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United in Action: System-Wide Results of the UN Development System in Asia and the Pacific in 2022



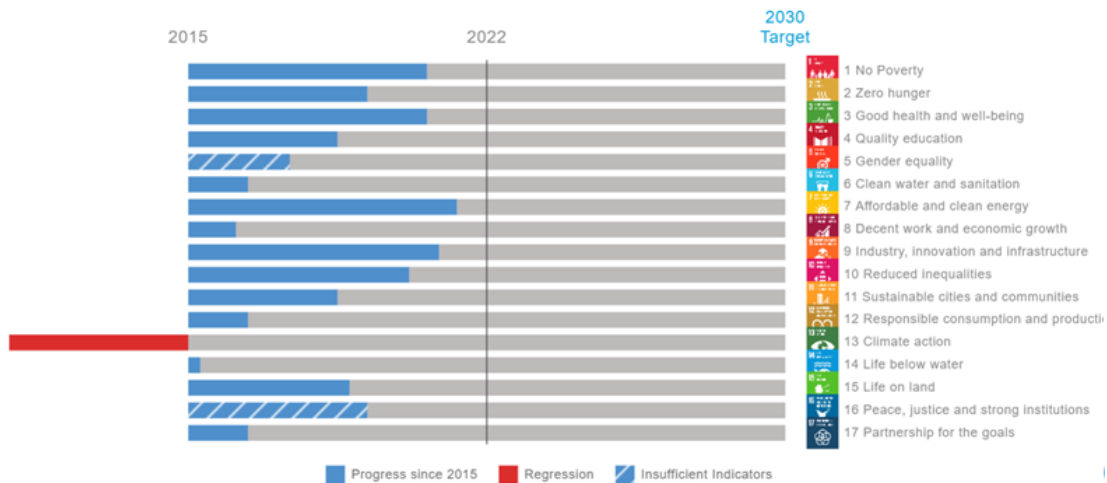
United in Action: System-Wide Results of the United Nations Development System in Asia and the Pacific in 2022

Introduction

The Asia-Pacific region faced multiple challenges in its development trajectory in 2022. Emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic, the diverse countries across Asia and the Pacific were buffeted by the knock-on effects of the war in Ukraine, inflationary pressures and pandemic-related weak economic growth prospects¹, fiscal pressures, increasing public debt and a series of climate-related disasters. The convergence of these multiple crises had militating impacts on the prospects for Sustainable Development Goals achievement and for United Nations (UN) efforts to address the most pressing development needs of the most vulnerable and those most at risk of being left behind.

As the Asia and the Pacific Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Progress Report 2022 has warned, the region is at least forty-two years away from achieving the SDGs at the current pace of SDG implementation². At the mid-point mark for achievement of the SDGs (2023), regression on the achievement of responsible consumption and production (Goal 12) and climate action (Goal 13) is of particular concern, as the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss and air pollution, have become ever more acute. Home to six of the countries most affected by climate change in the world, the Asia-Pacific region is overall the most disaster-impacted region of the world³. In this context, slow progress on addressing the climate-related SDGs risks reversing years of hard-earned development gains and the pursuit of climate ambitions – thereby disproportionately affecting the lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable, including women, youth and ethnic populations.

Figure 1. Snapshot of progress in Asia and the Pacific, SDG Progress Report 2023



¹ Average output growth in 2022 is estimated at 3.3 per cent, which is much lower than pre-pandemic averages. *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2023*. <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2023/economic-and-social-survey-asia-and-pacific-2023-rethinking-public-debt-sustainable#>

² *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2023*. <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2023/asia-and-pacific-sdg-progress-report-2023>

³ *Asia-Pacific Riskscape @1.5C*. <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/asia-pacific-disaster-report-2022-escap-subregions-summary-policymakers>

Notwithstanding these challenges, significant gains have been made in the deployment of affordable and clean energy (Goal 7) as well as in industry, innovation and infrastructure (Goal 9), facilitated by an increase in international financing for renewable energy, as well as the expansion of electricity access to urban and rural populations. The governments of the region are also increasingly demonstrating their commitment to sustainable development by raising their national commitments in critical areas such as climate action, energy transition and sustainable food systems.

The UN development system in Asia and the Pacific has sought to address these challenges and leverage emerging opportunities by finding tailor-made solutions to country needs and typologies. UN country teams, under the leadership of empowered Resident Coordinators, have responded by mobilizing coordinated support to governments and partners with regard to stepping up investments in the SDGs, strengthening resilience to future shocks and enhancing regional cooperation to address transboundary challenges. From innovative strategies for green and resilient recovery, to inclusive approaches to development that promote equitable opportunities for all, the UN development system is focused on maximizing its impact on the ground, guided by the 2030 Agenda.

This annual report provides a snapshot of the key development system results achieved in Asia-Pacific in 2022 through partnerships between the entities that make up the global development system: the UN agencies, funds and programmes, the Regional Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, national and local governments, subregional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society organizations, and the business sector – a network of developmental partnerships without which these results could not have been achieved.

