



**United  
Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs



Cornell University

# Preliminary key messages and recommendations

**ACCELERATING GLOBAL ACTIONS FOR A WORLD WITHOUT POVERTY: GAPS, CHALLENGES AND  
PROGRESS**

**Virtual Inter-agency Expert-Group Meeting on Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the  
Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027)**

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# KEY ISSUES

# Poverty

- *Poverty is both monetary and multidimensional*
  - “end poverty in all its forms” (2030 Agenda & Third UN Decade)
- Still, monetary indicators are very important to measure the extent of poverty
  - however, the huge progress in poverty reduction since the 1980s is very precarious because there is a big group of people not far above \$1.90 per day (about a billion people are between the \$1.90 and \$3.20 poverty lines)
- Economic growth/recession is the main driver of poverty progress/setbacks
- There are pockets of poverty in every country – sub-national “poverty hotspots”
- Poverty is mainly rural, young, shifting to Africa



# COVID-19 and poverty

- *The COVID-19 pandemic has increased poverty and laid bare the precariousness of the situation of poor people*
- The poorest people are the most affected by COVID
- A loss of resilience, downward mobility and de-assetting are observed
- In MENA, income poverty was already on the rise and COVID has exacerbated this increase
- In ASEAN countries, COVID interrupted the majority of the SDGs. But the effect differs across indicator and country
- The **poverty setbacks** caused by COVID-19 are *not irreversible*



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# Increasing inequality

- *The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the existence of inequalities or has even increased inequality*
- Some groups are more affected. The effects of COVID-19 differ across gender and race (e.g., South Africa), across regions (e.g., Caribbean countries where the economies depend on tourism are more affected), between urban and rural areas (e.g., USA), and between immigrants and native-born (e.g., OECD countries)



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# Increasing food insecurity

- *Rising hunger and food insecurity will imperil efforts to eradicate poverty*
- The COVID-19 pandemic is placing significant stress on all components of food systems (production, trade and distribution, and consumption), threatening the food security and livelihoods of millions of vulnerable people



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# Economic recovery

- *Economies are rebounding but not producing the expected jobs*

- In advanced economies, a fast rebound is occurring thanks to macroeconomic support and vaccines. However, employment remains subdued and job recovery is not for young people. The newly created jobs are often of inferior quality. Young people in particular are left behind, even where massive employment retention schemes helped contain the decline in employment, (e.g., Japan, Rep. of Korea, Portugal and Spain)



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# Role of social protection

- *Countries with solid social protection systems were able to respond faster and better to the COVID-19 pandemic.*
- Social protection systems were key automatic stabilizers for the economy, contributing to higher resilience
- BUT achieving universal coverage by 2030 will require additional investment
- *The pandemic has positively changed ideas and practices. Emergency social protection measures in response to the pandemic accomplished things that were not being done prior to the pandemic, such as targeting workers in the informal economy.* New programmes are more effective at reaching people living in poverty than before. But these measures were too temporary



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# PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON RECOMMENDATIONS



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# 1. Beware Laundry Lists

- **Implementation as a limiting factor?**
  - Science of implementation
  - Politics of implementation
  - Logistics of implementation
- **Beware laundry lists, wish lists, and black lists**
  - Thinking outside the box
  - Consider critical perspectives
- **Prioritization**
  - Actionable
  - Internally valid, large, and durable impacts
  - Low cost
  - Contextually salient



## 2. A Huge Undertaking and a Wicked Problem

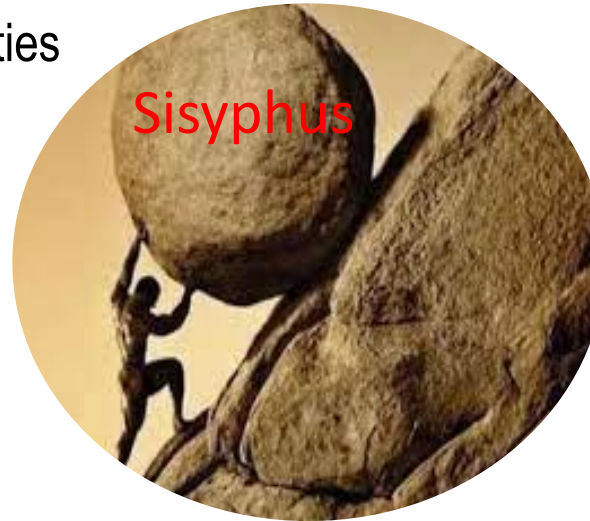
- **A Herculean Task**

- Sheer number of poor
- Number of person-years in poverty
- Depth of poverty and magnitude of inequalities



