



ASEAN Rapid Assessment:

The Impact of COVID-19
on Livelihoods across ASEAN



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ASEAN Rapid Assessment: The Impact of COVID-19 on Livelihoods across ASEAN

The ASEAN Secretariat
Jakarta

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on 8 August 1967. The Member States are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.
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Executive summary

The Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) were affected early in the 2020 outbreak of the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19). Thailand identified the first case on 13 January 2020. ASEAN Member States (AMS) and institutions responded rapidly, putting numerous measures and restrictions in place well before the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a global pandemic on 11 March 2020. As comparable restrictions were implemented throughout the world, economies suddenly slowed, domestic consumption and investment declined, global and regional supply chains were disrupted, and a global recession began.

The impact of the pandemic threatens to increase inequalities and negate progress made on poverty reduction. The exclusion of vulnerable groups from policy responses risks further entrenching existing poverty and expanding the number of poor in ways that will be difficult to reverse; the situation will be compounded if multiple types of inequalities are allowed to rise simultaneously. Across Southeast Asia, workers have been hit hard by the pandemic's economic toll, particularly those in informal labour markets. Additionally, unemployment rises rapidly: global data suggests that unemployment hit women workers the hardest. School closures have worsened the situation, affecting millions of students and their families.

In ASEAN, and globally, policymakers must balance public health and economic concerns. The severity of the pandemic's impact varies across countries, largely depending on the capacity of public health systems, the size of the informal sector, initial government containment measures, and economic stimulus responses. Evidence suggests that social distancing, quarantine measures, and travel restrictions help contain the spread of the virus, but these measures also create a serious economic cost, especially in countries that depend on trade and tourism. If ASEAN continues to experience outbreaks of the virus, it will be increasingly difficult to close parts of the economy because of lingering economic damage from the first wave and increased social and political opposition to shutdowns.

This rapid assessment aims to support AMS and the ASEAN Secretariat in their efforts to respond to the pandemic. In doing so, it focuses on three crucial policy areas: Labour, Education and Training, and Social Welfare. The report begins with a brief assessment of the key economic and social impacts of the pandemic and follows with three sector chapters that provide a detailed analysis of current policy responses across AMS. The report continues with an overview of current ASEAN frameworks and mechanisms, concluding with a series of national- and regional-level recommendations for the consideration of AMS and the ASEAN Secretariat.

It is difficult to underestimate the scope of the challenges ahead for the ASEAN region. In August 2020, the pandemic appears to be far from its peak; the global spread of cases continues to grow every day. Global estimates of the scale of economic and social impacts continue to grow: Poverty is increasing, more jobs are being lost, and more businesses are being closed.

Despite these dire circumstances, there are opportunities for growth. As the pandemic and its impacts reach across borders, regional collaboration is more important than ever. AMS and institutions have a unique opportunity to work together, drawing on the region's collective resources, to shape a new normal that can improve upon the livelihoods of citizens throughout the region. It is imperative that AMS invest in social and human capital to respond to a post-COVID-19 world flexibly and productively. Ultimately, shaping the future's new normal means investing in people today.

Foreword



The rapid assessment of the socio-economic impacts of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic in the ASEAN region comes at a time when generating data and analysis has become a necessity in determining the most appropriate and targeted measures at mitigating the pandemic's impacts. This report succinctly reviews the responses undertaken by ASEAN Member States thus far in the social welfare, labour, and education sectors. The report also identifies key challenges and scalable approaches and proposes a set of policy recommendations.

On social welfare, the assessment points to the critical role of social protection measures in mitigating the impacts of the pandemic. Among the wide range of response measures, social assistance through targeted transfers was the dominant approach to reach poor households and individuals, particularly working age adults in the formal sector. Significant changes to the delivery of benefits and services were also made, including the use of digital platforms. However, there is much room for social protection measures to reach those in the informal sector as well as vulnerable groups, including older

persons and persons with disabilities. The key recommendations of the report resonate with the Joint Statement of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development: Mitigating Impacts of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Groups in ASEAN. This includes strengthening national social protection systems, that can be scaled-up to widen coverage, to facilitate access to social protection, and the concomitant public investments.

On labour, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought devastating effects on the world of work. Lockdowns and related business disruptions, travel restrictions, school closures and other containment measures have had sudden and drastic impacts on workers and enterprises. Recognising this, on 14 May 2020, the ASEAN Labour Ministers adopted the Joint Statement of ASEAN Labour Ministers on Response to the Impact of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on Labour and Employment, solidifying its commitment to fully support ASEAN's workforce amidst the impact of COVID-19 to the economies and industries of ASEAN Member States. Undoubtedly, this report provides invaluable inputs that contribute to the realisation of the Joint Statement.

On education, the assessment tells us that over 150 million children and youth in ASEAN may have been affected by school and university closures. In turn, these disruptions may cause long-run learning losses or lead to dropouts. The ongoing pandemic may also exacerbate existing inequalities owing to gender, poverty, and disability. Measures were immediately undertaken to protect the health and safety of students, teachers, and communities, including alternative modes of learning and assessment, among others. However, the pandemic's ongoing effects on education has brought to the fore issues regarding education equity, quality, and efficiency. Indeed, while ASEAN Member States were quick to act and respond, collective action and effective policy coordination are still required to address the challenges faced by the sector.

Ultimately, this report holds the potential of contributing to ASEAN's current initiative on developing a comprehensive regional recovery framework and action plan. Building back better and strengthening resilience would necessitate more accessible, inclusive, and scaled-up social protection measures; more robust laws, policies and regulations on labour and employment to adapt to the new normal; and a strong focus on lifelong learning and future-ready education and skills development. Operationally, the report also contributes to the programming work of the ASEAN Senior Labour Officials Meeting (SLOM), Senior Officials Meeting on Education (SOM-ED), and Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD), particularly in the development of their next five-year work plans covering the period of 2021-2025.

The development of this report has been made possible through the joint efforts of the ASEAN Secretariat and The Asia Foundation, with the support of the Australian Government and The Rockefeller Foundation. The report has benefitted from the inputs and insights shared by SLOM, SOM-ED and SOMSWD, particularly through a series of consultations and the conduct of the Virtual Expert Dialogue on the Rapid Assessment for ASEAN: Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Livelihoods of ASEAN Population on 5-7 August 2020.

It is my hope that the readers will find this report useful to the continued responses of ASEAN Member States to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in ensuring effectiveness, inclusiveness, gender responsiveness and optimal results of those measures.



KUNG PHOAK
Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN
For ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community

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Acronyms

AADMER	ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response
ABVC	ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Centre
ACC	ASEAN Coordinating Council
ACSS	ASEAN Community Statistical System
ACCWG-PHE	ACC Working Group on Public Health Emergencies
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADMM	ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting
AEM	ASEAN Economic Ministers
AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Agreement
AHA Centre	ASEAN Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management
AHMM	ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting
AIA	ASEAN Investment Area
ALMM	ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting
AMAF	ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry
AMMSWD	ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Social Welfare and Development
AMRI	ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information
AMS	ASEAN Member States
APT-FETN	ASEAN Plus Three Field Epidemiology Training Network
ARARC	ASEAN Risk Assessment and Risk Communication Centre
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASSI	ASEAN Safe Schools Initiatives
ATCCT	ASEAN Tourism Crisis Communications Team
ATM	ASEAN Tourism Ministers
BPNT	Bantuan Pangan Non Tunai
BSH	Malaysia Program Bantuan Sara Hidup
COVID-19	Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DLTV	Distance Learning Television
DMRS	ASEAN Disaster Monitoring and Responses System
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
DDR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECQ	Enhanced Community Quarantine
EOC Network	ASEAN Emergency Operations Centre Network
GDP	Gross Domestic Production
HE	Higher Education
HICs	High Income Countries
ILO	International Labour Organization
KHEU	Kementerian Hal Ehwal Ugama (Ministry of Religious Affairs)
Lao PDR	Lao Peoples Democratic Republic
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LMICs	Low and Middle Income Countries

MCCT	Maternal and Child Cash Transfer
MCO	Movement Control Order
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs
MOLIP	Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MoM	Ministry of Manpower
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OFW	Overseas Filipino Workers
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PKH	Indonesia's Program Keluarga Harapan
PdP	Guidelines on Implementation of Teaching and Learning Under Periods of Movement Restrictions
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
RPHL	Regional Public Health Laboratories Network
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SCP	Supplementary Contributory Pension
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SLOM	Senior Labour Officials Meeting
SMS	Short Message Service
SOMED	Senior Officials Meeting on Education
SOMHD	Senior Officials Meeting for Health Development
TOR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TVRI	Televisi Republik Indonesia
UDB	Unified Data Base
UK	United Kingdom
UMICs	Upper Middle-Income Countries
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

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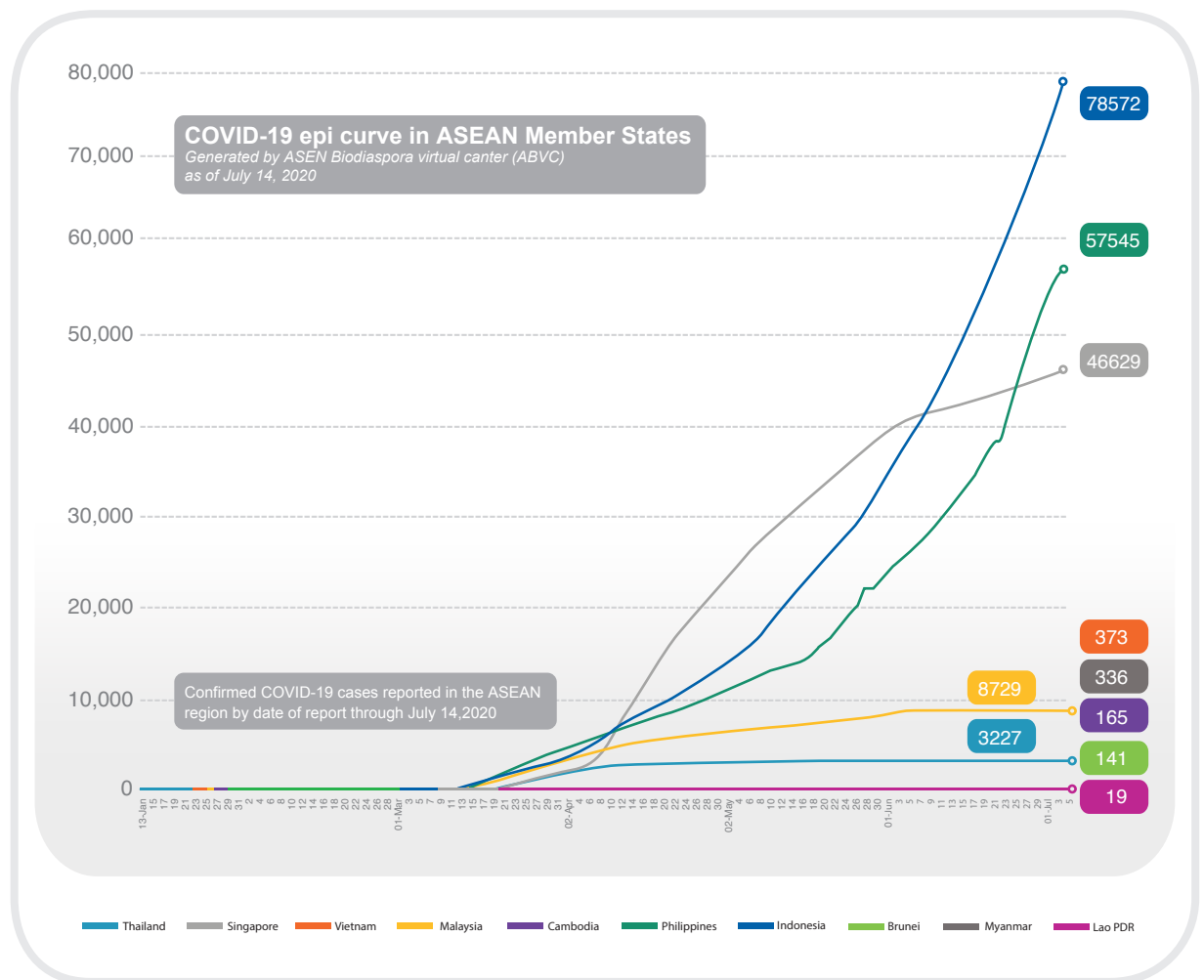
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Introduction

The members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) were affected early in 2020 during the outbreak of the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19). Thailand identified the first case in the region on 13 January 2020. On 25 March, Lao PDR identified two cases, making it the tenth and final ASEAN Member States (AMS) with active COVID-19 cases. During the first half of 2020, the virus

progressed differently across the ten AMS (Figure 1). After a relatively slow spread in all AMS during the first month, a steeper curve emerged in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand by mid-March. In mid-April, the number of cases in Malaysia and Thailand stabilised and, since then, seven of the ten AMS have achieved relative stability in terms of COVID-19 cases.

Figure 1: Cumulative confirmed COVID-19 cases as of 14 July 2020 (ASEAN Biodiaspora Virtual Centre 2020)¹



ASEAN Member States and Institutions responded rapidly to the outbreak. Many AMS put protective measures in place before the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic on 11 March 2020. AMS, including Viet Nam, Singapore, the Philippines, and Malaysia were among the first governments in the world to enact measures to control the spread of the virus (Hale et al. 2020). Governments across the region supported the immediate needs of local health systems and enacted a range of containment measures, movement restrictions, and social distancing requirements to slow the spread of the virus. The timeframes and rigidity of these measures varied significantly across the region, reflecting the severity of the virus in each AMS. Although these measures have been crucial for the containment of the virus, **widespread movement restrictions have had significant consequences on people's lives and livelihoods across the region.**

Movement restrictions throughout the world resulted in an immediate economic slowdown, including declines in domestic consumption and investment and disrupted global and regional supply chains. 2020 and beyond will likely see a global recession, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) predicts economic growth across developing Asia at just 0.1% in 2020 (Asian Development Bank 2020).

Unequal impact

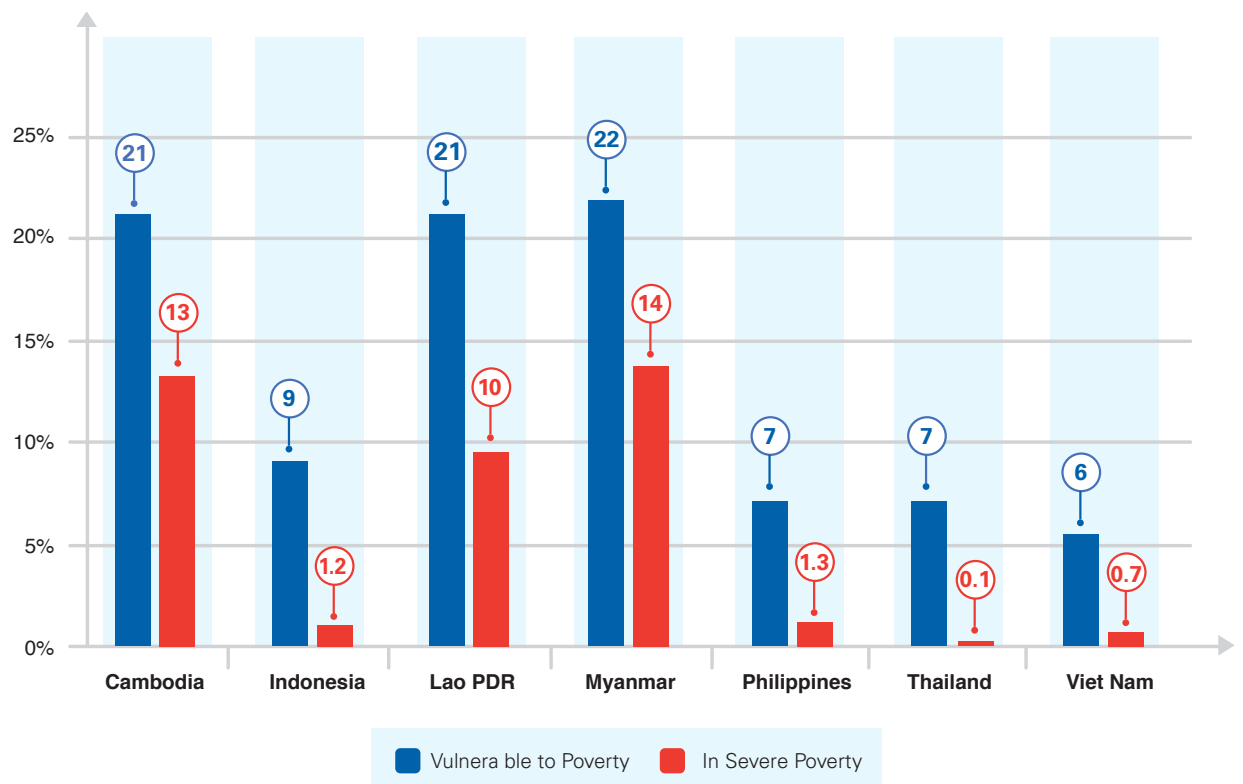
The pandemic is first and foremost a health crisis. ASEAN has implemented a tremendous effort to save lives. Yet there are broader impacts, including on jobs, livelihoods, education, and social welfare. COVID-19 and the regulations put in place to slow the spread of the virus affect everyone, regardless of socio-economic status, yet there are certain populations that are disproportionately affected by the virus and its economic impacts.

Common movement restrictions across AMS:

- * Business closures
- * School closures
- * Closure of public transport
- * Restrictions on the number of people in public spaces
- * Cancellation of public events
- * Voluntary or compulsory self-isolation
- * Voluntary or compulsory quarantine of differing lengths
- * Work from home orders
- * Internal travel restrictions
- * Restrictions on international travel

Despite important gains in poverty reduction over the past three decades, significant pockets of poverty have persisted across the region. The pandemic threatens to **increase inequalities and undo the region's poverty reduction progress.** Beyond absolute income poverty, millions of people remain vulnerable to poverty because of economic or other shocks. Furthermore, a range of vulnerabilities, including age, gender, disability, and minority or citizenship status, can exacerbate the accessibility of social safety nets, education, and healthcare. **Figure 2** illustrates the incidence of multidimensional poverty² and vulnerability across the region and demonstrates the uneven nature of poverty distribution and the significant numbers of those at risk of poverty. The **exclusion of vulnerable groups from policy responses risks entrenching existing poverty and expanding the number of poor in ways that will be difficult to reverse;** the situation will be compounded if multiple types of inequalities are allowed to rise simultaneously. These risks play out against a backdrop of 'mega-trends' that include ageing populations in some areas, the ongoing impact of climate change, and the ASEAN region's exposure to natural disasters.

Figure 2: Multidimensional Poverty Incidence across AMS pre-COVID-19 (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative 2020)³



Purpose of the assessment

The pandemic's multiple effects are not fully understood in the region. There are still many unknowns, not least of which is the timeframe of virus' spread and response. Decision-making is difficult in the absence of robust data.

For example, policymakers should consider the impact of school closures on **millions of students in East Asia and the Pacific**.⁴ While many schools have been able to mitigate the worst effects on learning continuity through distance learning, the majority of teachers and students, especially those in impoverished areas or without internet access and devices, did not have such alternatives. Many children and youth missed weeks, if not months, of school, and those in more vulnerable situations are at risk of not returning to school, even after the crisis ends.⁵ Additionally, school closures resulted in the extra burden of home-schooling responsibilities among families, which disproportionality impacted women, who are often primary caretakers.

Across the region, **workers have been especially affected by the pandemic's economic impacts, particularly workers in informal labour markets**

(International Labour Organization 2020a). The 30 June 2020 International Labour Organization (ILO) estimate predicts a drop in working time of 13.5% in the Asia-Pacific during the second quarter of 2020, corresponding to the loss of 235 million full-time jobs (International Labour Organization 2020b). **Certain groups have been impacted more than others.** Sectors hit hardest include tourism, hospitality, and retail, and those who operate micro-small or medium enterprises (MSMEs). Across the region there are high numbers of informal workers, ranging from 90.3% of the workforce in Cambodia to 10.6% in Malaysia (ASEAN Secretariat 2019). **The crisis has had a disproportionate impact on women workers**, threatening the past decades' progress in reducing gender inequality in the labour market. Women's employment is at greater risk than men's due to the downturn on the service sector and the increased burden of unpaid care (International Labour Organization 2020b).

This study aims to support AMS and the ASEAN Secretariat in their efforts to respond to the pandemic by closing knowledge gaps. The study focuses on understanding the pandemic's impact in the region across three crucial policy areas: Labour, Education and Training, and Social Welfare.

Methodology

This rapid assessment relies on publicly available data and analysis from a range of sources, including government information and documents, academic papers and university databases, research from the United Nations and other multilateral agencies, and news and media reports and assessments. Given the speed at which the situation has changed over the past six months, the research team gathered a large amount of information to provide the most up-to-date picture possible. Data and information were collected until the first week of July 2020. The study provides a snapshot of the national and regional responses to the pandemic in the Labour, Education and Training, and Social Welfare sectors to inform a series of national and regional recommendations.

The study does this with the goal to **build back better**. The pandemic has galvanized collective action and community support across countries and regions. Within ASEAN, this energy can augment existing systems and spur AMS to implement reforms in education, social welfare, and labour market policies. As the pandemic and its impacts span borders, working collaboratively across the region is more important than ever. AMS and institutions have a unique opportunity to work together, drawing on the region's collective resources, to shape a new and improved normal. The potential of new technologies for information flow, collaboration, and service delivery can enable government and non-government actors in a collective effort to accelerate developments for the advancement of lives across the ASEAN region. This rapid assessment hopes to contribute to that goal.

Notes

1. The confirmed case of Singapore is based on the data as of 14 July 2020 from Singapore's Ministry of Health (2020).
2. Multidimensional poverty measures go beyond income poverty assessment and look at other dimensions of deprivation, such as poor health or malnutrition, a lack of clean water or electricity, poor quality of work, and limited schooling (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative 2020)
3. Data is unavailable for Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, and Singapore. Data is based on demographic and health surveys in case of Cambodia (in 2014), Indonesia (in 2012), Myanmar (in 2015/2016, and the Philippines (in 2017) ; and on multiple indicator cluster survey in case of Lao PDR (in 2017), Thailand (in 2015/2016), and Viet Nam (in 2013/2014).
4. UNICEF-UNESCO Joint Op-ed of 8 June 2020 estimates that global school closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic has made 325 million children in countries across East Asia and the Pacific miss more than two months of school (UNESCO Bangkok 2020).

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Chapter 1: The scale of the pandemic

Impact on economies

ASEAN is one of the fastest growing regions in terms of real gross domestic product (GDP) and is the fifth largest economy in the world (ASEAN Secretariat 2019a). From 2010 to 2019, the region's real GDP grew by an average of 5% annually, exceeding by more than a full percentage point the average annual growth rate of global real GDP (ASEAN Secretariat 2019b). The ASEAN GDP per capita experienced a similar trend, which rose to US\$4,601.3 in 2018 from US\$3,299.3 in 2010 and nearly four times its value in 2000 at US\$1,195 (ASEAN Secretariat 2019c).

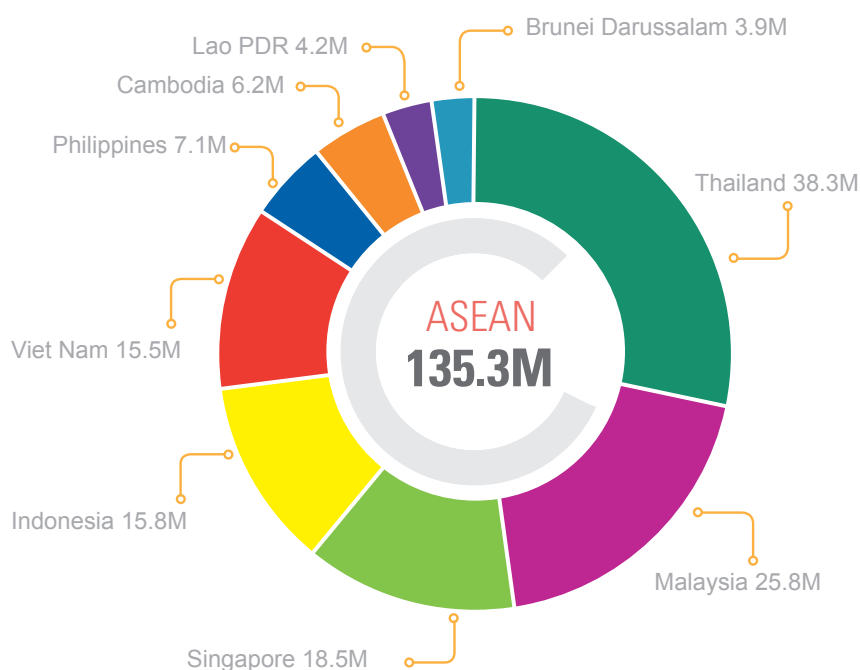
ASEAN would be classified as an upper middle-income economy based on the classification system developed by the World Bank, but the region comprises countries of vastly different size and scale. Two are classified as high income, two are upper middle income, and six are lower middle-income countries (World Bank 2020a). This economic diversity has compounded the effects of the pandemic on some AMS.

This chapter provides a brief overview of ASEAN's pre-COVID economic situation, and it draws from emerging evidence to illustrate the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic.

Three key ASEAN drivers of growth in recent years have been tourism, exports, and international labour migration. Tourism is a major revenue source for many AMS. In 2018, 135.3 million people visited ASEAN as tourists (Figure 3). The sector has grown at 5.8% annually since 2014. Approximately a third of the region's tourism is intra-regional.

Tourism is a particularly large sector in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Viet Nam,

Figure 3: Tourist numbers in ASEAN in 2018



although it is also an important source of revenue and employment for lower income countries, like Cambodia and Lao PDR. The extent of airport closures, flight cancellations, travel limitations, and increased border crossings procedures will likely result in a months- or possibly years-long slowdown in the tourism industry. The impact on ASEAN's tourism industry, in terms of generated income and employment, could be enormous.

Manufacturing and natural resource exports also fuel the economies of many AMS. In 2018, manufacturing and natural resource exports totalled US\$1.4 trillion in the region, equivalent to approximately 55% of the region's GDP (ASEANStatsDataPortal 2020). Electrical machinery and equipment are the biggest export commodities for ASEAN in terms of value and export share (ASEAN Secretariat 2020a). Cambodia tends to rely on the garment industry, Brunei Darussalam and Myanmar rely on mineral fuels, and Lao PDR relies on agricultural products. With international value chains disrupted by travel and movement restrictions, it is unclear how long it will be before both import and export channels will return to 2019 levels.

Remittances from migrant workers also make up an important part of the region’s economic stability.

In 2018, remittances to ASEAN (excluding Singapore and Brunei Darussalam) totalled US\$74.6 billion and were especially high in the Philippines (US\$33.8 billion), Viet Nam (US\$15.9 billion), and Indonesia (US\$11.2 billion) (World Bank DataBank 2020). In Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar, although remittances figures were lower, the income they provided served as an important lifeline to many households. According to the World Bank, the remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries will decrease by approximately 13% from 2019 to 2020 in East Asia and the Pacific, due to the COVID-19 economic slowdown; this will directly and indirectly lead to a decrease in wage and employment of migrant workers (World Bank 2020b). The economic shock resulting from the loss of migrant workers will affect both their previous employers who relied on migrant workers and the newly unemployed migrant workers who will return home to depleted job opportunities.

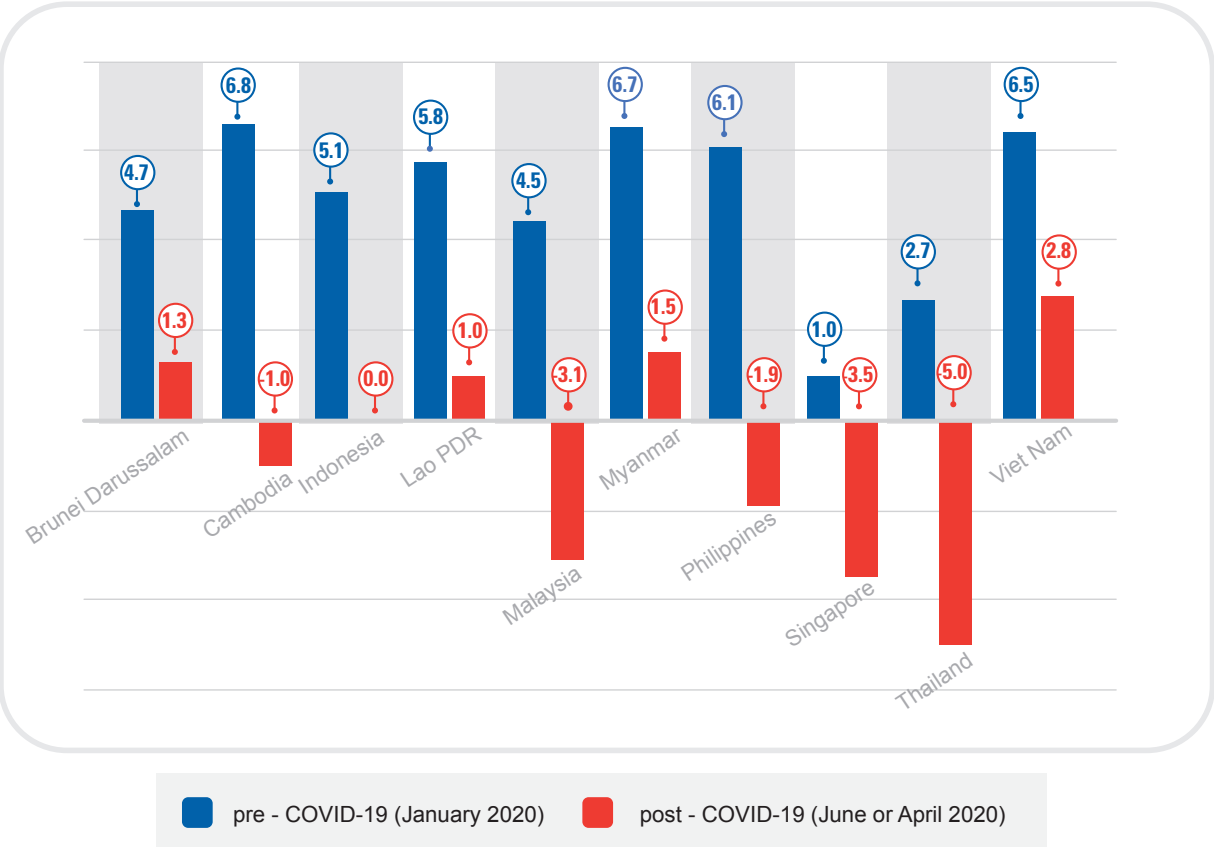
As a result of these and other factors, all AMS will take a considerable economic hit from COVID-19.

GDP projections (June 2020) have been revised to -2.0% and may further decrease.¹ Real GDP growth forecasts dropped from -3.4 to -8.0 percentage points across AMS, with the Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, and Malaysia expected to experience the sharpest real GDP drop (Figure 4). According to the World Bank, economies that are most dependent on global trade, tourism, remittances from abroad, and commodity exports will be hardest hit; all AMS fall into one or more of those categories (World Bank 2020c).

Impact on societies

In recent years, ASEAN has experienced enormous development progress, especially in poverty reduction, education, and health. In the 1990s, nearly one in two persons in the region lived in extreme poverty. By 2015, that was reduced to one in eight (ASEAN Secretariat 2015).²

Figure 4: AMS Real GDP growth forecast for 2020



Sources: World Bank Global Economic Prospects June 2020; International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook April 2020.

The COVID-19 economic downturn threatens to reverse the region’s progress in poverty reduction and food security.

People and communities that were economically vulnerable pre-COVID-19 may fall, or have already fallen, into poverty over the past

six months. Globally, one study estimates that the pandemic may force 280 million people into poverty, based on a 10% per capita income contraction and in the absence of concrete relief interventions (United Nations University 2020).³

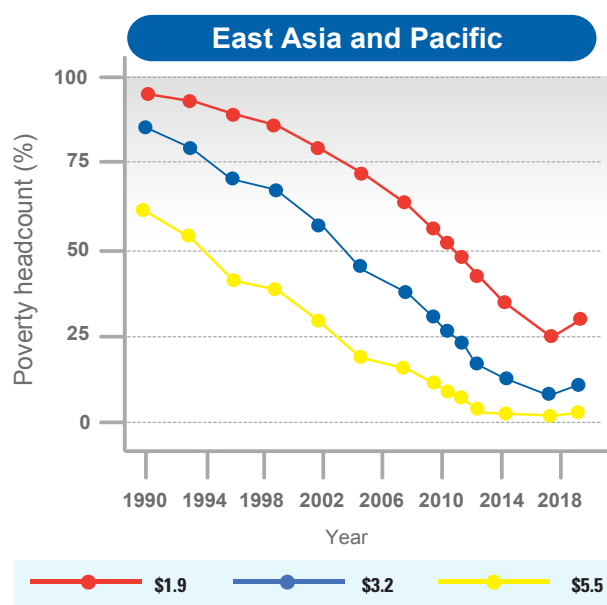
Currently, ASEAN-specific estimates are not available in the public domain. However, in the broader region of East Asia and the Pacific, this would mean an increase in poverty headcount rates for the first time since 1990, from 7.6% in 2018 to 10.2% (calculated at \$3.20 per day). This implies an increase in the absolute number of poor by 54 million in 2020 across East Asia and the Pacific (Sumner, Hoy and Ortiz-Juarez 2020:2).

