Transformation for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific region
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Transformation for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific region identifies key issues that define the work of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and advocates for regional cooperation and action on core priorities for a future of shared and sustainable prosperity.

The Asia and Pacific region has been an important driver of our shared global development journey since the Millennium Declaration was first adopted 15 years ago. Seizing the opportunities presented by the Rio+20 summit, our region has used the ESCAP intergovernmental platform to give strong voice to our regional priorities in shaping the global development future.

The United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, has said that 2015 is a year of “test and transition,” during which we will see landmark negotiations that will set the global development agenda for the next 15 years.

It is time for us to grow better. It is time to end poverty and hunger. It is time to embrace diversity and reject inequality. It is time to value our natural resources and to guarantee the future for our children.

Supporting this transformation, ESCAP strives to promote greater cooperation and integration between our members. Closer, stronger regional bonds are crucial for shared prosperity and a more sustainable future. Let us together shape and define our path, driving the transformations our region needs. It is time for Asia and the Pacific region to again lead the world by advancing regional action for our people and our planet.

Dr. Shamshad Akhtar
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP
ESCAP envisions a resilient Asia and the Pacific region based on shared prosperity, social equity and sustainability. It contributes to these goals through its comprehensive multilateral platform for promoting cooperation and development among its member States.

ESCAP is the regional arm of the United Nations and plays a unique role as the only intergovernmental forum for all countries and territories of the Asia and Pacific region. Established in 1947, ESCAP today has 53 members and 9 associate members, covering more than 60 per cent of the world’s population, or 4.1 billion people.

From its headquarters in Bangkok, ESCAP provides a forum for its member States that promotes regional cooperation and collective action, assisting countries in building and sustaining shared economic growth and social equity.

In pursuing its vision, ESCAP provides various forms of assistance to member States:

- ESCAP promotes rigorous analysis and peer-learning through its seven core areas of work: macroeconomic policy and development, trade and investment, social development, transport, statistics, environment and development, and information communications technology and disaster risk reduction.
- These analyses are translated into policy dialogues and recommendations.
- ESCAP also provides good development practices, knowledge-sharing and technical assistance to member countries in the implementation of these recommendations.
- The norm-setting and policy work of ESCAP ultimately affects people’s lives in a positive way by assisting countries to shape and implement a more balanced and inclusive development agenda for the region.

ESCAP enables stronger participation for smaller and often left-out voices of the region the Least Developed Countries, the Small Island Developing States and the Landlocked Developing Countries.
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<td>Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development I (APFSD I) (19-21 May)</td>
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<td>Forty-third Session of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA) Standing Committee (26-27 May)</td>
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<td>70th Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific – Phase I (23 May)</td>
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<td>June 2014</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Outreach Meeting on Sustainable Development Financing (10-11 June)</td>
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<td>Launch of the United Nations Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) Decade (18 June)</td>
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<td>Sixth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (23-25 June)</td>
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<td>Tenth ESCAP-Asian Development Bank (ADB) Annual Consultation Meeting (18 July)</td>
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<td>Forty-fourth Session of the APTA Standing Committee (24-25 July)</td>
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<td>August 2014</td>
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<td>Regional Consultation on Accountability for the Post-2015 Development Agenda (5-6 August)</td>
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<td>Launch of the United Nations Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2014 (6 August)</td>
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<td>High-level International Conference on the Role of Transport and Transit Corridors in Ensuring International Cooperation, Stability, and Sustainable Development (3-4 September)</td>
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<td>Asian Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) (4 September)</td>
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<td>Second Regional Forum on Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization in Asia and the Pacific (9-11 September)</td>
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<td>Forty-fifth Session of the APTA Standing Committee (10-12 November)</td>
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<td>Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (17-20 November)</td>
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<td>Ministerial Conference on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific (24-28 November)</td>
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<td>Seventeenth Intergovernmental Conference: Pathways to Sustainable Development (9-11 December)</td>
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<td>February 2015</td>
<td>Third Joint Session of the Panel on Tropical Cyclones and the Typhoon Committee (5-13 February)</td>
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<td>March 2015</td>
<td>High-Level Asia-Pacific Dialogue on the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (4-6 March)</td>
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<td>Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (14-18 March)</td>
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<td>Regional Forum for Least Developed Countries of Asia and the Pacific Region (28-30 April)</td>
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<td>Asia-Pacific High-Level Consultation on Financing for Development (29-30 April)</td>
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<td>First Meeting of the Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation (1-3 April)</td>
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<td>May 2015</td>
<td>Launch of the United Nations Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2015 (14 May)</td>
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<td>Regional Conference on Aligning Corporate Sustainability with SDGs (20 May)</td>
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<td>APFSD II (21-22 May)</td>
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<td>71st Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (25-29 May)</td>
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Connectivity

