

COVER STORY

Leaders adopt regional financing for development action-plan at ESCAP forum

Asia-Pacific leaders agreed on measures to generate additional financial resources to tackle economic, social and environmental challenges in the region, at the First High-Level Follow-up Dialogue on Financing for Development in Asia and the Pacific, co-hosted by ESCAP and the Government of the Republic of Korea from in Incheon from 30 to 31 March. The new regional follow-up framework provides a foundation for implementing the global Addis Ababa Action Agenda and for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). More than 200 senior policymakers, from 41 countries, participated, with the meeting officially opened by the Deputy Prime Minister and the Vice Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea.

“Asia-Pacific’s track record of achievements and the potential for unleashing both resource mobilization and private investment, give us confidence that the region will act to implement the Addis Agenda,” said United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar. “It will be important for the region to strategize to mitigate the downside risks that could complicate the development scenario if not effectively managed. Strong macroeconomic management, supported by productivity enhancement, will generate sufficient growth to facilitate effective resource mobilization.

“The region needs to develop a strategy to not only unleash its tax potential, but to deepen its capital markets to more effectively channel private funds into infrastructure development. It will also be important to deploy institutional investor’s funds to enhance the liquidity of capital markets, while offering the long-term funding needed for sustainable infrastructure,” she added.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Yoo Il Ho, vowed to help Asia-Pacific countries to better engage the private sector for financing development: “To make sure private finance



flows into developing countries, Korea will put its focus on policy advice and capacity building to improve the financial system and institution and to nurture capital markets of developing countries,” said Mr. Yoo.

The participants identified a number of priority areas for action including setting up an Asia Pacific tax forum for sustainable development. “Many countries in the Asia-Pacific region have not been able to fully realize their potential due to their weak institutional foundation, inefficient tax administration, limited human capacity, and low tax compliance,” emphasized Mr. Cho Tae Yeol, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea. The proposed Asia-Pacific tax forum will serve as an inclusive and broad-based platform for dialogue and cooperation among countries on tax matters.

Senior officials also called for the establishment of a new regional and cross-regional multilateral infrastructure-financing forum, which would enhance the support for cross-border infrastructure projects, as well as stronger regional cooperation in information sharing and macroeconomic monitoring and surveillance in view to support capital market development in Asia and the Pacific.

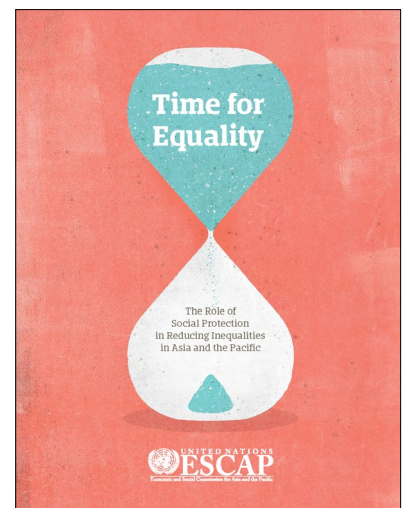
Member States recognized the importance of taking appropriate mitigation and adaptation actions, including mobilizing additional resources to complement national actions taken by Asia-Pacific countries to address the

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impact of climate change, and recommended the establishment of a Regional Center for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to support the capacity building activities in areas related to climate change.

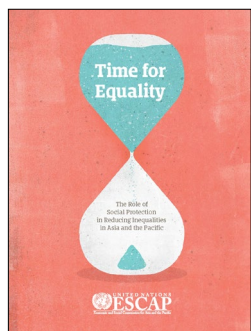
In mid-April, the Korean government and ESCAP will co-host a high-level side event at the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development at UN Headquarters in New York, to present the outcome of this meeting.

The outcomes of this meeting will inform deliberations at the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development at UN Headquarters in New York later this month, as well as the 72nd Commission session of ESCAP in May.

Learn more at:
<http://bit.ly/escapffd>

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Social protection is key to tackle Asia-Pacific's inequality trap



Inequality, in its multiple forms, is on the rise in Asia and the Pacific and the result is an adverse impact on sustainable development, according to a new report by ESCAP, *Time for Equality: The Role of Social Protection in Reducing Inequalities in Asia and the Pacific*.

Growing disparities in income and wealth, as well as unequal opportunities, reinforce each other, creating an “inequality trap” that disproportionately affects women and the

most vulnerable members of society, including the poor, youth, persons with disabilities, migrants and older persons.

Over the past 20 years the rich in Asia and the Pacific have grown richer, at the expense of the poor. Inequalities in opportunities also abound in the region, with nearly 80 per cent of the population lacking access to affordable health care, and as many as 18 million children out of school. Access to these basic social services is considerably lower among low-income groups and rural communities.

