



Minimum public health interventions for post COVID-19 lockdown: Lives and Livelihoods

1 July 2020, 15:00–16:30 (Manila Time), via Microsoft Teams

I. Background and Context

1. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is having a severe impact on Southeast Asian countries and the People's Republic of China (PRC) through several channels, including sharp declines in consumption and investment, lower tourism and exports, disruptions in trade and production, and adverse effects on health. Countries have taken drastic steps to “flatten the epidemiologic curve” putting in place measures including closing borders, restrictions on passenger transportation and labor mobility, reduced business operations affecting global supply chains, and lock downs putting a sudden stop to economic activities and making poor households vulnerable. As a global crisis, mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic requires country, (sub)regional, and global interventions and collaborative responses.
2. Developing Asia will barely grow in 2020 as containment measures to address the COVID-19 pandemic hamper economic activity and weaken external demand, according to a new set of forecasts from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2020 supplement on COVID-19 forecasts growth of 0.1% for the region in 2020. Economic activity in Southeast Asia is expected to contract by 2.7% this year before growing by 5.2% in 2021. Estimated contraction figures for Southeast Asian economies hit hard by COVID-19 are at -1.0% for Indonesia, -3.8% for the Philippines, and -6.5% for Thailand given containment measures affect their domestic consumption and investment.
3. With the impact of the COVID-19 being felt across countries and with a high degree of uncertainty, governments are undertaking policy measures to reduce the negative impact of COVID-19 and ensure that no further waves of outbreaks occur. Countries are implementing measures such as social distancing or minimizing close contact with others to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing (or safe distancing) can be achieved from a range of actions such as travel and movement restrictions; quantitative limits in mass transport, workplaces, restaurants and other settings where people congregate; and changes in business processes. It is therefore crucial to identify sustainable social distancing measures that can be implemented without serious travel and movement restrictions that can severely affect economic activities and impose significant economic burden on the population.
4. In slowly opening up the economy to mitigate the devastating effects of COVID-19 and prepare for post COVID-19 recovery, government policy considerations include: (i) testing, tracing and isolating cases swiftly to avoid subsequent waves of infection; (ii) preventing the healthcare system from being overwhelmed; (iii) enabling phased approaches to economic re-opening so that livelihoods can be maintained; and (iv) preparing citizens and businesses under the “new normal”. Beyond the domestic front, countries also need to consider how to set up minimum health standards to ensure safe mobility across borders and identify coordinated actions to harmonize health standards and safety protocols as economies re-open for post COVID-19 lockdowns.

II. Fourth PACER Dialogue

5. Countries in Southeast Asia and the PRC have been affected differently by COVID-19 and are in different phases of managing the crisis. Many countries are implementing lock downs and are in various stages of unlocking or relaxing containment measures. There is however uncertainty over what are the minimum measures that should be retained, what measures can be relaxed and in what sequence. The premature release of social distancing rules may exacerbate the situation, leading to further economic losses. Likewise, the needless extension of these measures put a greater toll on businesses and their employees with bankruptcy, retrenchments, and unemployment, and less fiscal space to cope with the pandemic. All these are challenging and complex tasks considering the uncertainties brought about by the pandemic and looming economic recession.

6. Countries can learn how others are mitigating the negative effects of COVID-19 by implementing public health interventions such as social distancing to kick-start the recovery process. Several policy options drawn from good practice examples are available for governments to consider and adapt to their own phased economic recovery efforts.

7. In this context the Asian Development Bank (ADB) will convene the fourth **Policy Actions for COVID-19 Economic Recovery (PACER) Dialogue** in virtual format on 1 July 2020 (Wednesday) from 15:00–16:30 (Manila time) using Microsoft Teams. The title of the fourth PACER Dialogue is **Minimum public health interventions for post COVID-19 lockdown: Lives and Livelihoods**. PACER Dialogues are organized under 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 fourth PACER Dialogue will feature global good practice examples of effective public health interventions to kick-start opening up of economies, featuring a stepladder approach on minimum measures for a post-lockdown period to manage and mitigate COVID-19 impacts, and build-back more sustainable and resilient economies. The objectives are to:

- promote a better understanding of the options available for a stepladder approach on public health policies, considering different country situations and harmonizing health standards across borders;
- disseminate global best practices and lessons on sustainable social distancing as part of measures to “bounce back better” from the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- provide a platform for policy makers and health practitioners to share knowledge and experience and collaboratively learn from each other.

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, lead participants are requested to provide inputs, share analysis, country experiences and lessons on public health measures 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.

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TIME	DETAILS
15:00-15:05	<p>Fourth PACER Dialogue – Overview and Objectives <i>Ms. Ayako Inagaki, Director, Human and Social Development Division (SEHS) Southeast Asia Department (SERD), Asian Development Bank (ADB)</i></p> <p>Introductory remarks on the fourth PACER Dialogue context, objectives, and structure.</p>
15:05-15:35	<p>Minimum public health interventions for post COVID-19 lockdown: Lives and Livelihoods <i>Mr. Jeremy Lim, Associate Professor and Co-Director Global Health, Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, National University of Singapore</i></p> <p>Presentation on global good practice examples of effective public health interventions to kick-start opening up of economies, featuring a stepladder approach on minimum measures for a post-lockdown period to manage and mitigate COVID-19 impacts, and build-back more sustainable and resilient economies. The experience of Singapore will be highlighted.</p>
15:35-16:25	<p>Open Discussion and Questions <i>Moderator: Mr. Alfredo Perdiguero, Director, Regional Cooperation and Operations Coordination Division (SERC), SERD, ADB</i></p> <p>PACER Dialogue participants exchange information on public health policies and measures in re-opening economies in an open discussion format.</p> <p>To enrich the PACER dialogue discussions, the moderator will request country delegations to provide inputs and share analysis, country experiences, and lessons on public health interventions aimed at mitigating the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and achieving economic recovery.</p>
16:25-16:30	<p>Synthesis and Summary Closing Remarks <i>Mr. Alfredo Perdiguero, Director, SERC, SERD, ADB</i></p> <p>Moderator summarizes the policy discussions, key recommendations, and closes the Dialogue.</p>