Promoting interconnectedness is vital to the future of the Asia and Pacific region. Consolidating growth necessitates cooperation between countries since, despite the region’s dynamism in recent decades, most of that development came from the growth of individual countries. To best unlock the potential of the region, a broader perspective on connectivity is key. This should not be considered sector by sector but rather as part of a unified whole, encompassing the development of corridors of prosperity through networks of transport, information and communications technology (ICT) and energy.

Launching this transformation will require both physical and political networks. Through our partnerships with governments in the region, we promote the advancement of critically underdeveloped systems and the development of infrastructure to foster links between the countries of the region. ESCAP supports and assists member States in the expansion of transport infrastructure, facilitating inter-country transport, broadband and energy networks while emphasizing the constructive impact of connectivity in the region. Mobilizing governmental authorities and gaining their political and financial support is essential for continued prosperity, along with creating stronger links between nations.

In this context, ESCAP encourages and helps member States adopt safe, modern and environmentally-friendly ways of moving goods and people in efficient, interlinked systems. Since its inception in 1959, the ESCAP Asian Highway project has expanded to include over 140,000 kilometres of standardized roadways, connecting 32 countries across the region. This, together with the Trans-Asian Railway programme, signals a move towards more robust frameworks of integrated intermodal connectivity – roads leading to railway networks with effective links to ports – which are crucial for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and transit.

There is, however, more to our connectivity work than the infrastructure for physically connecting people. We also seek to address the growing digital divide in broadband connectivity that, without investment, could turn into a development gap. The current ICT revolution has resulted in numerous innovations with great potential development impacts but the benefits are not shared equally by all. Broadband infrastructure is typically concentrated in commercially viable urban markets while rural areas are often left underserved. This leaves large swathes of the region without sufficient access to ICT.

To tackle this, ESCAP’s Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative seeks to promote seamless ICT connectivity. Designed to improve regional transmission networks through better cross-border fibre-optic cabling, the project envisions the Asian Highway network as the foundation for cost-effective intraregional broadband access.

In this framework, fibre-optic cables can be laid along road or railways as part of construction or maintenance. This also promotes open access to key transmission infrastructure, boosting competition and ultimately resulting in lower prices for consumers. Other advantages of new terrestrial routes include improved resilience in international transmission, which is currently viewed as excessively reliant on a small number of submarine cables.

ESCAP advocates that these infrastructure improvements underpin relations between countries and that our ICT capacity-building work can support countries to transform their businesses, drive productivity and improve efficiency.

At the same time, greater energy connectivity is crucial for fuelling development in our region. Through our intergovernmental forum we advocate for the creation of an Asian Energy Highway to improve infrastructure and stimulate cooperation between power importers and exporters. This would combine different types of delivery methods, including pipelines and cross-border grids, and serve as an effective option to optimize the application of energy resources, in particular renewable energy.

We also understand that greater intraregional connectivity will be a force for change for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Pacific subregion. These states suffer from multiple transport, ICT and energy gaps that hinder their long-term development where large distances and lack of adequate infrastructure make the transfer and sale of goods prohibitively expensive. Sustainable energy production is also needed since scarce natural resources and limited networks render these islands vulnerable to exploitation from energy providers.