United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Dr. Shamshad Akhtar highlighted that in the context of the 2030 Agenda, inequality casts deep shadows on all three pillars of sustainability – economic, social and environmental. “Rising inequality threatens to derail, from the start, successful

implementation of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific region. Stronger, more equitable social protection will be critical in overcoming these challenges,” said Dr. Akhtar.

“Inequality cannot be ignored. To do so jeopardizes the future we want of a more prosperous, inclusive and sustainable Asia-Pacific region.”

Download the report at:
<http://bit.ly/equalityreport>



GENDER EQUALITY

UN highlights need to close critical gender gaps in Asia-Pacific on International Women's Day

We must root out the causes of inequality between women and men by addressing unequal gender relations and tackling structural barriers such as discriminatory legislation and macro-economic policies, prejudicial social norms and harmful practices, ESCAP underscored at the observance of International Women's Day 2016 on March 8.

ESCAP and UN Women held the joint event to discuss the challenges, gaps and opportunities to advance gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the global theme, “Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality.”

The forum highlighted the commitments made by Heads of State at the Global Leaders’

Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment on the sides of the UN General Assembly on 27 September 2015, and other existing commitments on gender equality, women's empowerment and women's rights, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

In addressing the forum, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and ESCAP Executive Secretary Dr. Shamshad Akhtar emphasised that increasing the resources and strengthening governance for gender equality and women's empowerment is critical to successfully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

“To break through barriers, we must go beyond boundaries, generate new ideas and take bold

steps. This means placing all women and girls at the centre of the 2030 Agenda, but requires a specific focus on those who are most frequently excluded, including women and girls with disabilities, those living in rural poverty and those who are members of ethnic minorities,” said Dr. Akhtar.

“International Women's Day should be marked by a pledge for parity – to ramp up the ambition of our vision and accelerate the urgency of our actions on gender equality and women's empowerment.”

Learn more at: <http://bit.ly/escapgender>

DIGITAL DIVIDE

New ESCAP report shows disparity in Internet access and costs in ASEAN subregion

Despite rapid ICT development in some member countries, the ASEAN subregion is still facing formidable challenges in narrowing the digital divides and maximizing socioeconomic benefits from ICT investments, according to a new report by ESCAP and the National Information Society Agency (NIA) of the Republic of Korea.

The Pre-Feasibility Study on the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway in the ASEAN Subregion: *Conceptualization, International Traffic & Quality Analysis, Network Topology Design and Implementation Model* was prepared to support the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway, which promotes seamless broadband infrastructure development in the region to narrow digital divides,

create an enabling Internet ecosystem and facilitate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The report shows that while countries with submarine cable landing points generally enjoy more affordable, faster Internet access of good quality, inland countries are not fully benefiting from the Internet bandwidth. As a consequence, the percentage of households with Internet access ranged from 86 per cent in Singapore to 5.1 per cent in Lao PDR and 2.2 per cent in Myanmar in 2014.

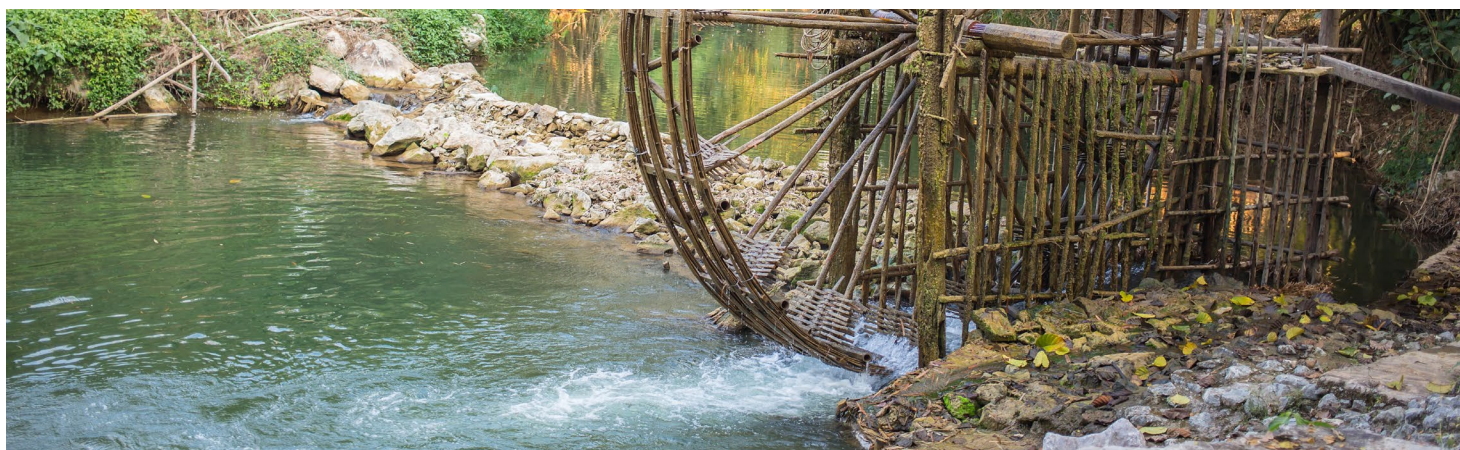
The price of Internet bandwidth that countries pay also varies significantly across the ASEAN region. Those with good submarine cable connectivity, such as Singapore, enjoy