Those in persistent pockets of poverty will be hit hardest. Global trends show that the poor have been disproportionately affected by the virus and the economic slowdown, compared to higher income and more educated workers. The main explanations for this include:

- Where they live: Poor communities in urban areas tend to live in congested housing that is not conducive to social distancing. Rural areas experience higher poverty rates and weaker local health services, and households are more reliant on remittances.
- Where they work: Low income workers are much more likely to work in settings where social distancing is more difficult to enforce or in jobs that are impossible to be done remotely, including in the agriculture and service sectors or self-employed and informal positions in micro or family enterprises (Sánchez-Páramo 2020).
- Ability to survive during lockdown: low income populations face increased economic risks because they cannot sustain long periods without working, due to the lack of emergency funds. As lockdowns stretch into weeks or months, most low-income workers have no choice but to return to work in order to feed their families, even if this entails returning to high risk work locations.
- Their working status: Most low-income workers are part of the informal labour market and lack the protections, insurance, and rights that are usually mandated in formal labour (International Labour Organization 2020a; International Labour Organization 2020b). As such, they have little, if any, protection from sudden loss of income or unexpected health costs.

The economic crisis will force many vulnerable people living just above the poverty line into poverty. **The new poor are more likely to be in cities where economic shutdowns and movement restrictions have resulted in immediate job losses.** Additionally, many of the vulnerable non-poor are employed through the 'gig economy', also based in urban areas, particularly in middle income countries, which also places them at

Figure 5: Poverty headcount ratio in East Asia and Pacific (1990-2018) and projection under a 10% per capita income or consumption contraction



Source: Sumner, Hoy & Ortiz-Juarez (2020).

risk of poverty.⁴ Whereas rural areas may be able to ride out economic shocks through self-sufficient food security, urban areas, where there may also be price disruptions and spikes, are less likely to have this protection (World Bank 2020d).

The high level of informal employment and significant poverty in several AMS exacerbate the vulnerability of workers in the region. Among the lower middle income AMS there is a high informal employment rate: 90% in Cambodia, 84% in Myanmar, 75% in Lao PDR, 57% in Viet Nam, and 44% in Indonesia (ASEAN Secretariat 2019d). The informal employment rate is high even in Brunei Darussalam (47%) and Thailand (37%) (ASEAN Secretariat 2019d). Using nationally-determined poverty thresholds, the latest available data show poverty incidence at 32 percent in Myanmar (in 2015), 23 percent in Lao PDR (2013), 17 percent in the Philippines (2018), 14 percent in Cambodia (2014), 11 percent in Indonesia (2017), 10 percent in Viet Nam (2016), and 9 percent in Thailand (2016) (World Bank DataBank 2020; World Bank 2019; World Bank 2015.⁵ **Figure 6**, below, draws on World Bank data to illustrate informal employment and absolute poverty incidence across AMS according to nationally-determined poverty lines.

Migrant workers, especially those who are undocumented, are also at risk because of the economic slowdown and restricted movements across countries. Labour migration within ASEAN and from ASEAN to the rest of the world has increased over time. The United Nations Department of Economics

Figure 6: Informal employment rate and poverty incidence in AMS⁶

ASEAN Member State	Informal employment rate	Year	Poverty incidence	Year
Brunei Darussalam	46.6	2017	N.A	
Cambodia	90.3	2012	13.5	2014
Indonesia	44.1	2018	9.8	2018
Lao PDR	75.4	2017	23.2	2013
Malaysia	10.6	2017	0.4	2015
Myanmar	84.1	2017	32.1	2015
Philippines	N.A		16.6	2018
Singapore	N.A		N.A	
Thailand	37.1	2018	8.6	2016
Viet Nam	57.2	2016	9.8	2016

Sources: ASEAN Secretariat (2019); World Bank World Development Indicators; World Bank(2015); World Bank (2019, October 29)

and Social Affairs estimated that the intra-ASEAN stock of migrants, the majority of whom are workers, was 6.8 million in 2019, out of a total of 10.2 million international migrants in the region (International Labour Organization 2015). The main corridors of intra-ASEAN migration are Myanmar-Thailand, Lao PDR-Thailand, Cambodia-Thailand, Indonesia-Malaysia, and Malaysia-Singapore. According to the International Labour Organization, in 2017, migrant workers made up 24% of the workforce in Brunei Darussalam, 15% in Malaysia, 37% in Singapore, and 11% in Thailand. Almost two-thirds of migrant workers in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, and Thailand are low skill workers in elementary occupations, and, of these, particularly among domestic workers, the majority are women (International Labour Organization 2019).

In addition to the decline in tourism, global trade has fallen and is not expected to recover immediately. Economic recessions are expected in the world's biggest export markets, such as the United States and the European Union (The Guardian 2020; Stevis-Gridneff and Ewing 2020). These recessions have had and will continue to have adverse effects on employment in AMS. The large share of informal workers and the high poverty in some AMS means a large portion of workers have limited access to social protection and are highly vulnerable to unemployment because of COVID-19.

As a result, **the pandemic will reinforce persistent pockets of poverty and create new pockets.** Different situations will require specific policies to best suit varying circumstances. Limited fiscal space may also lead to tensions in resource allocations between impoverished groups that existed pre-COVID, and those that were created during the crisis.

Existing social safety nets may be sufficient to target existing poor individuals and families reasonably quickly. However, the new poor may be harder to target because they may fall in and out of poverty in overcrowded impoverished neighbourhoods and peri-urban areas.

In addition, the pandemic will likely negatively affect ASEAN's progress towards the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In early 2020, a United Nations (UN) report illustrated that the region's SDG progress had already slowed and that the region was a long way from achieving most goals by 2030 (UNESCAP 2020). **Figure 7** illustrates Southeast Asia's pre-pandemic collective challenge for achieving the SDGs by 2030. The assessment stressed the need to strengthen efforts for the reduction of inequalities.

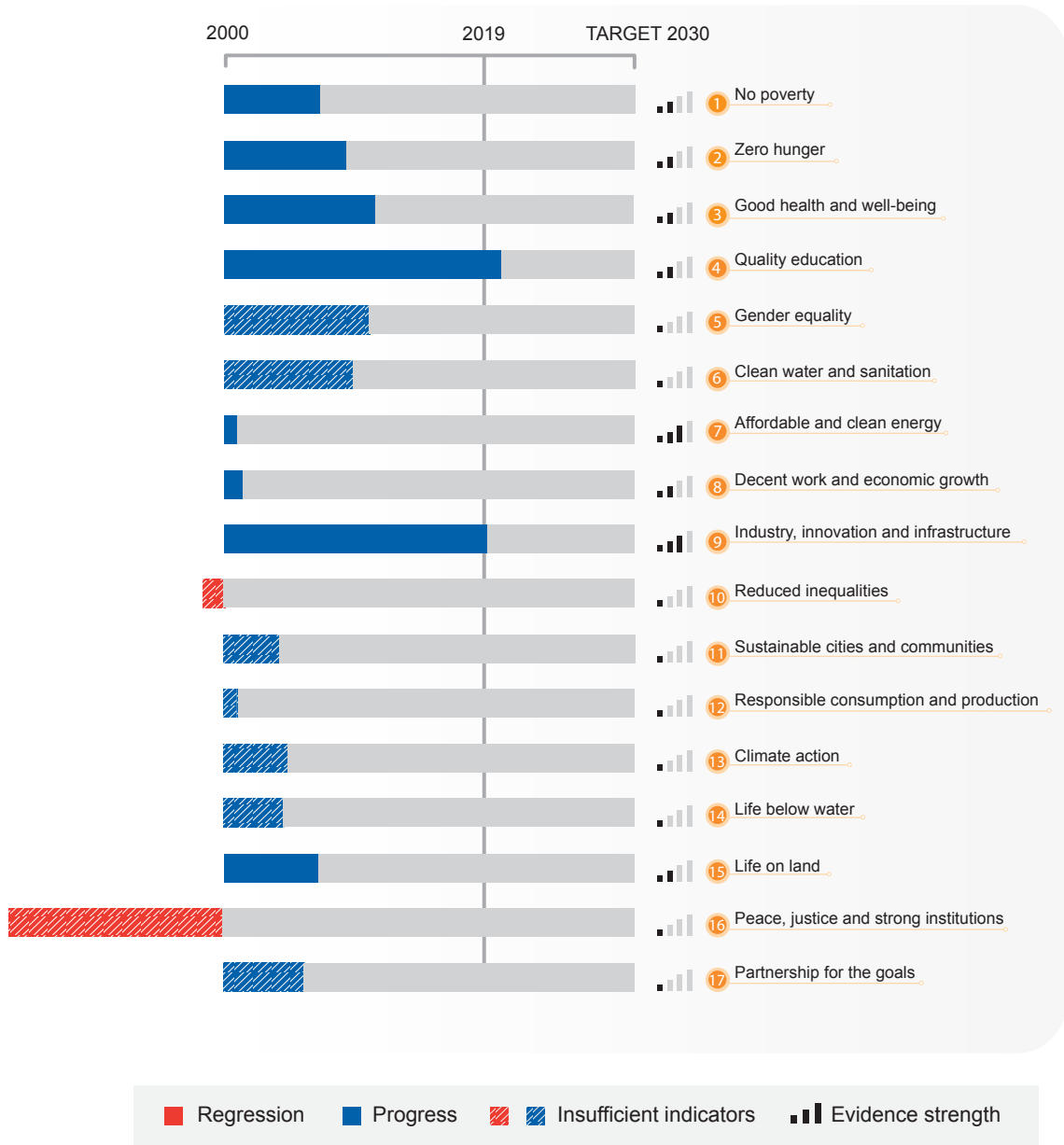
Policy responses

AMS responded quickly and comprehensively to the outbreak of the pandemic. Many AMS have mobilised pandemic preparedness plans from previous outbreaks, implemented social distancing protocols for citizens, and established a variety of movement controls and restrictions. **Figure 8** shows the timeline of COVID-response restrictions across ASEAN. Additionally, all AMS have initiated economic stimulus packages, including the measures illustrated in **Figure 9**. The scale and scope of these interventions have been constrained by the limits of each country's fiscal space, including anxiety over higher public debt, costs of borrowing, spending revenue to service debt, and level of development.

ASEAN institutions have comprehensively responded to the crisis with a series of high-level meetings, joint declarations, and commitments. In addition to many sector-specific commitments, ASEAN Leaders have committed to strengthening internal coordination mechanisms, and to work closely with international partners to mitigate the adverse impacts of COVID-19 (ASEAN 2020).⁷ At the 36th ASEAN

Summit, on 26 June, AMS stressed the importance of ‘fostering cross-pillar and cross-sectoral collaboration within ASEAN as well as renewing commitments for collaboration with relevant stakeholders to ensure a collective and coordinated regional response to curb the further transmission of COVID-19 and mitigate the multi-faceted impact of this pandemic’ (ASEAN Healthcare Services 2020).

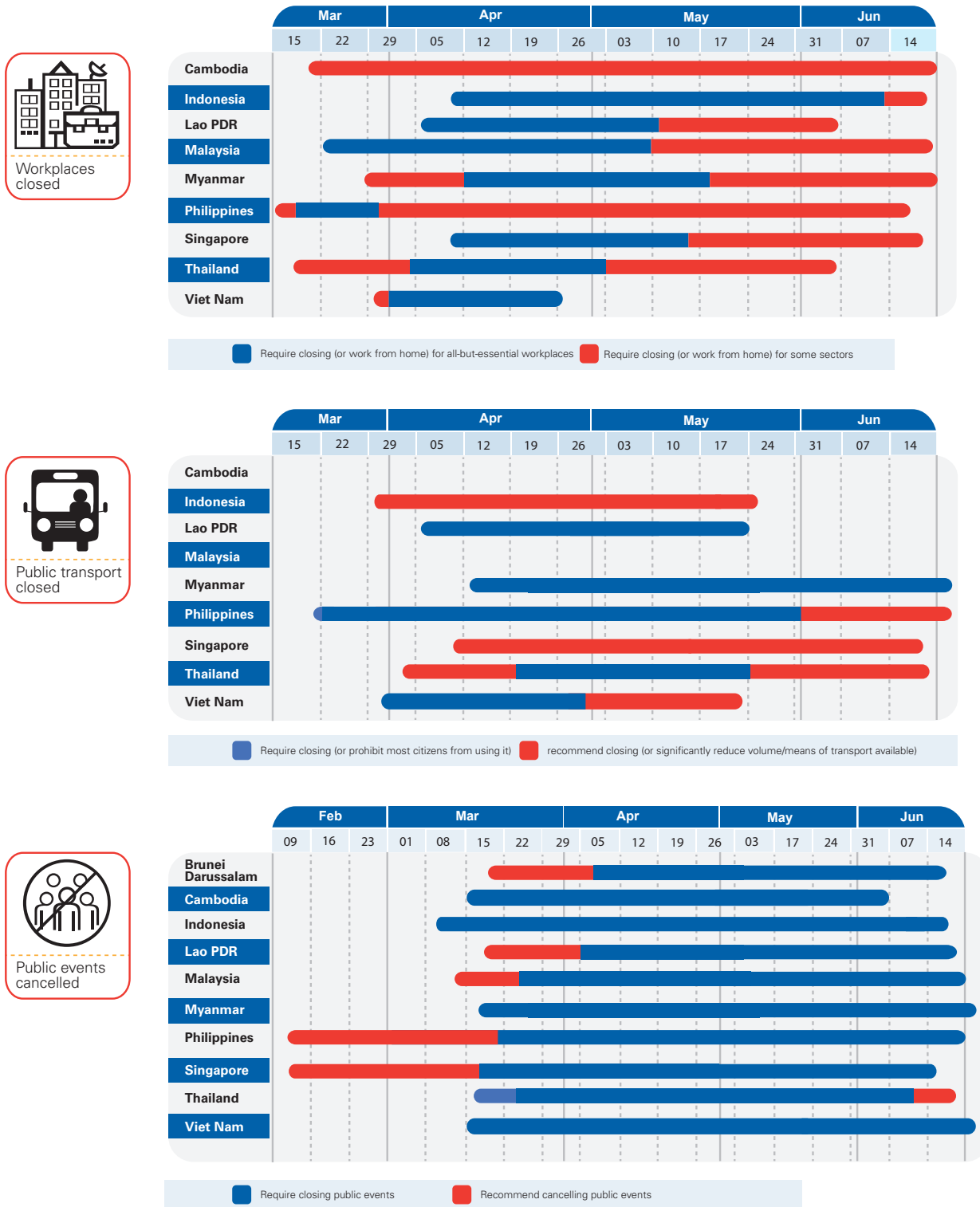
Figure 7: Pre-COVID assessment of progress towards SDGs



AMS have received numerous country-specific financial commitments from bilateral and multilateral agencies. Australia has re-oriented its entire official development assistance budget to focus on pandemic recovery, with the ASEAN region identified as one of the highest priority regions. China

is providing significant technical assistance, medical supplies and equipment, technical experts, and low-interest loans. The United States, Germany, the UK, the European Union, Switzerland, and Canada are funding assistance for health and economic support throughout the region.

Figure 8: Timeline of COVID-response restrictions across ASEAN



Source: Oxford Covid-19 Government Response Tracker

Source: Oxford Covid-19 Government Response Tracker

Globally and in ASEAN, **policymakers must balance public health concerns and economic costs.** The severity of the pandemic's impact varies across countries, largely dependent on public health system capacity, informal sector size, initial government containment measures, and economic stimulus responses. Social distancing, quarantine measures, and travel restrictions will likely contain the spread of

the virus, but they also impose a serious economic cost, especially in countries that depend on trade and tourism. If ASEAN experiences future outbreaks of the virus, it will be more difficult to close parts of the economy because of lingering economic damage from the first virus wave and increased social and political opposition to shutdowns.

Figure 9: AMS fiscal stimulus packages

	Overall fiscal measures	Health system measures	Income support	Tax concessions	Other tax expenditure measures	Loans to businesses	Subsidies to businesses	State loan guarantees
Brunei Darussalam	●	●		●	●	●	●	
Cambodia	●	●	●	●	●		●	
Indonesia	●	●	●	●		●		
Lao PDR	●	●		●		●	●	
Malaysia	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Myanmar	●	●	●			●	●	
Philippines	●	●	●		●	●	●	
Singapore	●	●	●		●	●	●	
Thailand	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Viet Nam	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	

The emerging shape of the new normal

Throughout the duration of the pandemic, certain trends have become predictable whereas others remain highly uncertain. At the time of this report, it is impossible to tell whether the worst of the pandemic has passed. Keeping this uncertainty in mind, what follows are recommendations based on certain assumptions, including:

For at least the next 12 months, the pandemic will continue to ebb and flow through its course across the world. While vaccine availability is uncertain, it is more likely that gradually improving treatments will reduce the health and mortality impacts of the virus, which could reduce health, economic, and social impacts. International travel will continue to be severely curtailed during this time; although, the movement of goods will likely return to pre-COVID levels sooner.

Economies will continue to slow, and consumption will remain significantly lower than 2019 levels. Even as lockdowns and other restrictions ease, citizens will likely remain reluctant to return to normal levels

of consumption. Rural and provincial areas will be hit hard; local services will be strained by the combined effects of returning, newly unemployed migrants from major cities, and businesses and schools will continue to be disadvantaged where they lack internet access.

In terms of the sectors examined in this report, there will likely be higher unemployment across AMS for the medium-term, with particular sectors, such as tourism, potentially impacted for the long-term, but opportunities may also arise in new sectors. Sectors with disrupted value chains will continue to experience negative consequences, but these disruptions may provide employment opportunities as new sectors emerge or expand, such as remote or digital work, platform work, e-commerce, and technology creation and management. The world of work and the notion of the workplace will evolve more quickly with online replacing face-to-face meetings in large sections of the workforce for the foreseeable future. Countries will try to move rapidly towards Industry 4.0 and towards greater automation as a protection against future crises. ASEAN is well placed to make that transition.

It is likely that periods of online and home-based learning will be required across all education levels. While many AMS have seen partial or full opening of education systems throughout May and June, some countries have also had to close schools again due to new COVID-19 outbreaks. The shift from school-based to home-based learning has significantly impacted students' access to quality education, especially children and youth from vulnerable groups. These students may be denied quality education because of a lack of infrastructure, digital devices, learning resources, or a home environment conducive to learning. Children and youth with disabilities may not have access to in-person learning support or aids. Girls are especially vulnerable because of community expectations to engage in household chores and babysitting.

A comprehensive picture of the pandemic's impacts on the newly unemployed and poor, children, the elderly, and other vulnerable and marginalized groups is not yet available. **More data collection and analysis of the pandemic's short-term impacts is necessary for longer-term predictions.**

The following chapters contribute to the shorter and longer-term picture of the pandemic's impacts. The chapters provide a preliminary analysis of the impact on the education, social welfare, and labour sectors across AMS and provide regional and national sector-level recommendations for policy reform. Each chapter assesses the immediate impacts to the sector, AMS and ASEAN Institutional responses, and provides recommendations for the future.

Intertwined challenges

The Education, Labour and Employment, and Social Protection sectors are deeply intertwined. Challenges in addressing one will likely compound challenges for others. For example, school dropouts will likely be higher among poor and vulnerable groups who are unable to maintain remote learning because of a lack of resources or funds. Although the education chapter focuses on the access and conditions of schooling during the pandemic, it is worthwhile considering the increasing number of students who will fall through the cracks of formal school systems, children who will, in

turn, rely on social welfare. It is important to remember the linkage between education and health because many K-12 students across the region rely on the school system to meet their basic food and nutrition requirements through meal programmes.

Similarly, social welfare and labour policy overlap in many ways. It is difficult for Informal workers to access government services, particularly social insurance, because of informal working arrangements. Informal workers often do not have access to social insurance products and services connected to formal employment conditions. The large number of intra-regional migrants who have lost jobs or relocated because of the pandemic has made it necessary to address the portability of welfare benefits across borders.

An issue that overlaps all three sectors is the need to improve digital access and overcome the divide between those with digital access and those without. The lack of digital access compounds other inequalities and, while the divide has been especially evident in the education sector, the primacy of online employment opportunities, online distance learning, and online social welfare benefits applications all promise to increase the challenge of access to these services for the most vulnerable and marginalised. Urban areas have experienced the brunt of this digital shift, but it will soon filter to rural areas where connectivity is much weaker. Internet access and affordability is a central policy issue for national governments' short- to medium- term recovery plans.

Therefore, there is an **important nexus between labour, education and training, and social welfare.** The linkages can be addressed with more resilient and forward-looking policies that will buffer ASEAN citizens against the worst of the crisis and kick-start the region's economic recovery.

That regional recovery requires a collective regional effort. Initiatives that are championed at a regional level could support national governments and build trust in the leadership of regional institutions. Regional cooperation will position ASEAN for multi-sectoral response to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and future shocks.

Notes

1. This figure covers the five largest ASEAN economies (International Monetary Fund 2020)
2. At the time of the 2015 assessment, extreme poverty was defined as less than US\$1 per day. It is currently defined as US\$1.90.
3. People with per capita consumption or income below PPP US\$1.90 per day are defined as extreme poor (as per the World Bank poverty lines); those with per capita consumption or income below PPP US\$3.10 per day are defined as poor. People with per capita consumption or income between PPP US\$ 3.10-US\$5.50 per day are termed economically vulnerable (i.e., those at high risk of poverty). Given the relatively low incidence of extreme poverty in East Asia and Pacific (1.3% in 2018), the poverty line of US\$3.2 per day is more relevant to examine changes in poverty and living conditions due to the crisis. Poverty incidence using national poverty lines can differ. However, there are no estimates of the crisis impact using national poverty lines or for AMS separate from East Asia and the Pacific.
4. “Gig economy” is based on temporary jobs or doing separate aspects of a job, each paid individually, rather than working for an employer (Cambridge Dictionary 2019).
5. For all countries mentioned, except Cambodia and Lao People’s Democratic Republic, see World Bank DataBank (2020). For Cambodia, see World Bank (2019). For Lao People’s Democratic Republic, see World Bank (2015).
6. People with per capita consumption or income below PPP US\$1.90 per day are defined as extreme poor (as per the World Bank poverty lines); those with per capita consumption or income below PPP US\$3.10 per day are defined as poor. People with per capita consumption or income between PPP US\$ 3.10-US\$5.50 per day are termed economically vulnerable (i.e., those at high risk of falling into poverty). Given the relatively low incidence of extreme poverty in East Asia and Pacific (1.3 percent in 2018), the poverty line of US\$3.2 per day is more relevant to examine changes in poverty and living conditions due to the crisis. Poverty incidence using national poverty lines would differ. However, there are no estimates of the simulated impact of the crisis using national poverty lines or for the ASEAN Member States separate from East Asia and Pacific.
7. On 14 May, 2020, ASEAN Labour Ministers signed a Joint Statement on Response to the Impact of Coronavirus Disease on Labour and Employment (ASEAN Secretariat 2020b).

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Chapter 2: Labour

ASEAN's connectedness to the global economy, a source of strength in the past, now contributes to its vulnerability. The region's dependence on tourism, exports, and international labour migration, along with high informal employment levels, has made the region's labour market especially vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19.

Impact on Labour

There are four ways in which COVID-19 affects labour (Ducanes and Balisacan 2020). **The first is through lockdowns**, imposed either nationally or at local levels to control the spread of the virus. Lockdowns immediately force workers, regardless of employment sector and excluding essential workers, to either work remotely or not work for the extent of the lockdown.¹ Some form of nationwide or partial lockdowns of varying lengths of time were imposed in the first half of 2020 in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

The second is through the social or physical distancing required even after a lockdown has ended or in the absence of a lockdown policy, for as long there is no vaccine. Included in social distancing is travel restrictions to prevent infections from abroad. These restrictions particularly affect contact-intensive work, work that requires people to congregate in a closed or relatively small area, and tourism- or travel-dependent work. This includes jobs in restaurants, shopping centres, airlines and cruise ships, public transportation, sports and concert arenas, spas, and barbershops and beauty salons.

The third is via the reduction of aggregate demand because of reduced purchasing power within-country and abroad, as household and business incomes shrink due to the economic fallout from COVID-19 and associated lockdowns. This can lead

to the downsizing or closure of affected firms, reduced working hours, and the retrenchment of workers. The projected fall in remittances in 2020 will contribute significantly to the decline in household purchasing power for some AMS, and the expected recession in many major markets will reduce demand for ASEAN exports and tourism.

The fourth is through a disruption in the supply chain. The pandemic has caused limited land, air, and sea transport, with has affected the supply of inputs to production and, in some cases, caused factories to operate at lower capacity or cease operations entirely.²

Workers in highly affected sectors

The effect on employment in sectors that are closely linked to exports, tourism, and labour migration will likely be considerable, although the exact extent is uncertain. Restaurants, accommodation, transportation, retail trade, and entertainment, all closely linked with tourism, will be affected, along with sectors highly dependent on remittances, such as real estate and construction (OECD 2020).³ **Figures 10 and 11** show the pre-COVID-19 AMS estimated number of employed workers in the accommodation and food services, manufacturing, trade, transportation, and construction-based sectors.

A total of 154 million workers in the five sectors are highly vulnerable to the economic impact of COVID-19. This number includes approximately 19 million workers in accommodation and food service activities and 55 million employed in wholesale and retail trade in ASEAN, as reported in their labour force surveys. Approximately 45 million workers in the region are employed in manufacturing, 14 million in transportation and storage, and 22 million in construction. Assuming only a fraction of these workers is affected by the pandemic, the newly unemployed could total in the millions, if not tens of millions.

Figure 10: Employment in sectors expected to be highly affected by COVID-19

ASEAN Member State	Accommodation and food service activities	Wholesale and retail trade	Manufacturing	Transportation and storage	Construction	Total
Brunei Darussalam (2017)	12	27	7	5	10	62
Cambodia (2012)	325	1,259	1,254	384	487	3,710
Indonesia (2019)	8,797	24,469	18,228	5,203	7,625	64,321
Lao PDR (2017)	41	329	140	39	83	632
Malaysia (2019)	1,550	2,595	2,682	668	1,276	8,770
Myanmar (2017)	399	3,720	2,510	1,148	1,181	8,958
Philippines (2019)	1,906	8,482	3,548	3,539	4,198	21,673
Singapore (2019)	267	486	485	262	457	1 965
Thailand (2019)	2,751	6,068	6,132	1,289	2,022	18,261
Viet Nam (2018)	2,753	7,324	9,717	1,774	4,273	25,841
Total	18,800	54,758	44,703	14,311	21,613	154,185

Sources: Labour Force Survey Reports of different AMS except for Singapore, For Singapore, source of data are administrative records and Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, Ministry of Manpower, (Note for Singapore: Data are compiled primarily from administrative records, with the self-employed component estimated from the Labour Force Survey.)

Figure 11: Employment in sectors expected to be highly affected by COVID-19 as % of total employment

ASEAN Member State	Accommodation and food service activities	Wholesale and retail trade	Manufacturing	Transportation and storage	Construction	Total
Brunei Darussalam (2017)	6.6	14.7	3.8	2.8	5.5	33.4
Cambodia (2012)	4.5	17.5	17.4	5.3	6.8	51.6
Lao PDR (2017)	2.3	18.7	8.0	2.2	4.7	35.9
Malaysia (2019)	10.3	17.2	17.8	4.4	8.5	58.2
Myanmar (2017)	1.8	15.9	10.8	4.7	5.5	38.7
Philippines (2019)	4.6	20.3	8.5	8.5	10.1	51.9
Singapore (2019)	6.0	16.3	9.8	9.4	4.5	46.0
Thailand (2019)	7.3	16.1	16.3	3.4	5.4	48.5
Viet Nam (2018)	5.1	13.5	17.9	3.3	7.9	47.6
Total	6.0	17.5	14.2	4.5	6.8	49.1

Sources: Labour Force Survey Reports of different AMS except for Singapore, For Singapore source data are administrative records and Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research and Statistics Department, Ministry of Manpower

The impact of the pandemic on AMS workers is compounded by the high level of informal employment in these sectors and the large share of women in some sectors (Annex 2 and 3). Employees in informal employment are easier to lay off because they often lack an employment contract and have limited legal recourse. Additionally, many self-employed workers in informal employment are in low-end services jobs (e.g. retail trade and public transportation) that will likely be heavily affected by the pandemic. These informal workers have limited access to social safety nets. In areas related to accommodation, food services, wholesale, and retail trade, which are closely linked to tourism, workers are predominantly women. **A high number of women will likely lose their jobs and be expected to do more household work during the pandemic, including supervising or educating children who are home because of school closures.**

The full impact of COVID-19 on employment cannot be known for some time. The following section summarizes publicly available data collected so far in several AMS countries, limited mostly to changes in employment, unemployment, and retrenchments. The AMS that conduct labour force surveys more regularly, either monthly or quarterly, have more information available.

Known impacts to date across AMS

Brunei Darussalam. There is no official report on the employment impact of COVID-19 in Brunei Darussalam, but the Asian Development Bank, in its economic impact assessment of COVID-19 in Brunei Darussalam, estimated that the country's best case scenario is a 0.44% reduction in total employment, and its worst case scenario is a 3.8% decline.

Cambodia. There are no official reports available on the number of affected workers in Cambodia, but media reports in late February quote the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training with the estimate that 200 factories, mainly garment production, with about 160 thousand workers, would close in March (Radio Free Asia 2020). As of late February, only 10 factories partially suspended operations, resulting in 3 thousand lost jobs.⁴ In a recent report, the Asian Development Bank estimated that Cambodia would lose 390 thousand jobs as a result of the crisis (Cheng 2020).

In late March, after the imposition of a partial lockdown in Bangkok, **50 thousand Cambodian workers in Thailand lost their jobs and returned to Cambodia** (International Labour Organization 2020c). Many more are assumed to have lost their jobs but were unable to

return home due to border closures. Many of these do not have access to social safety nets and even to medical care (including COVID-19 testing) if they are unregistered migrants, working in the informal sector, or, even if they work in the formal sector and were not properly registered in the social security system.

Indonesia. According to the Ministry of Manpower, based on data from early May, **Indonesia has retrenched approximately 3 million workers** (Fair Wear 2020). Detailed data was available for 1.7 million retrenched workers, out of which 68% were men and 32% were women, with the highest number of job cuts occurring in Jakarta, West Java, and Central Java. The Indonesia Chamber of Commerce estimates retrenchments could reach 15 million across sectors (CNN Indonesia 2020). Indonesian workers abroad have also been affected. As early as March 29, 11,566 Indonesian workers had been repatriated from Malaysia (International Labour Organization 2020b).

Lao PDR. During the partial lockdown in Bangkok, approximately 60 thousand Lao workers in Thailand returned to Lao PDR after losing their jobs, while many others have likely lost their jobs but been unable to return home because of border closures (International Labour Organization 2020c).

Malaysia. From April 2019 to April 2020, the number of employed workers declined by 156.4 thousand. Areas that saw the most lost jobs were manufacturing and services, specifically accommodation, food and beverage, and entertainment and recreation. The unemployment rate increased by more than a percentage point to 5% and unemployment increased by 255.4 thousand (Department of statistics Malaysia 2020). According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, these changes were mainly the result of the movement control order (MCO), which affected self-employed or own account workers, such as small traders. Based on the first quarter of 2020 labour force statistics, unemployment impacted various age groups, but was highest among the 46-64 age group (up by 61% compared to 2019 fourth quarter), followed by those in the 31-45 age group (up 8%), and least among those in the 15-30 age group (up 2%).

Myanmar. According to the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population (MOLIP), as cited in news reports, by the end of April, 175 factories had stopped operations in Myanmar due to cancelled orders and disrupted supply chains (Thura 2020). This resulted in the unemployment of over 60 thousand workers. At the time of announcement, the MOLIP said workers in 105 of the closed factories had not yet received their final pay.

During the partial lockdown in Bangkok, **approximately 150 thousand Myanmar workers in Thailand returned to Myanmar after losing their jobs** (International Labour Organization 2020c). Many others who have lost their jobs are unable to return to Myanmar because of border closures. These workers have limited access to social safety nets and health care due to their status.

The Philippines. The Philippines conducted the LFS in April, at the height of the government-enforced lockdown (known as 'enhanced community quarantine' or ECQ). **The unemployment rate rose to an all-time high of 17.7% from a 5.1% in the corresponding 2019 period, equivalent to an additional 5 million unemployed workers** (Philippine Statistics Authority 2020). The working age outside the labour force also grew by 5 million, reflecting others who lost

employment (but are not considered unemployed) as well as new entrants to the working age population who were unable to work due to the lockdown restrictions (Ducanes 2020). Additionally, **12.5 million workers reported having a job but not being able to do any work**. By occupation, employment loss was highest among services and sales workers (-1.7 million) and those in elementary occupations (-1.6 million); by type of worker, employment decline was highest among employees in private establishments (-4.8 million), followed by self-employed workers (-1.7 million); and by sector of employment, the largest employment drop was in wholesale and retail trade (-2 million), followed by construction (-1.4 million), and transportation and storage (1 million). Among those who were still in employment, mean hours worked declined by 16%, and the underemployment rate rose from 13.4% to 18.9%.

Figure 12: Impact of COVID-19 on employment based on labour force survey reports

Country	Period	Decline in Employment
Malaysia	April 2019-April 2020	156,400
Philippines	April 2019-April 2020	7,991,000
Singapore	March 2019-March 2020	25,600
Thailand	March 2019-March 2020	439,300

Sources: Labour force surveys of Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Figure for Singapore excludes foreign domestic workers.

COVID-19 also affected hundreds of thousands of overseas Filipino workers (OFW). According to the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE), **as of the second week of July, more than half a million OFWs have lost their jobs and applied for cash assistance** (Lee-Brago 2020). Of these, 82 thousand have returned to the country since February (Mercado 2020).