Advancing the UN Secretary General’s Reforms at the Regional Level

In the midst of multiple crises, the UN development system in Asia and the Pacific, through the Regional Collaborative Platform (RCP), has coalesced to respond to the changing priorities of countries in the region and to better address the identified needs of the UN Resident Coordinators and country teams.

In 2022, the RCP stepped up its efforts, through an active engagement of Regional Directors, in supporting UN Resident Coordinators and country teams across the region, including Afghanistan, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Islamic Republic of Iran, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The RCP helped to steer the UN leadership teams operating in these fluid and complex country situations, supporting them through the articulation of a shared vision, programme and operational prioritization, and as needed course correction or adjustment. The RCP also helped to ensure timely joint decision-making on the roles and contributions of the UN development system under these challenging circumstances.

The systematic engagement between the regional and national levels of the UN development system improved the diagnostic evidence base of the sustainable development situations at the country level, the transboundary impacts at the regional level and articulation of follow-up actions needed. The four **Issue-Based Coalitions (IBC)** continued to consolidate their work, which resulted in the UN country teams developing more ambitious planning frameworks and providing more rapid and effective policy and technical support to country level stakeholders. Notably, the mobilization of expertise, knowledge assets and resources across the members of the RCP, has become more immediate and demand driven.

The **SDG Data and Statistics Working Group**, through the UN Resident Coordinators and country teams, increasingly supported member states to fill remaining SDG data gaps. The SDG data clinic series formed the core of strengthening the capacity of UN country teams to support countries in strengthening their

national statistical systems, focusing on areas where data gaps are largest, such as decent work, migration, gender equality, governance, education, and food and agriculture. The Group also provided country-specific technical support, for example, to the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Pakistan, which resulted in enriched understanding on data availability, collection and analysis; and to the UN Country Team in Bangladesh, which enabled the development of a comprehensive workplan for strengthening data collection through the national statistical system in Bangladesh.

Box 1. Asia-Pacific Stats Café

The popular online webinar series “Asia-Pacific Stats Café” facilitated exchanges of practices and advice between UN entities and National Statistical Offices in the region. In the 22 sessions held, the series brought together 1,900 participants and explored a wide range of topics aligned to country priorities and requests for assistance, including calculating the economic cost of disasters, measuring illicit financial flows, estimating children on the move, and mainstreaming gender in official statistics.⁴ Best practices were also brought to the forefront, such as the use of administrative data in censuses in Australia, Indonesia, and Türkiye.⁵

The **Knowledge Management Hub**⁶ continued to evolve into an accessible one-stop-shop for knowledge resources by regional UN entities. In 2022, the Hub saw a 150 per cent increase in users and a 70 per cent increase in page views compared to 2021, and now welcomes over 9,200 users and more than 32,000 page views. It hosts over 250 knowledge resources consisting of flagship reports, policy guidance and research papers by over 14 regional UN entities. The Hub also expanded to provide knowledge management solutions, and now serves as a repository for all groups within the RCP.

Through the Regional Collaborative Platform Secretariat and the regional Peer Support Group, requests for support by UN Resident Coordinators and Country Teams are channeled to the most relevant regional resources, especially those provided by the Issue-based Coalitions and networking groups. The requests have ranged from environmental transboundary analysis, and trainings on integrating disaster risk reduction, and the normative priorities including human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion. The regular interface with the UN Resident Coordinators and Country Teams through dedicated exchange has helped to ensure requests for support to the UN at the country level are captured and delivered on a demand-driven manner.

In 2022, the **Regional Operations Management Team (R-OMT)** completed the Regional Business Operations Strategy (R-BOS), which was endorsed by the RCP in July 2022. The R-BOS is a results-based framework that focuses on joint business operations with the purpose of eliminating duplication, leveraging the common bargaining power of the UN and maximizing economies of scale. It includes 19 common services related to premises, human resources and financial services, with a projected cost avoidance of USD 1,841,820 for 2023. The R-OMT will continue to further enhance operational collaboration within the UN system, in support of the UN Secretary-General's Efficiency initiatives.