competitive prices at less than USD 10 per Mbps, while other less connected countries such as Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar pay USD 100 per Mbps.

The report provides an overview of the ASEAN countries' existing terrestrial fiber connectivity, broadband penetration – fixed and mobile – and Internet traffic. Based on the analysis, the report highlights the importance of trans-border terrestrial fiber connectivity and the establishment of more Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) in the subregion to manage Internet traffic and drive down costs. The report proposes that regional IXPs are set-up to be operator-neutral to encourage competition and innovative services.

Download the report at:

<http://bit.ly/ictaseanreport>



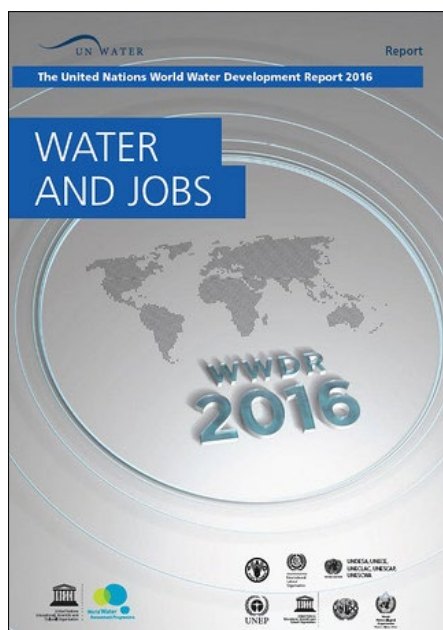
WATER RIGHTS AND SANITATION

UN highlights critical gaps in access to water and sanitation in Asia-Pacific on World Water Day

ESCAP urged the governments of Asia and the Pacific to address the critical gaps in access to water and sanitation by taking action to improve water infrastructure in the region, at a commemoration of World Water Day 2016, in Bangkok on 23 March.

United Nations Under-Secretary General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Dr. Shamshad Akhtar highlighted that over 1.7 billion people in Asia and the Pacific live without access to improved sanitation and inadequate sanitation, which costs economies of countries an equivalent of 0.5 per cent and 7.2 per cent of their annual GDP.

“Enormous gaps remain in water-related infrastructure, which incur both human and economic costs explained Dr. Akhtar. “At the same time, the poor pay more and the rich pay less for water. In some cities in the region the costs of one cubic metre from a water vendor



can be as much as 100 times that of the cost through an installed household connection. Focusing on water and sanitation can create tremendous opportunities not only to meet basic needs, especially of the poorest, but also provides an opportunity to strengthen decent work,” said Dr. Akhtar.

Launched during the regional commemoration of World Water Day, and in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the *World Water Development Report 2016* on the theme ‘water and jobs’ speaks of the relationship between decent work and water, both in terms of how greater access to clean and affordable water can support health, livelihoods and the economy, and also how meeting water needs can create employment.

Download the report at:

<http://bit.ly/2016waterreport>



INFRASTRUCTURE

ESCAP launches e-learning series on public-private partnerships

ESCAP has launched a six module series that aims to provide policy makers, civil society groups and institutional partners with essential information about the benefits and limitations of public-private partnerships (PPP) models in the infrastructure and transport sectors.

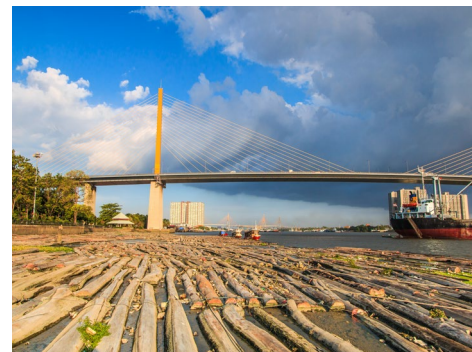
The launch comes as an increasing number of countries in the Asia-Pacific region attempt to harness private-sector funding and expertise to support government-led infrastructure projects. In recent years, many developing countries have identified partnerships with the private sector as an attractive alternative to using finance, due limited budgets and borrowing capacity.