Singapore. A decline in total employment in the first quarter of 2020 compared to the fourth quarter of 2019 (excluding foreign domestic workers) of 25.6 thousand, mainly among foreign workers, **was the sharpest quarterly employment contraction on Singapore's record** (Singapore Ministry of Manpower 2020a). Employment declined in manufacturing (-3.2 thousand), construction (-5.9 thousand), and services (-16.3 thousand), but the largest decline attributed to the COVID-19 outbreak was in the services sector, particularly food and beverage services (-8.3 thousand), retail trade (-5.3 thousand), and accommodation (-2.6 thousand). The number of retrenched employees was 1.5 per one thousand

employees in the first quarter of 2020, but it could have been higher if not for government-provided job- and wage-support measures. The bulk of the retrenchment was in services (2,360), followed by manufacturing (720) and construction (140). Among local employees, the number of retrenched locals was approximately the same for men and women at 1.7 and 1.6 per one thousand local employees, respectively. The resident unemployment rate increased to 3.1% in March 2020 compared to 2.8% in March 2019. By education level, the unemployment rate was higher among those with post-secondary (non-tertiary) qualification and lower (up 0.5-0.6 percentage points) compared to those with diplomas, professional qualifications, or degrees.

Thailand. From March 2019 to March 2020, **employment in Thailand declined by 439.3 thousand**, according to the monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS) report. There was a decline in agricultural employment by 602.7 thousand, but a reported increase in non-agriculture employment by 163.4 thousand. There were also substantial employment losses in manufacturing (-422.7 thousand) and construction

(-72.3 thousand). These sectors, including agriculture, have a large presence of migrant workers. According to the ILO, the tourism sector has also been negatively affected by COVID-19. Based on the monthly LFS report, employment in tourism-related jobs decreased by 139 thousand between January 2020 and March 2020 (International Labour Organization 2020a). The largest decrease in terms of numbers was among workers in food and beverage services, and the largest decrease in terms of percentage change was among workers in travel agencies and reservation activities. Thai workers abroad have also been affected; as of 4 May 2020, 40 thousand Thai workers were sent home from Malaysia (International Labour Organization 2020b).

Viet Nam. There have been no post-COVID LFSs conducted in Viet Nam, but a survey among enterprises in different sectors conducted by the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry in April 2020 revealed that 19% of enterprises cut employment or terminated contracts, 47% did not cut employment but reduced working hours, 20% did not cut employment but reduced worker salaries, while 26% asked workers to take temporary unpaid leave (Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry 2020).

Responses of ASEAN and ASEAN Member States

ASEAN

ASEAN and its various sectoral ministerial bodies have issued various Statements and Declarations on the region's collective response to COVID-19. The first of these was the *Chairman's Statement on ASEAN's Collective Response to the Outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019*, issued on 15 February 2020, which expressed a commitment to coordinating the region's efforts against COVID-19, including sharing information, experiences, and best practices (ASEAN Secretariat 2020a).

In multiple statements, ASEAN also addressed the impacts the pandemic will have on the population's livelihoods. To date, these statements include the following: the ASEAN Economic Minister's statement on Strengthening ASEAN's Economic Resilience in Response to the Outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) issued on 10 March; the Declaration of the Special ASEAN Summit on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) issued on 14 April (ASEAN Secretariat 2020b); the Joint Statement of the ASEAN Tourism Ministers on Strengthening Cooperation to Revitalise ASEAN Tourism on 29 April 2020 (ASEAN Secretariat 2020c); the Joint Statement of ASEAN Labour Ministers on Response to the Impact of Coronavirus Disease

2019 (COVID-19) on Labour and Employment issued on 14 May 2020 (ASEAN Secretariat 2020d); and most recently the Hanoi Plan of Action of Strengthening ASEAN Economic Cooperation and Supply Chain Connectivity in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic (ASEAN Secretariat 2020e); and ASEAN Leaders' Vision Statement on a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN (ASEAN Secretariat 2020f).

In these statements, **ASEAN committed to keep markets open, assist people and businesses affected by COVID-19, especially MSMEs and vulnerable groups, and to develop a post-pandemic recovery plan.** ASEAN agreed to safeguard the labour rights of all workers, facilitate healthcare access to workers infected by COVID-19, and provide appropriate assistance and support to ASEAN migrant workers affected by the pandemic. ASEAN also recognized the need to address COVID-19's heavy fallout on tourism, retail and other services sectors, and manufacturing. In the case of tourism, ASEAN underscored the necessity of developing clear health standards and guidelines to revive the sector. Operationalizing these plans is the next step in ASEAN's response.

Immediate Responses of Individual AMS

AMS have established various labour-related policy responses to COVID-19. These can be grouped into five types: income support for affected workers;⁵ training support; re-employment programmes; job-retention programmes; and occupational health and safety (OSH) programmes. A summary of each country's response follows (See **Annex 4** for the inventory of country responses).

Brunei Darussalam (Ministry of Finance and Economy 2020). To support self-employed workers, **the government is shouldering self-employed workers' supplementary contributory pension (SCP) contribution for six months.** The government is also providing workers with free online training and encouraging companies to conduct training for local staff. Brunei Darussalam is also **extending its apprenticeship programme** and providing an online platform to match workers to available jobs. Job retention programmes include providing a **25% salary subsidy for Bruneian employees in MSMEs for a period of three months**, deferment of contributions towards the SCP and the Employees Trust Fund, deferment of loan payments for businesses, waiving some government transaction fees for companies in targeted sectors, discounted rentals for government buildings for MSMEs, water and electricity bills, and discounts on corporate income tax for targeted sectors.

Cambodia. To support suspended garment workers in garment and tourism sectors, the Cambodian government provides each a monthly extra income support of US\$40 and requires employers to pay each a monthly allowance of US\$30 (Chheng 2020). **The government has also allocated between US\$800 million to US\$2 billion to address the economic impacts of COVID-19**, some of which will be in the form of tax holiday (from 6 months to one year based on the severity of the actual impact) and loans to businesses to support job retention (White 2020). Cambodia also continues to provide the medical care benefits of the Health Care Scheme to suspended workers in garment and tourism sectors. The suspended workers are also covered by the Occupational Risk Scheme while they attend the soft skill training offered by Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. Cambodia also provides employment services for workers through the National Employment Agency which can help workers or employees who have lost their jobs to get a new job as soon as possible. In addition, Cambodia is implementing the **cash-for-work programme** (2020 budgets extended from 38 million USD to 100 million USD) for the unemployed to provide people, who lost their jobs and returned to their hometown (from inside and outside the country) as well those in the community, the opportunity to get short-term employment with income to support their daily needs.

Indonesia (International Labour Organization 2020d). The Indonesian government **issued unemployment cards to laid off workers**, which gave them access to government-provided online training which entitles them to unemployment benefits. To support low-income manufacturing workers, the government **exempted workers who earned below 200 million rupiah annually from income tax for six months**. The government also **expanded unemployment benefits to cover informal sector workers** (International

Monetary Fund 2020). To help businesses survive and support job retention, the government is reducing corporate income tax by three percentage points and deferring import tax payments for selected manufacturing subsectors for six months. The **Ministry of Manpower (MoM) encourages employers to discuss alternatives to retrenching workers with trade unions or workers' representatives**, such as reducing salaries and perks for high-level positions, reducing workdays, or reducing work hours. The MoM is also providing laid-off workers with skills training and assistance to start a business. To help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace, the MoM is providing online consultation services on OSH issues related to COVID-19. This website also accepts COVID-19-related OSH complaints from workers.

Lao PDR (International Monetary Fund 2020). To support low-income workers during the pandemic, the government has provided **workers with monthly income less than 5 million kips (US\$555) with tax exemption for three months**. To support business survival and job retention, the government is giving microenterprises with profits between 50 million kips (US\$5,555) and 400 million kips (US\$44,400) exemption from profit tax, postponing, by three months, tax collection from tourism-related businesses, the payment of the road tax, and affected enterprises' contribution to mandatory social security.

Malaysia. The **government is providing a monthly support** of 600 Malaysian ringgit (US\$138) per month for six months to workers earning below 4,000 Malaysian ringgit (US\$920) per month (KPMG 2020a). To keep businesses viable and spur job retention, the government is also providing wage subsidies to enterprises, grants to MSMEs, and discounts on foreign worker fees (International Monetary Fund 2020).

Figure 13: Responses of AMS to COVID-19 (labour sector)

Country	Income support to affected workers	Training	Re-employment programmes	Job-retention and preservation programmes
Brunei Darussalam	[Blue bar]	[Red bar]	[Yellow bar]	[Blue bar]
Cambodia		[Red bar]	[Yellow bar]	
Indonesia		[Red bar]	[Yellow bar]	
Lao PDR		[Red bar]	[Yellow bar]	
Malaysia		[Red bar]	[Yellow bar]	
Myanmar		[Red bar]	[Yellow bar]	
the Philippines		[Red bar]	[Yellow bar]	
Singapore		[Red bar]	[Yellow bar]	
Thailand		[Red bar]	[Yellow bar]	
Viet Nam		[Red bar]	[Yellow bar]	

Myanmar. (Gan, See and Ng 2020). To help people unemployed because of COVID-19, **Myanmar extended healthcare, medicine, and travel benefits for unemployed Social Security Board members by six months.** Through the MOLIP, the government also **partially subsidized the social security fees for insured workers** temporarily closed for health inspections (International Monetary Fund 2020). To encourage job retention, the government is providing a partial credit guarantee scheme for new loans made by banks to Myanmar enterprises of a given size in selected sectors conditional on the retention of staff employed by the enterprises, as of the beginning of February 2020. The government also provided **tax and fee deferrals and tax credits for businesses**, and exemption from lease payments for manufacturing firms that lease from the government. An inter-agency team consisting of representatives from the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Health and Sports (MOHS), MOLIP, and the General Administration Department, conducted inspections of factories and other establishments in line with the guidelines of MOHS, in order to reduce unemployment.

The Philippines. For formal sector workers affected by temporary enterprise closures or flexible work arrangements, the government, through the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE) provided a **one-time cash grant of 5,000 pesos (US\$100).**⁶ For **informal sector workers affected by the lockdown, the government provided the equivalent of 10 day's minimum wage in exchange for work**, such as community cleaning and disinfection. The government also provided OFWs who have lost their jobs the equivalent of US\$200, regardless of their migration status (whether they are

regular or irregular OFWs). To support job retention, **the government provided financial support to MSMEs** and credit guarantee for small businesses (International Monetary Fund 2020).

Singapore. For self-employed Singaporean citizens meeting certain criteria, **the government is providing three cash pay-outs of 3,000 Singaporean dollars in May, July, and October 2020.** For eligible retrenched Singaporeans and permanent resident employees, the government provides a **monthly cash grant of up to 800 Singaporean dollars (US\$574)** for 3 months, as well as training support grants (Singapore Ministry of Manpower 2020b). The government encourages employers to help retrenched employees find other jobs or refer them to government employment agencies. **The government strongly encourages employers to implement cost-saving measures rather than retrench workers.** To support job retention, the government provides employers with financial support and training grants, such as the **Jobs Support Scheme**, which sends employers government pay-outs for wages (International Monetary Fund 2020). The government also offers support to heavily affected sectors for rental costs, loans, and additional support.

Thailand. The government provided **14 million non-farm informal sector workers and 10 million farmers with 5,000 Baht (US\$160) per month for three months.** The government also provided tax relief and soft loans, via state financial institutions, to businesses (International Monetary Fund 2020). **For migrant workers, the government extended the permission to work in Thailand** for those with documents expiring on 31 March (International Labour Organization 2020c). Additionally, migrant workers in

the formal sector who had contributed to social security for more than 6 months were entitled to unemployment benefits equivalent to 62% of their daily wage for up to three months. They were also entitled to severance pay if they had worked at least 4 months.

Viet Nam. The government provided **cash transfer for affected workers for three months** from April to June (International Monetary Fund 2020). The government also deferred without penalty social insurance payments for those economically affected by COVID-19 until June or December 2020 (KPMG 2020b). There are also discussions to cut the income tax rates for micro and small enterprises to support viability.

Other actors in the region have also responded to the crisis. In Singapore, the National Trades Union Congress and the government provided one-time cash relief for eligible union members who suffered income losses or retrenchment (National Trades Union Congress 2020). In the Philippines, at the beginning of the lockdown, some of the largest private companies committed to advance 13th month pay and maintain salary and benefits for all their employees for the duration of the lockdown (Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation 2020). In Indonesia, crowdfunding campaigns were launched using local platforms to raise funds for informal workers (Preuss 2020).

Other regions adopted additional responses beyond those in AMS. In the EU, for example, many countries adopted Short Time Work schemes, where workers were allowed to keep their employment but worked shorter hours or were temporarily laid off, but their contracts remained active, and they were paid a portion of their wage every month (Eurofound 2020). Other EU countries made teleworking, where possible, mandatory (Eurofound 2020). Canada provided workers psychological support through an online portal to deal with mental strains from the crisis (Trade Union Advisory Committee 2020). In Ireland, the government released a 'Return to Work Safety Protocol' to facilitate the return of businesses (Trade Union Advisory Committee 2020). In Israel, the trade union congress established a union for self-employed workers and provided them with legal service during the crisis (Trade Union Advisory Committee 2020).

Conclusions

The current pandemic and its economic fallout pose many challenges to the region's labour policymakers. In the medium to long term, certain challenges will become more prominent. These

include Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), regional migration policies and conditions, the flexibility of current labour laws, and long-term recovery. Additionally, as noted in the Introduction, lockdowns have exposed the fundamental limitations of existing social protection systems, especially in the informal and gig economies. An ongoing challenge for LDCs and LMICs in the AMS is providing adequate social security and unemployment insurance to formal and informal economy workers. Implementing and funding active labour market policies and programmes, like work fare or cash-for-work programmes, and contributory social security and unemployment insurance is also a challenge.

Governments must develop new OSH standards.

Without a clinically approved vaccine for COVID-19, enterprises need to adopt new OSH practices, train their employees in these OSH practices, and invest in personal protective equipment (PPE) for their employees. OSH standards should include living arrangements for workers who must stay in their place of work or in employer-provided living facilities. These measures may be particularly challenging for micro and small enterprises whose production is limited by physical distancing. But these measures are critical for resuming jobs that cannot be done remotely. Government should lead the development of OSH standards for different sectors or work environments. Given the scale of intra-regional labour migration, an ASEAN framework for OSH in different sectors would be useful.

ASEAN should further pursue labour migration policies that protect migrant workers.

The pandemic's lockdowns and border controls exposed the vulnerability of migrant workers, many of whom lost their jobs and could not return to their home countries. Some reported not receiving severance pay or other entitlements (Wongsamuth 2020). The large number of migrant workers with irregular status in the region complicates this issue. The challenge of regularizing irregular workers and coming to an agreement on migrant worker rights is a continuing challenge for ASEAN. The ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers is an important step, but more efforts are necessary.

AMS governments must adjust or develop labour laws to prepare for the future.

The pandemic has pushed many enterprises to adopt work-from-home policies. Despite some exceptions, national labour laws pertaining to work-from-home arrangements and other non-standard forms of employment are not yet in place. Where such laws are in place, they were not intended for the current pace and magnitude.

These new forms of employment arrangements pose challenges for working conditions, company performance, and overall labour market function. Traditional work that cannot be done remotely will also require new policies for worker protection. Each AMS will need to amend national labour laws and policies to take these new challenges into account.

Revive heavily affected economic sectors and prevent long-term unemployment. Many heavily affected sectors, such as tourism, still face uncertain future. Given the usually large number of intra-ASEAN tourists, the sector's recovery could involve the collective efforts of member states. Some who

lost their jobs in these sectors face the possibility of long-term unemployment. A major challenge will be to retrain these workers for jobs that are more likely to be available soon, such as online retail. These workers may need additional training, including digital technology skills.

It is only the beginning of the impact of COVID-19 on ASEAN's labour market, but the information gathered so far reveals **a broad and protracted impact that affects the livelihood and wellbeing of millions of workers and their families.** The widespread reach of these effects underscores the need for urgent individual country and collective action.

Notes

1. A common definition for essential workers is a worker that conducts services that are essential to continue critical infrastructure operations. The Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Disease in the Philippines provided a list of essential workers, which includes agricultural workers in the food supply chain, private establishment workers in food, medicine, medical supplies, and equipment production, delivery services workers, workers in banks and money transfer services, among others (Inter-Agency Task Force 2020).
2. We would like to thank Ms. Ha Thi Minh Duc, Deputy Director General of MOLISA (Viet Nam), for this insight.
3. This is the case in the Philippines, where overseas Filipino workers make up a large part of the market for residential condominium units.
4. It was reported in a news report in early May that according to the Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia, there were about 180 factories that have suspended operations, 60 more in danger of suspending operations, and affecting over 150 thousand to 200 thousand workers (Cambodianess 2020).
5. Income support measures (including social insurance contribution waivers, cash transfers, cash for work) are also covered in the chapter on Social Protection in this report.
6. The Department of Labor and Employment reported extending assistance to about 650 thousand formal sector workers and 340 thousand informal sector workers (Department of Labor and Employment 2020a; Department of Labor and Employment 2020b).

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Chapter 3: Social welfare

Impact on poverty and vulnerability

From a lifecycle perspective, all population groups face different vulnerabilities because of the pandemic's health and economic impacts. **The poor are the hardest hit and will take longer to recover.** In East Asia and the Pacific, the COVID-19 pandemic will likely force approximately 54 million people into poverty in 2020 (Sumner, Hoy and Ortiz-Juarez 2020).

- **Infants and very young children, pregnant women, people with disability, and older people are particularly vulnerable to health risks.** The pandemic has increased morbidity and mortality due to disruptions in essential health services, such as immunizations. Globally, the pandemic will likely have an adverse impact on child and maternal mortality (Roberton et al. 2020). Additionally, older people in institutional care are particularly vulnerable to health risks. Gaps in public health provision, high out-of-pocket health costs, and unequal access to healthcare between different socio-economic groups contribute to the disproportionate impact on the poor.

- **School-age children suffer the impacts of school closures, learning disruptions, and access to school meals.** Previous crises have resulted in an increased exposure to domestic violence for children. Additionally, enrolment and school attendance rates tend to be lower for children from poor households. For many, school closures may result in permanently dropping out of school and a long-term decline in learning outcomes.

- **The working age population, especially informal and migrant workers are the most affected by the economic fallout of the**

pandemic's containment measures. The large informal economy in AMS leaves most workers without formal social protection. As a result, the loss of jobs means an abrupt drop in income for these workers and their households, particularly migrant workers whose households are dependent on remittances. One estimate suggests there will be between 9 and 35 million new working poor in 2020 (ILO Monitor 2020).

Across all age groups, some face additional adverse impacts based on disability, gender, and other factors. The pandemic will likely further marginalize **people with disabilities**, stimulating greater demand for basic and care services (Wickenden et al. 2020). COVID-19 will also likely have a greater negative impact on **women**. Women are over-represented in frontline sectors responding to the pandemic, increasing their health risks. Many women are also employed in highly affected sectors (e.g., garments) and face greater unemployment risks relative to men (International Labour Organization 2020). There has also been emerging evidence concerning rising gender-based violence because of containment measures (Evans 2020).

Response of ASEAN and ASEAN Member States

ASEAN framework and declarations on social protection

This chapter draws on the regional framework and action plan for the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection, which examines AMS social protection responses to COVID-19 (ASEAN Secretariat 2019). The framework emphasizes the role of social protection for poverty alleviation and inequality reduction.

Box 1: Social protection programmes in ASEAN

Social insurance includes measures for individuals to mitigate the risk of a sudden drop in income or expenditure due to unforeseen shocks, such as illness, death, unemployment, or poverty in old age. All AMS have some form of contributory social insurance that provides insured workers with a combination of pensions, survivor, and disability benefits; sickness and work injury benefits; maternity/paternity benefits; and other benefits.

Social care services provide a range of benefits and services to vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, elderly people, and at-risk children and youth. Some AMS have provisions for institutional care for these groups, but comparable information across the region is limited.

Social assistance, social welfare, or social safety net programmes (with terminology varying across countries and organizations) are programmes that protect poor and vulnerable households and individuals (as mentioned in the ASEAN framework). These programmes are typically non-contributory and help the poor and vulnerable cope with disasters and crises. The programmes generally comprise cash transfers, food and other in-kind transfers, cash for work, fee waivers, and targeted consumer price subsidies. In ASEAN, cash transfers typically comprise social pensions for the elderly, unconditional cash transfers for vulnerable groups, school stipends, and conditional cash transfers (linked to human capital acquisition). With respect to in-kind transfers, several AMS have school feeding programmes, but Indonesia is the only country with a large-scale food distribution program. Cash for work programmes are less common, introduced largely for humanitarian and emergency relief (by donors and NGOs in Lao PDR, and Myanmar, and by the government in Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines). In addition to general support, many countries also have provisions for temporary emergency cash and in-kind transfers.

In summary, a *social protection system* is a coherent set of policies and interventions, including social insurance, social assistance, and social care services, that protect from destitution and poverty, prevent or mitigate the drop in income and consumption due to shocks, and promote human capital, economic opportunities, and livelihoods. The ASEAN Declaration includes labour market interventions in its framework for social protection; these are covered in the previous chapter.

Within this broad regional framework, ASEAN emphasizes national implementation by member state, including the policy mix and financing mechanisms, depending on the context. As a result, the level of maturity of social protection systems varies across AMS. Social protection systems are more mature in countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam. All these countries have large-scale national programmes funded by government budget and implemented through government systems. They also have robust systems for social protection delivery, including identification and selection of beneficiaries and payments, and for monitoring program performance through digitized data and information systems. Social protection systems countries like Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar have relatively nascent systems, with small-scale programmes that are not yet national in coverage and have a large share of donor funding. The two high income countries, Brunei Darussalam and Singapore, also have well-established social insurance programmes and, although no large-scale social assistance programmes, robust delivery systems are in place to enable quick response when necessary.

Source: O'Keefe et al. (forthcoming, based on the *Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity [ASPIRE]*, World Bank 2020a)

It also considers social protection to be a necessary investment and encourages AMS to gradually extend social protection coverage, availability, quality, equitability, and sustainability, with adequate resources to ensure optimal benefits. The framework defines social protection as, but not limited to, 'social welfare and development, social safety-nets, social insurance, social assistance, social services' (see **Box 1**).¹

The framework states that 'everyone, especially those who are poor, at risk, persons with disabilities, older people, out-of-school youth, children, migrant workers, and other vulnerable groups, are entitled to have equitable access to social protection that is a basic human right and based on a rights-based/needs-based, lifecycle approach and covering essential services as needed.' **The framework highlights the need for social protection measures that are responsive to emerging risks and vulnerabilities in the region, including climate change, disasters, and economic crises.** This Declaration is particularly relevant considering the COVID-19 pandemic.

This chapter focuses on government-led social protection programmes because these provide the basis for a coherent policy response to current and anticipated future crises.² **AMS have committed to effectively deploy social protection for the COVID-19 crisis.** In the Declaration of the Special ASEAN Summit on 14 April 2020, member states committed to 'cooperate in ensuring a social safety net for our peoples, preventing social disruption and instability as a consequence of the negative impact of the pandemic, continue efforts to design and implement risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection systems to reduce the vulnerabilities of at-risk populations and improve their overall resilience (ASEAN Secretariat 2020a). On June 10, 2020, the ASEAN Ministers responsible for social welfare and development committed to 'facilitate the access to social protection with appropriate allocation of public funds for social spending. Provide access to all essential goods and services to safeguard the well-being and livelihoods of the poor children, older persons, persons with disabilities, women and girls, migrant workers, and other vulnerable groups in times of crisis.' They also committed to developing

comprehensive and integrated post-pandemic recovery programmes, leveraging technology and the need to address the digital divide in the region (ASEAN Secretariat 2020b).

Short-term responses of AMS governments

In all AMS, social protection has been a critical component of COVID-19 response.³ During the four-month period of March to June 2020, AMS planned or introduced approximately 77 response measures, comprising social assistance and social insurance measures (see **Annex 5** for a detailed description by country). Several countries also added social care services. In addition to government efforts, there has been considerable support from communities, volunteers, and non-government organizations, often coordinating with and supplementing government efforts. This chapter focuses exclusively on government responses.

Budgets for short-term social protection measures varies across AMS, and data on budget allocation for social protection response is not readily available. **Figure 14** provides estimated budget allocation across the subset of AMS for which this information could be obtained. For some countries (such as Malaysia and Thailand), these are likely lower bound estimates, as they are not constructed from budget allocations for all measures. For other countries (such as Myanmar, Vietnam, and Indonesia), estimates may include non-social protection allocations as the estimated allocation relates to an aggregate budget line. The estimates range from US\$ 0.2 billion in Myanmar to US\$10.7 billion in Indonesia. Considering the size of different countries, the per capita budget allocation provides a better cross-country comparison (**Figure 15**).

On average, budget allocation per capita was approximately US\$174 per capita. Per capita allocation is highest in Singapore and Malaysia. Per capita allocation in Thailand and in lower middle-income countries in the region, such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam, averages at US\$ 44 per person.⁴ Myanmar is an outlier with only US\$ 4 per person.

Figure 14: Estimated budget allocation (US\$ billion)

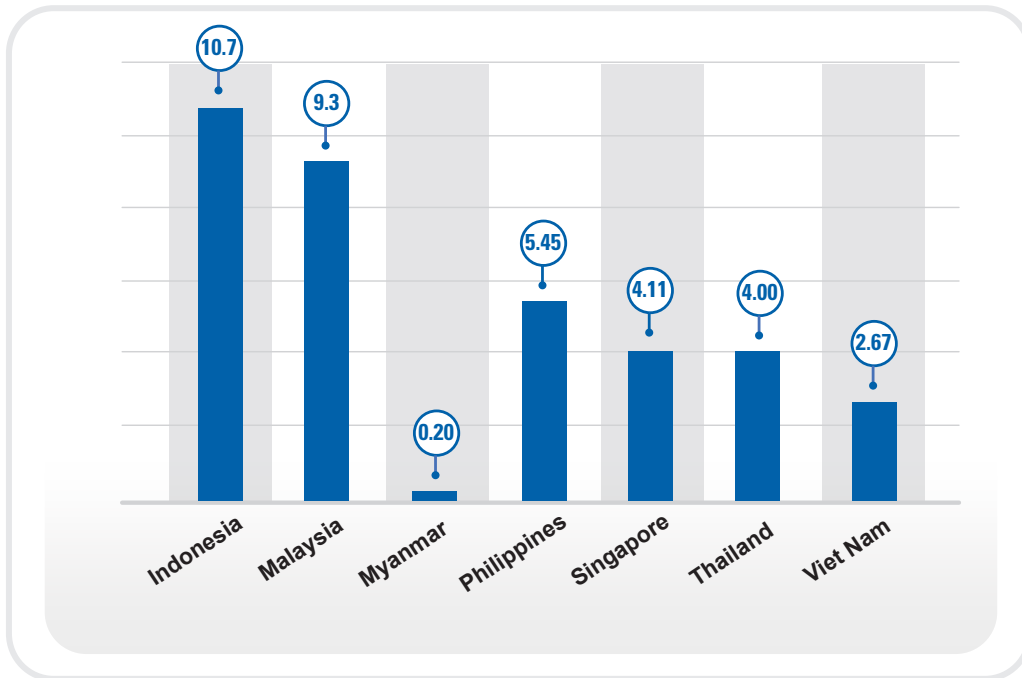
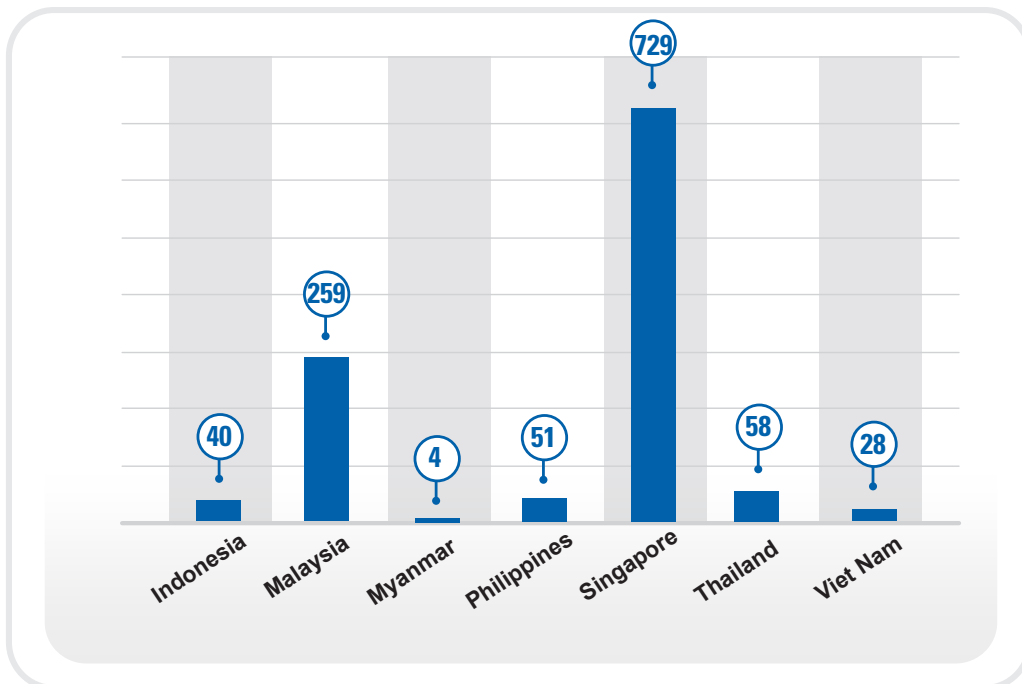


Figure 15: Estimated budget allocation per capita (US\$)



Source: See Annex 5.⁵

The overwhelming majority of responses involved social assistance for poor and vulnerable groups.

Across the region, approximately 82% of all measures were social assistance interventions. This pattern holds across the different country groups, i.e., among the two high income countries, the two upper middle-income countries, and the six lower middle-income

countries. Almost all countries introduced more than one measure within these broad categories.⁶

There were also some differences among interventions across AMS depending on the maturity of existing social protection systems. All AMS have some form of social insurance, but many

do not yet have large-scale social safety nets or social assistance programmes. While all countries introduced emergency relief programmes, countries with at least one large-scale national program were able to quickly adapt existing programmes relative to countries with nascent social assistance systems. These patterns are examined below. Ideally, budget allocation, spending, or coverage data should be used to analyse the response across countries. In the absence of comparable, up-to-date data on these indicators, the number of measures announced are used to analyse the patterns and breadth of response across AMS.⁷ Additionally, it is unclear whether planned measures are already being implemented.

Social assistance

All AMS responded with a range of social assistance interventions to ensure food security and basic consumption requirements for households and individuals. These represent the bulk of the social protection response in the region. These patterns are consistent with the global response, where over half the social assistance response measures were cash-based (Gentilini et al 2020).

Type of measure. The following patterns emerged, regardless of country income level (see **Figure 16**):

- **Cash transfers were the most common instrument.** Across the region, approximately 68% of social assistance responses were new emergency cash transfers (typically one-off or

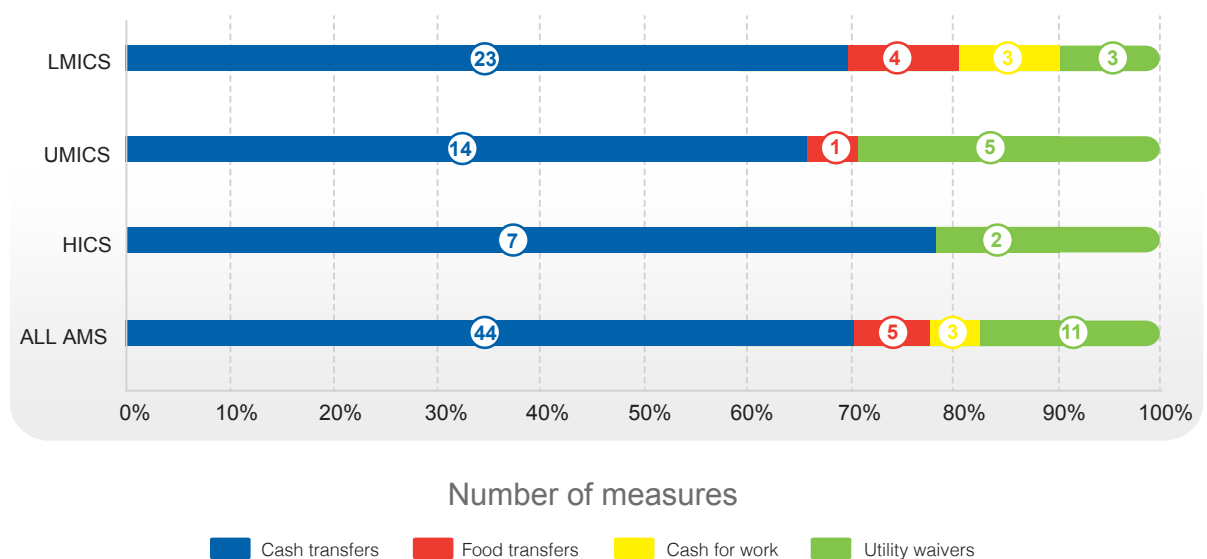
time-bound) or adaptations to existing cash transfers (also time-bound). Almost every country introduced at least one cash transfer in response to the pandemic; many introduced several cash transfers.

- **19% of social assistance response measures were utility fees or mortgage waivers,** largely in the form of electricity waivers for all households (in Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, and Thailand), and housing support for poor or low-income households (in Indonesia, Lao PDR, and Malaysia).

- **Food transfers accounted for 8% of all measures** (introduced in four countries, namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Myanmar). In some countries, this involved a one-time food distribution to poor households (Cambodia and Myanmar) or shelters for vulnerable groups (including the elderly, people with disabilities, children, and homeless people in Malaysia). In contrast, Indonesia expanded its existing food distribution program and introduced an additional emergency food transfer.