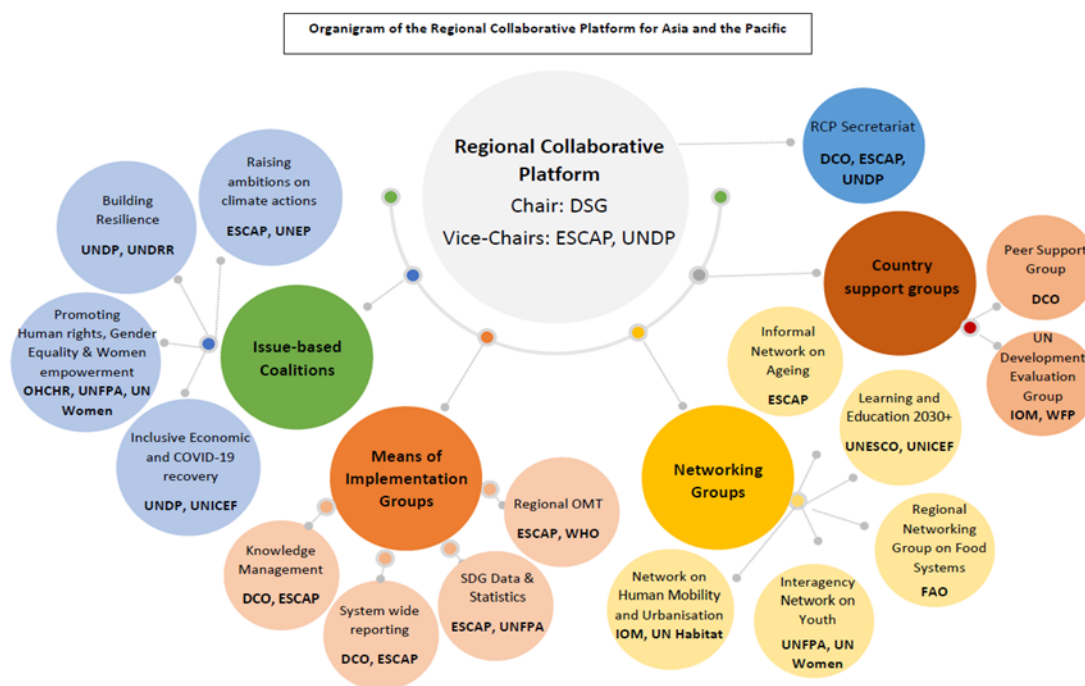
The critical support to UN Resident Coordinators and country teams for quality assurance of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF) and Common Country Analysis (CCA) was provided by the RCP's Country Support Groups, composed of the **Peer Support Group** and **UN Evaluation Development Group**. This technical support has resulted in the raised ambitions of the 2022 Cooperation Frameworks in areas critical to the achievement of the SDGs in respective national contexts.

⁴ See <https://www.unescap.org/our-work/statistics/stats-cafe>.

⁵ See <https://www.unescap.org/events/2022/asia-pacific-stats-cafe-series-emerging-trend-use-administrative-data-asia-pacific>.

⁶ See <https://knowledge.unasiapacific.org/>

Figure 2. Regional Collaborative Platform



Highlights of System-Wide Results at the Regional Level

The following sections provide an overview of the key results delivered in 2022 in the priority areas of the RCP. The benefits that countries accrued, through support provided to the UN Resident Coordinators and country teams, are also highlighted.

I. Raising Ambitions on Climate Action

Channeling analytical and policy expertise on climate change

Achieving the Paris Agreement is not possible without climate action from countries in Asia and the Pacific. The region suffers the worst consequences of climate change, but it is also a key emitter, accounting for over half of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions. The latest analysis emerging from the Issue based coalition on raising ambitions on climate actions showed that even with full implementation of current greenhouse gas reduction commitments, emissions are forecast to be 16 percent higher than 2010 levels, a world away from the 45 per cent reductions needed to keep warming within 1.5°C⁷. While 39 countries⁸ in the region have made carbon neutrality and net-zero pledges, the sum of countries’ actions in their nationally determined contributions falls short of the required ambitions needed to achieve the Paris Agreement.

Now in its second iteration, the 2022 assessment of climate ambitions served as an entry point for dialogue between the IBC, UN Resident Coordinators, member states and stakeholders in the lead up to and during the 27th Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP

⁷ 2022 Review of Climate Ambitions in Asia and the Pacific. <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/2022-review-climate-ambition-asia-and-pacific-raising-ndc-targets-enhanced-nature-based>

⁸ This refers to UNESCAP regional coverage that includes Central Asia.

27). Since 2021, the annual assessment and the dialogue with UN Resident Coordinators and Country Teams have helped to create a shared understanding among UN Resident Coordinators and Country Teams of the climate ambitions in Asia and the Pacific towards COP and the areas in which more integrated support by the UN at the national level is needed. At a side event organized by the IBC at COP 27, discussions at the Ministerial level mobilized a shared sense of urgency on the need to act and implement best practices in high-impact sectors such as energy, low-carbon transport and logistics.

Box 2: H.E. Sherry Rehman, Federal Minister of Climate Change of Pakistan, thanked the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat at the joint IBC side event at COP 27 (11 November 2022) for their tireless work to make the voices of Asia-Pacific member states heard and highlighted, that stronger commitments to net-zero are needed, especially from the higher emitters to ensure a climate resilient future for developing countries.

Translating analysis into climate action through advocacy

The IBC also continued to strengthen its advocacy efforts on climate action, reaching out to a wide range of stakeholders. The *Climate Science Literacy in Asia and the Pacific*⁹ initiative produced a series of open-source posters, social media graphics and video series to the public. Launched at the 9th Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development in 2022, the materials were the starting point for engaging youth and students in developing proposals for integrating climate action and resilience into education curricula and programmes. In response to requests by Resident Coordinators, the materials were also translated into local languages to assist with the advocacy efforts by the United Nations at the country level.