- **A Sisyphean Task**

- Relapses into poverty
- Reproduction across generations
- Higher fertility among the poor



- **Mixing Pollyanna and Cassandra**

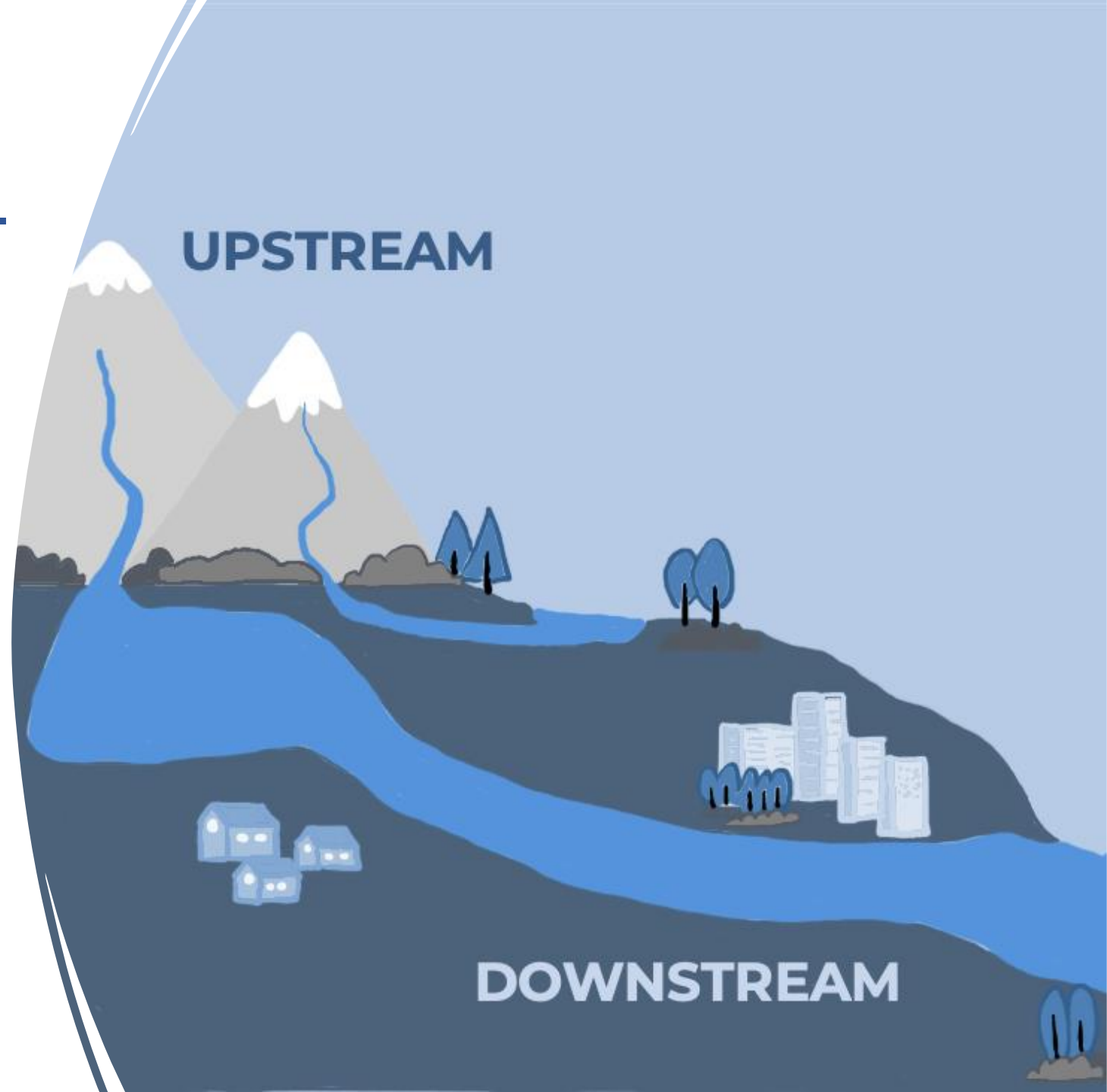
- A world without poverty is possible but not easy
- Question the depth of commitment to eradicating poverty
- Vested interests in the status quo