Subprogrammes
- Transport
- Environment and development
- Information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction
“We must put forth all our efforts to close the digital divide and ensure that all people are able to thrive in today’s information economy,” said Dr. Shamshad Akhtar.
Highlights

Regional Connectivity for Shared Prosperity
Connectivity is a cornerstone of regional economic cooperation and integration. It has become a major priority for the countries of the Asia and Pacific region as they find new drivers of regional economic growth, and seek to create additional domestic and aggregate regional demand, finds this ESCAP publication.

Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway: for Inclusive and Seamless Connectivity
This publication takes stock of the current status of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative in the region. Examining the causes behind the digital divide in the region, it identifies the lack of coherence in fibre-optic transmission networks as part of the reason why prices for broadband remain prohibitively high in some ESCAP countries, particularly in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and LLDCs. The Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative aims to create a meshed network of fibre-optics across the region, using the rights of ways of other cross-border infrastructure projects, including those of the ESCAP Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway programmes.

Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Maps
These online maps are the result of a partnership between ESCAP and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). They constitute the first publicly available repository of maritime and terrestrial transit routes of fibre-optic networks used to transmit Internet data. The maps reveal potential missing links in global and regional Internet connectivity. By overlaying the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks, they also show potential synergies that could be tapped by laying out fibre-optics along these transport networks as they are being built or maintained.

Regional Common Framework for the Facilitation of International Land Transport
The framework helps member countries and their development partners increase the effectiveness of facilitation programmes and accelerate the development of international transport. It also promotes common approaches to addressing facilitation issues and provides general direction when formulating facilitation policy, agreements, programmes and projects. With the success of the framework for road transport, ESCAP members and associate members are working towards the adoption of a regional cooperation framework for the facilitation of international railway transport.

Maps of Asian Highway Network, Trans-Asian Railway Network and the Integrated Map with Dry Ports of International Importance
Under the auspices of ESCAP, member countries concluded the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway network agreements, which have become the backbone for regional connectivity. In this work, ESCAP acknowledges the role of intermodal interfaces in developing a comprehensive transport system that provides efficient access to goods and services. This supports economic and social development while, at the same time, minimizing the negative impacts of a rapidly growing transport sector.

2014 Policy Dialogue on Energy for Sustainable Development for Asia and the Pacific
The ESCAP Secretariat organizes the Policy Dialogue to promote ongoing discussion and actions towards the implementation of the outcomes of the Asia-Pacific Energy Forum (APEF) held in 2013. The annual meetings facilitate the dissemination of information, the exchange of best practices and the identification of potential regional policy initiatives that can be developed under the APEF framework. The meeting was held from 26 to 28 November 2014 in Bangkok.
Integration
Shared prosperity is one of the most ambitious goals of the new development agenda. Across the region, countries are working together for a common future. Deepening regional economic cooperation, and building stronger and closer bonds across the countries of the Asia and Pacific region are vital for dynamic and equitable growth.

While there is evidence of a global consensus on the importance of trade and economic integration for sustainable development, barriers to trade, investment and movement of people persist. A large number of trade and partnership agreements remain underutilized and unimplemented, and more recent efforts to create even larger regional trading blocs may not contribute to the harmonization and simplification of rules for trade and investment. This risks leaving in place, or even exacerbating, a complex and fragmented system that makes it difficult for businesses to benefit from.

In this context, ESCAP promotes the rationalization of preferential trade agreements, modernization of trade and investment policies, and streamlining of trade procedures in regional economies, along with the adoption of policies to encourage more sustainable business operations. We emphasize the need for trading rules and regional mechanisms to ensure smooth and less costly transacting across borders. Through trade expansion channels, and by allowing more actors to engage in international trade, this can bring about more inclusive development.

