## Social protection interventions as medium- and long-term responses amid COVID-19 and beyond

### 26 August 2020, 15:00-16:30 (Manila Time), via Microsoft Teams

## I. Background and Context

1.      The Asian Development Bank (ADB)'s recently published brief, *An Updated Assessment of the Potential Economic Impact of COVID-19*, finds that the global economy could suffer between $5.8 trillion and $8.8 trillion in losses—equivalent to 6.4% to 9.7% of global gross domestic product (GDP)—as a result of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. For Asia and the Pacific, the economic losses could range from $1.7 trillion under a short containment scenario of 3 months to $2.5 trillion under a long containment scenario of 6 months.

2.      Governments around the world have been quick in responding to the impacts of the pandemic, implementing measures such as fiscal and monetary easing, increased health spending, and direct support to cover losses in incomes and revenues. The adverse economic and social impacts resulting from the public health challenge are hitting the poor, near poor, informal workers, and other vulnerable populations the hardest.  Many governments have placed social protection at the center of their response package to reach out to individuals and households through cash and in-kind transfers and other schemes.

3.      Social protection spending by countries has been substantial. By mid-July, more than 1,000 social protection measures have been put in place in around 200 countries/territories across the globe. Social assistance, mostly cash-based transfers, accounts for around 60% of the response. To adapt to the crisis, existing programs have either increased their benefits or expanded their coverage. To date, more than 1 billion individuals benefitted from these social assistance programs. Apart from social assistance, countries have also been implementing social insurance (e.g., paid sick leave and unemployment benefits) and labor market programs (e.g., wage subsidy, training) to provide protection to their population.[1]

4.      The ADB is supporting its developing member countries (DMCs) respond to COVID-19 through finance, knowledge, and partnerships. To support the government during this critical time, ADB announced a $20 billion assistance package in April 2020 to help its DMCs deal with the impacts of the pandemic on the lives, well-being and livelihood of its population.

---

[1] Ugo Gentilini, et. Al. 2020. Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures. "Living Paper" version 12 (July 10, 2020)  http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/454671594649637530/pdf/Social-Protection-and-Jobs-Responses-to-COVID-19-A-Real-Time-Review-of-Country-Measures.pdf

## II. 11<sup>th</sup> PACER Dialogue

5.	Countries in Southeast Asia and the People's Republic of China (PRC) have been affected differently by COVID-19 and their ability to provide social protection to their populations have been largely determined by the strength of their social protection systems pre-COVID-19. Lessons are already available from the initial phase of the response, and as the pandemic drags on, longer-term strategies must be designed from these lessons to help countries bounce back successfully from this crisis to a new normal.

6.	In this context the ADB will convene the 11<sup>th</sup> **P**olicy **A**ctions for **C**OVID-19 **E**conomic **R**ecovery **(PACER) Dialogue** in virtual format on 26 August 2020 (Wednesday) from 15:00–16:30 (Manila time) using Microsoft Teams. The title of the 11<sup>th</sup> PACER Dialogue is "**Social protection interventions as medium- and long-term responses amid COVID-19 and beyond.**"

7.	The PACER Dialogues are organized under the framework of the ADB-supported BIMP-EAGA, IMT-GT, and GMS (B-I-G) Capacity Building Program, and will explore measures that can help "B-I-G" member countries, Singapore, and Timor-Leste "bounce back better" from the COVID-19 pandemic.

## III. Objectives

8.	The 11<sup>th</sup> PACER Dialogue will help provide a framework for understanding the range of social protection measures available to countries in Southeast Asia and the PRC based on global best practices and including select country examples. The objectives are to:

- provide a platform for policy makers and social protection practitioners and experts to share knowledge and experience in responding to the crisis, including challenges and lessons from the initial to the current phase of COVID-19 response (in such areas as targeting, registration, delivery mechanisms, and leveraging existing systems);
- promote a better understanding of policy options available as governments transition from crisis to recovery; and
- disseminate global and regional best practices and lessons on how governments could "bounce back better" from the COVID-19 pandemic.

9.	At the end of the dialogue, a Policy Brief will be produced to summarize the policy options and recommendations discussed.

## IV. PACER Dialogue Background Paper, Structure and Timing

10.	The PACER Dialogues are envisaged to help decision makers broaden their perspectives, appreciate the wider implications of critical policy choices, and identify concrete policy actions. During the open discussions, participants are requested to provide inputs, share analysis, country experiences and lessons on social protection policies and solutions taken to mitigate the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerate recovery.

11.	A background paper will be circulated to all participants as advance reading. The indicative structure of the 1.5-hour (90 minute) PACER Dialogue is summarized in the attached program.

# Social protection interventions as medium- and long-term responses amid COVID-19 and beyond

## 26 August 2020, 15:00-16:30 (Manila Time), via Microsoft Teams

| TIME | DETAILS |
|---|---|
| 15:00-15:10 | **Introduction and Objectives**<br>*Moderator: Mr. Ramesh Subramaniam Director General, Southeast Asia Department (SERD), Asian Development Bank (ADB)*<br><br>Moderator to deliver introductory remarks on the eleventh PACER Dialogue context, objectives, and structure. |
| 15:10-15:25 | **Making decisions on social protection systems in response to COVID-19 over the short- and medium-term**<br>*Ms. Valentina Barca, Independent Social Protection Expert*<br><br>Expert presents a conceptual framework for how social protection systems can respond effectively to the COVID-19 crisis, key issues, and a menu of policy and program options available for medium- and longer-term responses. |
| 15:25-15:45 | **Responding to COVID-19: Options for identifying, registering and paying beneficiaries for social protection programs**<br>*Mr. Edward Archibald, Independent Social Protection Expert*<br><br>Expert presents options for designing and implementing social protection programs amid COVID-19 and beyond using specific country examples and global good practice to date. |
| 15:45-16:20 | **Open Discussion**<br>*Moderator: Mr. Ramesh Subramaniam*<br><br>Moderator opens the floor for questions and invite participants to share their experiences in implementing social protection measures, some lessons learned and plans going forward. |
| 16:20-16:30 | **Synthesis and Summary**<br>**Closing Remarks**<br>*Mr. Ramesh Subramaniam, Director General, SERD, ADB*<br><br>Moderator summarizes the policy discussions, key recommendations, and closes the Dialogue. |