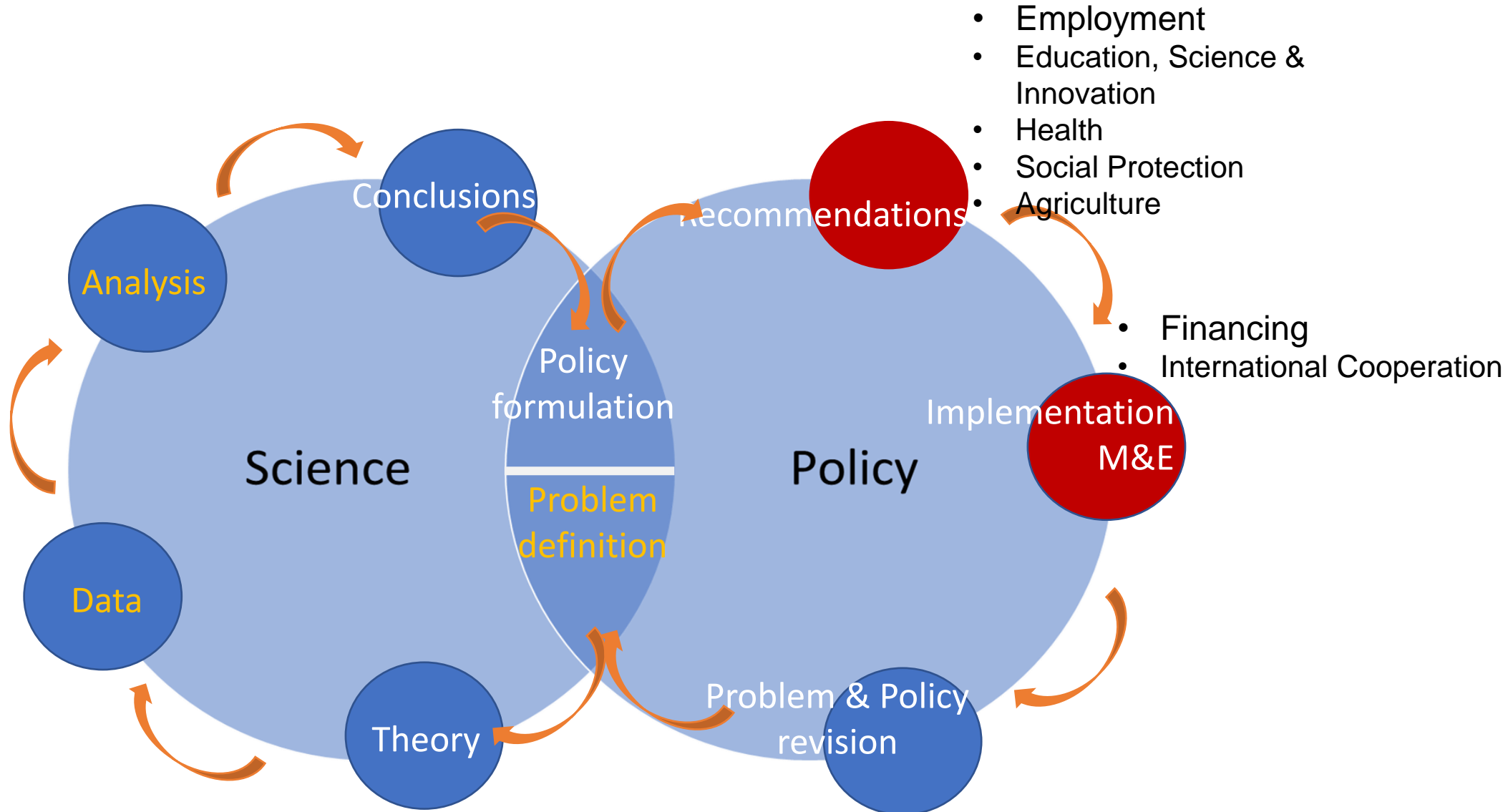
### 3. Recommendations across the full Science-Policy Interface

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- **Quality of evidence (UPSTREAM)**
- **Clarity and specificity of recommendations**
- **Quality of implementation (DOWNSTREAM)**



# The Science/Policy Interface in Programming Poverty Eradication



# CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS



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# Employment and Health Sectors

## Employment

- *Invest in key sectors that create jobs* while paving the way for building an inclusive and resilient economy (green, digital, care and health)
- *Maintain accommodative fiscal and monetary policies in order to sustain recovery*
  - Protect workers in hard-hit sectors, women and young people to mitigate economic and social scars
  - Adjust fiscal support as the economy re-opens
  - Invest in training because skills needed for jobs are changing

## Health

- *Quickly roll out vaccines*
- Invest in health in smart, multisectoral policies aligned with the SDGs
- *Build strong, resilient, and prepared health systems to have healthy populations*
- Aim for *universal health coverage*
- Fund the ACT Accelerator, including COVAX