- In three countries with a history of cash deployment for work programmes for post-disaster emergency relief (Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines), **cash for work programmes were also used** to provide temporary employment and income support. These accounted for 5% of all response measures.

Figure 16: Distribution of social assistance measures by instrument



Source: See Annex 5.

Duration. Most of the social assistance measures are one-off or time-bound (for an average of 3 months, with most interventions ending in June).⁸ It is unclear whether temporary emergency measures will be sustained during recovery.

Unit of receipt. Social assistance interventions were almost evenly distributed across household- and individual-level benefits. About 56% of interventions were targeted to individuals and 44% provided household-level benefits.

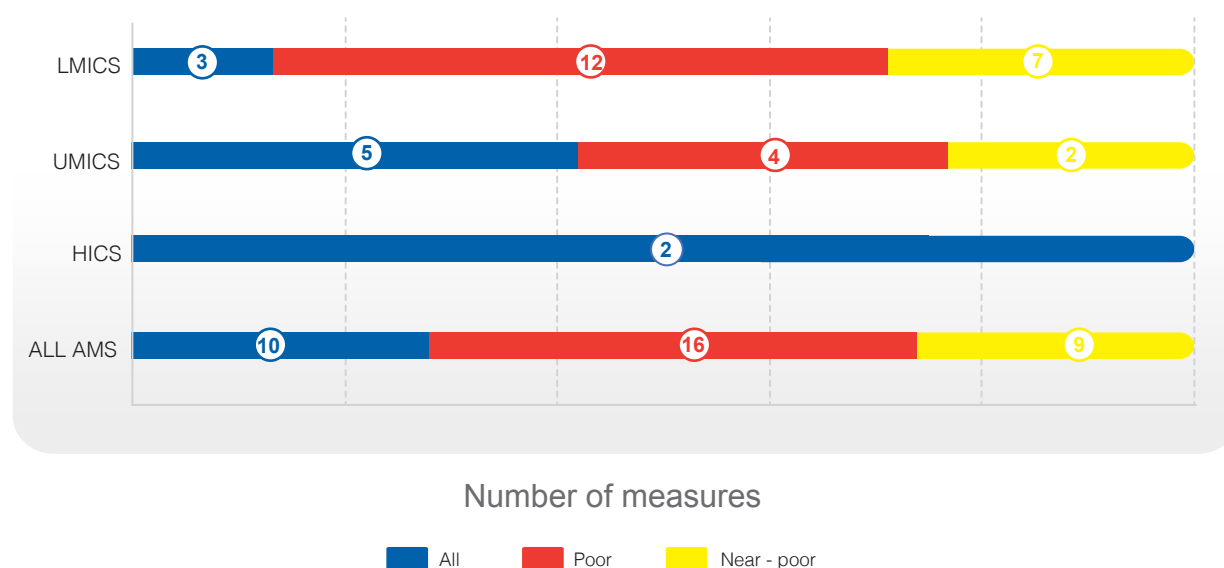
Target groups among household-level benefits. Nearly half the household-level interventions (predominantly cash and food transfers) targeted poor or low-income households and approximately a quarter covered vulnerable households just above the poverty line or which had recently fallen into poverty following the pandemic (Figure 17). The latter group could be covered in countries that already had a database or a social registry with information on poverty status and other household characteristics (see below). Fee waivers, on the other hand, accounted for the remaining 29% of household-level benefits and were typically provided to all households, regardless of income level (the only exceptions were in Indonesia, Lao PDR, and Malaysia as previously noted).

Target groups among individual-level benefits. Many of the groups covered in the ASEAN framework on social protection (see Chapter 6) are covered by social assistance responses.⁹ Given the prevalence of multigenerational households in Asia, many household-level benefits accrue to all household members, regardless of age. From a lifecycle perspective, however, the primary focus of social

assistance responses is on working age adults who are most affected by the pandemic (Figure 18), as follows:

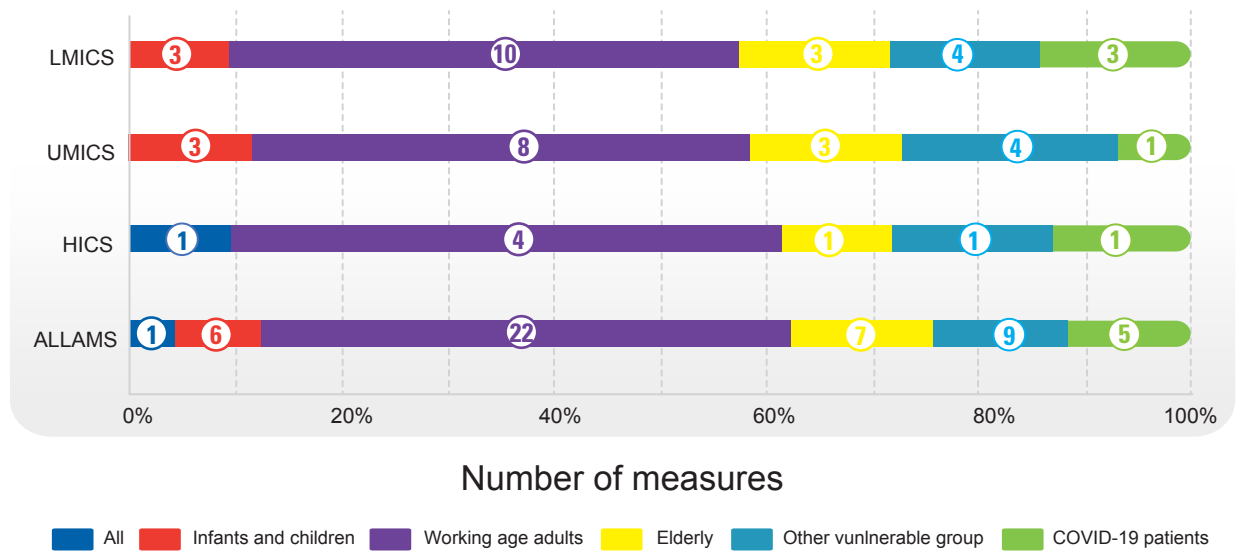
- Across the region, 45% of individual-level benefits target working age adults, with cash transfers and cash for work programmes targeting self-employed and informal workers, workers who lost their jobs or livelihood due to the pandemic, repatriated migrant workers, and frontline staff dealing with the pandemic.
- 14% of the individual benefits provided by cash and food transfers targets the elderly. These benefits primarily take the form of top-up benefits to existing social pensions. In the absence of a social pension, Singapore provided transport vouchers for the elderly. With older people (especially those with co-morbidities) facing the brunt of the health impact, many of the benefits targeting COVID-19 patients (accounting for 8% of all individual-level benefits) also disproportionately cover the elderly.
- 18% of individual benefits cover vulnerable groups, particularly people with disabilities.
- 12% of individual benefits target children. However, two of the largest household-level cash transfers in the region (Indonesia's Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH) and the Philippines' *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program) target poor households with children.
- Only one country – Singapore – introduced a universal cash transfer for all adult residents.

Figure 17: Distribution of household-level measures by target group



Source: See Annex 5.

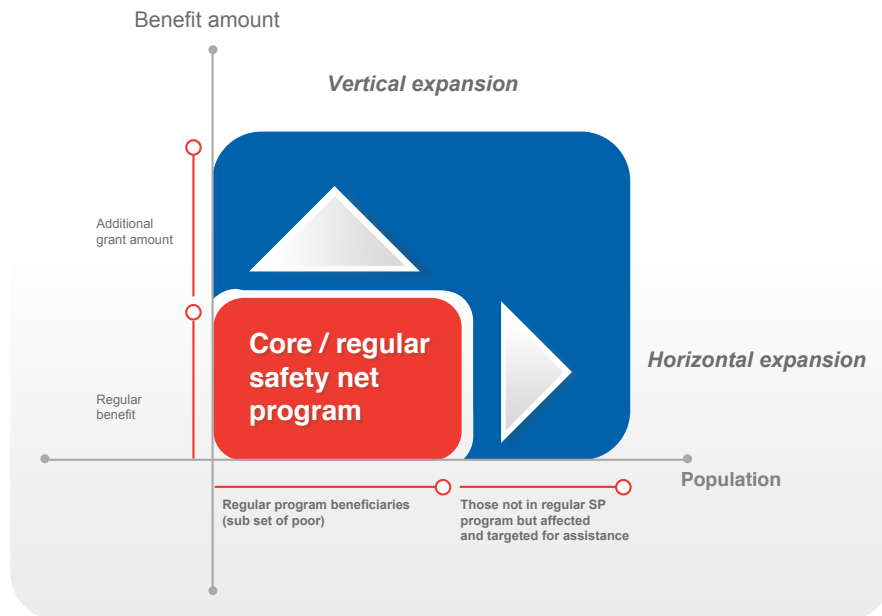
Figure 18: Distribution of individual-level measures by target group



Source: See Annex 5.

Adaptations. Most middle-income AMS (such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Viet Nam, Malaysia, and Thailand) strengthened and expanded their social protection system following the 1997-1998 and the 2008 economic crises. These countries, which had relatively mature social assistance systems, were able to rapidly scale up their systems to support poor and vulnerable groups through the pandemic. These adaptations took the following forms (Figure 19):

Figure 19: Adaptations of social protection



Source: Bowen et al (2020).

- **Increasing benefit levels of ongoing social assistance programmes to current beneficiaries** (i.e., vertical expansion by moving up the vertical axis in Figure 19). Most countries with existing cash and food transfers provided top-ups to existing beneficiaries. This included Indonesia (*Program Keluarga Harapan* - PKH, and *Sembako* - previously *BPNT*), Malaysia (*Bantuan Sara Hidup*, BSH), Myanmar (Maternal and Child Cash Transfer, MCCT, and social pensions for the elderly), and Viet Nam (social transfers to vulnerable groups including the elderly and people with disability, under Decree 136, and national veterans). The effectiveness of this approach depended on how robust these databases and registries are in terms of the accuracy and dynamism of beneficiary information and accuracy of targeting methods (Kidd, Athias and Tran 2020; Barca 2020).

- **Expanding coverage of ongoing social assistance programmes to non-beneficiaries** (i.e., horizontal expansion by moving right along the horizontal axis in Figure 19). Countries with existing databases and social registries for household information on existing social assistance beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries (including near-poor and vulnerable households or individuals) were able to extend coverage. Indonesia used its social registry (the *Basis Data Terpadu* or Unified Data Base, UDB) to temporarily expand its already large-scale programmes - PKH and *Sembako* – to cover 15% and 30% of the population, respectively (Barca 2020).

- **Leveraging existing delivery systems to provide new emergency benefits** (i.e., horizontal expansion by moving right along the horizontal axis in Figure 19). Viet Nam used its national poverty database to distribute cash transfers to poor and near-poor households. Cambodia plans to do the same using its ID Poor system. Malaysia's BSH used its registry of low- and middle-income households and individuals to expand coverage with new one-time cash transfers to workers in sectors most affected by the pandemic. Indonesia and the Philippines also used their existing systems to distribute emergency cash transfers.

- **Relaxing administrative requirements to make it easier to receive benefits.** Indonesia and the Philippines temporarily waived program conditionalities (such as health visits, sending children to school, and attending family development sessions) from its CCTs (PKH

and *Pantawid Pamilya*, respectively). PKH also increased payment frequency (monthly instead of quarterly) for existing beneficiaries. Malaysia's BSH made early payments (in March, instead of May).

Several countries also strengthened social care services. Systematic data on spending and coverage is not available. However, several countries reported increased allocations for institutional care (e.g., child care centres in Malaysia), continued service provision as feasible (Singapore's centres for people with disability), an emphasis on implementation of 'zero COVID-19 case' policy in elderly homes (Thailand), and providing temporary accommodation and meals for homeless (Malaysia and Thailand). Most countries introduced some form of psychosocial and counselling support for vulnerable groups (e.g., migrant workers in Indonesia and Singapore, internally displaced people in Myanmar, elderly in Singapore, and women and children in Malaysia and Thailand).

Social insurance

Eight AMS adapted their social insurance programmes to respond to the pandemic. The most common response took the form of waiving contribution requirements for all insured workers (Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Thailand) or for specific groups that were severely affected by the pandemic (Brunei Darussalam, and Viet Nam). Additionally, Malaysia's provident fund allowed insured workers below the age of 55 to make early withdrawals to cope with the pandemic. Some countries also increased medical benefits to insured workers infected with COVID-19 (Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Thailand). Cambodia continued to provide medical care benefit even for suspended workers in garment and tourism sectors. Indonesia also expanded coverage of the BPJS Kesehatan (National Health Insurance) to 107 million low-income households.

However, social insurance provisions only cover formal sector workers; this is a small share of the population in most AMS.¹⁰ While some countries are trying to expand coverage to informal workers, progress has been slow. Even in the countries that have rapidly ageing populations and are either highly formalized or formalizing (such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Viet Nam), pension coverage ranges from 18 to 25% of the working age population (O'Keefe et al. forthcoming). Therefore, social insurance provisions for the COVID-19 pandemic are useful for those already covered by social insurance but reach only a small proportion of the population.

Conclusions

In most AMS, the short-term response has been some form of income support for people, especially poor and vulnerable groups most affected by the crisis. A wide range of instruments were deployed, largely rooted in existing programmes and delivery systems, with considerable variation across countries. However, a common thread was the use of unconditional cash transfers to ensure that people can cover basic needs and subsidies for utilities and rent. In the future, it will be important for AMS to maintain and expand social protection coverage for all groups, including informal sector workers.

In the medium- to long-term, AMS should ensure basic social protections for the poor and vulnerable even in 'normal' times. Income support measures during a crisis can reduce the depth of a recession as well as the risk of escalating social tensions. Even after the pandemic is managed, maintaining a social protection system can contribute to economic growth. This was an important lesson from the 1997-98 and 2008-09 economic crises, when most middle-income member states (Indonesia, the Philippines, Viet Nam, Malaysia, and Thailand) substantially expanded their social protection systems. The relatively mature social protection systems (see Box 4.1) in these countries were equipped to leverage existing delivery systems and rapidly expand existing programmes for their COVID-19 response. These experiences provide useful insights for other AMS that want to strengthen their social protection systems. A series of concrete short- and medium-term measures are articulated in Chapter 7.

Beyond COVID-19, AMS have high exposure to disaster risk and future pandemics; shock-responsive, adaptive social protection systems should be an essential element of social policy.

Planning for future shocks means investing in delivery systems and scalable national programmes and taking advantage of current innovations used for COVID-19 responses, especially those that utilize emerging digital technologies. Regular social assistance systems in some countries have responded quickly after a crisis. A key feature of adaptive social protection is the scalability of the system, i.e., its ability to provide higher benefits to existing beneficiaries and/or vertically expand to cover additional people during a crisis. This also implies flexible instruments for financing. As evident in the diverse COVID-19 responses, a scalable system can be achieved through new programmes that leverage existing delivery systems or through regular programmes that have sufficient coverage. This suggests the focus should be on achieving greater responsiveness in social assistance programming, particularly for at-risk countries.

In all AMS, it is important to explore options for facilitating livelihood recovery for poor and vulnerable households.

In the short-term, this could be achieved by emphasising cash for work programmes to provide temporary employment while building community infrastructure and essential services. In addition, increasing access to health insurance for social assistance beneficiaries can build their resilience to shocks. In the medium- to long-term, promoting the economic inclusion of the poor and vulnerable, including informal and migrant workers, will be critical for income generation and livelihood recovery. Institutionally, this will require greater coordination across social welfare, labour, health, and immigration ministries.

Notes

1. The ASEAN declaration also includes labour market interventions and human resources development in its framework for social protection. In this chapter, we focus on social assistance and social insurance; labour market interventions are covered in the previous chapter.
2. Multilateral or bilateral donors may provide technical and financial support, but the government is the lead agency with respect to design and implementation. In some countries with nascent government-led social protection systems, non-government organizations are heavily engaged in social protection provision. These programmes are not included in this rapid assessment due to the challenge of collating information from such a wide range of agencies.
3. Globally, social protection has also been the primary response to Covid-19 – by July 10, 2020, 176 countries had planned, introduced, or adapted social protection programmes (Gentilini et al. 2020).
4. This compares favourably with regional and global patterns. Globally, countries spent approximately \$52 per capita (including social assistance, social insurance, and labor market programmes, for the subset of countries for which information is available). LMICs and UMICs spent approximately \$6 and \$23 per capita, respectively. The average for East Asia and the Pacific is substantially higher at \$137 per capita (Gentilini et al. 2020).
5. Estimates of budget allocations are based on announcements for total allocation for social protection (Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam) or constructed by adding budget allocations for specific measures (Indonesia and Malaysia). Budget allocations for social insurance measures that are foregone contributions are not included; only budget allocations for medical benefits are included. High income countries (HICs): 2 countries - Singapore and Brunei Darussalam; upper middle-income countries (UMICs): 2 countries - Malaysia and Thailand; Lower middle-income countries (LMICs): 6 countries - Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Viet Nam. Data on all AMS is not available: No information was available on social protection measures in Lao PDR; spending data for social protection measures in Brunei Darussalam cannot be estimated (measures are not time-bound); social protection measures in Cambodia were in the planning stage and budget allocation was not available.
6. In East Asia and the Pacific, 57% of responses were social assistance, 24% were social insurance, and 19% were labour market programmes (the last category is covered in Chapter 3 in this report). Globally, the distribution was as follows: social assistance (60%), social insurance (26%), and labour market programmes (14%) (Gentilini et al. 2020).
7. These measures do not systematically include interventions planned or introduced by regional governments.
8. There are some exceptions, such as cash transfer to frontline staff for the duration of the crisis in Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia. Some other timebound transfers are for a longer duration. For instance, Indonesia's food transfer (Sembako, formerly BPNT) provides support to existing and new beneficiaries for nine months. Singapore's support for self-employed persons makes cash payments in three tranches up to October 2020. Most of Malaysia's timebound transfers and waivers are for six months, as is Thailand's cash transfer to informal sector workers. Others are for a slightly shorter duration, such as cash transfers in Myanmar and the Philippines.
9. The first wave of impact of COVID-19 was on urban areas, with subsequent spiralling out to rural areas. Correspondingly, many social protection responses targeted urban households and individuals. For instance, social insurance contribution waivers largely benefitted predominantly urban formal sector workers, and social assistance measures that targeted informal workers in specific sectors may have predominantly benefitted urban workers. Currently, however, there are no precise estimates for differential impact or of social protection spending or coverage across ASEAN's rural and urban areas.
10. Part of the reason for this low coverage is that mandatory pension schemes only cover the civil service in some countries (such as Cambodia and Myanmar); although, some other provisions (such as medical and employment injury benefits) extend to workers in the private formal sector.

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Chapter 4: Education and training¹

COVID-19 has resulted in major upheavals in ASEAN's education sector after schools were forced to close in early 2020. **Schools were largely unprepared for remote teaching and learning. The infrastructure was not in place, device access not universal, and many education institutions and households struggled to cope with the demands and skills required to implement online and home-based learning.** School closures threatened to exacerbate existing inequalities between those who have access to internet and digital devices and those who do not. Although schools and local and national governments worked quickly and creatively to facilitate students' remote learning, the pandemic highlighted weaknesses in the system that require immediate redress and long-term planning.

Education institutions – schools, higher education (HE), and training and vocational training (TVET) – throughout the region **faced a two-fold challenge over the past six months.**

1. The health crisis and the requirements of movement restrictions presented unique challenges for school communities, which had to manage children's behaviour within entirely new parameters and implement social distancing regulations.
2. The physical closure of education institutions and the limited capacity of educational institutions to provide online learning and limited access to online platforms for families created a learning crisis.

This chapter addresses short- and longer-term solutions to these two challenges. It examines how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted education and training² in ASEAN and hopes to provide a way forward. The chapter looks at

- the likely impacts of COVID-19-related school and university closures on education quality, equity, and efficiency (compared to pre-pandemic) in AMS.
- the ways in which governments, education and training institutions, and international and regional agencies responded to these challenges; and
- the medium- and long-term challenges and implications of these responses.

The chapter concludes with short- and longer-term recommendations for the ASEAN Secretariat and relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies (especially Education and Training).

Notably, there are vast differences in the educational landscape across the ASEAN region. **The education and training landscape is diverse in terms of size, development, and management, and in terms of quality, equity, and efficiency.** A disruption, such as the current pandemic, presents different challenges and requires different responses.

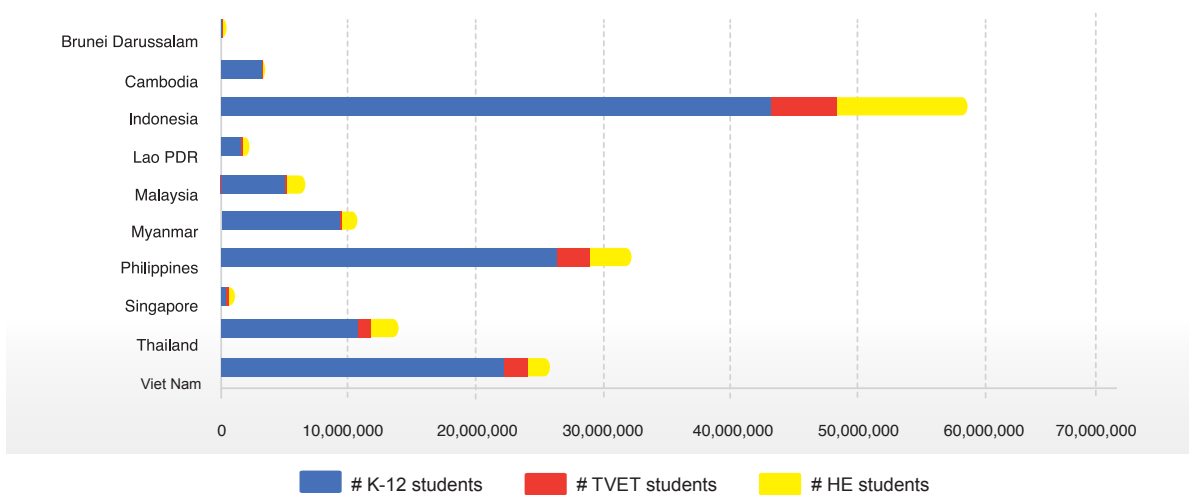
Box 2: Educational landscape in ASEAN

There are very different country contexts across ASEAN, and these contexts manifest themselves in vast differences between education systems. There are more than 674,800 K-12 schools in the region. More than half of these schools are in Indonesia and 18.3% in the Philippines, while only 0.03% are in Brunei Darussalam and 0.11% in Singapore. Of the of the 30,400 Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Higher Education (HE) institutions in ASEAN, Indonesia and the Philippines account for over 85%.

Brunei Darussalam and Singapore, with much smaller populations, have highly developed education systems with an average of 10.2 years and 11.5 years of schooling, respectively. In Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar the average is 5 years of schooling.

In addition to size and scale, other variations exist in terms of quality, equity of access, and efficiency for the job market. Quality is about meeting students' learning needs and supporting them for expected learning outcomes. Equity is about fairness and inclusion. And efficiency is about developing competencies that are relevant to the socio-economic situation and demands of the country (including employment and labor market needs). These outcomes are aligned to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal for Education (SDG4): 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'.

Estimated number of students across AMS



Variations in quality are largely due to access to infrastructure and resources, capacity of teachers and school leaders, and the robustness of school and institution evaluations. For example, Cambodia suffers a shortage of classrooms, the Philippines faces overcrowding in urban schools, and Indonesia must tend with a lack of competent teachers, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Inequities often affect gender, socioeconomic status, ethnic minority status, religion, migration status, special needs, and residence in rural and remote locations. Students from marginalized communities are more likely to drop out of school and less likely to enrol in higher education. Among less developed ASEAN countries, efficiency issues exist at every level, from K-12 to HE. In some areas, HE and TVET insufficiently prepare students for the labour market and 21st century competencies.

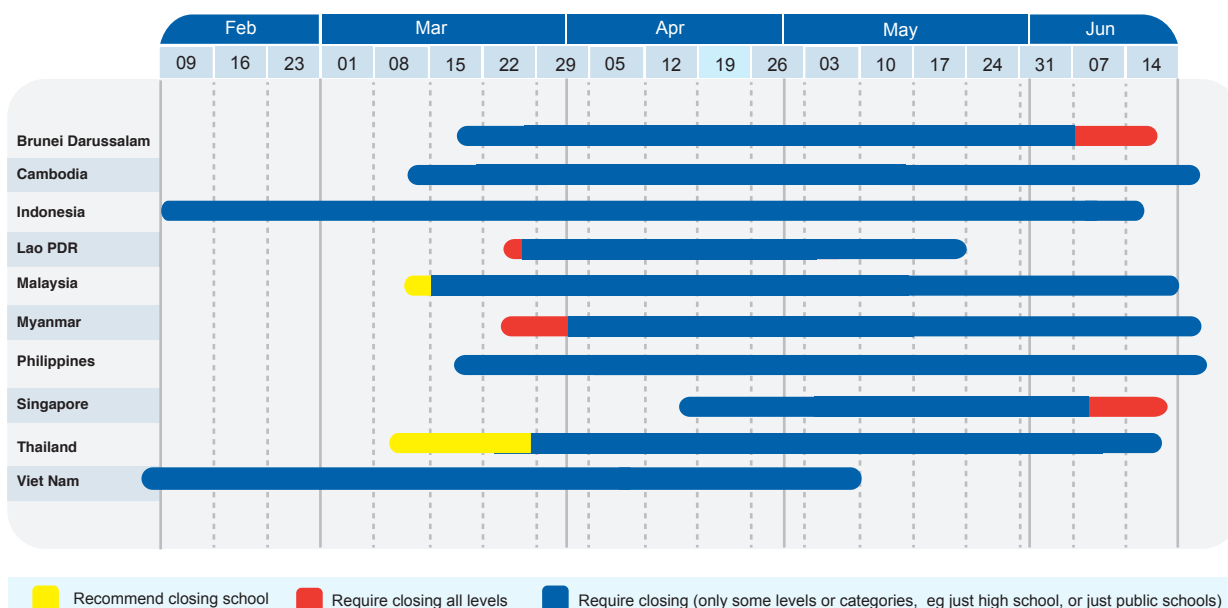
The impacts of COVID-19 on education and training

As of July 2020, mass school and university closures across the world have affected approximately 1.5 billion children and youth. The immediate disruption to families and communities has been enormous, resulting in job and income loss, increased mental health challenges, rises in domestic and gender-based violence, and other challenges. **In ASEAN, estimates suggest more than 152 million children and youths have been affected** (Ministry of Education Brunei Darussalam 2020; Ministry of Education Cambodia 2020; Ministry of Education and Culture Indonesia 2020; Ministry of Education Singapore 2020a; Ministry of Education Singapore 2020b; Ministry of Education Myanmar 2020a; Ministry of Education Myanmar 2020b; Asian Development Bank 2020; Ministry of Education Thailand 2020; General Statistics Office of Viet Nam 2020). Figure 20 shows the duration and

period of school closures and re-openings across AMS.

The immediate impacts have been unequal across populations. These impacts also potentially preface longer-term quality, equity, and efficiency goals with respect to learning loss, increased dropout rates, and greater inequities that may compromise future human capital and welfare. Therefore, the scale of the closures and the broader crisis could constitute a critical juncture. School closures because of the COVID-19 crisis has provided an opportunity for AMS governments to revisit education and training quality, equity, and efficiency issues and formulate short- to long-term strategies for improvement. This situation can be used as an opportunity to build a better education system across AMS, which should be addressed in the existing and forthcoming national education sector plans and their associated budgets.

Figure 20: School Closures – Reopening in ASEAN due to Covid-19 (Blavatnik School of Government 2020)



Source: Oxford Covid-19 Government Response Tracker

Five critical issues surrounding equity, quality and efficiency have come to light during the pandemic. These include:

- 1. Limited access to infrastructure, devices, and resources:** A necessary condition for quality multi-modal teaching and learning is access to infrastructure, devices, and resources. However, urban-rural and socioeconomic gaps limit access for certain populations. Statistics show that, in 2018, the total number of internet subscribers in

all AMS was 53.4 per 100 people. Only a small percentage of households in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar have access to Internet broadband. Countries like Indonesia and the Philippines have a marginally higher percentage of access. Most of the households in Myanmar do not have access to electricity. Such vulnerabilities may expand and shift during school closures. Additionally, many students, families, and teachers in AMS could not afford internet data packages and devices, including computers, televisions, and radios.

2. Lack of teaching materials tailored to disadvantaged students: Urban-rural and socioeconomic gaps in access to infrastructure and digital devices highlight the need for alternate modes of teaching. These modes include radio-enabled and internet-enabled methods. Resources need to be developed quickly to respond to the pandemic, but attention must be paid to the ways in which resource development may increase inequities. For example, resources that are not in local languages may exclude students from learning during school and university closures (Nguyen and Pham 2020). Students with disabilities may also lack access to learning materials and platforms that respond to their needs.

3. Lack of support to vulnerable students and their families: Students need a home environment conducive to learning; however, many students do not have such an environment and need additional support with respect to potential learning loss during school closures (Child Rights Coalition Asia 2020; International Federation of Social Workers 2020). A rapid assessment conducted in Cambodia by Plan

A survey of female school students in ASEAN reported additional challenges during school closures. Girls often face specific responsibilities for supervising younger siblings, attend household chores, and, in some cases, contribute to the family's finances. (Plan International, 2020)

International indicated that almost 30% of parents did not teach their young children during school closures. 60% of parents were unable to provide support to their children's learning, and 74% of parents had limited knowledge on how to teach their young children (World Vision 2020). In some instances, such a loss of learning may impact the ongoing enrolment of these students. In the Philippines, the government expects a drop of 5 million students in basic education in the 2020-2021 school year compared to pre-COVID projections (Hernando-Malipot 2020). These students and their families need social safety nets and support that include school meals, protection from violence, and cash transfers to mitigate loss of income.

4. The need for alternative modes of assessment: Most national and high-stake examinations have been cancelled or postponed during school and university closures (World Bank, 2020a). Some ASEAN countries (such as Lao PDR and Malaysia) have postponed these

examinations (for Lao PDR to the first week of school and university reopening; and for Malaysia to the first week of January 2021 for schools, and for universities, the examinations have been administered online during the affected semester). Alternative modes of assessment must be considered to provide students with feedback, which encourages students to monitor and manage their own learning.

5. The relevance of curriculum and programmes for changing and emerging industry demands that will shape the workforce post-COVID-19:

To date, ASEAN countries have relied heavily on certain industries. Some of these industries have not invested in the capacity of their workforce. Lao PDR and Cambodia, for example, rate relatively low on the international measurements of workforce skills (Schwab 2019; Hamit 2020). The pandemic has negatively impacted certain industries (e.g., tourism, examined in more depth in the Labour Chapter), but it has also led to the emergence and growth of other industries, including e-learning/e-training and e-commerce. Schools and institutions will need to re-examine the relevance of their curriculum and programmes to the changing demands of these emerging industries and revise them accordingly (Rajput 2020).

Responses of ASEAN and ASEAN Member States

Given the rapid nature of the pandemic, governments across the region have responded in several ways to address and protect the health of students, teachers, and communities and provide alternative teaching and learning environments. These responses address issues created by the overlapping health and learning crises phases: the coping phase, recovery phase, and accelerating improvement (building an improved system) phase. See **Annex 6** for an inventory of country responses.

- **Ensuring health and safety**

Health and safety of students is the highest priority. Governments have provided guidelines and advice to students, teachers, parents, and guardians and supported schools to reopen. Some areas in the region have experienced multiple closing and reopening phases, and some government measures have been short-term. Other areas have needed a longer-term investment, depending on the progression of the pandemic within each country.

Health and safety guidelines. The threat of virus spread is still prevalent, and, throughout the region, **health authorities have worked closely with education ministries to provide schools with infection prevention guidelines.** These guidelines are based on key global frameworks from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (UNICEF, WHO, and IFRC) and the partnership of UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, WFP, and UNHCR (Inter-Agency Standing Committee 2020; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization et al. 2020). In Viet Nam, the Ministry of Health issued a series of orders, letters, and graphics between February to April 2020 about school precautionary measures for reopening, such as body temperature checks, personal protective equipment (masks, goggles, and face-shields), school sanitization and regular cleaning, social distancing maintenance, and classroom layouts. The Ministry of Health also provided instructions and checklists for schools, teachers, students, and parents (Ministry of Health Viet Nam 2020). These instructions include procedures for students, preparation of school grounds and classrooms, and teacher preparation.

Other instructions address mental health impacts and psychosocial support for students. In Thailand, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Public Health, and other partners released guidelines for COVID-19 prevention in educational institutions. The guideline targets students, teachers and other education personnel, parents, food vendors, and cleaning workers. The guidelines include COVID-19 screening procedures and student self-assessment rules. Some countries have given effort to support students with disabilities. Since the Philippine Government declared a state of public health emergency in March 2020, the Department of Education has released Guidelines on the Required Health Standards in Basic Education Offices and Schools (DepEd Order no. 14, s. 2020). The Guidelines enumerate the responsibilities of national and local administrators in following health and safety protocols, practicing evidence-based decision making, and to uphold socio-economic equity and rights-based approach. The Guidelines include social gathering restrictions, COVID-19 testing protocol, and budget allocations for the initiatives in COVID-19 response. Similarly, the Philippine Commission on Higher Education has released several advisories to provide guidance to its stakeholders regarding the conduct of information campaigns, maintenance of a safe and healthy campus, establishment of health guidelines and protocols, and conduct of various school activities.