The IBC also spearheaded collective action on tackling air pollution through the annual commemoration of the International Day for Blue Skies. Furthermore, following its endorsement at the 7th ESCAP Committee on Environment and Development, the IBC will strengthen collaboration across UN entities to help implement the Regional Action Programme on Air Pollution, the first intergovernmental framework of its kind in the region.

Looking forward, the IBC will continue its annual assessment of climate ambitions in Asia and the Pacific, which serves as an important advocacy tool to accelerate climate action. Advocacy through the Climate Science Literacy package will also be scaled up in collaboration with countries and development partners. In this regard, the 2023 Asia Pacific Climate Week will help further share IBC-developed knowledge materials to a broader audience of policy makers.

Empowering youth for climate action and climate justice

Youth are not only the most climate-impacted generation, they are also agents of change and valuable contributors to climate action. With youth empowerment serving as a key pathway to raising climate ambitions, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with UNFCCC and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), through the Youth Empowerment in Climate Action Platform¹⁰, enhanced the meaningful engagement of young people across Asia and the Pacific in the lead up to Stockholm+50. Joint consultations, workshops and trainings under this partnership engaged over 30,000 young people in Asia and the Pacific. In addition, over 2,000 children and youth were involved in regional dialogues on Youth and Climate Justice, organized with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

⁹ *Climate Science Literacy in Asia and the Pacific*. <https://knowledge.unasiapacific.org/our-work/knowledge-resources/climate-science-literacy-asia-and-pacific>

¹⁰ See <https://www.yecap-ap.org/>

(OHCHR) and UNEP, contributing towards the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) General Comment No. 26 and their rights to a healthy environment.

To promote inter-generational dialogue on climate justice, the IBCs on Human Rights, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and Raising Ambitions of Climate Action co-organised the '*Asia Regional Dialogue on Climate Justice for Children, Youth and Future Generations*', where 384 children (9 to 17 years) and young people (18 to 35 years) across Asia presented their views on the topic. The key messages were consequently shared with the Stockholm +50 Youth Taskforce.

II. Building Resilience

Addressing complex disaster risks and developing early warning systems

Climate-induced disasters are sweeping across the region with increased intensity and frequency. The latest analysis to emerge from the IBC showed that in 2021, compared to the past two decades, economic damage from storms increased by 30 per cent and more than doubled due to floods in the South-West Pacific region¹¹. Research in South Asia and the Hindu Kush Himalaya by members of the IBC highlighted the gendered differences in the severity of climate change impacts and the ability to adapt.¹² Yet, many countries in the region are still ill-prepared to address multiple overlapping crises, with cascading effects on the most vulnerable populations, including women and girls.

In response, the IBC and partners have been supporting member states to accelerate the implementation of the Sendai Framework. Support to Bangladesh, the Philippines and Viet Nam allowed countries to integrate disaster risk reduction (DRR) into their policies and programmes. The IBC identified key areas for further action that encompass the integration of risk information in disaster-related policies and strategies, the need for increased investment in building resilience, and ensuring human rights-based approaches to DRR.

This contributed to a more explicit reflection of DRR in the new generation of Cooperation Frameworks. Capacity building support from the IBC helped UN country teams to elevate the ambitions of the Cooperation Framework, and through them, strengthen disaster-related policies in countries. Notably, in Papua New Guinea, dedicated training in this area was conducted for the UN country team at the start of the Cooperation Framework drafting; and in Nepal and the Philippines, a capacity building exercise for stakeholders on the application of the UNDP Digital Disaster Risk Reduction Maturity Model (DDRRMM) was organized¹³. In the Maldives, the DRR and climate change adaptation strategy drew on the IBC's diagnostic capacity of the current local and national systems, through data and analysis available in ESCAP's Risk and Resilience Portal. In the Philippines, the National DRR and Management Plan 2020-2030 drew upon a data governance study¹⁴ and a digital readiness strategy¹⁵ developed by UNDP.

Young professionals' initiatives in science, engineering, technology and innovation (SETI) for DRR and climate adaptation were also supported by the IBC. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), together with the U-INSPIRE Alliance, UNDP Accelerator Labs and United Nations

¹¹ *Regional State of the Climate Reports for Asia and the South-West Pacific*. Available at <https://public.wmo.int/en/our-mandate/climate/wmo-statement-state-of-global-climate/southwestpacific>

¹² *State of Gender and Climate Change in the ASEAN region and South Asia and the Hindu Kush-Himalayan*. Available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/40859>

¹³ See https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-09/DDRRMM%20White%20Paper%20Version%204.0%20%28FINAL%29_1%20September%202022.pdf

¹⁴ See <https://www.undp.org/philippines/publications/data-governance-study-philippines>

¹⁵ See <https://www.undp.org/philippines/publications/digital-readiness-strategy-philippines>

Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), engaged over 100 young professionals on ‘*Futures Literacy for DRR*’¹⁶ to leverage anticipatory systems thinking and collective intelligence processes in DRR and resilience. Building on the cases of Cambodia and Viet Nam, the scale-up of the child-centered and vulnerability-focused risk assessment frameworks were also showcased to SDG practitioners in the region through a dialogue led by UNICEF, UNDRR and UNDP.

