



Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation

IN SUM: The Senior Officials' Report on Economic and Technical Cooperation 2020

Crisis Calls for Cooperation, Economic Inclusion

APEC is a place for economies to explore creative solutions to shared challenges in the Asia-Pacific region and to learn from each other through economic and technical cooperation (ECOTECH).

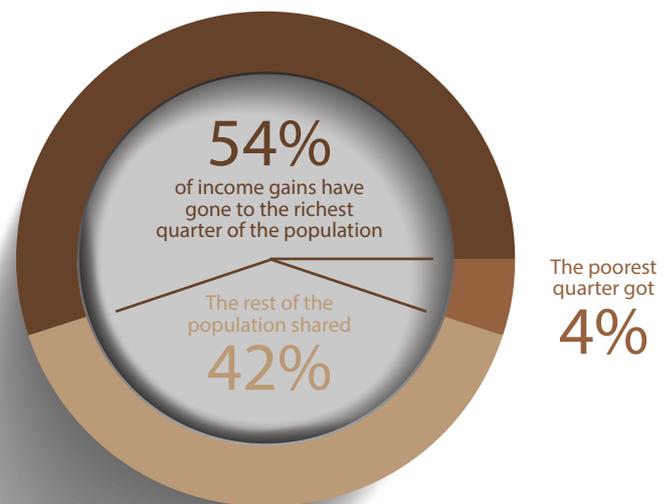
The Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation, or SCE, coordinates APEC's ECOTECH agenda.

Distributing the Pie

Over the last 30 years, individual incomes within APEC have grown while poverty has significantly decreased. But income gaps and inequalities persist.

- Very few people get a larger slice of the economy
- While the vast majority gets a much smaller slice

Inclusion is not simply about enlarging the economic pie, but the equity of its distribution.



The Virus that Discriminates

The COVID-19 health crisis and economic downturn exposed an urgent need for economies to act towards economic inclusion. While it hit everybody, it disproportionately affected certain members of society, such as:

- Those living in poverty
- Women
- Youth
- Ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples
- Micro, small, and medium enterprises
- Various vulnerable groups

A United Front

Pivot. Prioritise. Progress.

Numerous sub-forums operate under the SCE, specializing in various but ultimately interconnected areas. Under the SCE's coordination they have shifted focus to responding to COVID-19. Below are just a few examples of this year's many initiatives:

The future of work

People and businesses must adapt to new work environments taking into consideration restricted movement and post-workplace arrangements. The digital economy can allow inclusive economic participation even during lockdowns—policymakers must take advantage.

The Human Resources Development Working Group has initiated the creation of “Action Strategies on Future of Work Post-COVID-19.” Sample policies to help workers:

- Support for upskilling and retraining
- Expand social safety nets
- Monitor automation trends that may lead to unemployment

Lift up small business

The region’s small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which employ over 60% of workers in APEC, are at risk. Without support the damage to local economies could lead to insolvency for many SMEs, spikes in unemployment and societal stress.

The Small and Medium Enterprises Working Group started an informal and voluntary information-sharing exercise on measures to foster SMEs resilience during the crisis.



No business sector has been more shaken than travel and tourism. The APEC Tourism Working Group is exploring measures for recovery and reform and recognizes the need to work on safety procedures alongside with health agencies to encourage travel.

The imbalanced recession

While recessions historically disenfranchised male-dominated industries, women have had to deal with disproportionate negative effects of the current downturn, which has affected firms that hire many women, such as those in tourism and hospitality. Work-from-home arrangements also attach gender-related injustices: An expectation to do more household chores.

The Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy developed the La Serena Roadmap Implementation Plan in 2020. The Roadmap calls for

- Greater representation for women in leadership
- Reductions in employment and salary gaps
- Sex disaggregated data collection and analysis

Women’s jobs are 1.8 times more vulnerable than men’s jobs because of the pandemic.



of global employment



of job losses

In the APEC Region, women account for



food & hospitality



wholesale & retail



health & social work

Source:
Madgavkar, Anu, Olivia White, Mekala Krishnan, Deepa Mahajan, and Xavier Azcue. 2020. “COVID-19 and Gender Equality: Countering the Regressive Effects.” McKinsey Global Institute. Calculations using ILO data.

Not forgotten: The Need for Innovative Sustainability

The pandemic has only worsened the global solid waste problem. Single-use plastics have become commonplace again, and less attention is being paid to proper disposal.

Circular Economy

The SCE held a Policy Dialogue on the Circular Economy—a system that eliminates waste, keeps materials in use and regenerates natural systems. Discussions centered around

- Plastic use and waste reduction
- Repurposing agricultural into organic fertilizer
- e-Waste programs for items such as batteries.

Sustaining the Ocean

The Oceans and Fisheries Working Group developed Implementation plans this year for the

- APEC Roadmap on Marine Debris
- Roadmap on Combatting Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing.

Advantage: APEC’s a broad scope and diverse membership

While most inclusive policies are implemented domestically, APEC contributes to greater inclusion by leveraging its strength as a forum for discussion, sharing, and consensus that eventually leads to commitments and policy action