

## ESCAP input to the Report of the Secretary-General on Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027)

To **expand social protection systems to underpin poverty reduction and inclusive development**, ESCAP is continuously strengthening governments' capacity on the importance of broadening social protection coverage through well-designed schemes and systems. ESCAP is also developing new knowledge and advocacy products to support these activities. The secretariat is regularly updating its online resource facility, the Social protection Toolbox: a platform that contains more than 120 good practices on social protection; videos, infographics, animations and online games on topics. These cover areas such as the importance of social protection, the social protection floor, social protection and the SDGs, social protection and human rights, as well as facts and figures on poverty, inequality in Asia and the Pacific.

ESCAP Secretariat has also completed four social protection modules on: why social protection is needed; how to design an inclusive social protection system; how to implement an inclusive social protection system; and how to finance an inclusive social protection system. These guides serve as practical hands-on capacity-building tools for policymakers and are developed in a user-friendly format. They have also been translated into Russian to facilitate usage in Russian-speaking member States;

In response to a recommendation by the ESCAP Committee on Social Development, at its fifth session held in November 2018, ESCAP established a Group of Experts, consisting of officially nominated representatives from ESCAP member States, to develop an Action Plan for strengthening regional cooperation on social protection in Asia and the Pacific. Following the two meetings held in Bangkok in June and November 2019, the draft was submitted for endorsement to ESCAP's 76<sup>th</sup> Commission session, to be held in May 2020. The modality is expected to support ESCAP members and associate members in accelerating progress towards the realization of universal social protection and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Secretariat is also finalizing its new and innovative Social Protection Impact and Financing Tool, that will help countries estimate the potential impact of various social protection schemes addressing poverty, inequality and household purchasing power, by specifying criteria related to programme eligibility, levels of coverage and transfer values. Using the modelling tool, the Secretariat will examine the policy impact and costs of developing a comprehensive social protection system for thirteen countries in Asia and the Pacific.

To **address the non-income forms of poverty and reducing inequalities**, ESCAP has conducted extensive interdisciplinary research and data analysis on non-income forms of deprivation, identifying population groups furthest behind in access to a range of basic services and opportunities, including education, health care, nutrition, basic water and sanitation, clean energy and decent work. The secretariat has also studied how unequal access to these opportunities and services have changed over time. These results have been published in an online database and in a series of thematic policy papers on inequality of opportunity. The ESCAP secretariat has also produced two flagship publications on this topic, comprehensively analysing inequality trends in the region and highlighting the importance of inclusive social policies to reverse the trends.

For 2020, the ESCAP secretariat will produce two new studies on the groups furthest behind, namely on access to ICT and the barriers faced by women most likely to suffer from child marriage and teenage pregnancy. Towards the last quarter of 2020, a new issue of the Social Outlook for Asia and the Pacific will be produced, with a focus on social protection.

The ESCAP secretariat has supported a number of member States and UN country teams, including from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Turkmenistan, with detailed country-specific information and analysis on measuring inequality and leaving no one behind.

With respect to **Structural Transformation, Productive Employment and Decent Work**, ESCAP has prepared a number of knowledge products to enable the designing and implementing of policies which will accelerate the efforts aimed at poverty eradication, gearing its research towards particularly disadvantaged countries, namely, least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS). In this vein, the *Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2019* highlighted the role of structural transformation to reduce poverty as it generally leads to increases in productivity and output and raises incomes of workers. The report emphasizes the need for particular action in the rural economy, especially agriculture. Thus, while agriculture contributes an average of 17.3 per cent of output in countries with special needs, it accounts for an average 37 per cent of employment across countries with special needs in Asia and the Pacific. Also, the incidence of poverty in countries with special needs is concentrated in rural areas, where on average, four poor people live compared with one urban poor person. The report also highlights the role of manufacturing as one which by raising significantly productivity levels compared to agriculture, has the greatest impact on poverty reduction, except in small States that lack economies of scale and where the services sector has more potential. The report examines the importance of creating productive employment to reduce poverty and suggests sectoral development options. As a follow up, a knowledge product depicting tailored policies towards landlocked developing countries was prepared, with particular attention paid to financing structural transformation in landlocked least developed countries. It acknowledged particular impediments in structural transformation faced by landlocked countries, which have no direct sea access to international markets, and provided pertinent policy recommendations. The *Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2020* advances the knowledge on structural transformation to reduce poverty. Focusing exclusively on Asia-Pacific SIDS, it provides pertinent policy options to develop fisheries and tourism, as those with the greatest potential for advancing sustainable development among Asia-Pacific SIDS. It emphasizes the need to conservation and environmental protection and more effective linking of tourism and fisheries to the local economies to create productive employment and reduce poverty.

ESCAP also supports its member States to enhance women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship as a strategy for poverty reduction. ESCAP is implementing a five year (2018-2023) regional programme on Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship - Creating a Gender-Responsive Entrepreneurial Ecosystem. The initiative endeavors to advance women's economic empowerment and contribute to poverty reduction in the Asia-Pacific region, accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. More than 100,000 women entrepreneurs will directly benefit from improved regulatory and legal environment at the national and regional level, innovative financing mechanisms and digital solutions. Through a specially developed fintech fund, women's bond and impact investment funds, public and private sector funding will be leveraged to invest in women entrepreneurs. Micro entrepreneurs who are unable to access banking services due to constraints such as lack of collaterals and banking history would be able to access financial services; women who run small and medium-sized enterprises would be supported to accelerate their business growth with enhanced access to transformative technology and larger capital. At least one million additional beneficiaries, including women working along the value chain and family and communities will be uplifted from poverty.