As the climate crisis escalates risks of internal displacement, the IBC is leading regional dialogues to implement the UN Secretary General’s Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. The IBC commenced dialogues among partners, UN Resident Coordinators and country teams on durable solutions to internal displacement. A community of practice is now in place to support UN Resident Coordinator’s Offices and other partners in scaling up their work on averting, minimizing and addressing disaster displacement.

Box 3: “For the Sendai Framework, achieving durable solutions for displaced people is a very important aspect. It clearly highlights the development of public policies on the relocation of human settlements in disaster risk-prone zones as a potential preventive or adaptive measure and recognizes the need to find durable solutions in the post-disaster phase and to empower and assist people disproportionately affected by disasters”, stated Mr. Marco Toscano-Rivalta, Chief of UNDRR for Asia and the Pacific.

Connecting disaster resilience with the environment-health nexus

Another area requiring urgent attention and that emerged prominently during the pandemic is the need to mitigate risks across the interlinkages between disasters, the climate crisis and the attendant health impacts. Widespread and prolonged flooding of an unprecedented scale in Pakistan in 2022 led to widespread water-borne diseases, and evidence of such interconnected environment and health risks are increasing across the region. The integration of disaster resilience principles in public health policies and vice-versa remains underdeveloped in the region.

Through a policy dialogue organized by ESCAP, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNEP, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), governments and stakeholders from Asia and the Pacific highlighted the urgent need for a collective ‘One Health’ agenda to address the interconnected environment-health risks and deliver co-benefits for the environment and human well-being. Practical pathways to operationalize mutually reinforcing environmental and health principles were identified, including through mainstreaming in national policies on health, biodiversity, climate change, and food systems; strengthening multisectoral collaboration and policy coherence; enhancing integrated environment and health data management and assessment, such as through ESCAP’s Risk and Resilience Portal that provides integrated risk profiles on disaster, climate and health in 55 countries; promoting a human rights-based approach and stakeholder engagement; integrating environment-health funding streams; and strengthening regional collaboration.

The initiative responded to member states’ calls for attention to be drawn to the ‘One Health’ approach as highlighted in the Bangkok Declaration on ‘A Common Agenda to Advance Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific’. It supported the development of a regional approach to the global One Health Joint Plan of Action 2022-2026. With the participation of 300 policymakers and stakeholders, potential pilot subregional initiatives, policy labs and a sector-focused policy guide were proposed for further development in 2023.

Looking forward, the IBC will scale-up support to strengthen the capacity of national and subnational stakeholders and UN country teams to mainstream DRR and resilience across strategic documents.

¹⁶ *Futures Literacy for DRR*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384038>

Furthermore, it will continue to provide support to governments with the implementation of the Sendai Framework Mid-Term Review recommendations by enhancing understanding of climate related risks, providing capacity building to policymakers to promote gender responsive climate action and supporting member states to provide durable solutions to disaster and climate-related internal displacement. The IBC will also produce analysis to support the implementation of measures that mitigate risks emerging from the disaster-environment-health nexus.

Box 4

Alexander O'Connor, Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services, Government of Fiji: “What is the value of a human life when we are destroying the very planet that gives life meaning?”

Dechen Tsering, Regional Director, UNEP in Asia and the Pacific: “Human health and environmental health are two sides of the same coin and ensuring the wellbeing of people and nature is critical to tackling the triple planetary crisis. It has been encouraging to see the environment-health nexus increasing in priority on the political agenda in Asia and the Pacific. Coordination across sectors, as well as properly designed financing and monitoring mechanisms, will be key going forward”.

III. Human Rights, Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

A human rights-based approach to leave no one behind

In 2022, the IBC supported UN country teams to navigate the complex landscape of a year of multiple crises, which has threatened a broad range of human rights and disproportionately hit the poor and vulnerable the hardest. Through the three working groups on human rights, ending violence against women, and disability inclusion, the IBC has provided support in capacity building, technical assistance, and advocacy to integrate a human rights-based approach across all development areas and ensure that no one is left behind.

Training to UN Resident Coordinators and country teams helped to embed the fundamental principles of human rights, gender equality and leaving no one behind for sustainable development in the Cooperation Frameworks and CCAs, such as in Bhutan, Cambodia, India and Papua New Guinea. The IBC also provided a platform for 23 UN country teams to share good practices and enable peer learning on gender equality accountability frameworks, particularly the UNCT-System-Wide Action Plan (SWAP) Gender Equality Scorecard and the UNCT-Gender Equality Marker.

With the UN Secretary General’s transformative vision and highest aspiration for human rights laid out in the Call to Action for Human Rights, the Human Rights Working Group brought together UN Resident Coordinator Offices and country teams for peer learning and experience sharing on the UN country teams’ Call to Action dialogues undertaken in Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand, and to further encourage other UN country teams in the region to undertake this critical exercise .