School meal subsidies. During school closures, many schools have continued to provide subsidies for students who depend on school feeding programmes. In Singapore, the Ministry of Education (MOE)

provided school meal subsidies to all primary and secondary students from low-income families via the School Smartcard top-ups (including the mid-year holiday). In Myanmar, 10,000 disadvantaged students in COVID-19 affected areas received home-delivered food during school closures (Myanmar Ministry of Education 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the regular School-Based Feeding Program for public elementary schools in the Philippines continued its operation to provide food for the learners in disadvantaged areas and/or backgrounds. **Although not all AMS have school meal subsidies or home-delivered food during school closures, governments have implemented social safety net policies for low-income families that include food subsidies and cash assistance programmes.** In North Sumatra, Indonesia, the Family Hope Program include a basic food card, subsidies for buying food staples, and additional cash assistance (North Sumatra Government 2020).

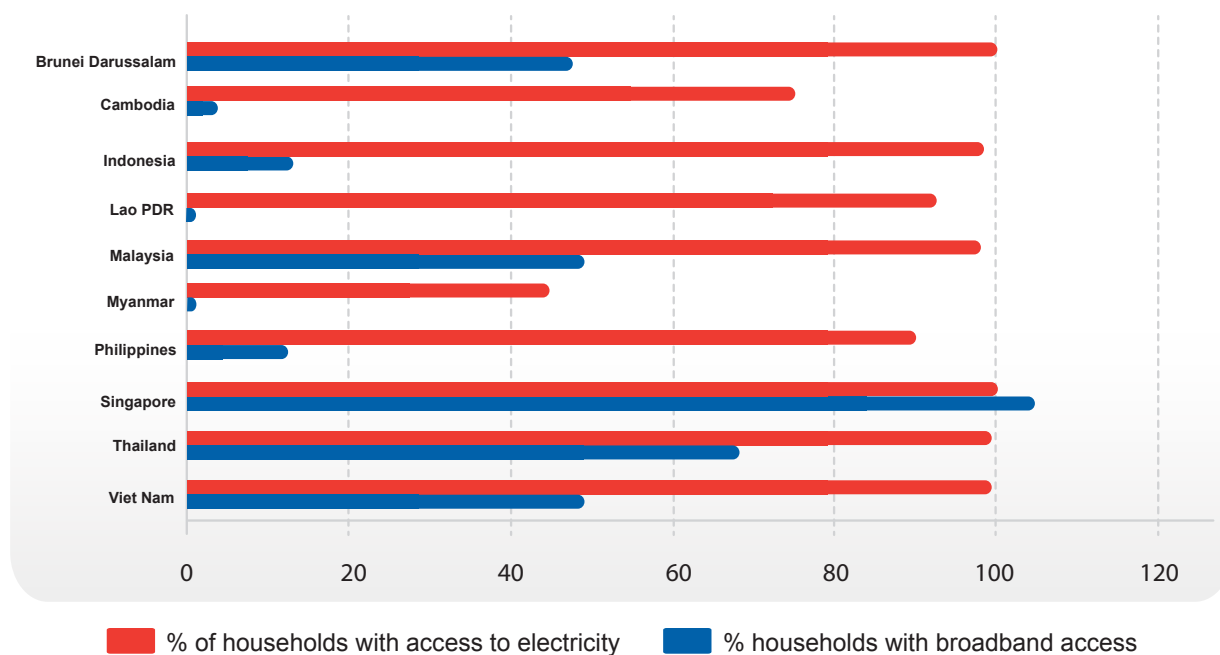
Staged or staggered approach towards reopening institutions. To maintain the safety of students and teachers, some ASEAN governments have adopted a staged approach to reopening K-12 schools and TVET institutions. In Brunei Darussalam, schools started to open on 2 June 2020 in stages. Priority was given to students who would sit for public examinations under the Ministry of Education (Year 6, Year 8, Year 10 Express, Year 11, Year 12 and Year 13) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (KHEU) in the first stage from 2 to 13 June 2020 with each stage announced every two weeks (Ministry of Education Brunei Darussalam 2020).

Additional school budget for personal protective and personal hygiene items. It is required that schools purchase personal protective and personal hygiene items in preparation for reopening and to hire more cleaners and purchase better quality cleaning products. The Ministry of Education and Culture in Indonesia allowed schools to use the School Operational Assistance if they need additional financial resources to purchase personal protective and hygiene items (Ministry of Education and Culture Indonesia 2020a). In Myanmar, the government provided additional resources (face shields and masks for students and teachers, digital thermometers, and additional wash basins) to meet the demand for cleanliness and other reopening procedures (Ministry of Education Myanmar 2020).

- **Providing remote learning options for those with access**

While most households in the region have access to electricity, **Figure 21** illustrates the challenge of

Figure 21: Electricity and broadband internet coverage across the region



Sources: World Bank 2020; International Telecommunication Union 2019b. Authority for Info-communications Technology Industry of Brunei Darussalam 2016; Ministry of Finance And Economy, Brunei Darussalam 2016; Minges 2018; Electricity Authority of Cambodia 2020; Sulaiman 2019; Yap 2017; Unit 2015; EuroMonitor n.d.; Eleven Media 2019; Asian Development Bank 2018; Singapore Open Data 2019; Singapore Department of Statistics 2019b; Infocomm Media Development Authority, Singapore 2019; Provincial Electricity Authority n.d.; General Statistics Office of Vietnam 2018; General Statistics Office of Vietnam 2019.

providing effective home-based, online schooling opportunities to children. Except for Singapore, most countries have significantly less than 100% broadband internet coverage. AMS governments, schools, and other educational institutions have come up with a wide array of teaching methods, reaching students through radio, TV, internet and online sources, and SMS and phone chat applications.

Guidelines on remote teaching and learning.

AMS governments have provided guidelines to their education and training stakeholders, some (such as Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Viet Nam) more comprehensively than others, including guidelines on implementation of teaching and learning under periods of movement restrictions (Ministry of Education, Malaysia) and specific guidance to pre-schools (Ministry of Education, Brunei Darussalam). These **guidelines provided students, teachers, families, and other stakeholders with the information needed to navigate a rapidly changing environment**, including for physical activities for young children, parental support for home-learning, and modes of teaching and learning.

In the Philippines, Department of Education developed the Basic Education-Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) which covers the different learning modalities

that will define how learning will be best delivered in an area where health and safety of the learners is a priority. The BE-LCP also includes adjustment of the basic education curriculum to focus more on the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) which serve as the primary reference in determining and implementing learning delivery approaches that are suited to the local context and diversity of learners while adapting to the challenges caused by COVID-19. In addition, the advisories that have been released by the Commission on Higher Education also include key issues such as the adjustment of academic calendars and deployment and use of alternative learning methods (with emphasis on flexible learning).

During school closure, parents and guardians have been the most immediate source of support for students in home-based learning. In Cambodia, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports worked with local councils to raise parents' and guardians' awareness of online learning resources and TV programmes. It also provided advice for creating a home environment conducive to learning, especially in the case of young children and their families (Dy 2020). The Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC) worked with ASEAN countries to provide guidelines for parents and guardians of young children (Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood 2020). In Brunei, these guidelines include

- providing a learning space for young children at home,
- communicating with teachers and school staff,
- supporting children's learning at their own pace, and
- supporting schools monitoring children's learning at home (Ministry of Education Brunei Darussalam 2020).

Support to teachers in online teaching competencies – immediate and longer term.

Across the region many school, TVET, and HE teachers have been expected to employ remote teaching and learning strategies without ever having done so before. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) teachers have found it especially difficult to provide their young students with online learning given the nature of ECCE teaching and learning activities that focus on play and in-person learning. Although some ASEAN countries have provided teachers with access to network devices, more emphasis must be placed on professional development and support at the national level.

Lodged within the Department of Education, the National Educators' Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) has provided professional development to basic education teachers to help them adjust to the New Normal and the blended learning modalities. The professional development by NEAP supported teachers to implement the learning delivery modalities appropriate to their students and school context. As technical assistance providers for the teachers, division and district supervisors were tasked to support schools and teachers in implementing and managing the learning delivery modality adopted in the school.

Individual HE institutions, regional and international organisations, and private corporations have more proactively provided teachers with professional development and support. For example, Google launched Teach from Home to build the capacity of teachers and provide them with resources and tools (Google 2020). LinkedIn worked with HE institutions to identify courses to support university teachers in the implementation of remote teaching and learning. ARNEC has collected and collated online teaching and learning resources from partners and built online communities to support ECCE teachers. Some governments have recognised that **teachers also require resources for the mental health and psychosocial (MHPSS) needs of their students.** A number of schools in Thailand have focused resources on developing capacities to meet these needs (Singhasivanon 2020).

Multi-modal home-based learning for students.

Governments and institutions throughout AMS provided students with access to online learning platforms and applications, digital resources, education television channels, radio programmes, and hard copies of teaching and learning resources. In the Philippines, Commission of Higher Education has implemented PHL CHED CONNECT which is an online platform that stores course materials in various forms for teaching, learning and research; and CHED HiEd Bayanihan which is a virtual, cooperative learning environment dedicated for training, capacity-building and resource-sharing (PHL CHED 2020). In Indonesia the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) developed an online learning portal, *Rumah Belajar*, that provides teachers and students access to learning resources, virtual laboratories, and question banks. The MOEC works with private organisations, such as Google, *Ruangguru*, and *Sekolahmu* to support schools and institutions in remote learning. To provide all students, especially those who have limited Internet access, with the opportunities to engage in learning during school closures, MOEC also launched the Learning from Home program that aired on Indonesian National Television (TVRI) since April 2020. The program focuses on developing literacy, numeracy, and character building (Ministry of Education and Culture Indonesia 2020b).

Based on the same rationale behind creating wider access to quality learning (96% of the households have access to free-TV), the Malaysian Ministry of Education delivered six hours a day of free educational television programmes on three free channels (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2020). In Thailand, the Ministry of Education provided Distance Learning Television (DLTV) nationwide, targeting children and youth in rural and remote areas and from low-income families. This programming is supplemented by interactive radio instruction programmes that cover most primary school subjects (Mala 2020).

Aside from television and radio, **many ASEAN schools rely on SMS and social media to reach students in rural and remote areas.** In Lao PDR, some schools disseminate information and share learning resources with parent groups via WhatsApp, social media platforms, and SMS. In Singapore, special education school teachers prepared lesson packages (both online and offline) for students with special education needs so parents and guardians can guide their children through home-based learning (Ministry of Education Singapore 2020).

More future-directed TVET curricula. Although many ASEAN countries began curriculum and assessment reform efforts pre-pandemic, **the pandemic has acted like a catalyst to these reform efforts in ways that may change the learning outcomes and shift how learning outcomes are assessed.** Myanmar plans to restructure some of its TVET curriculum for the year 2020/21 on a case by case basis to better meet the demand of its economy. This may include offering some of reskilling courses to people who have lost their jobs during the pandemic (Ministry of Education, The Republic of the Union of Myanmar 2020). In Indonesia and Malaysia, TVET institutions have more autonomy to develop new programmes and courses to meet industry-specific competencies needs. HE institutions have also integrated digital competencies and digital entrepreneurship courses into their programmes to align with 21st century learning outcomes (Asian Development Bank 2020). In the Philippines, education and training stakeholders have discussed the challenges of assessment during the pandemic and the need to rethink the purpose and mode of assessment, especially to better align teaching, learning, and assessment (Tuscano 2020).

Professional development of teachers and education leaders. The Department of Education in the Philippines is working on a comprehensive professional development program for teachers to plan and implement quality remote teaching and learning. It intends to create a professional development courseware supported by a professional learning community of teachers and education experts (Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines 2020). The Ministry of Education Singapore’s initiative “SkillsFuture for Education” under the Learn for Life movement is focused on professional development and support of its teachers in (1) assessment literacy, (2) inquiry-based learning, (3) differentiated instruction, (4) support for students with special education needs, (5) e-pedagogy, and (6) character and citizenship education.

- **Providing learning opportunities for disadvantaged students**

Additional budget to support offline students. During school closure, students from vulnerable groups and marginalized communities have no or little

access to remote teaching and learning. **Schools will need additional budget to identify and address the gaps in learning that some students will have after having had no access to online learning environments.** The Myanmar Ministry of Education (2020) developed a comprehensive plan that addresses learning losses and gaps. The plan draws upon additional budget to implement a campaign for back-to-school assessments to identify gaps in learning and provide remedial teaching and learning for the most vulnerable students.

Access to equipment. The governments of Brunei Darussalam and Singapore loaned computing devices, dongles, routers, and SIM cards to low-income families and marginalized communities. In Brunei Darussalam, the Ministry of Education received donations of computing and network devices from senior government officials, private companies, and the public. These devices are distributed to students from low-income families to support them in online learning (Ministry of Education Brunei Darussalam 2020b). While extremely beneficial for the families who receive devices, such measures are difficult for long-term implementation across AMS. In the Philippines, the Department of Education authorized school leaders to loan desktops, laptops, and smartphones to their teachers for online lessons (Department of Education Philippines 2020).

Longer-term investments in vulnerable groups and marginalised communities. Many students from disadvantaged backgrounds and communities **Many students from disadvantaged backgrounds and communities were unable to engage in home-based learning and could not access remedial teaching and learning for multiple reasons during school closures.** Students with disabilities often struggled to learn from home due to the lack of assistive technologies and digital resources (Bebasari and Silalahi 2020). To provide improved access, some ASEAN governments (Myanmar, for example) announced plans to invest in learning support, including a learning network for disadvantaged students and remedial teaching. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in Cambodia began developing education videos with the private sector that included sign language for students with hearing disabilities (Dy 2020).

Conclusions

Unequal access to alternative educational platforms during the pandemic has been a significant challenge for many ASEAN countries. Given that the pandemic is not yet over, many of these challenges will likely continue. Opportunities for AMS to build an improved education system include:

- Investment in remote learning, capacity building, and frameworks.
- Learning support for students (including out-of-school children) from vulnerable groups and marginalized communities; and
- Greater alignment of curricula with the future of work (Association of Southeast Asian Nations 2020).

1. Investment in remote learning, capacity building, and frameworks

Lack of basic infrastructure and hardware means that many students from marginalised communities do not have access to remote teaching and learning during school and education institution closures. **Several AMS governments plan to increase investment in network and communication infrastructure in rural and remote areas and enhance provision or subsidies for technological and network devices for students in these communities.** Improved technical support coordination between schools and local and national government education offices is also an important opportunity, along with and sustaining remote teaching and learning resources (including resources for students with special needs). Most efforts have so far focused on building basic technical competencies - for both teachers and students - rather than how to shape teaching and learning experiences (for example, how to use ZOOM for online teaching as opposed to how to design and implement online teaching).

The latter requires greater emphasis on teacher capacity building and the pedagogical use of technology, the management of remote teaching and learning tasks, and the monitoring of teachers' own professional learning. Teachers have also had to develop their psychosocial competencies to support students and themselves during times of crisis. AMS should also build the capacity of other education stakeholders, including school leaders, parents and guardians, community leaders, and education officials and policymakers. When these key stakeholders are well-developed, the education system is more likely to robustly respond to crises with strategies that can build the system back better.

All education systems in ASEAN countries have quality assurance frameworks for K-12 schools and TVET and HE institutions. However, most frameworks only apply to face-to-face learning. **The shift to remote teaching and learning during the pandemic highlighted the urgent need for adjustments to quality assurance frameworks at all levels of education and training.** Once adjusted, these frameworks could inform national qualification frameworks, especially at the TVET and HE level.

2. Learning support for students (including out-of-school children) from vulnerable groups and marginalized communities.

These students include those with disabilities, struggling learners, children and youth from marginalized ethnic groups, children and youth in rural, hard-to-reach, and impoverished communities, students already out of school, and girls. These groups are least likely to have access to remote learning opportunities due to the lack of infrastructure, devices, resources, and conducive environments for quality learning. COVID-19 has highlighted the lack of preparedness for remote teaching and learning in most ASEAN countries, including middle-income countries. Children and youth from these groups require different types of learning support. Students from remote communities may require no or low technology-enabled learning support, such as the delivery or collection of printed learning materials with guidance and feedback provided over the telephone. Students with special needs may require access to assistive technologies and resources to support their learning. Children and youths who are already out of school require pathways back into the education system or apprenticeship opportunities through community-based programmes enabled through Internet, television, or radio.

3. Create greater alignment of curricula with the future of work

The pandemic will widen the gap between the competencies of TVET and HE graduates and the competencies required in the workforce. Existing TVET and HE curriculum may not be responsive to the changing needs of a post-COVID-19 economy and society. **Youth unemployment will rise because of the economic slowdown and the mismatch between graduate competencies and industry requirements.** The pandemic provides ASEAN governments with an opportunity to develop responsive and forward-looking TVET and HE curriculum reforms that ensure relevant graduate skills. ASEAN established the ASEAN TVET Council (ATC) to serve as the regional coordinator for TVET institutions as they work towards curriculum reforms and more robust partnerships other TVET institutions and with industries

(Association of Southeast Asian Nations 2020). The integration of 21st century competencies, such as critical thinking, creative thinking, problem-solving, ethical decision making, global perceptiveness, and effective communication, is urgently needed in TVET and HE curriculum. Moreover, reforms have to revisit key learning outcomes of digital and learning-for-life competencies and entrepreneurship and strategies such as work-based learning supported by network

technologies and resources (International Labour Organization 2020b). Institutions should also explore how emerging technologies, such as virtual reality, augmented reality, immersive game-based multi-user virtual environments, and 3-D printing could mediate these activities when onsite engagement is not possible. TVET and HE institutions must work closely with industries to identify competency gaps and bridge them in their programmes and courses.

Notes

1. Annex 6 provides an inventory of each country's responses to the pandemic. The measures taken are categorized into 3 sections: ensuring health and safety, providing distance learning options for those with access, and providing learning opportunities for disadvantaged students. No resource mobilisation data is presented in this chapter because the author does not have access to such detailed data across the AMS.
2. The term education and training in this chapter refers to formal education that includes kindergarten (4-6 year olds) through 12th grade (17-19 year olds) or pre-school, primary school, and secondary school (K-12), technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and higher education (HE).

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Chapter 5: ASEAN frameworks and mechanisms

ASEAN responded quickly to the pandemic outbreak in February 2020. **By the first quarter of 2020, the impact and multidimensional character of COVID-19 had gone beyond a public health emergency, demonstrating instead that it would have far-reaching socio-economic repercussions.** Relevant ASEAN sectors responded through their regular mechanisms, such as ASEAN ministerial meetings and senior official meetings, to discuss the impacts of the pandemic and identify collective action measures.

The ASEAN leaders adopted the Chair's Statement on a 'Collective Response' to the outbreak of COVID-19 on 15 February 2020. The Statement expressed serious concerns over the well-being of people in AMS and beyond. As early as 19 February 2020, ASEAN Defence Ministers issued the Joint Statement on Defence Cooperation Against Disease Outbreaks in Ha Noi, Viet Nam. From then until mid-June 2020, ASEAN leaders and ASEAN ministers, including for economy, health, foreign affairs, tourism, labour, forestry and agriculture, and social welfare and development, convened their meetings to discuss COVID-19 responses and identify recovery measures for the region. Some have also engaged with ASEAN Dialogue Partners. The 36th ASEAN Summit on 26 June 2020 held in Viet Nam underscored the importance of strengthening ASEAN's capacity and regional public health and preparedness mechanisms to address Covid-19, emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, and other public health emergencies. The Special Summit also mobilized a Whole-of-ASEAN approach to contribute to a comprehensive recovery plan.

This chapter addresses the efforts of ASEAN Sectoral Body representatives to initiate regional approaches to widespread social challenges resulting from COVID-19, considering the mechanisms available to them. It provides an overview of ASEAN frameworks and mechanisms relevant to social welfare, labour, and education sectors and lessons that can be taken from previous pandemics and financial crises. The chapter ends with recommendations for joint action that can be taken in the coming months.

Prospects of ASEAN Community-wide responses

While many of the challenges caused by COVID-19 are primarily addressed through national responses, regional responses also play a crucial role. Given the unprecedented scale of the pandemic, there are opportunities for strengthening and complementing national responses through joint regional actions. ASEAN is coalescing several community-wide responses for COVID-19 recovery. These include:

1. Mobilizing of special arrangements
2. Developing new instruments; and
3. Launching common programmatic and thematic areas to combat COVID-19.

On 14 April 2020, ASEAN leaders issued a joint response declaration. The **Declaration of the Special ASEAN Summit on COVID-19** calls for ASEAN to build on the foundation of existing efforts by individual AMS and that of the ASEAN Community in curbing the spread of COVID-19 and mitigating its political-security, economic, and social impacts (ASEAN Secretariat 2020a). The Declaration includes the following points:

- **Expand capacity strengthening of existing emergency and response arrangements**, such as the ASEAN Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) Network for public health emergencies, ASEAN Risk Assessment and Risk Communication Centre (ARARC), ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Centre (ABVC), and the ASEAN Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre).
- **Enhance existing operational instruments on emergency assistance** including ASEAN Guidelines on the Provision of Emergency Assistance by ASEAN Mission in Third Countries to Nationals of ASEAN Member Countries in Crisis Situations.

- **Ensure Clarity in public communications** by enhancing effective and transparent public communication through multiple forms of media, including timely updates of relevant government policies, public health and safety information, clarifications on misinformation, and efforts to reduce stigmatisation and discrimination.
- **Take collective action and coordinate policies to mitigate the pandemic's economic and social impact, safeguarding the well-being of peoples and maintaining socio-economic stability** by implementing ASEAN Economic Ministers' Joint Statement on Strengthening ASEAN's Economic Resilience in Response to the Outbreak of COVID-19. Also, cooperate to ensure social safety nets are in place and continue to design and implement risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection systems, among others.
- **Preserve supply chain connectivity** that provides for trade to continue for the smooth flow of essential goods and ensures critical infrastructure for trade and trading routes to remain open.
- **Support reallocating existing available funds and encourage technical and financial support** from ASEAN's partners to facilitate coordinated relief efforts, including the proposed establishment of the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund.

ASEAN leaders affirmed the importance of a multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral, and comprehensive approach to respond to COVID-19 and future public health emergencies. They acknowledged the role of the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) and the newly established ACC Working Group on Public Health Emergencies (ACCWG-PHE) and instructed ACCWG-PHE to assist the ACC by serving as the main platform that coordinates ASEAN's response to public health emergencies. At the recent 36th ASEAN Summit on 26 June 2020, the ASEAN leaders adopted *the Ha Noi Plan of Action on Strengthening ASEAN Economic Cooperation and Supply Chain Connectivity in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic* to implement the Declaration (ASEAN Secretariat 2020b).

Furthermore, in the *Chairman's Statement of the 36th ASEAN Summit*, ASEAN underlined the importance of holistic, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach to address the multi-dimensional impacts of COVID-19, including through the ACCWG-PHE. The Statement also underscored the importance of strengthening the capacity of ASEAN and existing regional mechanisms for public health and emergency responses and undertaking responsive and timely

measures to address the impact of the pandemic in vulnerable sectors. Additionally, the statement announced the establishment of the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund and recovery process efforts.

The leaders also recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic constitutes a challenge for sustainable growth. In *the ASEAN Leaders' Vision Statement on a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN: Rising Above Challenges and Sustaining Growth* released at the 36th ASEAN Summit, the leaders announced a firm commitment towards expediting economic recovery and resilience. They emphasized addressing shocks, particularly those in vulnerable economic sectors, such as MSMEs and informal economy; restoring business environments and reinvigorating productivity; and tackling socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, including continued access to education, support workers in affected sectors, addressing employment and unemployment issues, upskilling and reskilling existing workforces, and promoting social protection while promoting demand-led employment strategies.

COVID-19 sectoral responses to date

As a first responder in a public health emergency, the **ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting (AHMM)**, Senior Officials for Health Development (SOMHD) met (including with ASEAN Dialogue Partners) to enhance regional collective action. Existing regional mechanisms were activated with a focus on promoting national measures, knowledge, and information exchange.¹ On 7 April 2020, AHMM reached a agreements on data sharing, sectoral communications, cross-border coordination, and sharing resources critical to national health systems, among other things (ASEAN Secretariat 2020c).

The **ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM)** Retreat on 19 February 2020 discussed scientific cooperation for managing infectious disease outbreaks; new initiatives and ways of contributing to ASEAN's overall efforts to counter fake news regarding the health crisis; and efforts to support public health and social cohesion by supporting respective national health authorities and ASEAN's regional health mechanisms in response to the emerging public health threat (ASEAN Secretariat 2020d).

The 26th **ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM)** retreat on 10 March 2020 sought collective action to mitigate the impact of the virus, using technology, digital trade, and trade facilitation platforms (ASEAN Secretariat 2020e). In June, the AEM agreed on collective action to mitigate Covid-19 impact, via the Hanoi Plan of Action on Strengthening ASEAN Economic Cooperation and Supply Chain Connectivity in Response to the

COVID-19 Pandemic. The aim of this collective action is to boost the region's economy and supply chains amid disruptions caused by the pandemic and counter adverse impact, ensure markets for essential goods remain open, and strengthen economic cooperation.

Reflecting concerns over disruptions in the food chain, the **ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF)** issued a statement on 15 April 2020 pledging to keep markets open and transportation of agricultural and food products continue (ASEAN Secretariat 2020f). They also stressed the importance of reducing excessive price volatility, particularly price spikes, ensuring adequate emergency food and reserves, and providing timely and accurate market information. The ministers stressed the need to implement necessary measures, projects and programmes at the national level to meet the immediate food needs of the ASEAN population, particularly the vulnerable groups in the society, and highlighted the need to boost AMS' social protection programmes for smallholder farmers and MSMEs to increase food production and ensure food security in the region. The ministers also agreed to a needs-assessment study to determine the effectiveness of mitigation measures on food security and livelihoods.

On 29 April 2020, the **ASEAN Tourism Ministers (ATM)** agreed on an information exchange on travel-related health and other measures through enhanced operation of the ASEAN Tourism Crisis Communications Team (ATCCT), including sharing information and best practices on responses to the pandemic. They agreed on a collaboration mechanism for ASEAN's National Tourism Organisations to implement measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and future crises. They agreed to introduce policies and measures to bolster confidence among domestic and international visitors in the region and to develop and implement a post COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery Plan. They committed to develop economic policies for financial stimulus, tax alleviation, and capacity and capability building, especially digital skills for travel and tourism stakeholders, with emphasis on MSMEs, vulnerable groups, and other affected communities (ASEAN Secretariat 2020g).

ASEAN Labour Ministers met on 14 May 2020 and committed to provide support for the livelihoods and health for all workers, especially those in high-risk sectors, and to safeguard their labour rights amidst the impact on economies and industries of AMS. They agreed to provide all workers affected by the pandemic appropriate compensation via the employers, social assistance, or unemployment benefits from government in accordance with the laws, regulations, and policies of the respective AMS;

to facilitate access of all workers with COVID-19 to essential health care services; and to assist migrant workers affected by the pandemic in each other's country or in third countries. They agreed to strengthen labour market policies, occupational safety and health (OSH) standards and social protection system; utilize digital technology to further regional cooperation and national responses; enhance effective and transparent public communications; enhance existing partnerships with other stakeholders in mutually agreed areas; and continue to share best practices and lessons learned (ASEAN Secretariat 2020h).

The **ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (AMMSWD)** on 20 June 2020 focused on mitigating the worst of the pandemic's impacts on vulnerable groups in ASEAN. A joint statement was issued in which ministers resolved to facilitate access to social protection with appropriate allocation of public funds (ASEAN Secretariat 2020i). The statement recognises the need to secure health and safety for social workers at the frontline of pandemic response. The ministers committed to developing comprehensive and integrated post-pandemic recovery programmes and continuity plans and measures that are disability-inclusive, gender-responsive, and age-sensitive; and promote social solidarity and children's participation. The statement also recognises the need to address the digital divide.

While these statements focus on respective sectoral mandates and priorities, all of them emphasise the importance and need for cross-sectoral cooperation and stakeholder partnerships in immediate pandemic responses and sustainable post-pandemic recovery.

Relevant lessons from previous crises

In the past decades, before COVID-19, the ASEAN region experienced various wide-scale public health emergencies, economic crises, and natural disasters. While each crisis is unique in scale and impact, there are several lessons that can be learned from past collective responses.

Public health emergencies, natural disasters, and other crises provide impetus for ASEAN to accelerate regional integration and cooperation.

A regional economic crisis in 1997 led ASEAN to strengthen the economic fundamentals of AMS and advance closer regional integration through, *inter alia*, accelerating the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) and Framework Agreement on ASEAN Investment Area (AIA) and negotiating the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services. Additionally, the emergency response of the 2004 earthquake and tsunami disaster helped develop a regional instrument on disaster

management and emergency response, later known as the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), signed in July 2005, and the ASEAN Disaster Monitoring and Responses System (DMRS) as an integrated system that detects a natural calamity.

Cross-sectoral cooperation requires leadership and a specific mechanism. While ASEAN sectoral bodies have gradually opened themselves for cross-sectoral approach, the pandemic requires leadership to instruct cross-sectoral cooperation and assign a clear mechanism for such cooperation. In April 2003, ASEAN Leaders met in Bangkok for their Special Meeting on SARS. Among many concrete solutions, the Meeting agreed to establish an ad-hoc Ministerial-level Joint Task Force to follow up, decide, and monitor the implementation of decisions of the leaders as well as the ASEAN Plus Three Health Ministers Special Meeting on SARS. The statement tasked respective Senior Officials to recommend operational details to the Joint Task Force. This prompted ASEAN sectoral bodies, including the ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting (ALMM), to discuss the impacts of SARS on labour and request its Senior Labour Officials Meeting (SLOM) to hold a special meeting with its Plus Three counterparts to provide recommendations to the Task Force.

As has been seen in past financial crises, **the increasing fiscal pressure on governments across the region will limit AMS responses to social welfare, education, and labour challenges.** Most ASEAN governments have introduced fiscal stimulus packages to counter the negative economic effects of COVID-19. Fiscal measures and GDP contractions lower government revenue and lead to increases in ASEAN's overall public debt. Countries with high public debt and those that pay high interest rates for capital market loans will be hardest hit. High public debt and overall risk aversion in the market will push these borrowing costs higher, leading to necessary allocation of a larger part of ASEAN revenue to servicing debt and leaving less room for investments and stimulus when it might be needed for future crises. This situation makes it more difficult to prioritize funding for measures that are not clear contributors to economic growth and recovery, such as labour and social protection. It is worth emphasising, however, that investing in human capital has driven growth in the past and increased inequalities will have a negative impact on future growth (Ostry, Berg, and Tsangarides 2014).

Generally, however, past financial and health crises hold limited relevance for the current situation. The scale and impacts of the COVID-19 public health crisis

far exceeds any previous pandemic. Travel restrictions currently in place across ASEAN are unprecedented, and the impact on the tourism industry has never been seen at this scale. The COVID-19 financial crisis differs from that of the 2008 financial crisis which occurred after a disruption in the US real estate and financial markets spread to the rest of the world after a short delay. The COVID-19 pandemic impact is vastly more dramatic. It immediately impacted the real economy while effectively demolishing supply and demand.

Opportunities for Regional Responses

ASEAN Sectoral Bodies can mobilize regional efforts to address an overwhelming set of shared challenges. Sectoral bodies are already building momentum in this direction.² The most important next step is to identify opportunities for regional joint approaches and develop the modalities, frameworks, and instruments that would be most useful for addressing these opportunities.

Sectoral bodies have several models that can be considered in the coming months:

Ex-post Measures

- 1. Joint communication strategies** – Communication at a time of crisis is a crucial aspect of crisis management. The ASEAN leaders and ministers emphasised the importance of clear communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the wake of the outbreak, ASEAN has shared information on COVID-19 cases in AMS and ASEAN efforts in prevention and response to COVID-19. ASEAN sectoral bodies should develop joint communication strategies for clear, accurate, and consistent messages through appropriate channels to reach the peoples of ASEAN or other target audiences. The influence of social media in attenuating pandemic response was recognized in ASEAN's public messaging in June 2014 when the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information (AMRI) agreed in their meeting to support development of a socially responsible media in ASEAN and strengthen cooperation, thereby mobilizing their mechanisms to intensify cooperation. These efforts culminated in the Framework and Joint Declaration to Minimize the Harmful Effects of Fake News (14th AMRI; 10 May 2018). The Declaration provides the basis for a coordinated response to disinformation.
- 2. Mechanisms for research, information sharing, and addressing data gaps** – As the pandemic spread rapidly across the region, most governments lacked the critical information

needed to make policy decisions and shape domestic programmes. Sectoral bodies may consider establishing platforms for the exchange of information on cross-border challenges or developing joint approaches for rapid data collection at the national level. Furthermore, governments should work together to fill data gaps – including data disaggregated by gender, age, and ability – through approaching multi-lateral and private sector actors that have access to this information.

3. Addressing cross-border challenges through policy alignment and inter-governmental collaboration platforms

– Several of the current challenges are cross-border in nature and require regional responses. For example, many documented and undocumented migrant workers seek to return home country to reunite with their families due to fear of the pandemic or loss of jobs. At the same time, those who are unable to return to their home country must rely on their host governments for employment protection, social security and social assistance, and access to healthcare. These prompted the ASEAN Labour Ministers to call for appropriate assistance and support to ASEAN migrant workers that are affected by the pandemic in their Joint Statement in May 2020. Sectoral bodies should align policies to address these challenges or develop new areas of inter-governmental collaboration. Such measures can include maintaining a central database and information on entry requirements and if local processing offices are functioning; and aligning communications between national contact points to clarify policy changes and other announcements.

4. Joint engagement with dialogue partners and multi-laterals to shape global response to the pandemic

– While governments have focused on containing the pandemic and mitigating its impacts, its impact spreads beyond state borders. ASEAN is part of the global community, and ASEAN sectoral bodies could consider leveraging or expanding their existing relationship with dialogue partners and multi-laterals to steer coherent global action and efforts. At the 36th ASEAN Summit, ASEAN leaders underlined the importance of keeping open, inclusive, transparent, and rule-based regional architecture with ASEAN centrality while strengthening efficiency and mutually reinforcing synergy between ASEAN-led mechanisms with external partners.

