inclusion in the Ministerial Declaration of the 2025 HLPF.**

- Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific must be accelerated through strengthened national commitment, increased investment and solutions that address the region's diversity and promote sustainable lifestyles
- Close data gaps & strengthen SDG monitoring; by investing in high-quality data systems for better SDG tracking, and expanding community-driven data initiatives to address rural and marginalized inequalities.
- Accelerate just transitions in climate action & social protection; by scaling up social protection systems for workers in green and blue economies, and expanding adaptive social protection (ASP) for communities facing climate and economic shocks.
- Advance gender equality & inclusive workforce development; by increasing women's access to STEM education for green industry participation, and enhancing financial incentives and policies for gender-equal workforce integration.
- Enhance regional cooperation & digital transformation; by strengthening regional partnerships for technology transfer and sustainable trade, and boosting private sector investment in climate-smart industries and workforce reskilling.
- Strengthen regional cooperation on financing for development, digital transformation and intergenerational equity, backed by equitable access to technology, in line with the Pact for the Future, will enable countries to turbocharge progress towards the Goals.
- Inclusive and evidence-based voluntary national reviews, with strong stakeholder engagement from government, the private sector, civil society and academia, are crucial for assessing progress towards the Goals and identifying gaps, as well as for data-driven decision-making.
- Strong regional cooperation on financing for development is required, in particular for the region's most vulnerable countries, including least developed countries and small island developing States.