As the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy takes root, the IBC, through the Disability Inclusion Working Group, helped bring together relevant UN entities for sharing knowledge and good practices on raising standards and performance on disability inclusion across the work of the UN, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Working Group both assessed and mapped the engagement and partnerships with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities across UN entities as well as strengthened awareness on disability inclusion in UN country teams, such as in Papua New Guinea, where a training on human rights-based approach to disability inclusion was conducted for the first time.

In the region, violence against women (VAW) and girls continues to be a significant barrier to achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment. At the country level, with the support of the UNiTE Working Group, the rollout of the “RESPECT” Framework on VAW such as in Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam was a key instrument that supported national stakeholders in the formulation of effective strategies for VAW prevention. In addition, the implementation of the Essential Services Package ensured country-level coordinated approaches to VAW responses such as in Cambodia, Pakistan and Viet Nam.

Relatedly, to examine the intersection and impacts of gender-based violence, environmental degradation and the climate crisis, UN Women and OHCHR gathered academics and experts on women’s rights, representatives from UN agencies, civil society organisations, practitioners, and other stakeholders. The Expert Group Meeting specifically discussed the groups of women and girls most at risk, the climate-related factors that lead to gender-based violence, and good practices in mitigating the climate crisis, environmental degradation and related displacement. Policy recommendations on the meaningful participation of women and girls in these mitigating strategies were also put forth as the way forward.

Leveraging advocacy for regional cooperation

Advocacy on human rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment continued to move forward both at regional intergovernmental platforms and to the public at large. Notably, at the 9th Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development in 2022, the IBC helped to inform and facilitate a deep dive into SDG 5. At the same time, a dedicated discussion on the intersection of land rights, natural resource management, gender equality and indigenous peoples furthered advocacy efforts among a wide range of stakeholders. Advocacy efforts by the IBC in collaboration with UN country teams were also elevated to focus on the start of the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as on a wider range of human rights issues such as stateless persons, and economic, gender and health inequalities.

With the increasing severity of transboundary climate risks and criticality of protecting and promoting environmental rights, ESCAP, UNEP and OHCHR are jointly supporting the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) in the development of a Regional Framework on Environmental Rights. The goal is to deliver a draft framework instrument for the consideration of ASEAN leaders in line with those in other regions such as the Escazu Agreement in Latin America and the Aarhus Convention in Europe. The collective interagency efforts include analysis on environmental impact assessment procedures in the ASEAN region, and a series of dialogues on the establishment of a working group and workplan towards a regional declaration on environmental rights in ASEAN. As a result, an interim ASEAN working group on environmental rights is now in place to drive the development of the ASEAN framework with the participation of experts, civil society, academia and youth. Notably, the collaboration between the AICHR and the UN was acknowledged in the Chair’s statement at the ASEAN-UN summit in Cambodia in December 2022.

Box 5: Capacity building on the environmental rule of law for UN country teams

‘The rights of future generations, especially climate justice’ is one of the seven areas for urgent attention laid out in the UN Secretary-General’s Call to Action for Human Rights. To support UN Resident Coordinators and country teams to unpack the topic of human rights and environmental rule of law, the IBC conducted dedicated training programmes in Cambodia and Thailand to help develop a

shared understanding of key issues threatening environmental rights and of the necessary course of actions for the UN and partners.

This allows UN Resident Coordinators and country teams to collectively tackle a range of intergovernmental commitments, such as those contained in General Assembly resolution 76/300 and Human Rights Council (HRC) resolution 48/13 on the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, in addition to commitments made within Multilateral Environmental Agreements, the implementation of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the Human Rights Council resolution 40/11 on environmental human rights defenders, and the UN Guidance Note on Civic Space. In addition, through the capacity building exercise, UN country teams identified entry points to integrate environmental rule of law and substantive elements of the right to a healthy environment into the CCA, Cooperation Frameworks and UN workplans.

Looking forward, in 2023, training on environmental rule of law will be extended to additional countries, including Lao PDR, Maldives, Mongolia and Viet Nam, in collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator Offices. With the materials developed, the training can be adapted in countries across the region, and there is potential to extend the training to the global level. A working paper on the topic is also planned for publication in 2023.

Furthermore, the IBC plans to launch a regional report on childcare that will provide policy solutions on delivering gender-responsive care policies and services. The IBC also plans to expand its series of human rights capacity building training to strengthen the UN country teams' understanding of the nine core international human rights instruments, as well as on international human rights mechanisms including the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council.

IV. Inclusive economic growth and COVID-19 recovery

Collective analysis and policy support to address the food, fuel and finance crises

The year 2022 saw countries in the region faced with the dual challenge of recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic while responding to the food, fuel and finance crisis triggered by the war in Ukraine. The IBC was established to support UN Resident Coordinators and country teams and, through them, countries to tackle the multiple crises, such as through an exchange on vulnerabilities of countries, from constrained fiscal space to debt sustainability, with the network of economists in UN Resident Coordinator's Offices.