Throughout the six module course, participants

will learn how to develop an effective PPP model that includes: benefits and limitations of PPP's, its key characteristics, ways to create a PPP enabling environment, development of project cycles and options for financing a PPP project.

At the end of each course, participants will be quizzed on their knowledge to deepen their understanding of the material. Additionally, case studies and working papers on successful PPP projects are provided to participants.

These materials are for self-study and are tailored to provide a basic minimum knowledge of various issues that policy-makers dealing with PPPs have to be aware of. The modules are presented by ESCAP staff from the economic affairs, social development



and the transport department. Courses are offered in English and feature 10-15 minute video segments.

Access the e-learning series at:
<http://bit.ly/ppplearningseries>

DISABILITY INCLUSIVENESS

Promoting disability-inclusive development in Asia-Pacific

The Third Session of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities was organized by ESCAP and hosted by the Royal Government of Thailand through the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security from 2 to 4 March 2016.

This session welcomed more than 70 participants and reviewed the progress and good practices in the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, including decisions taken by the Working Group at its previous session. Participants also discussed links

to the Sustainable Development Goals and preparations for the 2017 High-level intergovernmental Meeting of the midpoint review.

The Working Group made 14 decisions and five recommendations, many of which focused on how members could ensure a timely, high-quality submission of information to the ESCAP midpoint survey, as well as promote high-level participation at the 2017 High-level Intergovernmental Meeting. Decisions and recommendations also suggested practical steps for members to effectively communicate, share and coordinate information and efforts between Governments and CSOs.

The Working Group was established in 2013 by the Commission at its sixty-ninth session to provide technical advice and support to ESCAP Governments to promote a full and effective implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities 2013-2022. The Working Group is composed of 30 members: 15 Government representatives from ESCAP member States and 15 representatives from regional and subregional civil society organizations working on disability.

Learn more at:
<http://bit.ly/3rdwgdissability>



MYANMAR

Mapping out a blueprint to help farmers in Myanmar improve their livestock feed

In collaboration with the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT), the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT) organized a workshop on 'Best Practices in Mung Bean (Green Gram) Seed Production, Quality Control and Maintenance' in Magway, Myanmar from 29 February to 1 March. Over 25 participants from farmer associations, NGOs, researchers and agricultural officials came together to address ways to strengthen value chains for production through policy and technology.

Participants recommended introducing a feasibility study in order to enhance Myanmar's capacity to make the bean resistant to agricultural pests and diseases. The two-day workshop concluded that a seed production

zone, storage facilities and market information centres should be established, and that data on crop production should be centralized and made available online for better planning purposes. This would ensure a consistent supply of mung bean for household farmers along with access to low-cost livestock feed and cheap organic fertilizer.

The workshop was a valuable platform for APCTT, a Delhi-based regional institute of ESCAP, and its partners to collect information and understand the various needs of farmers in dry zone of Myanmar for future implementation of development projects.

Learn more at:
<http://www.apctt.org/>



JAPAN

Upskilling Asia-Pacific statisticians on agricultural data gathering in Japan



The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) brought together statistical officials from 17 countries in Asia and the Pacific for a training-of-trainers workshop on agricultural statistics from 29 February to 3 March in Chiba, Japan. During the four-day workshop, SIAP offered training on tools and methods for effective agricultural data gathering. Participants practiced their abilities to identify gaps, analyze needs of learners and prepare effective training sessions, along with sharpening their presentation skills.

Following the workshop, participants are expected to design and deliver training for their national offices. The workshop is part SIAP's key objective to build institutional capacity in national statistical systems in order to produce, disseminate and communicate statistical products and services.

Learn more at:
<http://bit.ly/siaptraining>

UPCOMING AT ESCAP

31 MARCH - 2 APRIL

[Asia-Pacific Civil Society Forum on Sustainable Development 2016](#)

BANGKOK, THAILAND

1 APRIL

[Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Private Sector Consultative Meeting](#)

BANGKOK, THAILAND

3-5 APRIL

[Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development](#)

BANGKOK, THAILAND

25-26 APRIL

[Policy Dialogue on Regional Connectivity and Border Special Development Zones in Eastern South Asia](#)

SHIHLONG, INDIA

25-27 APRIL

[2016 Policy Dialogue on Energy for Sustainable Development](#)

BANGKOK, THAILAND

27-29 APRIL

[Second Technical Working Session on Child Deprivation Profiling](#)

BANGKOK, THAILAND

15-19 MAY

[Seventy-Second Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific](#)

BANGKOK, THAILAND

[ESCAP CALENDAR OF MEETINGS](#)

[MORE UPCOMING AT ESCAP](#)