Ex-ante Measures

1. Joint needs assessment – COVID-19 has brought about tremendous change across different sectors of society. Some challenges are new, but other challenges are the result of intensified existing issues. ASEAN sectoral bodies should work together to identify, better understand, and prioritise issues for immediate, mid-term, and long-term regional interventions. ASEAN already possesses a relatively robust disaster management architecture, and a policy and action framework through the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER). The AHA Centre plays a catalytic role in driving national, regional, and global policy disaster management issues that have changed the discourse on disaster response. The ASEAN Special Summit placed the AHA Centre at the centre of an emergency management framework for the One ASEAN, One Response concept. The pandemic calls for intensifying and expanding a joint needs assessment approach for regional human security mechanisms.

2. Shared access to expertise and global good practice examples

– All governments are facing new and unprecedented challenges and are looking for the latest ideas and models from within ASEAN and other parts of the world. The challenges of maintaining social distancing as schools re-open, is a shared challenge. Sectoral bodies should use the ASEAN platform to quickly draw upon other governments' experiences and international expertise to inform their school re-opening plans. The ASEAN Safe Schools Initiatives (ASSI) promotes Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in national curriculum through supporting relevant sectors' initiatives. Safe Schools models established in at-risk AMS communities can be used to disseminate policies and tools.

In many cases, existing ASEAN commitments or frameworks can be used to enable rapid progress within the region. As a starting point, Sectoral Bodies may want to review already existing frameworks and mechanisms that are relevant and can be built on for COVID response. **Annex 7** includes a broad mapping of labour, education, and social protection-related declarations, frameworks, and instruments.

This approach would require a COVID-19-oriented ancillary implementation plan for all three sectors. As Sectoral Bodies develop responses, there are several considerations unique to the current context. In the short term, the COVID-19 Special Summit outcomes provide a useful framework for Sectoral Bodies to develop regional initiatives. Within the coordination platform led by the ACC and the ACCWG-PHE, ASEAN Sectoral Bodies should expand their engagement with ASEAN policy centres, academic and research institutes, the private sector, and civil society. In the longer term, ASEAN Sectoral Bodies may want to propose more far-reaching institutional adaptations, based on lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. Together, such actions would make a valuable contribution to ASEAN's continued and stronger resilience.

Notes

1. These mechanisms include ASEAN Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), the Network for Public Health Emergencies, the ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Centre (ABVC) for Big Data Analytics and Visualization, the ASEAN Risk Assessment and Risk Communication Centre (ARARC), the Regional Public Health Laboratories Network (RPHL), and the ASEAN Plus Three Field Epidemiology Training Network (APT-FETN).
2. To date, regional efforts have been mobilized beyond the conduct of special meetings on COVID-19 and collective actions of the health sector. The 28th Senior Officials' Meeting for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (SOCA) welcomed the Viet Nam-ASEAN Secretariat's proposal to organize a series of webinars with the theme 'The Impact of COVID-19 on ASCC Sectors and Post COVID-19 Strategies' to support the formulation of policy recommendations for the 37th ASEAN Summit scheduled for November 2020. While the webinars will focus on ASCC sectors, participation of relevant sectors under ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC) and ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) pillars is encouraged. Furthermore, the 28th SOCA Meeting also noted the Indonesia proposal for the establishment of an ASEAN Plus Three Task Force on Pandemics, and recommended that this proposal be submitted to the newly formed ASEAN Coordinating Council Working Group on Public Health Emergencies.

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Chapter 6: Recommendations

The chapters above provide a brief assessment of the initial COVID-19 impacts and responses to the pandemic among AMS and ASEAN institutions. The following section provides a series of national- and regional-level recommendations for the three sectoral areas: Labour, Social Welfare, and Education and Training. The chapter also includes several suggestions for a productive path out of the pandemic that can mitigate the worst of its long-term effects.

National-level recommendations for ASEAN Member States

Labour

- **Collect labour statistics to assess the full extent of the COVID-19 impact on labour**, including its impact on unemployment, labour force participation, working hours, income, and employment conditions with disaggregation by age, gender, and disability status. For AMS that conduct monthly, quarterly, or semi-annual LFS, this data is a matter of course. But for countries that have no LFS scheduled in the immediate term, it is important to plan one. If it is impossible to conduct a full LFS because of budget cuts, logistical considerations, or physical distancing, it is important to use an alternative to access a picture of the true labour market situation.¹ If funding is an issue, encourage multilateral and bilateral aid organizations to provide financial and technical support, because the information gathered would also help these organizations in their country programming.

- **Encourage enterprises to retrench workers as a last resort.** As Singapore and Brunei Darussalam have done, enterprises should communicate with tripartite partners to find alternatives to retrenchment, such as a shorter work week, flexible work arrangements, or temporary layoffs with some retained benefits. Given the extent of the COVID-19 economic fallout, some slack in production is inevitable. These alternatives will cushion the impact on workers and may help avoid the worst impacts on workers' livelihoods.²

- **Support job retention, especially in MSMEs, through grants, tax cuts, credit guarantees, or other forms of financial support.** All AMS are already undertaking one or more of these measures, but the pandemic could be protracted, and the pressure to retrench workers will only grow stronger. To the extent their finances allow, governments should provide financial support to enterprises, especially MSMEs which employ a large portion of vulnerable workers

- **Register and provide social security coverage for informal sector workers and gig economy workers.** Informal sector and gig economy workers in tourism, retail, and transportation and logistics were among the lockdown's most heavily affected workers. Often, these workers were also the last to receive employment-based assistance because they are not in the government's worker database. Registering these workers or the enterprise where they work will facilitate emergency assistance in the case of future crises, such as a second wave of infection. It will also ease the transition of informal workers into the formal sector. Providing informal workers with social security coverage will alleviate the need for emergency assistance. There are challenges to registering informal sector enterprises and providing them social security, but there have been documented success stories, such as the SUPERSIMPLES programme in Brazil and the Peasants' Social Insurance in Ecuador.³ These programmes relied on simplifying administrative procedures for business registration and creating incentives for enterprises to enrol their workers in social security.

- **Establish unemployment insurance for AMS that do not have it and expand unemployment insurance for AMS where it is limited.** The current crisis demonstrates the importance of unemployment insurance. Countries that did not have an established unemployment-insurance system struggled to support thousands or millions of workers who lost their jobs in the first months of the pandemic. Some AMS do not have any unemployment insurance, and others have limited systems, such as only coverage for government workers.

- **Strengthen active labour market policies and provide emergency employment or public workfare programmes for unemployed low-skilled workers.** This is especially important for low-income workers without access to unemployment insurance and/or if there is only limited government cash assistance for affected households. By keeping low-skilled workers employed and productive, public workfare programmes could lessen the pandemic's effects on future labour productivity.

- **In accordance with new OSH standards, establish social/physical distancing, testing, and tracing protocols at work, either sector-specific or specific to work type.** The threat of COVID-19 persists, and work arrangements cannot yet return to their pre-pandemic state. The necessary new protocols will differ across types of work and sectors and depend on the amount of space and people in a workplace. There could be different protocols for restaurant workers who necessarily interact with many people during the day compared to manufacturing workers, construction workers, or office workers. Experts in epidemiology should vet protocols, and OSH standards should be strictly enforced and assessed. The establishment of protocols will facilitate the resumption and continuity of business even during the pandemic.

- **Ensure employee-workers, including migrant workers, are provided with personal protective equipment by their employers** in compliance with ILO Convention No. 155. The government should provide low-income self-employed workers with subsidized PPEs. Additionally, ensure employers provide adequate OSH information and training to staff, also in accordance with ILO C.155. These measures will reduce costs to workers, increase the likelihood of workers using PPEs, and prevent the spread of COVID-19 and further business disruptions.

- **Provide training or re-training for workers who have lost their jobs and are in sectors that are not likely to recover soon,** including migrant workers who have been retrenched and have returned to their home countries. Governments should provide free or subsidized training to unemployed workers, which could be online, to prepare workers for more secure jobs (e.g. jobs that can be remote). Also, the pandemic will likely accelerate automation, and training can help prepare a workforce with Industry 4.0 or 21st century skills, such as problem-solving, people management, and digital skills.

- **Invest in digital infrastructure and close the digital divide.** Work-from-home arrangements, and other economic activities that can be done online, such as e-commerce, are constrained by the quality and level of access to digital infrastructure. AMS that have poor digital infrastructure should urgently invest to improve them, and access to digital technology should be more widely available to maximize employment potential.

- **Leverage technology to ensure an updated Labour Market Information System, which will inform and guide workers.** Such a system should contain the latest update on COVID-19, how to access benefits and protection, available training opportunities, and job-matching.

- **Establish labour standards and national legislation for telework and work from home arrangements.** Telework arrangements have proliferated during this pandemic and could be a new normal moving forward. According to the ILO, there are no established international labour standards on telework conditions. Many AMS do not have labour standards pertaining to work-from-home arrangements. At the national level, AMS should work with tripartite partners and labour experts to establish these labour standards.⁴

Social welfare

In the medium-term, social protection measures remain critically important. Recovery will be a non-linear path, and there will be frequent changes to containment measures in many countries. In this uncertain world, AMS should continue to support the poor, the new poor, and other vulnerable groups, especially the elderly, people with disability, and informal workers affected by the pandemic.

- AMS with less-developed social protection systems can draw on regional experience to strengthen their system. The priority of these countries should be to **introduce and strengthen a large-scale, national safety net that can be scaled up in times of crisis.** The experiences of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia are particularly relevant, given their large-scale national programmes and delivery systems (especially social registries and payment systems). Even small-scale programmes, however, can provide a starting point. Myanmar recently introduced two cash transfers programmes in the last two years; these provided the basis for its Covid-19 response.

- AMS with relatively mature social protection systems should explore how to retain recently introduced adaptations for a longer duration. Even when benefit levels and coverage is scaled down to regular, non-crisis levels, some adaptations will continue to be useful, such as relaxing administrative requirements for easier access, directly adding messaging to contain the spread of COVID-19 (e.g. WASH and hygiene information), and gender-sensitive programming (particularly in light of domestic violence concerns following movement restrictions).

- For all AMS, it is important to continue monitoring performance and impact, especially on poor households and vulnerable groups, and evaluating whether to increase the transfer size, coverage, and duration of newly introduced emergency response measures.

- At the policy level, **AMS will need to include migrant workers in response measures.**⁵ Eligibility for social protection is generally limited to residents, so migrant workers (even internal migrants) cannot access social protection if they do not reside at their place of origin. Several countries supported international migrants with cash transfers and helped migrant workers return home (the Philippines and Thailand). Ideally, migrant workers should be included in short- to medium-term response measures in their destination country, especially if they cannot return to their own countries. This will have health and economic benefits for the migrant workers and the host country. Singapore established protective measures for migrant workers, including bearing the cost of COVID-19 testing and treatment. Malaysia recently announced a subsidy to employers for each foreign worker sent for COVID-19 screening and amended regulations on employer-provided housing for migrant workers to specify minimum space requirements, etc.

Long-term institutional reform (financing, human resources, and partnerships)

- **It is critically important to ensure that announced benefits are delivered as planned.** In some cases, there may be a gap between the announcement of measures and actual implementation. Some measures may still be in the planning stage.⁶ AMS currently have a better understanding their needs based on the social protection measures taken so far. This provides a useful guide for budgeting and preparing for additional social protection measures. In the long-

term, most AMS will need to spend more on social protection; this requires careful prioritizing and fiscal allocations, including the policy mix between social assistance and social insurance (and labour market interventions) as populations age and economies formalize. In general, tax revenues in the region are lower than global benchmarks, suggesting that the efficient use of resources and other regressive subsidies will make incremental spending feasible (as was the case in Indonesia following the 1997/98 crisis) (O’Keefe et al.).

- **AMS will need to strengthen institutional capacity, including inter-agency coordination and well-trained human resources, to deliver benefits and social care services. Currently, COVID-19 responses have focused on social assistance and social insurance, with limited interventions in social care services.** In the medium-term, especially in AMS with rapidly ageing populations, governments should emphasize improving social care services for the elderly, persons with disabilities, and children. For the elderly, institutional care services in OECD countries suggests the need to improve living conditions (including reducing density) and improve links with healthcare. In the long-term, AMS should build a network of social workers for effective case management, enabling access to social protection and other relevant government programmes.⁷ In addition, inter-agency coordination must be strengthened across social welfare, labour, health, and immigration ministries, and between central and local governments. The Philippines used a legal framework and formal coordination mechanism to guide its COVID-19 response.

- **Throughout the region, community and non-governmental organizations supplemented government responses.** In Vietnam, the mass organization, Fatherland Front, collected support (cash and in-kind) of approximately VND 1900 billion. Indonesia’s Rapid-Response Task Force also collected large funds through crowdfunding campaigns to support informal sector workers. In the future, it is important that social protection systems leverage these partnerships for co-financing, implementing, and monitoring programmes.

In all cases, delivery systems should be modified to reach the intended beneficiaries and provide benefits safely, transparently, and fairly, including the following short- and medium-term implications:

- **Use digital solutions where feasible.** At present, social protection delivery is heavily constrained by social distancing norms, lockdowns, and other containment measures. Programmes face implementation challenges in terms of communicating entitlements and distributing cash or food. Countries, such as Indonesia and the Philippines, with adequate financial and payments infrastructure were able to roll out digital payments rapidly, which is useful during times of social distancing.

- **By far the greatest challenge is identifying social protection beneficiaries.** Most social assistance programmes typically target the poor and vulnerable, while social insurance typically covers a small share of workers in the formal sector. This leaves the problem of the ‘missing middle’ in most social protection systems, including the emerging middle class and most informal workers (both urban and rural). Most of these populations were non-poor pre-COVID-19 but fell into poverty or live just above the poverty line because of the pandemic. At the policy level, at least half of all individual-level social assistance benefits target this group. However, this group is typically not covered by existing social insurance or social assistance programmes; they are also less likely to be registered in national social protection databases or registries. As a result, existing identification systems cannot rapidly scale up to cover this group. It is worth examining the experiences of some AMS in this regard. For example, Malaysia used its registry to provide temporary cash transfers to middle class households (those in the middle 40% income group). In the absence of a similar registry, Thailand created an online and SMS registration system that allows affected informal sector workers to apply for benefits.

- **Another key challenge is ensuring clear communication regarding entitlements and allowing for convenient grievance redress.** This is essential to ensure transparency, mitigate risks of tensions over eligibility misconceptions, benefit levels, and receipt of benefits. Governments should ensure that benefits are delivered as announced to foster credibility and fairness.

In all AMS, it is also important to explore options for facilitating livelihood recovery of poor and vulnerable households. There are several dimensions to this issue:

- Most governments have announced economic stimulus packages, typically with a focus on sectors most affected by the pandemic. It is important to **ensure that sectors with high levels of informal and low-skilled employment are included** in these packages, to ensure that the poor and vulnerable benefit from these measures.

- There is **an expanded role for cash for work programmes** as norms for social distancing ease. These programmes can provide temporary employment and income to many unemployed and informal sector workers, in both urban and rural settings, enabling economic activity among vulnerable workers. These programmes serve as a form of unemployment insurance in highly rural, agrarian economies. These programmes can also create critical community infrastructure and provide COVID-19 related community services (including sanitation and care services).

- There is **considerable scope to pilot and scale up economic inclusion programmes that target extreme poor and vulnerable households**, especially female-headed households and return migrants, with a set of multidimensional interventions to address multiple constraints to income generation.⁸

Future-proofing social protection systems will be an important component of the recovery phase, helping economies build back better. This experience suggests the following lessons for the recovery period:

- In all countries, it is **important to expand social insurance** (including sickness benefits, health insurance, and free or subsidized access to health care, specifically for COVID-19) to informal workers. In recent years, Thailand, the Philippines, and Viet Nam added voluntary schemes to cover informal sector workers, but coverage remains low.⁹ Some East Asian countries successfully expanded health insurance coverage by subsidizing the contributions of poor and vulnerable groups. Indonesia, the Philippines, and Viet Nam combined social health insurance systems (with mandatory payroll deductions for civil servants and the formal sector) with general revenue-financing for insurance premiums for the poor. They also provide some degree of subsidy to all elderly people, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Cambodia and Lao PDR use health equity funds to provide access to healthcare for the poor (O’Keefe et al. forthcoming).

• Where feasible, **social protection programmes can influence other outcomes adversely impacted by COVID-19** (such as universal health coverage, child undernutrition, and school participation). Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines have social assistance programmes that seek to increase child nutrition, health, and education outcomes.

Education

Provide support to the most vulnerable students and their families. AMS can do the following:

1. improve remote teaching and learning options to cater to different learning contexts and needs.
2. work with partners to design innovative remote teaching and learning solutions, especially for students with special needs.
3. coordinate inter-sectoral responses that consider social protection measures (including free school meals and meal subsidies) to support student learning engagement at home and in school.
4. provide guidance and support to parents and guardians for home and remote learning; and
5. develop remote teaching and learning resources that can be used in no-tech and low-tech contexts.

The United Kingdom's Department for Education (2020) provided a comprehensive guide to K-12 schools and school partners for supporting vulnerable children and young people during the COVID-19 pandemic. This guide covers students' mental health and well-being, assessing students' learning, planning remedial actions, supporting high need groups, and supporting students approaching transitions (for example, from primary to secondary schools). A replication of this guide with local context would support vulnerable families during the pandemic and help establish partnerships with public and private sector actors and regional and international organisations in the future.

Address competency gaps among teachers and education leaders. The school and university closures and re-openings have identified competency gaps in the professional development of teachers and education leaders. **To ensure quality and inclusive education and training, governments should develop programmes based on the key competencies**, especially with respect to remote teaching and learning, supporting students from vulnerable groups and marginalized communities, providing psychosocial support for students and teachers, and monitoring their own professional learning (Beteille 2020). These programmes could be technology-mediated with support from professional learning communities to ensure that they could be scaled up without compromising quality and efficiency (Lim, Liang and Juliana [in press]).

Adopt a holistic approach towards remote teaching and learning to enhance equity, quality, and efficiency in the education and training sector. For sustainable and scalable remote teaching and learning, AMS should adopt a holistic system approach. AMS have built their education systems' capacities for remote teaching and learning through adopting a suite of strategies. The discussions in this report highlight the need for a holistic system approach to enhance equity, quality, and efficiency in the education and training sector. This holistic system approach should include the following ten dimensions: (1) National remote teaching and learning vision; (2) National remote teaching and learning plans and policies; (3) Complementary national remote teaching and learning and education policies; (4) Access to technological infrastructure and resources; (5) Professional development for teachers and education leaders; (6) Partnerships; (7) Digital technology in the national curriculum; (8) Teaching and learning pedagogies; (9) Assessment; and (10) Evaluation and research (Ra, Chin and Lim 2016). This approach has been adopted to examine the role of technology and improve existing technology-enabled education plans in the education systems of Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka (Lim et al. 2020a; 2020b).

Regional recommendations

Labour

ASEAN's vibrant workforce is a key foundation in the region's remarkable economic development over the past few decades. The current pandemic caused hardship to many of the same workforce, which now faces an uncertain future. These national and regional-level recommendations are meant to ease workers' hardships and allow them to contribute to the region's dynamism and inclusive development. The following recommendations could strengthen AMS national-level efforts combatting the crises facing workers across the region:

1. **Dialogue and coordinated ASEAN framework on social distancing and OSH in key labour sectors.** All governments in the region are establishing new social distancing and OSH guidelines for key sectors, such as tourism, manufacturing, and hospitality. These national guidelines will benefit from joint engagement with multi-national companies in these sectors and leading international experts. ASEAN Sectoral Bodies with oversight of labour, health, tourism, and MSMEs should develop a shared regional framework for new social distancing and OSH guidelines.

2. Cross-sectoral measures to accelerate recovery of ASEAN tourism. Member states should work towards lifting border restrictions and restoring tourism in the region. This must be done in stages, starting with an agreement on COVID-19 testing and tracing standards for intra-ASEAN and other tourism in the region; establishing health protocols for tourist transportation and accommodation; and building the necessary infrastructure, including digital infrastructure, for these systems. A useful reference for this framework is the European Commission document 'COVID-19: EU Guidance for the progressive resumption of tourism services and for health protocols in hospitality establishments' (European Commission 2020).

3. Joint needs assessment on supporting informal labour through the COVID-19 pandemic. Informal workers are among the pandemic's most heavily affected groups, but there is limited information on how they are being affected and adapting to challenges. AMS governments have introduced new programmes to help informal workers, but it is challenging to determine the impact of these programmes. ASEAN Sectoral Bodies should engage in joint research and monitoring efforts, involving leading ASEAN and international research teams, to assess informal working conditions and provide short-term policy recommendations to AMS governments.

4. Establish a regional system to facilitate newly unemployed migrant workers return to home countries. This is necessary to avoid a repeat of what happened when lockdowns and border controls led to the stranding of thousands of displaced migrant workers in the region. Such a system will include the identification of agencies across AMS which can coordinate the process, funding, and health protocols at border crossings.

5. Joint communications strategy to encourage workers to follow social distancing guidelines and wear personal protection. AMS governments must encourage workers to follow social distancing practices and wear personal protection, such as face masks. ASEAN should amplify these messages and increase compliance by developing a joint communication and awareness-raising initiative that includes partnerships with technology and digital media companies.

6. Regional workshop and joint access to international expertise on changing labour laws around the new normal. To assist governments in developing new labour policies and regulations, where required, in response to COVID-19, ASEAN Sectoral Bodies should consider a regional workshop to learn from international examples and discuss common challenges. These initiatives could recommend short-term policy measures to AMS governments.

7. Regional dialogue to advance discussions on the portability of social security across AMS. The pandemic underscores the importance of social security for migrant workers, who are often ineligible in their country of employment. AMS should discuss ways to move forward recommendations from the 9th ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour in 2016, which included social security portability for migrant workers in ASEAN (International Labour Organization 2020d).

8. Regional dialogue among tripartite partners to discuss policy responses that support economic recovery while protecting workers' jobs and rights. Across AMS, social partners have had varying levels of policy input concerning COVID-19's economic fallout. AMS can learn from each other's policy design experience concerning the best balance for economic recovery, business viability, and worker protection.

Social welfare

Coordinated regional policy efforts are necessary to increase the effectiveness of national efforts. AMS are highly interconnected through their economies and migratory patterns, so a regional approach is required. At the regional level, AMS have reinforced their commitment to social protection (ASEAN 2020b). This will need to be backed with the national measures recommended above.

1. Regional dialogues and joint analysis for urgent social protection responses. ASEAN sectoral bodies should facilitate peer learning and disseminate good practices with respect to short-term responses and medium-term system building. One important topic is implementing social protection schemes during lockdowns in compliance with social distancing requirements. Another key topic is strategies for unregistered populations, particularly the 'missing middle' and the newly poor groups who have no access

to government support. ASEAN sectoral bodies' efforts could take the form of facilitating regional dialogue, evidence-driven policy notes on good practices tailored to the different needs and context of AMS, and virtual learning paces and study visits within and outside the region (once travel restrictions lift).

2. Develop joint mechanism for regional risk pooling of social protection systems. Regional efforts for risk pooling can complement national efforts for shock-responsive social protection systems. The key priority is moving the region from a reactive approach to proactive systems that strengthen future crisis responses. AMS should invest in regional emergency preparedness with respect to coordinated regional response and risk financing.

3. Joint engagement with multi-lateral agencies and dialogue partners to shape social protection assistance in ASEAN. Multiple AMS could partner with multi-lateral agencies (World Bank, ADB, and ILO) and other partners to enhance their social protection efforts through technical assistance and development finance. Given the unprecedented scale and rapidly evolving context, it is essential for AMS governments to keep an open dialogue with partners and to discuss lessons and areas of shared concern. Attention should be given to how countries can scale up social protection systems during crises and sustain systems beyond the crisis. This engagement will also ensure that ASEAN shapes this area of support to national priorities.

4. Joint analysis and monitoring for social protection program impact. ASEAN should use a collaborative effort to analyse the impact of social protection programmes. Using a common research team and data collection approach across several national programmes, AMS would have access to more robust information and comparisons. This shared approach will enhance AMS national social protection programmes in a much shorter timeframe.

Education

Despite the diversity in their education and training sector, AMS have experienced similar challenges and responses during the pandemic. There are several collective approaches that AMS could take together in the shorter and longer term to address the impact of the pandemic and build back their systems better.

1. Coordinate regional dialogues and joint analysis on school reopening that ensures health and safety during the pandemic. ASEAN sectoral bodies, such as SOMED, should facilitate access to the latest international research and examples on experiences from school reopening and ensuring health and safety. As ASEAN and global governments face unprecedented challenges, there is a clear need for time sensitive peer learning and dissemination of good practices and models for school guidelines. This could take the form of regional virtual meetings, with leading regional and global examples presenting on their most recent experiences. Furthermore, SOMED should commission a rapid research initiative to review school reopening guidelines from dozens of countries and rate the effectiveness of different methods to inform AMS approaches.

2. Develop a regional toolkit for high-quality remote teaching and learning. Although there are quality assurance frameworks at all levels of education and training in ASEAN countries, most of these frameworks apply to teaching and learning in a physical setting. School and university closures have shifted most of the teaching and learning remotely. This shift highlighted the need for a quality assurance framework for remote teaching and learning that ASEAN can develop for localization in its member states. This framework would include and go beyond guidelines for remote teaching and learning that have been provided by ASEAN governments during school and university closures. It should specify a set of standards and performance indicators for remote teaching and learning in the context of courses and programmes. This set of standards and performance indicators will inform remote teaching and learning, assessment and feedback, student engagement and progression, and credits and graduation (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2020). ASEAN should develop a toolkit to guide education policymakers, education leaders, and teachers as they work towards the quality enhancement of remote teaching and learning within their education systems, schools, and institutions. Similar to toolkits that have been developed by the Commonwealth of Learning and other organizations for remote teaching and learning, an ASEAN toolkit will consist of (1) rationale and discussion of the quality assurance framework, (2) guides, templates, and checklists for data collection and documentation aligned to the standards and performance indicators, and (3) promising practices and lessons learnt based on case studies (Latchem 2016).

3. Revise the competency framework for ASEAN teachers. An updated version of the Teacher Competency Framework for Southeast Asian teachers developed by SEAMEO INNOTECH was approved by the high officials of the SEAMEO member countries in 2017. This updated version has incorporated the teacher competencies needed in a changing education landscape with respect to technological advances and 21st century competencies (SEAMEO INNOTECH 2017). The discussions in this chapter have highlighted gaps in these competencies, especially with respect to remote teaching and learning, and identified new competencies that teachers should develop. These new competencies include (1) mental health and psychosocial support for students, (2) remote teaching and learning for students from vulnerable groups and marginalized communities, (3) adaptability to future crisis and disruption, (4) assessments for learning loss and remedial actions, and (5) enforcement of health and safety guidelines and practices. Within ASEAN, a short-term recommendation will be to revise the Teacher Competency Framework for Southeast Asian Teachers.

4. Coordinate regional dialogues on adapting TVET and HE curriculum to the post-COVID future of work. Given the urgent need to revamp TVET and HE curriculum to respond to the rapidly changing skills landscape in the private sector, ASEAN could benefit from direct engagement with experts who are tracking the changing skills landscape. ASEAN could organize a series of regional dialogues, including leaders from the private sector and technology experts, to adapt TVET and HE curriculum for the post-COVID future of work. For TVET, the ASEAN TVET Council, with members from economic, education, and labour sectors, business and industry sector, and relevant stakeholders, can lead the dialogue and facilitate mutual learning and innovations through sharing best practices. Such activities are more likely to actualise the collective regional policies and actions for the TVET sector.

5. Initiate regional conversations on the issues and challenges of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and raise awareness among AMS about how these could be addressed. Globally, ECCE has been largely absent from conversations about COVID-19 impacts compared with the other sub-sectors of education. Among AMS, information has emerged on the impacts of COVID-19 on ECCE but less is available on government responses to address

the loss in learning, play, and care. While attempts have been made to initiate regional conversations (such as the webinar organised by SEAMEO on early childhood care and parenting¹⁰ and those organised by the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC) with its partners UNESCO and UNICEF), there are no coherent regional strategies to address these issues. A partnership with an established regional network, such as ARNEC, might spark such conversations and raise awareness among AMS about specific ECCE challenges.

Recommendations beyond the sectors

1. Data on social and economic impacts are urgently needed. As the situation rapidly changes, data gaps will continue to emerge. Short-term impacts continue to hold centre stage, but longer-term effects will also become more apparent. What will be the long-term effects of education disruptions on learning outcomes? To what extent will there be permanent unemployment? What is the risk of longer-term structural poverty?

Building on its existing institutions and mechanisms, ASEAN should invest in a combination of research response mechanisms, some of which can respond quickly, filling immediate data and knowledge gaps as they emerge, and some of which will start to track longer-term trends. Existing national and regional research mechanisms can lead these efforts. The ASEAN Community Statistical System (ACSS) Committee could take on a more central role in the collection of data and coordination of data collection and dissemination across AMS. ASEAN centres, entities associated with ASEAN, and existing development cooperation programmes with ASEAN can also support research or specific technical support according to the needs of ASEAN. Joint areas of exploration could include digital systems for service delivery, learning from each other, and promote digital technology in public service delivery and e-governance initiatives.

In the longer term, a fuller study of the scope and depth of the impact on labour, education, and household welfare across countries and the factors (e.g. existing policies, policies in response to COVID-19, and institutions in place) that matter for mitigating the impact of the crisis on these sectors would be helpful as national statistical systems begin to track key social indicators. ASEAN should deploy rapid data collection and

program monitoring tools (based on lessons from Asia and globally) to understand the impacts of the crisis across specific population groups.

2. Adapt existing regional mechanisms to respond to the pandemic. Existing ASEAN mechanisms are well placed to lead coordinated policy responses. ASEAN sectoral and ministerial bodies remain effective for AMS to discuss and implement regional responses and share experiences and information. These platforms are also ideal for engaging Dialogue Partners, other international organizations, and non-governmental stakeholders. At an ASEAN-wide level, ACC coordinates with the ASEAN Community Councils to enhance policy coherence, efficiency, and cooperation. The timely establishment of ACCWG-PHE to support ACC has allowed for a coordination dedicated to COVID-19. COVID-19 presented an opportune moment for different ASEAN sectoral bodies, especially ones under different ASEAN Community Pillars, to build, strengthen, or rejuvenate relationships where

cooperation remains limited. ASEAN should establish a sub-working group under ACCWG-PHE for priority or most-affected areas, including labour, education, and social welfare, for more targeted cross-sectoral coordination.

3. Expand virtual dialogue on shared challenges. Online dialogue provides an opportunity for broad-based dialogue among government and non-government actors and can support citizen engagement during a crisis. Many assume that online communication cannot replace face-to-face engagement. While the quality of the engagement may be different, online, and virtual platforms provide new opportunities to quickly reach broader audiences, less effort and preparation, and a decreased need for protocols that are required for face-to-face or high-level meetings. Opportunities include hosting regional virtual meetings to engage with global experts on issues, such as protocols for school openings or the impacts on particular employment sectors.

Notes

1. The ILO has produced a guide document for labour statistics data collection, see International Labour Organization (2020a).
2. The Singapore Ministry of Manpower's 'Advisory on retrenchment benefit payable to retrenched employees because of business difficulties due to COVID-19' is a useful guide, see Ministry of Manpower Singapore (2020).
3. For other examples, see International Labour Organization (2020b).
4. Some guidance can be found in International Labour Organization (2020c) and International Labour Organization (2020d). The Philippines has a law on work-from-home called the Telecommuting Act (Department of Labor and Employment Philippines 2020).
5. This is consistent with the Joint Statement of ASEAN Labour Minister on Response to the Impact of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on Labour and Employment, which includes guidance to "provide appropriate assistance and support to ASEAN migrant workers affected by the pandemic in each other's country or in third countries", and "endeavour to provide that all workers, including migrant workers, laid off or furloughed by employers affected by the pandemic are compensated appropriately by the employers and eligible to receive social assistance or unemployment benefits from the government where appropriate, in accordance with the laws, regulations and policies of respective ASEAN Member States".
6. In Thailand, for example, funding for the 5,000-baht cash transfer for self-employed and informal workers could be distributed for one month; distribution for the remaining two months was delayed as new legislation related to Covid-19 funding was necessary to unlock the budget. Given the magnitude of the economic impact, it is not surprising that far more people applied for benefits (about 27 million people) than were eligible or could be accommodated within the existing budget. Cash transfers were distributed to about 8-9 million people in April 2020. Information is not available on subsequent months for this transfer (Bangkok Post 2020).
7. See ASEAN Social Work Consortium for a regional platform to strengthen social work quality and coverage. Spearheaded by Vietnam, the ASEAN is considering the adoption of the Declaration on Strengthening Social Work.
8. In Indonesia, some PKH beneficiaries are linked to the business entrepreneurship program, Kelompok Usaha Bersama (KUBE), which provides business grants, access to savings, financial training, and microenterprise start-up coaching. This integrated approach began operation in 2013, expanding from 11,300 beneficiaries in 2013 to 147,400 in 2015 (Nazara & Rahayu 2013; CGAP 2016), but it recently closed, and the government is considering alternative approaches. In both SLP and KUBE-PKH, the national social registry is used to identify participants. In the Philippines, the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) was introduced in 2011 to help generate sustainable livelihoods for Pantawid Pamilya beneficiaries (comprising 80% of SLP participants) and poor households. SLP provided participants with microcredit or employment facilitation, through access to seed capital, training, locally available jobs, and public works (Acosta & Avalos 2018). In April 2020, as part of its Covid-19 response, the SLP announced Livelihood Assistance Grants (LAGs) to Covid-19-affected beneficiaries; these will be granted after quarantine ends (COVID-19 Dashboard 2020). The Philippines also has an ongoing graduation pilot that provides a comprehensive and sequenced set of interventions to Pantawid beneficiaries to help them achieve sustainable livelihoods (BRAC 2020).
9. In 2014, Thailand's scheme covered about 2.4 million people but less than half the accounts were considered active. In the Philippines, the AlkanSSSy program covered only 122,000 members in 2014. China provides an example of a social insurance scheme with wide coverage. Its rural pension scheme in China already covers close to 500 million workers but it is not clear how many accounts are active (O'Keefe et al. DATE).
10. For the SEAMEO Webinar on Embracing a New-Normal in Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Parenting, see SEAMEO Secretariat (2020).