At the country level, the UN's collective expertise and policy support were instrumental in supporting governments to explore sustainable solutions to address the crises, such as in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The Integrated National Financing Framework and Integrated Financing Strategy to accelerate SDG progress were critical tools for countries in moving away from the crises and charting ways towards achieving the SDGs. To this end, the IBC provided the necessary expertise and policy advice in countries such as Mongolia and Viet Nam.

A regional vision of inclusive and comprehensive social protection

With the rollout of the Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation on Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific in 2022, members of the IBC worked closely with UN Resident Coordinators and country teams to develop concrete national actions. Rapid baseline national surveys were conducted to provide an

overview baseline report of the progress and challenges in achieving the regional vision of inclusive and comprehensive social protection systems for all. Comprehensive follow-up surveys will also be conducted in 2023. With support from members of the IBC, the first National Social Protection Strategy was completed and rolled out in Lao PDR. The Government of Sri Lanka was also supported to develop macroeconomic and social protection responses in light of the financial and economic crisis.

Looking forward, the IBC will continue to engage with UN Resident Coordinators and country teams to strengthen the UN's analysis and capacity to intervene on the interconnected economic and social challenges of food security, energy and financing, and implement coordinated system-wide regional support to countries, including on social protection. It will explore ways to strengthen the UN's value proposition vis-à-vis international financial institutions and country negotiations, particularly with regards to debt restructuring.

V. Generating Regional Momentum for Global Dialogues

Transforming education through learning and education 2030+

With progress on SDG 4 being off track and 128 million children out of school in the region, 2022 was a crucial year to mobilize political ambition, actionable solutions and solidarity to transform education and recover from pandemic-related learning losses, leveraging the Transforming Education Summit. UN entities in the region joined hands to catalyse regional dialogues and exchanges, and elevate national ambitions.

17 countries in Asia and the Pacific, assisted by UN Resident Coordinators with the support of the Learning and Education 2030+ Networking Group, conducted inclusive national consultations on how to transform their education systems. These consultations allowed governments, civil society, development partners and youth to gather and develop more ambitious commitments ahead of the Transforming Education Summit in September 2022.

At the regional level, governments and education stakeholders gathered at the Asia-Pacific Regional Education Ministers' Conference to chart pathways for education recovery and transformation and accelerating progress towards SDG 4. While examining the learning losses and access to education in the region, the high-level discussions allowed countries to share good practices and deliberate on how to address common learning-related challenges. As an outcome of the Conference, the Bangkok Statement 2022 set out major priority actions for the region to rebuild and transform education systems, and served to inform the global Transforming Education Summit in September 2022.

Following the Summit, the Learning and Education 2030+ Networking Group continued to engage with governments and education stakeholders to realize their commitments for enhanced equity, inclusion and quality of their education systems.

Advancing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA)

The share and number of older persons in Asia and the Pacific are growing at a fast pace. Latest analysis by members of the Informal Network on Ageing showed that by 2050, one in four people in the region will be 60 years and older. The MIPAA is the global guiding framework to address the challenges and opportunities of this transformation.

In 2022, the Asia-Pacific fourth review and appraisal of the MIPAA assessed progress and identified gaps in implementation. It benefited from four inclusive consultations with non-government stakeholders, as well as a range of policy papers from the Network. Besides the participation of 30 member states and 30 civil society organisations, representatives of older persons also brought their perspectives directly to the discussions at the review, sharing their experiences of living by themselves, staying healthy and active, and overcoming social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. This culminated in an outcome document¹⁷ focused on healthy ageing, including long-term care, digitalization, emergency situations, intergenerational solidarity, human rights, decent work and the life course perspective of ageing.

Drawing on the outcome document together with the analysis of the Asia-Pacific Report on Population Ageing 2022¹⁸, the Network provided capacity building support to member states in developing and revising policies and action plans on population ageing. The Network will pivot its efforts in 2023 to support member states in accelerating the implementation of the MIPAA and align it more closely with the 2030 Agenda and the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing.

Promoting Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

As a follow up to the first regional review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in Asia and the Pacific in 2021¹⁹, the Regional Network on Migration undertook a mapping of UN networks on migration at the country level²⁰ and supported the development of national implementation plans, including in Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Regional perspectives and outcomes from the review were brought forth at the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) in May 2022, where the importance of bilateral, regional and subregional cooperation on migration governance was highlighted, as was the need to reduce irregular migration. Also informing the IMRF was a mapping exercise led by the International Detention Coalition with support from the Network²¹, which examined the use of immigration detention and its alternatives in the region. Drawing on this mapping exercise, the Network gathered civil society representatives to exchange good practices and commence strategic discussions on immigration detention.