# Education & Science, Social Protection

## Education and Science

- *Invest in training* because skills needed for jobs are changing due to the pandemic
- *Science plays an important role* in identifying ways to recover; Innovations in all sectors are also required to adapt to new circumstances

## Social Protection

- *Extend and strengthen social protection systems*
  - Accelerate the extension of social protection to those in the informal economy
  - Strengthen social protection systems, including floors
- *Invest in universal social protection* for more resilience
  - Low-income countries need to invest an additional USD 77.9 billion or 15.9% of GDP per annum to guarantee at least a basic level of social security for all by 2030 through a nationally-defined social protection floor.
- Use social protection as an accompanying measure for effective poverty reduction
- Create a proactive, rather than reactive social protection system



# Agricultural and Structural Transformation

## Agricultural transformation

- Agricultural productivity growth has been shown to be more poverty-reducing than growth in other sectors, in particular in low-income countries where *agriculture constitutes a major portion of the economy and absorbs a large part of the labour force*
- Fully harnessing this potential for poverty reduction requires targeted policies and investments
- To harness the potential contribution of agricultural innovation and productivity growth for poverty and hunger reduction, *policies and investment need to be conceived within the broader framework of agricultural, rural and structural transformation*

## Structural transformation

Structural transformation should be accelerated both in agriculture (rural push) and in non-agriculture sectors (urban pull) to accelerate recovery and rapid reductions in poverty. There is need for increasing agricultural productivity by transiting from staple to non-staple products, *improving economic integration with domestic and global economy* through investment in infrastructure, and increasing public investment in agriculture



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# Recovery policies

- Recovery policies and assistance should be *proportional to impact*
- Recovery policies *based on sustainable frameworks* can have *more support from communities*. It is important to *seize the opportunity of a positive trend on behavior change*, as a result of the pandemic, towards more sustainable lifestyles
- Construct an economy that caters to all citizens and provides a decent life for all to reduce inequality
- Minimize the impact of the pandemic on settled immigrants. Ensure that immigrants have equal access to training and that migrants are included in digital literacy programmes
- Provide universal social transfers in areas/sectors severely affected by COVID-19 in order to support those already in poverty and vulnerable workers (disproportionally women)
- Expand women's access to productive resources to help lift them out of poverty or help them cope with various shocks
- Sustain, protect and improve food systems and markets during the crisis to reduce economic and food insecurity risks to communities, especially the most vulnerable, and enable a quicker and more inclusive recovery
- The year 2021 represents an opportunity for the international community to strengthen its commitment to the “Leave no one behind” promise of the SDGs and to support investments in interventions needed to end poverty by 2030



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# UPSTREAM RECOMMENDATIONS [GENERATING THE EVIDENCE]



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# Definition, Measurement, Data, Analysis

## Definitions & Measurement

- Use both *monetary and multidimensional* indicators to measure poverty
- Update the extreme poverty line
  - bring the set of poverty lines together
- Use a monetary poverty line that aligns well with nutrition, health and education at reasonable levels
  - extreme poverty as measured by \$1.90 a day might be ended but not human poverty
- Use a *monetary poverty line that allows for some indication of precariousness* after people move above the poverty line

## Data

- Invest in, and use, disaggregated data to identify the poor.
- Use *new data sources such as satellite data, social networks and machine learning to enable better targeting*

## Analysis

- A systems approach to identify new SDGs *synergies and dependencies* fostered by the pandemic in specific contexts,
- Analyses to address in clusters of multiple SDGs. By so doing, research can help achieve more with less resources



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# DOWNSTREAM RECOMMENDATIONS [IMPLEMENTATION]



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# Financing, Integration & Cooperation

- Finance recovery in developing countries
  - Enhance *domestic fiscal support*
  - Address gaps in *external resources* (stagnant ODA, declining FDI, uncertain remittances flows, volatile capital inflows and a looming debt crisis)
    - Meet ODA commitments
    - Fund ACT Accelerator, including COVAX
    - Provide grants or ultra-long-term financing
    - Prioritize spending on health and social protection floors
    - Expand debt swap initiatives and state-contingent debt instruments
- *Global cooperation is very important* as the pandemic has shown
- The short-term measures taken during the pandemic prove that *States can do much more* than what they were doing pre-COVID-19
- The international community can play a key role in promoting trajectories for inclusive policy by framing the emergency as still unfolding, stressing the role of the State, and supporting its expansion
- *Use integrated approaches and stronger collaboration*
- *Step up international cooperation* to fund and achieve SDG1 and other SDGs



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# THANK YOU!



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