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Conclusions

It is difficult to underestimate the scope of the challenges ahead for the ASEAN region. As of September 2020, the pandemic appears to be far from hitting its peak, and global spread continues to grow each day. Global estimates of the impact on economies and societies tend upwards with each revision: more poverty, more jobs lost, more businesses closed. Recognising the limits to fiscal expansion and the need to maintain macroeconomic stability, policymakers face very difficult policy choices as they seek a balance between short- and long-term impacts.

Shaping the new normal means investing in people. As much as possible, AMS should refrain from

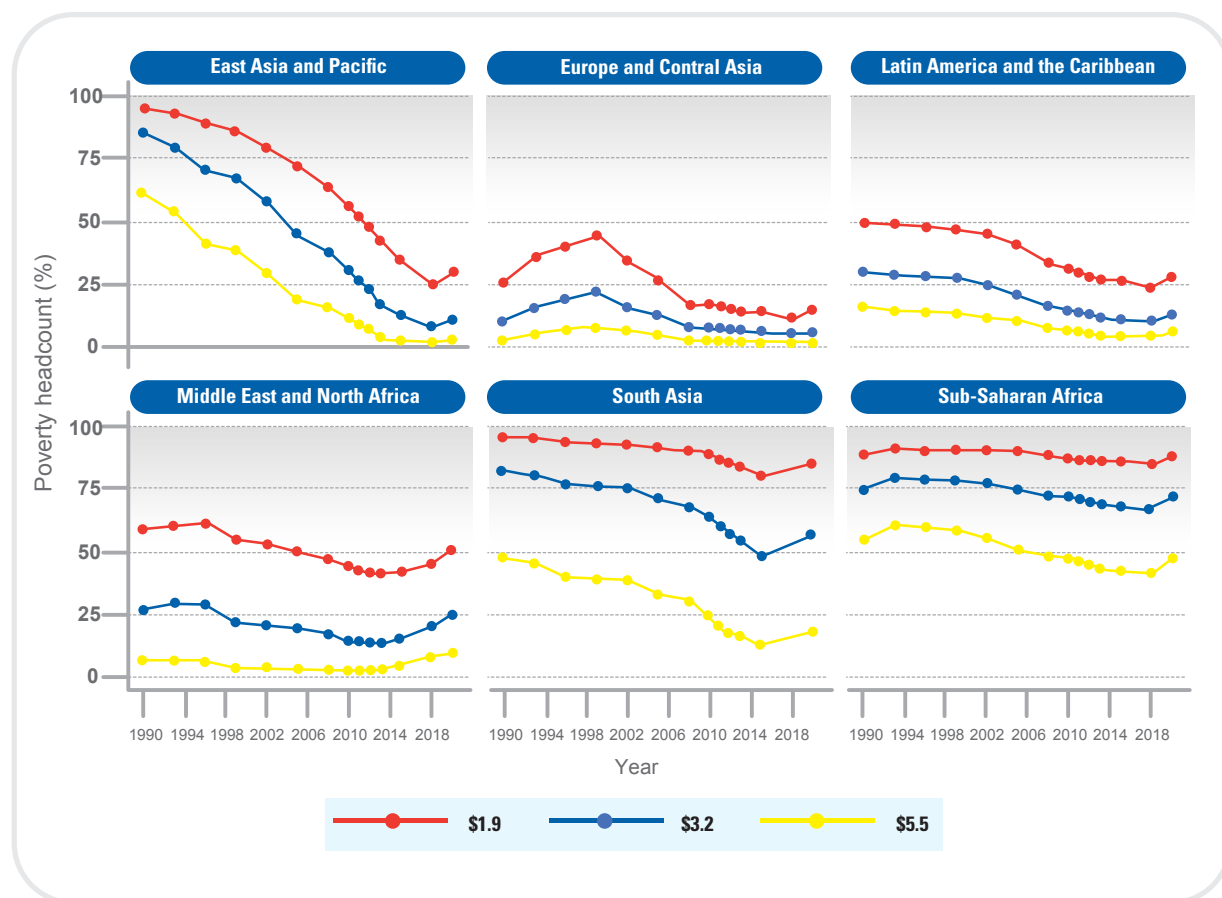
reducing spending on education, training, and social protections for current and future workforces: the region's human capital. Instead, AMS should take the opposite direction to prepare the region's citizens for

productivity and flexibility in the future post-COVID-19 world. Doing so will mean taking the principle of equity seriously. The poor and vulnerable have been and will be the worst hit: after the crisis, they will need support to prevent them from falling into destitution and to enable them to recover their livelihoods. This, too, will take investment and commitment.

Despite all this, there are opportunities. In a moment of global optimism, the phrase '**build back better**' has caught on, highlighting the recognition that the 'old normal' was inadequate, inequitable, and involved a great deal of poverty and suffering, not to mention an ongoing climate crisis. Sometimes it takes a critical juncture, such as a global pandemic, to enable a leap forward into something that is better than what is left behind. With that sentiment in mind, this report contributes, in whatever small way, to a dialogue about what 'building back better' might mean in ASEAN.

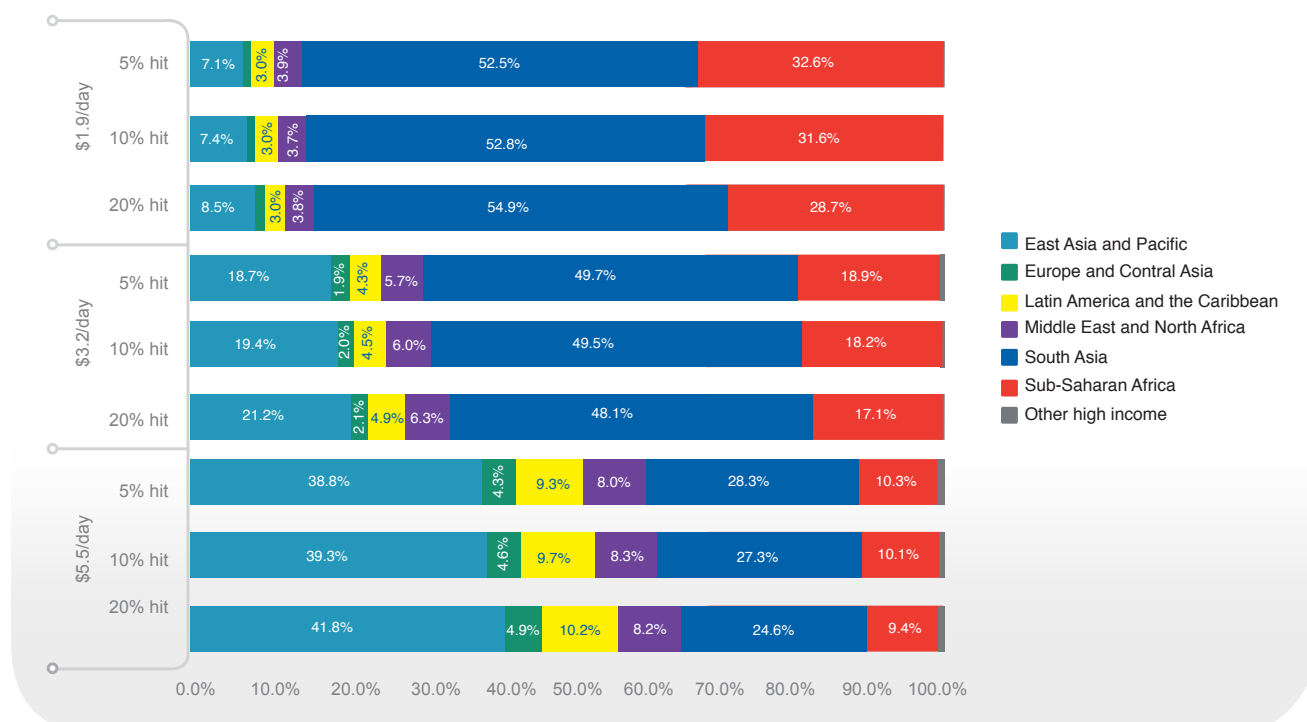
Annex 1: Impact of the COVID-19 crisis

Figure 1A: Poverty headcount ratio by regions, 1990–2018 and projection under a 10% per capita income or consumption contraction



Source: Sumner, Hoy and Ortiz-Juarez (2020)

Figure 1B: Distribution of additional number of poor by region and contraction scenario



Source: Sumner, Hoy and Ortiz-Juarez 2020

Annex 2: Informal Employment Rate in Sectors Expected to be Highly Affected by COVID-19

Informal Employment Rate by Sector

ASEAN Member State	Accommodation and food service activities	Wholesale and retail trade	Manufacturing	Transportation and storage	Construction
Brunei Darussalam (2017)	70.1	60.6	73.9	36.2	69.2
Cambodia (2012)	98.9	96.8	97.7	98.8	99.1
Indonesia (2018)	67.7	66.3	34.9	56.4	55.8
Lao PDR (2017)	96.0	96.0	80.8	82.6	92.6
Malaysia (2017)	16.5	11.3	9.3	7.5	21.7
Myanmar (2018)	82.6	81.0	93.7	65.7	98.2
Philippines	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Singapore	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Thailand (2018)	65.1	56.5	22.0	40.2	49.3
Viet Nam (2016)	80.7	69.8	47.7	65.0	90.2

Source: ASEAN Secretariat 2019

Annex 3: Employment Share of Women in Sectors Expected to be Highly Affected by COVID-19

ASEAN Member State	Accommodation and food service activities	Wholesale and retail trade	Manufacturing	Transportation and storage	Construction	Total
Brunei Darussalam (2017)	48.8	46.0	38.2	28.9	14.8	39.1
Cambodia (2012)	63.6	62.6	65.1	8.8	11.2	51.2
Indonesia (2018)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lao PDR (2017)	61.0	57.1	58.6	10.3	9.6	48.6
Malaysia (2019)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Myanmar (2018)	54.7	62.0	58.1	4.0	9.8	42.8
Philippines (2019)	52.0	58.9	40.2	2.1	1.6	34.9
Singapore (2019)	55.8	49.0	36.2	24.1	27.6	40.0
Thailand (2019)	65.1	51.0	47.8	17.4	14.4	45.8
Viet Nam (2018)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	59.5	56.7	48.2	6.5	7.5	41.5

Sources: Department of Statistics Department of Economic Planning and Development Prime Minister's Office Brunei Darussalam 2018; National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning of Cambodia and International Labour Organization 2013; Laos Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Planning and Investment, and International Labour Organization 2018; Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, Department of Labour of Myanmar 2018; Philippine Statistics Authority 2020; National Statistics Office, Ministry of Digital Economy and Society of Thailand 2020; Manpower Research & Statistics Department, Ministry of Manpower of Singapore 2020

Annex 4: Inventory of Country Responses - Labour

ASEAN Member States	Income support to affected workers	Training	Re-employment programmes	Job-retention and job-preservation programmes
Brunei Darussalam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government to shoulder supplementary contributory pension (SCP) contribution of self-employed workers for 6 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online training for workers free-of-charge provided by government Government actively encouraging companies to train local staff Expansion and extension of government-sponsored apprenticeship programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of government online platform to match workers with available jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25% salary subsidy for Bruneian employees in MSMEs for 3 months Deferment of SCP and Employees Trust Fund contribution for 3 months Deferment of payments of loans and waiving of some government transaction fees for companies in targeted sectors Discounts on rental of government buildings, and water and electricity bills for MSMEs Discount on corporate income tax for targeted sectors Discount on electricity bills
Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government monthly payment of US\$40 and factories' monthly payment of US\$30 to suspended workers in garment and tourism sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soft skills training for suspended workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cash-for-work programme for the unemployed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax holiday and loans to businesses
Indonesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6-month income tax exemption for manufacturing workers earning below 200 million Rupiahs (US\$14,120) annually Unemployment benefits extended to cover informal sector workers 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills training and assistance to start a business for laid-off workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction of corporate income tax by 3 percentage points and deferred import tax payments for selected manufacturing subsectors Government actively encouraging employers to explore with trade unions or workers' representatives as alternatives to retrenchment
Lao PDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax exemption for 3 months for workers with monthly income less than 5 million kips (US\$555) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Profit tax exemption for microenterprises with profit between 50 million and 40 million kips (US\$5,555 to \$44,400) Deferment for 3 months for tax collection from tourism-related businesses, road tax payment, and affected enterprises' contributions to mandatory social security
Malaysia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government-provided cash support of 600 Malaysia ringgit (US\$138) per month for 6 months to workers earning below 4,000 Malaysian ringgit (US\$920) per month 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wage subsidies to enterprises Grants to MSMEs Discounts on foreign worker fees

ASEAN Member States	Income support to affected workers	Training	Re-employment programmes	Job-retention and job-preservation programmes
Myanmar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Social Security Board members unemployed due to COVID-19, 6-month extension of health care, medicine, and travel benefits • Subsidized social security fees for insured workers in workplaces temporarily closed for health inspections 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partial credit guarantee for new loans made by banks to enterprises of a given size in selected sectors conditional on staff retention • Tax and fee deferrals, and tax credits for businesses • Exemption from lease payment of affected manufacturing firms leasing from government
Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For formal sector workers affected by enterprise's temporary closure or flexible work arrangement, onetime cash grant of 5,000 pesos (US\$100) • For informal sector workers affected by lockdown, government-providing equivalent of 10-day's minimum wage in exchange for work, such as house cleaning and disinfection. • For overseas Filipino workers who lost their jobs, one-time cash grant of US\$200. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support to MSMEs and credit guarantee for small businesses • Flexible working arrangements encouraged by government and adopted by firms
Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For self-employed Singaporean citizens meeting certain criteria, three cash pay-outs of 3,000 Singaporean dollars (US\$2,194) in May, July, and October 2020 • For eligible retrenched Singaporean and permanent resident employees, monthly cash grant of up to 800 Singaporean dollars (US\$574) for 3 months. • For eligible union members who suffered income losses or were retrenched, one-time cash relief payment between 50 to 300 Singaporean dollars (US\$ 26 - 291) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For retrenched Singaporean and permanent resident employees, training support grant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government actively encouraging employers to help retrenched employees find other jobs or refer them to government agencies which can help them find other jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support and training grants to employers, including Jobs Support Scheme, in which employers receive pay-outs from government to help pay wages • Government support to cover rental costs, loans, and additional support to heavily affected sectors • Flexible working arrangements encouraged by government and adopted by firms

ASEAN Member States	Income support to affected workers	Training	Re-employment programmes	Job-retention and job-preservation programmes
Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Thai citizens, government provides 14 million non-farm informal sector workers and 10 million farmers 5,000 baht (US\$160) per month for 3 months. • For migrant workers in the formal sector who have contributed for more than 6 months to social security, entitlement to unemployment benefits up to 3 months • For migrant workers in the formal sector who have been working with their employers for at least 4 months, entitlement to severance pay 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax relief and soft loans to businesses via state financial institutions • For migrant workers, extension of permission to work in Thailand for those whose documents were set to expire on 31 March
Viet Nam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash transfers for 3 months for affected workers • Deferred social insurance payment for workers economically affected by COVID-19 without penalty for late payment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to training provided to jobless eligible workers via existing unemployment insurance scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job placement for jobless eligible workers via existing unemployment scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned cut in income tax rate for micro and small enterprises to support their viability

Sources: Asian Development Bank 2020b; Juergens 2020; ILO Monitor 2020; International Labour Organization 2020a; International Labour Organization 2020b; International Labour Organization 2020c; International Monetary Fund 2020; OECD 2020; O'Keefe et al. (forthcoming); Robertson et al. 2020; Government of Brunei Darussalam 2020; Government of Cambodia 2020; Government of Indonesia 2020; Government of Malaysia 2020; Government of Singapore 2020; Government of the Philippines 2020

Annex 5: Inventory of Country responses – Social Protection

ASEAN Member States	Social assistance	Social insurance
Brunei Darussalam	<p>1 (new) Timebound cash transfer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly special allowance of B\$400 for frontline public health staff (March, duration of crisis) 	Waiver of contributions to Employees Trust Fund (TAP) and Supplementary Contributory Pension (SCP) contributions (including for self-employed individuals (April, six months).
Cambodia	<p>1 (new) one-time cash and food transfer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 kg of rice and 200,000 Riel to poor households (and pagodas) in 3 districts. [Budget: Riel 11,600,000 and 2320 kg rice] <p>1 (new) timebound cash transfer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monthly extra income support of 40 USD to each suspended worker in garment and tourism sectors, with employers required to pay monthly allowance of 30 USD per worker (in total, each suspended worker receives US\$70 per month). <p>1 (new) time-bound Cash for Work program [Budget allocation increased from US\$38 million to US\$100 million]</p> <p>Adaptations to 1 existing programmes or delivery systems [Budget allocation: USD 25 per month] (June):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash transfer (expansion of the ID poor system): Poor households (approx. 560,000 with approx. 2.3 million people); cash transfer of \$20 to rural households and \$30 to urban households.¹ 	Waiver of contributions to National Social Security Fund (NSSF) for enterprises in the garment and tourism sectors
Indonesia	<p>[Total budget commitment: IDR 110 Trillion]</p> <p>2 (new) Time-bound cash transfers (households):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bantuan Sosial Tunai (BST): Approx. 9 million households (residing outside the Greater Jakarta region who have already registered in the social registry but are not recipients of existing programmes - PKH or Sembako) receive IDR 600,000 (US\$ 40) per month (April, 3 months). • BLT Dana Desa: Approx. 10-12 million households (village residents, who have been negative affected but have not registered in the social registry and are not recipients of PKH/Sembako/BST) receive IDR 600,000 per month (April, 3 months). <p>1 (new) Time-bound in-kind transfer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bantuan Presiden: Food assistance for approx. 1.9 million households (10 municipalities in Greater Jakarta region) worth IDR 600,000 (US\$ 40) per month (April, 3 months).²⁹ <p>1 (new) Cash for work programmes: For unemployed, poor, daily wage laborers, and other vulnerable people (approx. 589,000 people). [Budget allocation IDR 16.9 Trillion (US\$ 1.1 trillion), implemented by various ministries]</p> <p>Adaptations to 3 existing programmes (and their delivery systems):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH) [Total program budget IDR 37.4 trillion (US\$2.5 billion); increased by nearly 29%] (April, 3 months): 	<p>Waiver of contributions to national health insurance scheme (BPJS) for 30 million nonsalaried workers (April, 3 months). [Budget allocation: IDR 3 Trillion (US\$ 200 million)].</p> <p>BPJS Kesehatan (Indonesian National Health Insurance), with coverage expanded to 107million low-income households</p>

ASEAN Member States	Social assistance	Social insurance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ double the benefit level and increase payment frequency (monthly instead of quarterly) for existing beneficiaries (9 months) ◦ expand coverage from 9.2 to 10 million beneficiary families (i.e., 15% of the population). • Program Sembako (previously called BPNT; food assistance program) [Total program budget IDR 43.6 trillion (US\$2.93 billion); increased by nearly 55%] (April, 9 months): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ increase benefit level from IDR 150,000 to IDR 200,000 per month (i.e., by 33%) for existing beneficiaries. ◦ expand coverage from 15.2 million to 20 million low-income households (i.e., nearly 30% of the population). • Kartu Pra Kerja (KPK, 'Pre-Employment Card'): Cash transfers to dismissed workers (informal workers and daily workers who are working in tourism and transportation industry). Workers with BPJS card (social insurance) receive IDR 1 million per month ; workers without a BPJS card receive IDR 600,000 per month (4 months). Approx. 5.6 million beneficiaries. Additional one-time cash transfer (IDR 1 million) for completing online training. [Budget allocation: IDR 20 trillion]. <p>1 (new) social care service (one-time):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social rehabilitation support for repatriated migrant workers <p>2 (new) Time-bound utility waivers (April, 3 months):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electricity waiver: 50% waiver (7 million households with a 450VA and 900VA connections) to approx. 31 million low-income households. [Budget allocation: IDR 3.5 Trillion (US\$ 234 million)]. • (new) Housing: Interest rate subsidy and downpayment subsidy for up to 175,000 low-income households requesting a mortgage. [Budget allocation: IDR 1.5 Trillion (US 100.45 million)]. 	
Lao PDR	<p>1 (new) Time-bound utility waivers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electricity waiver for poor households. 	
Malaysia	<p>1 (new) one-time cash transfer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bantuan Prihatin Nasional: Benefits, depending on category and income level (2 payments, April, and May) [Budget allocation of RM10 billion] • Cash transfers of B40 & M40 households, selfemployed workers, employees in the private sector, FELDA settlers, farmers, fishermen and small traders who earn less than RM8,000 a month (2 payments), as follows: <p>4 million households earning <RM4000/month: RM1600</p> <p>1.1 million households earning RM4001-8000/month: RM1000</p> <p>3 million single individuals aged 21+ earning <RM2000/month: RM800 to</p> <p>400,000 single individuals aged 21+ earning RM2001- 4000/month: RM500</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students enrolled in institutes of higher learning in May 2020: RM200 	<p>Malaysians below the age of 55 will be allowed to withdraw RM500 per month from their Employees Provident Fund (EPF) (April, 12 months)</p> <p>Reduced minimum employee contribution rate for the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) from 11 to 7% of salary (April to the end of the year).</p> <p>Through the national insurance plan for the B40, mySalam, patients of COVID-19 can apply for an income replacement of RM50/day for up to 14 days. This initiative will also be extended to the B40 who are quarantined as persons under investigation (of COVID-19 symptoms).</p> <p>Paid sick leave of RM 600 (around \$150) will be provided per employee/month for up to 6 months for workers who are forced to take leave without pay from March 1,2020 onwards.</p>

ASEAN Member States	Social assistance	Social insurance
	<p>4 (new) one-time cash transfers for other individuals (April):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism-related workers (taxi, tourist and trishaw drivers and tourist guides): RM600 (US\$144) • 120,000 e-hailing drivers (in addition to the one-off cash transfer for taxi drivers): RM500 (US\$125) • Civil servants – (a) 1.5 million civil servants of grade 56 and below, including contract workers: RM500 (US\$125); (b) 850,000 government pensioners: RM500 (US\$125) • Single mothers and persons with disability: RM300 (July 2020) <p>4 (new) time-bound cash transfers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malaysia NADMA COVID-19 Government Assistance: Cash transfer of RM100 per day as income replacement for all employed and working Malaysians who lose their jobs or income during the Movement Control Order period or due to treatment for COVID-19 at the hospital • Frontliner allowance: Monthly special allowance of RM600 (US\$150) for medical doctors and other medical personnel (and paid sick leave for the entire isolation period) (March, duration of crisis) • Frontliner allowance: Monthly special allowance of RM200 (US\$50) for other front liners namely military, police, customs, civil defence and RELA members who are directly involved in enforcing the MCO (April, duration of crisis) • Childcare allowance: e-voucher of RM800 per household for mobile childcare services (until August)² <p>Adaptations to 1 existing cash transfer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bantuan Sara Hidup (BSH; formerly 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) program): One-time top-up of RM100 for all BSH recipients (May) plus RM50 subsequently channelled through e-tunai; administrative change: bring forward BSH payment of RM 200 scheduled by May 2020 to be paid in March 2020 <p>1 (new) one-time food transfer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food distribution to vulnerable groups including the elderly and children in shelters, the disabled, and the homeless [budget allocation: RM25 million (US\$6 million)]. <p>3 (new) Time-bound waivers (April, 6 months):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing (Projek Perumahan Rakyat, PPR): Rent waiver for B40 households renting public housing for the urban poor [Foregone payments: RM3 million (US\$0.75 million)] The Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) will be making the same exemption for public housing in its jurisdiction, benefiting 40,000 renters. • Housing: Mortgage waiver for 4,649 B40 households that own 'rent-to-own' units of the PPR households [Foregone payments: RM5.7 (US\$1.4) million]. • Electricity: Waivers, ranging from 15% to 50%, depending on consumption [Allocation: RM150 million] <p>3 (new) social care service (one-time):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-time grant of RM5000 per childcare centre registered with the government 	<p>This will be delivered through the Employment Insurance System (EIS) and is targeted to workers with monthly income of less than RM 4,000 (around\$1,000). This is expected to cost RM 120 million (about \$30M).</p>

ASEAN Member States	Social assistance	Social insurance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transit shelters and dormitories for the homeless • Counselling: Talian Kasih 15999 for women, children and anyone experiencing physical and mental abuse to lodge complaints or get assistances. Safe places and shelters are available for victims. Counselling services are also provided via a dedicated helpline with the support of 528 registered counsellors. 	
Myanmar	<p>[estimated budget allocation for social protection: \$200 million; anticipated coverage: around 5 million households]</p> <p>Adaptations to 2 existing programmes or delivery systems (April, one-time):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternal and Child Cash Transfer (MCCT): Top-up benefits to nearly 450,000 pregnant mothers (onetime MMK30,000 in addition to existing monthly MMK 15,000) for approx. 241,425 beneficiaries [Budget: USD 4.93 million] • Social pensions: Top-up benefits (one-time MMK 30,000 in addition to existing monthly MMK 10,000) to approx. 200,000 beneficiaries; coverage expansion by reducing age limit (anticipated coverage: 1.6 million individuals) [Budget allocation: USD 4.7 million] <p>4 (new) One-off in-kind transfer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency food assistance for 4.1 million low-income households without regular income (April) • Child grants in IDP camps: child grants (for children aged 2-5 years) to approx. 10,000 beneficiaries • Household in IDP camps: cash transfer to over 60,000 households in IDP camps • People with disability: Cash transfer to approx. 300,000 beneficiaries <p>1 (new) One-off utility waiver (April):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electricity waiver: 100% waiver on first 150 units of consumption for all households <p>1 (new) social care service (one-time):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social services for internally displaced people (IDPs) for psychosocial support 	<p>Waiver of contributions to Social Security Board for approx. 1.3 million insured workers from factories and workshops that are suspended for health inspections (April, 3 months).</p> <p>Medical benefits: Extended benefits for unemployed SSB members from six months to 1 year from the date of unemployment (equivalent of 60% of wages).</p>
Philippines	<p>1 (new) time-bound cash transfer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Subsidy Program (ESP): A social amelioration program to provide cash or noncash transfer of Php 5,000.00 to Php 8,000.00 per month to 18 million households (low-income 4P beneficiary families, households with an informal worker, and with vulnerable members)³⁰ (covering 75% of households) (April-May, 2 months). <p>5 (new) One-time cash transfers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) program: individuals with urgent medical and burial needs can avail of financial assistance • AKAP program for migrant workers: Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) provided cash transfer of P10,000 (US\$200) to Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) affected by the travel ban due to COVID-19 and those who were repatriated (February) 	<p>Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (Philhealth): Extension of contributions, filing of claims, and policy waivers (on single period of confinement and 45-days coverage)</p> <p>PhilHealth medical expenses coverage for COVID-19 patients and assistance to health workers, which includes PhilHealth medical coverage, compensation for severe infection, and death benefit [Budget allocation: PHP22.1856 billion]</p>

ASEAN Member States	Social assistance	Social insurance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health workers: Cash transfer of P100,000 to public and private health workers who contract the disease while in the line of duty. In case of death, their families will receive P1,000,000. • COVID-19 Adjustment Measures Program (CAMP): cash transfer of PHP5,000 (US\$97.6) to affected workers, regardless of status (i.e. permanent, probationary, or contractual) employed in private firms whose operations are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (approx. 650,000 formal sector workers from MSMEs) (March) • Financial Subsidy to Rice Farmers (FSRF): Cash transfer of Php 5,000.00 to rice farmers with farm sizes ranging from 1 hectare and below and listed under the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture <p>1 (new) Cash for work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) Program: About 10-30 days of temporary community-based work for nearly one million workers who have temporarily lost their livelihood.³¹ (April) <p>Adaptations to 1 existing cash transfer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) waived the program conditionalities for the months of February and March, continuing the provision of full cash grants under the period. 	
Singapore	<p>4 (new) One-time cash transfers (individuals):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care and Support: cash transfer to all residents aged 21 and above between S\$300 and S\$900 overall (April, 2 ipayments) • Workfare Special Payment: Cash transfer of S\$3,000 to low-income wage workers and eligible self-employed persons • Self-Employed Persons (SEPs) Income Relief Scheme (SIRS): Cash transfer of S\$3000 per month each in end-May, July, and October 2020 for self-employed persons eligible for income relief scheme • Elderly: S\$100 (US\$68.5) for silver card top-up for all seniors • Low-income: S\$100 supermarket vouchers for lower income (increased to S\$300). <p>1 (new) time-bound measures for COVID-19-related costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash transfer of S\$800 per month for workers who lose jobs or are on involuntary leave without pay, supplemented by a jobs and training program (3 months) <p>2 (new) Time-bound utility waivers (April, 3 months):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utility rebates are doubled • Housing: waiver of late charges for late-payment on public-housing mortgage <p>2 (new) social care service (one-time):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency for Integrated Care hotline for elderly and vulnerable people • National CARE hotline for emotional and psychosocial support (community-based) 	

ASEAN Member States	Social assistance	Social insurance
Thailand	<p>2 (new) Time-bound cash transfer (individuals):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash transfer of THB 5,000-baht (\$153) for approx. 9 million workers not covered by the Social Security Fund (out of 21.7 million applications) (April, 3 to 6 months) [Budget allocation: \$4 billion] • Cash transfer of THB 1,000 per month for approx. 6.8 million beneficiaries (children under 6 years of age, older persons, people with disability) (3 months)³ <p>3 (existing) utility subsidies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electricity • Water • Housing mortgage waiver <p>2 (new) One-off cash transfer (individuals):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash transfer THB15,000 for migrant workers (members of Overseas Workers Fund and return migrants from countries with a COVID-19 outbreak) • Cash transfer of THB 1000 for people with disability (with a disability identification card) <p>2 (new) social care service (one-time):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free temporary accommodation and meals for homeless people • Provision of counselling and referral services via the toll-free 1300 Hotline 	<p>Medical: Full coverage of medical costs of insured workers infected with COVID-19; but health insurance premium increased from THB 15,000 (\$460) to THB 25,000 (\$760)</p> <p>Waiver of contributions to the social security fund (3-6 months)</p>
Viet Nam	<p>[Budget allocation for all income support: VND62,000 billion (US\$2.7 billion) covering approx. 20 million people]</p> <p>Adaptations to 3 existing programmes or delivery systems (April, 3 months):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households on poor list: Cash transfer of VND 1 million (\$43) per month (poor) and VND 500,000 (US\$ 21.50) per month (near-poor) • Social transfers (Decree 136) (elderly, people with disability, single parents, orphans, and other children in need): additional cash transfer of VND500,000 (US\$ 21.50) per month • Merit (national devotees/former freedom fighter): additional cash transfer of VND 500,000 (US\$ 21.50) per month <p>2 (new) Time-bound cash transfers (individuals) (April, 3 months):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash transfer (formal sector workers): contracted employees/workers (who lost jobs but are not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits, on un-paid temporary leave, or on reduced working hours) receive VND 1.8 million per month. • Cash transfer (informal sector workers): selfemployed and un-contracted workers (who have suspended businesses or lost jobs in selected sectors, with income below the poverty line) receive VND 1 million (US\$43) per month <p>1 (new) time-bound measures for COVID-19-related costs (medical and/or income loss during quarantine):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All expenses related to living, COVID-19 testing, and medical treatment for all citizens institutionally quarantined (in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City; financed by local government) 	<p>Waiver of contribution for COVID-19 affected firms (at least 50% of labour force being on temporarily leave because of the pandemic) to social security scheme (max 12 months)</p>

Sources: Asian Development Bank 2020b; Juergens 2020; ILO Monitor 2020; International Labour Organization 2020a; International Labour Organization 2020b; International Labour Organization 2020c; International Monetary Fund 2020; OECD 2020; O'Keefe et al. (forthcoming); Robertson et al. 2020; Government of Brunei Darussalam 2020; Government of Cambodia 2020; Government of Indonesia 2020; Government of Malaysia 2020; Government of Singapore 2020; Government of the Philippines 2020