The Network provided technical support to countries to enhance inclusive implementation of the Global Compact for Migration and to follow-up on the pledges committed at the IMRF. To operationalize the pledges, the Network gathered regional and country level UN entities for the first subregional dialogue in South-East Asia, with a focus on migrant vulnerability in online scam operations. Such dialogues will continue in 2023, focusing on different topics of the Global Compact for Migration.

In addition, to strengthen advocacy on addressing emerging migration issues, the Network also issued a statement on the nexus between climate change and migration and on preventing and resolving cases of missing migrants, in commemoration of International Migrants' Day (18 December 2022).

¹⁷ See https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/MIPAA_IGM.3_3_E_1.pdf and https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/MIPAA_IGM.3_3_Add.1_E.pdf

¹⁸ See <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/asia-pacific-report-population-ageing-2022-trends-policies-and-good-practices-regarding>

¹⁹ See <https://www.unescap.org/intergovernmental-meetings/asia-pacific-regional-review-implementation-global-compact-safe-orderly>

²⁰ For a list of United Nations networks on migration at the country level, see: <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/country-and-regional-networks>

²¹ See <https://idcoalition.org/publication/immigration-detention-atd-in-the-asia-pacific-region/>

VI. Ensuring the Quality of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks

Regional Peer Support Group (PSG)

The Cooperation Framework is “the most important instrument for planning and implementation of the UN development activities at country level in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”²².

The PSG engages with UNCTs in quality assuring three products of the Cooperation Framework cycle: the Cooperation Framework cycle roadmap, the Common Country Analysis (CCA) on the basis of which the Cooperation Framework is designed and the Cooperation Framework document. The PSG functions as an interface between the country-led Cooperation Framework and the Regional Directors of the respective Agencies, Funds and Programmes; it is an asset that can contribute to enhancing the UN’s collective programmatic strategy on country and sub-regional issues.

In 2022, the PSG provided quality support and assurance to 14 UN country teams in Asia-Pacific, including promoting collaboration, coherence and efficiency in the review of 16 strategic documents. As a result, the UN country teams in Mongolia, India, Sri Lanka, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan and the Pacific finalized their Cooperation Frameworks in 2022. All Cooperation Frameworks reflect raised ambitions on climate and environmental action, with heightened focus on supporting economic recovery centred on green and environmentally sustainable development, diversification and the creation of employment and decent jobs. Furthermore, the PSG engaged significantly with countries in special situations such as Afghanistan and Pacific countries, by providing advisory support and technical assistance in designing strategies that benefitted the most vulnerable communities.

The PSG also played an important bridge-maker and facilitator role, connecting UN Resident Coordinators and country teams to the expertise of the IBCs and regional experts on thematic issues including gender, human rights, and the environment, to support countries’ mainstreaming efforts.

In 2023, the PSG will support seven UN country teams: Bhutan, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, and the Philippines in finalizing their Cooperation Frameworks, and to Afghanistan and Myanmar in their transitional strategic frameworks. The PSG will also support the finalization of the Country Implementation Plans for 14 countries and territories in the Pacific which are key to operationalizing the Regional Pacific Cooperation Framework.

United Nations Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific (UNEDAP)

UNEDAP’s support to UN Resident Coordinator’s Offices has helped to improve the quality of evaluations and inform the development of new Cooperation Frameworks. In collaboration with the UN Development Coordination Office, UNEDAP provided the second tier of quality assurance to evaluation products and facilitated the application of new Cooperation Framework evaluation guidelines, such as in Bhutan, Cambodia, and the Philippines.

In 2022, UNEDAP also offered its flagship six-week online training programme to 35 UN country evaluation specialists. Feedback showed that the specialists applied the knowledge gained from UNEDAP trainings to successfully manage their Cooperation Framework and Country Programme evaluations in 2022.

As a global good practice, UNEDAP will continue to ensure that evaluation is addressed as a distinct and strategic function by UN entities and their partners.

²² General Assembly resolution 72/279

Conclusion and way forward

As countries in Asia and the Pacific recover from the multiple crises in a world of unprecedented disruptions, the need to prioritize actions towards a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable future remains imperative at the mid-way point to 2030.

The UN development system in Asia and the Pacific, through the Regional Collaborative Platform, has continued to consolidate its work and accelerate its support in critical priority areas for the region in an increasingly coherent and coordinated way. These collective efforts have contributed to raising ambitions on climate action in the lead-up to and at COP27, increasing resilience to disasters, transforming education, promoting and protecting human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, and addressing the multi-dimensional implications of the food, fuel and finance crises. The results have demonstrated the shared value added the regional system can bring to countries in achieving the common goal of sustainable development.

Moving forward, the Regional Collaborative Platform will continue to ensure that it provides timely, relevant and integrated support, drawing on the expertise of different regional entities in a cohesive and strategic manner, to respond to requests for support by member states, UN Resident Coordinators and Country Teams. The UN development system will continue to adopt a more systemic, system-wide approach and position itself as a trusted partner to countries in addressing emerging challenges, leveraging evolving opportunities, notably those generated by technology and innovation, and advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, for the delivery of tangible results for people on the ground.