Annex 6: Inventory of Country Responses – Education and Training

Country	Ensuring health and safety	Providing remote learning options for those with access	Providing learning opportunities for disadvantaged students
Brunei Darussalam	<p>Health and safety guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Health has published a guideline for cleaning and disinfection procedures in schools and childcare settings in February, based on the Singaporean version in July 2019 (Ministry of Health Brunei Darussalam 2020). The guideline discussed the following precaution measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand hygiene Respiratory and cough hygiene/etiquette Use of personal protective equipment (PPE) where appropriate Appropriate cleaning and disinfection of contaminated items Appropriate handling and disposal of infectious waste The school needs to abide by the following guidelines when reopening the school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check everyone's body temperature before entering school. Limiting a guardian to send students to school. Supply of hand sanitizer at strategic locations of school space. There are no school groups or gatherings, outdoor activities, physical activities, and drama classes. Classroom seats are at least one meter apart from each other <p>Staggered approach towards reopening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school will reopen on June 2 in stages (Ministry of Education Brunei Darussalam 2020a) Priority will be given to students who will sit for public examinations under the Ministry of Education (Year 6, Year 8, Year 10 Express, Year 11, Year 12 and Year 13) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (KHEU) in the first phase from June 2 to 13. Each phase of the school restart will be announced every two weeks to avoid public confusion. 	<p>Guidelines for remote learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools will be given the authority to determine the number of students who will attend lessons in classrooms and those who can learn from home if they have internet access and video conferencing tools Parents can negotiate with school leaders on allowing their children to continue online lessons if they are still not confident in letting their child return to schools (Ministry of Health Brunei Darussalam 2020). Students will be required to continue to be at home and to learn online through various platforms according to their school capacity whether via Email, Google Docs, WhatsApp, Video Conference, Microsoft Teams and social media platforms or any other compatible telecommunications application (Ministry of Education Brunei Darussalam 2020b). Specific guidance to pre-schools includes guidelines for children, preschool teachers, parents/guardians (Ministry of Education Brunei Darussalam 2020c) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines for children <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Prior learning session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the children are ready before the session starts Ensure no interruption as soon as lesson starts During the learning session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online: ensure parents/ guardians are present to assist Offline: focus on the learning, exercise, and activity that the children are working on After the learning session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children need to complete the exercise or activity given either online, through recording or home learning pack within the time given. Following or performing physical activity given by the teacher to increase selfactivity, if any. <p>Forward looking TVET curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop better vocational training and education, reskilling, and the professionalization of manual jobs, it established several initiatives such as the Ready Apprenticeship Program and strengthened collaboration and engagement with industry through the Manpower Industry Steering Committee. These efforts are intended to ensure alignment between industry needs, in terms of numbers and qualifications, and manpower supply, and to address the current mismatch between general education and TVET training and the requirements of industry. The programmes will help youths develop their skills and prepare for future employment. 	<p>Access to equipment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ministry of Education (MOE) this afternoon received more laptop contributions totalling 173 units from senior government officials and several companies to support online learning and to aid students in need amidst COVID-19 pandemic in the country. (Ministry of Education Brunei Darussalam 2020d) In support of online learning, the public is welcome to donate computers, laptops, and tablets (new or used) The school will provide home-pack learning for students who do not have access to the internet. Education through TV shows will also be implemented as a supplement to teaching and learning through mass media (Ministry of Education Brunei Darussalam 2020e). Program Home learning plan for Year 6 Students are shown through RTB Aneka and RTB GO (Every Monday to Thursday and Saturday from 8.30 am). (Ministry of Education Brunei Darussalam 2020e)

		<p>Guidelines for remote learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further initiatives aim to develop aspiring entrepreneur, such as those under Darussalam Enterprise and the Ministry of Finance and Economy, and the Entrepreneurship Innovation Centre under the Ministry of Education (Asian Development Bank 2020a). 	
Cambodia	<p>Health and Safety guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of Education adopted the UNICEF March 2020 version - Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools as the major guidelines for precautionary measures in schools (Bender 2020) • MOEY also posted a Khmer version of Proper Hand Washing poster to promote personal hygiene for school in its website (MoEYS Cambodia 2020). 	<p>Guidelines for remote learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To expand the online learning service, MOEYS has called for the collaboration with existing Education Technology developers such as (Dy 2020): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ WikiSchool presents the content of teaching videos produced by MOEYS on their Apps and Wiki TV (around 1500 users per day) ◦ Offered online Basic Equivalency Program through the website: beep.moeys.gov.kh in collaboration with Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training and UNESCO in Cambodia. ◦ Produced videos on 5 modules (each with 3 lessons) for ECCE. The videos have been uploaded to E-school Cambodia platforms as well as live on Facebook at prime time as well as aired on the national TV channels. ◦ Cooperated with the Ministry of Information, TV programmes on education has been launched via Apsara TV, Sky One TV Channel, Digital One TV Channel as cable channel, Wiki TV (online educational TV) ◦ At Higher Education Institution level, several universities run the Distance Learning program. The platform of Distance Learning at higher education ranged from simple social media communication (Telegram and WhatsApp) to Zoom Cloud Meeting, Google Classroom, or comprehensive platform. The Institute of Technology of Cambodia had hosted the E-Learning platform for Royal University of Agriculture, University of Health Science, National University of Management and Institute of Technology Cambodia itself. ◦ Administrative line of MOEYS has cooperated with the local councils to raise the awareness of parents on the availability of online learning and TV programmes and how to use it. ◦ TVK2 or TVK-Education, a new channel of the state-owned National Television of Kampuchea (TVK), officially launched its broadcast trial here this morning (Nika 2020). ◦ TVK2, a collaboration between the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS), is aimed to promote distance learning and e-learning while schools across the country have been shut down to prevent and contain the spread of COVID-19. 	<p>Longer-term investments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-literate individuals and drop-outs can still resume their education via two programmes offered online – the Factory Literacy Programme and Beep Programme. These two programmes are free of charge. As such, interested learners – especially women and young girls working in factories can resume their studies normally during this time of COVID-19 (Kanika 2020). • Additional investment has been made to develop educational videos using sign languages as a medium of teaching and learning to support students with hearing disabilities Radio programmes have also been developed for indigenous students in their mothertongue/ native language. (Dy 2020)

<p>Indonesia</p>	<p>Health and safety guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of Health developed general guidelines for prevention and control of COVID-19 and a more specific protocol for education institutions (Ministry of Health Indonesia 2020) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The protocol for education institutions includes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hand washing - Other healthy hygiene behaviours - Clean the school environment regularly with disinfectants - Conduct initial screening of the school community (for both illnesses and temperature measurement) - The stricter requirements for food hygiene and health • The Central government's Task Force for the Acceleration of Handling COVID-19 developed a Cross-Sector Guideline Package for regional stakeholders that include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tips for safely carrying out school operations (such as social distancing and temperature measuring) - a review of distance learning options (online and offline) for children ◦ Protection of children from vulnerable groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the needs of psychosocial support, care options - the latest case management and referral guidelines <p>School meal subsidies</p> <p>There are social safety net policies for poor households, including labour subsidies, food subsidies, and cash assistance programmes (North Sumatra government 2020).</p>	<p>Multi-modal home-based learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of Education and Culture together with UNICEF has conducted a survey to evaluate the implementation of the Learning from Home program on TVRI since 13 April 2020 thus to help them make some improvements on the coming plan (Ministry of Education and Culture 2020a). <p>Professional development and support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The International Labour Organization (ILO) provides online training for TVET instructors on transforming offline training material to suit online training (International Labour Organization, UNESCO & World Bank 2020). • The ILO organizes a series of webinars on design and delivery of online TVET in cooperation with the Australian Embassy in Jakarta. <p>Forward-looking TVET curriculum</p> <p>The curriculum of the TVET schools is undergoing transformation to align itself to the changing demand of the workplace and more important, changing demand of the industries. More flexibility will be built into the curriculum to be responsive to the job market (Lubabah 2020). The International Labour Organization, for example, has worked in partnership with the Ministry of Manpower, the Public Vocational Training Centre, and the Animation Industrial Sector Association to analyse the gaps of digital art and animation competencies between industry demands and TVET programmes. To address these gaps, the TVET curriculum is revised and refined to better align itself to the competencies required from the industry (International Labour Organization 2020d).</p>	<p>Longer-term investments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Learning from Home Program is aimed to help those people who have limited Internet access both due to economic challenges and geographical location. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2020b)
<p>Lao PDR</p>	<p>Health and safety guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a guideline written by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education for schools to prevent and control COVID-19 (Task Force 2020). The guideline including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Social distancing ◦ Basic disinfection and sanitization measures ◦ Personal and hand hygiene ◦ Checklist for school principals, teachers, and staff ◦ Checklist for parents ◦ How to cope with students' stress 	<p>Multi-modal home-based learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of Education and Sports immediately launched a new TV/radio teaching program on 23rd March covering the key primary subjects for students' continuous learning in response to the school closure (BEQUAL-Laos 2020). • Teachers are using social media and messaging apps to contact students, support their studies, and to provide and check homework (Vientiane Times 2020). <p>Professional development and support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources (including videos) are developed to support teachers on how to engage students in remote learning. 	<p>Longer-term investments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More educational programmes are developed to be aired on satellite TV, national TV, and radio channels under the partnership of Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism (MICT). These programmes are in addition to the education TV programmes such as "My Village TV" and "Learn Together Laos."

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of Health developed a guideline for suggested measures for maintaining schools' cleanliness and health, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Hygiene and disinfection principles ◦ Different procedures regarding waste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing or new social media groups (e.g. WhatsApp and Facebook Groups) to enable teachers to learn from one another and provide peer support (Ministry of Education and Sports 2020). 	
Malaysia	<p>Health and safety guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOE is also developing an updated version of SOP (the previous version published in March) for schools and teachers to deal with COVID-19 • The Ministry of Health does not issue an official guideline for precautionary measures for schools, but there are guidelines for workplaces and social distancing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The guideline for special settings is not including schools ◦ Those guidelines include appendices that discuss the following items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Personal hygiene and respiratory etiquette ◦ Hand Hygiene ◦ Respiratory Etiquette ◦ Wearing surgical masks ◦ Disinfection Procedures • For the recent reopening of school, there are some further announced/discussed measures from MOE, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The school reopening done in phases, and online teaching and learning should continue ◦ Max. 16-17 students per class to ensure social distancing ◦ Stricter measures for canteens 	<p>Guidelines for remote learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ministry of education immediately released guidelines to carry out home based learning when the MCO was imposed. <p>Multi-modal home-based learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online learning platform which was called MOEDL has replaced school learning. It integrates digital tools to support online teaching and learning and offers free educational services, applications to all schools, for example, it provides links to a wide of variety of applications including google classroom and Microsoft Team for teaching and learning purposes, digital textbooks, educational videos and game-based learning applications. • The re-introduction of educational TV programme • Education TV programme which was only available online since 2012 has made its return on terrestrial free-to-all TV. It is now aired 6 hours daily on 3 channels since the MCO was imposed (SEAMEO Secretariat 2020). <p>Forward-looking TVET curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TVET institutions are working closely with industries to identify competency gaps and developing courses and programmes to ensure that their graduates meet up to the demands of the employers. • The 2020 budget has introduced the Malaysians@Work program with the Apprentice@Work component that encourages youths to enrol in TVET courses and programmes by offering an additional RM100 per month on existing allowance for trainees on apprenticeship (Dermawan 2020). 	<p>Longer-term investments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During home-based learning, televisionbased learning sessions through RTM's youthcentric channel, TV Okey has been introduced to students, especially for those who do not have access to unlimited Internet. More teaching and learning resources will be developed for broadcast on this channel. (Razak 2020)
Myanmar	<p>Health and safety guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ As MOE agreed that necessary changes are required to comply with COVID-19 regulations, different measures that implemented by the government ◦ Provide free face shields and masks for students and teacher ◦ Provide digital thermometers to schools for temperature screenings ◦ Arrange washbasins in schools ◦ Apply safe distancing measures in classrooms ◦ Take other preventative measures such as creating separate morning and evening sessions for schools with large numbers of students (Ministry of Education Myanmar 2020). 	<p>Guidelines for remote learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a National Response and Recovery Plan for the Education Sector published by MOE (Ministry of Education Myanmar 2020). <p>More future-looking TVET curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the particular nature of TVET which combines theoretical learning and practical training, DTVET's decisions on content and mode of dissemination of learning materials will be made in close collaboration with the heads of institutions and 	<p>Additional budget to support offline students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In collaboration with the World Bank, Ministry of Education, Myanmar launched a new project aiming to improve education quality and access across country. The project, financed by a US\$100 million credit from the International Development Association (IDA), will be implemented over four school years. (World Bank 2020)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of Health and Sports published a Preventive Health Tips for Pupil in April that mentioned the following measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Hand Hygiene ◦ Respiratory Etiquette ◦ Wearing surgical masks <p>School meal subsidies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Provision of meals to students in affected townships despite the closure of schools. Home delivery of food or provision of cash or vouchers in 11 states/regions, except Yangon, Delta and Bago region (Ministry of Education Myanmar 2020). 		
<p>Philippines</p>	<p>Health and safety guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department of Education will implement the “safe back to school” program to ensure the safety of students (Department of Education Philippines 2020a) • Schools are not required to have physical classes even the school year started (Department of Education Philippines 2020b). ◦ Class sizes would have to be limited to only 15 to 20 students Continuous Production and Distribution of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Food Assistance • The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) continuously produces and distributes personal protective equipment, face masks, face shields, and baked products to hospital frontliners, Local Government Units, and security enforcers, as output of training cum production program of TESDA Technology Institutions (TTIs). • It donated to the community fruits, vegetables, rice, seedlings, and poultry products harvested from the mini-organic farms of the institutions. <p>Preparations for the Resumption of Work and TVET Classes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed a course on Practicing COVID-19 Preventive Measures in the Workplace anchored on the quarantine and health protocols issued by the Philippine Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases. It is aimed to develop and enhance awareness, skills, and attitude to protect oneself from being infected by COVID 19 and prevent the transmission of the disease. 	<p>More future-looking TVET curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Re-think assessment in the time of pandemic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purpose of assessment: evaluate learning and/ or tool for learning that helps students progress and master skills, knowledge, and understanding. - Assessment should engage, support, and inspire students to continue studying. - Relevant assessment challenge students to use their learned skills and knowledge to make sense of and respond to the current situation - Equitable assessment across modalities of learning delivery ◦ Re-think Grades <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on demonstration and mastery of skills and knowledge, use of checklist of skills and understanding - Suspend alphanumeric grades and instead focus students’ achievement of the required criteria (pass with distinction, pass, insufficient evidence) - Flexibility balanced by accountability in assessments, submission of requirements, etc. (Tuscano 2020). <p>Professional development and support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are receiving material support in the form of equipment (the lack of which poses a major challenge for remote learning). • Support for teachers is coming from telecom providers in the form of reduced tariffs for data bandwidth. • Capacity building programmes are planned for trainers by the National TVET trainer academy to conduct online/blended/distance learning and webinars are being organized by national institutions. <p>OPLAN TESDA ABOT Lahat: TVET Towards the New Normal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Philippine Technical Education and Skills Development Authority’s (TESDA) new strategies and innovative approaches in providing skills and livelihood opportunities to the Filipino people under the “new normal” condition and bounce back to recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. 	<p>Access to equipment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government authorizes school heads to release desktops, computers, laptops, and smartphones to teachers for the use of online classes (Department of Education Philippines 2020c). • During the closure, schools will provide learners with assignments, orientation on the utilization of alternative learning delivery modalities and corresponding learner’s materials (Department of Education Philippines 2020b). • In coordination with relevant agencies, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority has focused on food production and livelihood programs for the affected and vulnerable communities, especially the IP communities, as food production sites in some regions. TESDA intensified the promotion of agriculture-based skills training programs in coordination with the Department of Agriculture.

	<p>The course is accessible thru the TESDA Online Program and via downloaded presentation applications.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TESDA mobilized its resources nationwide through training cum production and distribution of PPEs (face masks, face shields and goggles) and cooked/baked products to our front liners, LGUs and government hospitals. • Designed a prototype low cost portable ventilator named “Air of Life We Heal As One” project which hopes to provide quick, inexpensive, and alternative ventilators for patients in critical stages due to the COVID 19 infection. <p>Strengthening the TESDA Online Program (TOP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web-enabled learning management system (LMS) which provides open educational resources through massive open online courses (MOOCs) • Aims to make technical education accessible to more Filipino citizens using ICT <p>Can be accessed for free, anytime, and anywhere through computers or mobile devices using the internet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently offering 71 courses in 13 sectors. A total of 908,396 users registered to the TOP within the period from March 16 to September 13, 2020. The total accumulated users from 2012 is 2,344,633, with 965,929 enrolments and 452,992 completed courses. <p>Implementing Flexible Learning Delivery in TVET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopts innovative and flexible learning in continuing the delivery in TVET, making TVET resilient against educational disruptions and responding to the challenges of the digital economy. • Flexibility in learning is exemplified using conventional and IT-based teaching/ learning approaches to promote wider participation inclusive among the institutions, the trainers, and the learners. • Delivery modes are face-to-face learning; online learning; blended learning; distance learning; or combination of distance learning or face-to-face. <p>Capacitating the TVET Trainers/ Facilitators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating eLearning Courses for trainers’ development on use of online/blended training module. Target is at least 3,700 TVET trainers trained thru the regional multiplier program <p>Provision of Scholarship Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for Work Scholarship Program (TWSP) • Special Training for Employment Program (STEP) • Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education (UAQTEA) • Private Education Student 	
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<p>Singapore</p>	<p>Health and safety guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current measures for school reopening (which some of them have been introduced prior the school closure) (Ministry of Health Singapore. 2019): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Daily temperature-taking with additional visual and question screening ◦ Students and staff who are unwell, or who have adult household members on home quarantine / Stay Home Notice or have flu-like symptoms such as fever and cough, will be required to stay away from school. ◦ Schools will clean hightouch surfaces more frequently and disinfect the premises daily. ◦ Students and staff are required to wear their masks or face shields. ◦ Students will practice frequent handwashing throughout the school day and practice wipe down of tables and shared equipment after use. ◦ Intermingling across classes and levels will be minimised. ◦ There will be fixed examstyle seating in classrooms and spaced seating in canteens or alternative venues. ◦ Schools will also stagger arrival, dismissal, and recess timings to reduce congestion. ◦ For PE classes, students and teachers will not be required to wear masks <p>Meal subsidies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOE (the Ministry of Education) had provided school meal subsidies to all primary and secondary students from low-income families via School Smartcard top-ups during the period (including this mid-year holiday) of Full Home-Based Learning. (Ministry of Education Singapore 2020a) 	<p>Staggered school reopening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools will reopen on June 2, with full resumption by June 10 (Ministry of Education Singapore 2020b) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only P6, S4 and S5 are required to back school in daily basis - Other grades are alternating between home-based learning and classes in school on a weekly basis <p>Guidelines for remote learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A blended learning model—one day of Home-Based Learning (HBL) a week starting from April (primary, secondary, junior college/centralized institute) • Schools will remain open for a small group of students whose parents are not able to secure alternative childcare arrangement. • Blended learning, incorporating a mix of face-to-face and e-learning components, has been a core part of the Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs’) curriculum. In recent months, IHLs have moved almost all their class-based modules online and stepped up safe distancing measures on their campuses. They have also been making similar adjustments to their examination and assessment formats. They continue to be in touch with their students to support them in their learning and progression, and wellbeing, and are committed to work towards helping students to graduate on time (Ministry of Education Singapore 2020c). • Both mainstream and Special Education (SPED) schools have worked hard to ensure that students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) as well as their parents and caregivers have support since MOE started full Home-Based Learning (HBL) on 8 April 2020 (Ministry of Education Singapore 2020d). 	<p>Access to equipment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting from 8 April 2020, all primary, secondary, Pre-University and IHL (Institutes of Higher Learning) students, including students from Special Education (SPED) schools, will shift to full Home-Based Learning (HBL) till 4 May 2020. (Ministry of Education Singapore 2020e) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Schools will continue to provide instructions and support for students to access a range of both online and hardcopy HBL materials, so that learning continues uninterrupted. Schools will also assist students who may require digital devices or internet access. The Singapore Student Learning Space (SLS) platform will continue to be accessible to students during this period. Throughout this period of full HBL, our students can rely on the ongoing support of their teachers and other school personnel who will continue to work from home or from school. School staff will also keep in regular contact with them and their parents. Likewise, SPED teachers will provide our students in SPED schools as well as their parents with HBL support for the customised curriculum and maintain regular contact.
<p>Thailand</p>	<p>Health and safety guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Public Health and Education ministries have set up strict preventive guidelines (Guidelines for the prevention and control of coronary disease in 2019 - Published in May 17) for all educational institutions, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ students must wear face masks and have their temperature measured before entering school. ◦ Maintain social distancing while learning or carrying out other activities 	<p>Multi-modal home-based learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC) has decided to let each school decide whether they should reopen on July 1 or opt to use distance-learning television (DLTV) and online learning. • MOE will apply Distance Learning Television model nationwide to ensure access to quality teaching and learning at K-12 schools. The MOE combines existing recorded courses, which have been prepared in the past years, with newly recorded ones. 	<p>Longer-term investments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thailand adopts satellite or DLTV (Distance Learning Television) especially for underprivileged children and youth for all learners nationwide (Mala 2020) Thailand has invested in the development of Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) to ensure students from the remote and rural areas, and those from marginalised communities will have access to quality remote teaching and learning. IRI in Thailand covers preschool and primary school topics and subjects. (EDTECH 2020)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Inspect the toilets, cafeteria to have enough sinks, in good condition, ready for use, including adequate hand soap. ◦ Prepare hand washing items such as alcohol and gel at the entrance of the classroom and various buildings ◦ Related cleaning procedures ◦ Define the sick spot screening point at the entrance of the school building, dormitory with equipment such as handheld thermometer. ◦ Arrange the space to allow separation between people such as queuing and alternative schedule for lunch and breaks. ◦ Require staff responsible for disease prevention and control of the school to keep in touch. Work with public health agencies in the area when encountering suspected patients ◦ Related Disease surveillance and prevention activities at the beginning of the course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with Internet access could access online platforms for greater interactions with their teachers and classmates (Mala 2020). <p>Professional development and support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development initiatives by the MOE such as courses, professional learning resources, and seminars are implemented to build the capacity of teachers for remote teaching and learning, and the pedagogies that are associated with it. • Many of these courses are made available to teachers before the delayed school re-opening to allow teachers time to build their capacity before they engage in remote/blended teaching and learning. 	
<p>Viet Nam</p>	<p>Health and safety guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of Health issued a series of orders, letters, and Graphics between February to April 2020 to instruct schools to complete the precautionary measures for school reopening (Ministry of Health Viet Nam 2020a) • Schools are required to practice measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Check body temperature ◦ Maintain social distancing ◦ most schools are following a shorter day than before the pandemic ◦ Students are divided into groups ◦ taking classes in alternative shifts ◦ not to touch one another at school ◦ use hand sanitizer (Ministry of Health Viet Nam 2020b) 	<p>Guidelines for remote learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry included different checklists for schools, teachers, students, and parents, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ What students need to do at home ◦ What students need to do at school ◦ What teachers do when students go to school ◦ What school protections need to be done ◦ What health care workers at school need to do ◦ What the school needs to do before the student returns to school ◦ What the school should do when students go to school (Ministry of Health Viet Nam 2020c) <p>Multi-modal home-based learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A television teaching program for students in grades 9-12 was implemented to help them prepare for the upcoming national high school exams. The city has also introduced digital resources for other students to access online (Vietnam Insider 2020). 	<p>Longer-term investments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of Education and Training has been working with UNICEF on a digital literacy program that will be included in the K-12 curriculum and in the teacher professional development programmes. The interventions in this program targets vulnerable regions with a high proportion of children from ethnic minorities. • Investment and prioritization of devices and internet connectivity are being planned especially in rural and underserved areas. This has become more urgent because of the COVID-19 crisis with reported loss of learning among children from these areas during school closures. • The vision of the Ministry of Education and Training is to have one education platform (with different modalities) and a digital competencies and literacy curriculum for K-12 schools. Learning resources will be created from videos to applications that are accessible to every child and youth.⁴

Annex 7: ASEAN Frameworks

ASEAN Frameworks under Social Welfare, Labour and Education Sectors Relevant to COVID-19 Response and Recovery	
<p>ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection and Regional Framework and Action Plan</p>	<p>The Declaration stipulates the principles, among others, that everyone, especially those who are poor, at risk, person with disabilities, older people, out-of-school youth, children, migrant workers, and other vulnerable groups, are entitled to have equitable access to social protection that is a basic human right and based on a rights-based/needs-based, life-cycle approach and covering essential services as needed. It also mentions that social protection shall be adaptive to different risks.</p> <p>The Declaration also stipulates strategies and mechanisms to strengthen social protection in the region including, among others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate strategies that promote the coverage, availability, comprehensiveness, quality,] equitability, affordability, and sustainability of various social protection services • Allocate adequate financial resources for social protection in line with national targets and subject to the capacity of each Government • Strengthen the capacity of government officials, communities, service providers and other stakeholders for better responsiveness, coordination and effectiveness of social protection and delivery services at regional, national, and local levels • Promote multi-sectoral responsiveness of social protection <p>The Action Plan includes extensive list of projects and activities by different ASEAN sectoral bodies that can be built upon for post-COVID-19 recovery and resilience.</p> <p>For full Declaration and Regional Framework and Action Plan, please visit: https://asean.org/storage/2019/01/26.-November-2018-ASEAN-Declaration-on-Strengthening-Social-Protection-1st-Reprint.pdf</p>
<p>Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Ageing: Empowering Older Persons in ASEAN</p>	<p>The Declaration calls for concrete actions to, among others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote rights-based/needs-based and life-cycle approach and eliminate all forms of maltreatment on the basis of old age and gender through equitable access of older persons to public services, income generation, health care services, and essential information as well as preventive measures, legal protection and effective support system; • Mainstream population ageing issues into public policies and national development plans and programmes; and • Strengthen the capacity of government agencies, corporate bodies, civil society organizations, including voluntary welfare organizations, communities and relevant stakeholders for better coordination and effectiveness in the delivery of quality services for older persons at local, national, and regional levels. <p>For full Declaration, please visit: https://www.asean.org/wpcontent/uploads/images/2015/November/27thsummit/ASCC_documents/Kuala%20Lumpur%20Declaration%20on%20Ageing%20-%20Empowering%20Older%20Persons%20in%20ASEANadopted.pdf</p>
<p>ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</p>	<p>The Masterplan details key action points in the three ASEAN Community Blueprints 2025 where rights of persons with disabilities should be mainstreamed. For the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025, these include the action lines on the enhancement of access to social protection, economic opportunities, information and communication, and decision-making processes; and on advancement of educational systems, skills training, and capacity building activities at all level.</p> <p>For full Masterplan, please visit: https://asean.org/storage/2018/11/ASEAN-Enabling-Masterplan-2025-Mainstreaming-the-Rights-of-Persons-with-Disabilities.pdf</p>
<p>Vientiane Declaration on Transition from Informal Employment to Formal Employment towards Decent Work Promotion in ASEAN and its Regional Action Plan</p>	<p>The Declaration encapsulates the actions to promote the transition to formal employment where workers are accorded with labour protection and social protection. The actions, among others, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster research and information sharing among AMS on best practices in promoting the transition from informal employment to formal employment towards achieving decent work that promotes employment creation, rights to work, social protection, and social dialogue • Integrate labour matters into national policies and programmes that promote entrepreneurship, sustainable MSMEs and other forms of business models by expanding access to information of relevant regulations, financial services and supportand market opportunities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen policies and programmes and encourage cooperation and collaboration of enterprises, self-employed workers and cooperative units to provide support to workers in informal employment who are vulnerable to decent work deficits and to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. <p>The Regional Action Plan comprises several activities at national and regional levels that can be adapted or used to inform or support post-COVID-19 recovery.</p> <p>For full Declaration and Regional Action Plan, please visit: https://asean.org/storage/2019/01/30.-November-2018-Vientiane-Declaration-Transitionfrom-Informal-Employment-to-Formal-Employment-towards-Decent-Work-Promotion-in-ASEAN.pdf</p>
<p>ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers</p>	<p>The Consensus provides general principles; fundamental rights of migrant workers and the members of their families; specific rights of migrant workers; and obligations of sending states, receiving states and AMS, among others. The obligations of the receiving state include provision of fair treatment to migrant workers in respect of working condition and remuneration and occupational safety and health protection, and access to adequate medical and health care. The Consensus also provides that AMS will cooperate and coordinate to extend assistance to migrant workers who are caught in conflict or crisis situations in the Receiving State through services of embassies and consular offices of the Sending States and authorities in the Receiving State.</p> <p>For full Consensus, please visit: https://asean.org/storage/2019/01/3.-March-2018-ASEANConsensus-on-the-Protection-and-Promotion-of-the-Rights-of-Migrant-Workers.pdf</p>
<p>ASEAN Labour Ministers' Statement on the Future of Work</p>	<p>The Statement encapsulates areas of work to prepare ASEAN workforce and business for the future. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen capacity of public and private institutions to prepare the workforce for the future of work and better enable them to take advantage of new technology and participation in the global labour market through closer cooperation with industries, improving TVET standards, and using TVET to skill, upskill and re-skill our workers; • Encourage and support efforts of business, including MSMEs, to invest in decent work according to international standards and to harness and manage technology which will improve the quantity and quality of jobs in existing and emerging sectors of employment. • Promote fiscally sustainable public and private national social protection initiatives in AMS to uphold or improve our workers' well-being and improve their retirement adequacy; and • Strengthen tripartite relations to enable all partners to work collectively towards continued sustainable development of the ASEAN Community and creation of decent work for workforce <p>For full Statement, please visit: https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/ASEAN_Labour_Ministers%E2%80%99_Statement_on_the_future_of_work_Embracing_Technology_for_Inclusive_and_Sustainable_Growth.pdf</p>
<p>ASEAN Labour Ministers' Statement on Improving Occupational Safety and Health for Sustainable Economic Growth</p>	<p>The Statement urges for actions that are relevant to occupational safety and health (OSH) legislation, standards, and capacity for safe workplace during the pandemics. These actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise OSH standards through developing and regularly reviewing occupational safety and health legislation for adequate coverage of the working population and relevance to the changing economic and social environment. • Build OSH inspection capabilities and capacities to ensure that inspectorates are adequately resourced and skilled to enforce their respective OSH legislation. • Strengthen risk management capabilities in ASEAN which provides the foundation to improve OSH standards. • Improve private sector OSH capability by adherence to safety accreditation frameworks for companies; and • Improve productivity efficiently by means of new technology at workplace which reduces workplace hazards. <p>For full Statement, please visit: https://asean.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/09/SIGNED_ASEAN-Labour-Ministers-Statement-on-Improving-OSH-for-Sustainable-Economic-Growth.pdf</p>

<p>ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out of School Children and Youth</p>	<p>The definition of out of school children and youth (OOSCY) in this Declaration encompasses children and youth that do not have access to school in their community; who do not yet enrol at a school despite the availability of a school; who have enrolled but do not attend school; or are at risk of dropping out and drop out of the education system. This definition is applicable to children and youth who do not have access to school due to COVID-19.</p> <p>The Declaration stipulates principles of inclusivity, equity, accessibility, continuity, quality, flexibility and sustainability and provides measures to achieve these principles through legislation and policies, programmes and practices, mechanisms and personnel, information and monitoring, material and non-material resources, and coordination and cooperation.</p> <p>For full Declaration, please visit: https://asean.org/storage/2016/09/ASEAN-Declaration-on-OOSCY_ADOPTED.pdf</p>
<p>ASEAN Declaration on Human Resources Development for the Changing World of Work</p>	<p>The Declaration recognises that the future-ready and competent human resources are key to ASEAN's sustainable development, competitiveness, and resilience. The Declaration encapsulates actions, including the following among others, to prepare the ASEAN human resources for the changing world of work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate lifelong learning culture in societies and raise awareness of youth, workers, and employers on the importance of investing in skills development • Improve inclusivity of education and employment for all • Enhance the responsiveness and cohesiveness of labour, educational, economic policies and institutional frameworks towards better employment opportunities, employability, higher income, job security, quality of jobs and enterprise competitiveness • Enhance leadership of business, industry, and educational institutions on human resources development by fostering closer partnerships between government and private sector and providing incentives and recognition to companies investing resources in skills training, internship and apprenticeships • Promote demand-driven competencies and qualifications in TVET as well as in higher education • Improve accessibility and quality of labour market information • Promote infrastructure development to ensure access to crucial infrastructure such as on the internet and information technology, so that the opportunities presented by the 4th Industrial Revolution may be widely enjoyed <p>For full Declaration, please visit: https://asean.org/storage/2020/06/ASEAN-Declaration-on-Human-Resources-Development-for-the-Changing-World-of-Work.pdf</p>
<p>Other ASEAN Frameworks Relevant to COVID-19 Response and Recovery</p>	
<p>ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response</p>	<p>The Agreement defines “disaster” as a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses. IT defines “disaster management” as the ranges of activities, prior to, during and after the disasters, designed to maintain control over disasters and to provide a framework for helping at-risk persons and/or communities to avoid, minimise or recover from the impact of the disasters.</p> <p>The Agreement establishes cooperation on disaster management, as well as ASEAN Cooordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) to facilitate cooperation and coordination among the Parties and with relevant UN and international organisations in promoting regional collaboration.</p> <p>For full Agreement, please visit: http://agreement.asean.org/media/download/20190702042042.pdf</p>
<p>Guidelines for the Provision of Emergency Assistance by ASEAN Missions in Third Countries to Nationals of ASEAN Member Countries in Crisis Situations</p>	<p>The Guidelines stipulate general principles for Missions of AMS to aid nationals of other AMS who are not represented in the conflict or crisis areas in third countries. It defines a conflict or crisis as a situation wherein the general population of a given territory is placed at imminent risk because of, among others, outbreak of highly contagious and dangerous diseases. The Guidelines also detail courses of action.</p> <p>For full Guidelines, please visit: https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Guidelines-for-the-Provision-of-Emergency-Assistance-in-Crisis.pdf</p>

Notes

1. Target group: Poor families and vulnerable people who have Equity Cards, with priority to children under the age of 5, people with disability, older people aged 60 and above, and those living with AIDS.
2. Supplemented with income tax relief for childcare services (raised to RM3000 for assessment years 2020 and 2021).
3. Supplemented by one-year debt moratorium for loans from Fund for Empowerment of Persons with Disability and Older Persons Fund.

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