Progress has been made in formulating a set of rules and procedures to enable cross-border paperless trade – trade based on electronic rather than paper documents – as it has the potential to deliver export gains of US$257 billion annually to the Asia and the Pacific region, and could decrease import and export times by up to 44 per cent and 31 per cent respectively. For countries with small internal markets, LLDCs or those vulnerable to natural disasters, easy access to markets for products and services in the region is vital for their sustained development.

While in recent years the use of tariffs – taxes on traded goods – has been decreasing, non-tariff measures are becoming increasingly prevalent. Non-tariff barriers encompass, for example, measures put in place to protect public health, such as regulations to prevent diseases or pests being imported into a country through agricultural and food products. While often essential, these measures are sometimes disguised forms of protectionism and can be significant impediments to trade. This is especially true for low-income developing countries or Least Developed Countries (LDCs) that often lack the laboratory facilities or certification processes ensuring compliance with measures, further exacerbating disparities in the region.

Much of the promise of the Asia and Pacific region remains unfulfilled. Regional integration can provide mutually beneficial opportunities for South-South trade and spur the growth of developing economies across the region, complementing other economic and financial linkages. In a fast-changing global economic environment, the need for countries in the region to work together is becoming increasingly apparent. The region’s dynamism will depend on its ability to harness the potential of regional economic integration while ensuring social and environmental sustainability.

In order to foster broader and more robust economic integration, our member States have recognized that simultaneous efforts should also be taken in the areas of finance, connectivity, and shared vulnerabilities and risks. The 2013 Ministerial Declaration on regional economic cooperation and integration gave us a mandate to explore an integrated strategy to achieve this objective.

We believe that this renewed commitment to greater mobility of people, sustainable trade and investment, developing seamless connectivity and addressing shared vulnerabilities and risks will, together with an efficient regional financing system, mobilize the region towards a shared and prosperous future.

Subprogrammes
- Trade and investment
- Macroeconomic policy and inclusive development
“Regional economies also need to diversify away from dependence on traditional sources of export-demand in Europe and the United States, developing domestic demand and better integrating with other regional economies,” explained Dr. Shamshad Akhtar.
Seventh Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF): Deepening Regional Integration through Trade Facilitation and Cross-Border E-Commerce

The APTFF, the leading forum on trade facilitation in the Asia and Pacific region, aims to promote trade facilitation as an important component of a comprehensive strategy for national and regional development. It also intends to strengthen regional cooperation and coordination of Aid for Trade and related technical assistance and capacity building in trade facilitation, including paperless trade. The forum will be held from 20 to 21 October 2015 in Wuhan, China.

First Meeting of the Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation

Government officials and experts from across the Asia and Pacific region convened from 1 to 3 April 2015 in Bangkok to work on formulating the text of a regional agreement for cross-border paperless trade facilitation. The prospective regional agreement seeks to enhance regional integration by setting up a framework to enable exchange and mutual recognition of electronic data and documents across borders to reduce trade costs.

Fourth Trade and Investment Week and the Fourth Session of the Committee on Trade and Investment

The Fourth Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Week under the theme “Global Value Chains and Regional Integration” will be held from 2 to 6 November 2015 in Bangkok. It will bring together government officials and other stakeholders for discussions on issues relevant for participation in global and regional value chains, and for enhancing regional integration among developing countries. Drawing on the presence of senior policymakers from across the Asia and Pacific region, the week will host a number of engaging events related to trade and investment, including the Eleventh Asia-Pacific Business Forum and the ARTNeT conference. Other events will cover trade facilitation and trade agreements, foreign direct investment and responsible business practices, as well as several capacity-building activities. The week will culminate in the fourth session of the ESCAP Committee on Trade and Investment.

Report of the Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration (MCREI) in Asia and the Pacific

ESCAP emphasizes that deepening economic integration and cooperation in the region could be mutually beneficial to all countries and instrumental in the achievement of key developmental goals. The Bangkok Declaration holds the promise of region-wide cooperation and policymaking in trade, finance and connectivity while addressing shared vulnerabilities to build an integrated market, seamless transport and energy connectivity, financial cooperation, and enhance resilience to address vulnerabilities and risks from natural disasters.

The Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report

A total of 36 economies in the Asia and Pacific region are classified as Countries with Special Needs. They are home to more than a quarter of the population of developing countries in the region, excluding China and India, but they account for less than one tenth of the GDP of that group. The Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2015 covers these countries in terms of their current social and economic status, how quickly they are progressing towards their agreed goals and aspirations, and their policy options to accelerate their progress. It highlights the message that these economies need to build their productive capacities and diversify to overcome their structural challenges. It also maps potential new products and markets that could increase the chances for success in diversifying economies.
Reducing Inequalities

Photo: (Masyudi Syachban Firmansyah)
Reducing Inequalities

Despite impressive economic growth and significant progress in reducing poverty, one in every three people in Asia and the Pacific region — a total of 1.44 billion individuals — still lives in poverty; surviving on less than US$2 a day. A crucial cause for the persistent poverty is a lack of decent employment opportunities, with un- and underemployed women and men, alongside more than 60 per cent of all workers occupying jobs without legal and/or social protections.

As a proponent for inclusive and equitable economic growth in our region, ESCAP supports countries in addressing the growing disparities in income and wealth (where, for example, the income of the richest 10 per cent of the population is twice that of the poorest 40 per cent), as well as in reducing inequalities in opportunities and power. ESCAP advocates, in particular, for the elimination of discrimination against, and the empowerment of, women and girls, persons with disabilities, migrants, older persons and other vulnerable populations.

As an example of this work, and in recognition that 15 per cent of the Asian and Pacific population are persons living with disabilities, ESCAP pioneered the formulation and implementation of the Incheon Strategy to ‘Make the Right Real’ for persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific region. The Incheon Strategy comprises disability-inclusive development goals, targets and indicators to guide member States in advancing the equality and rights of the 650 million persons living with disabilities across the region.

Our latest recommendations, in the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2015, are that to reverse the trend of widening disparities public expenditures must be more development-oriented, with a focus on equitable access to quality education and health care, social safety nets, finance and energy.

We also advocate that business plays a critical role in making growth more inclusive and that without a vibrant and strong private sector, tackling poverty and rising levels of inequality while creating jobs would not be possible. We further promote equality of opportunity and the development of the new employment needed through small- and medium-sized enterprises and rural industrialization.

In this way – promoting economic and social inclusiveness – the work of ESCAP contributes to sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific region; responding to the centrality of equality, social justice and solidarity for economic growth and environmental protection.

Finally, supporting cooperation and partnership within and between governments, civil society, the private sector and other development actors, we promote collective action for sustainable development that improves the living standards of all people; reduces inequalities in opportunity and advances equality in decision-making power.

Data for development

In order to measure progress, achieve our development targets and promote the adoption of evidenced-based and strategic policies, we need statistics and data, including “big data.”

Reliable, comprehensive, timely and disaggregated data on development indicators – from poverty, education and health, to command of natural resources and political participation – are critical for the economical, efficient, effective and equitable implementation of global development agendas.

Disaggregated, consistent and up-to-date data help ensure that no one is left behind in the push to improve lives and livelihoods, and their problems are effectively addressed. A lack of trustworthy, timely and comparable data hinders the monitoring of progress and documentation of results.

As such, we now view and advocate for statistics as an essential component of monitoring the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and as a lynchpin for integrating an effective review mechanism in the post-2015 agenda.

Subprogrammes

- Macroeconomic policy and inclusive development
- Social development
- Statistics
“It’s about real transformation of the lives of the 293 million people living in our 12 LDCs, of whom 113 million remain below extreme poverty line, with high exposure to natural disasters, and about the 130 million who have yet to enjoy access to education, health and other basic services,” said Dr. Shamshad Akhtar.

READ MORE
Outcome of the Beijing+20 Conference
The Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review was convened by ESCAP, in cooperation with UN Women, from 17 to 20 November 2014 in Bangkok. The Conference, which was attended by representatives from 52 UN Member States and 188 civil society organizations, resulted in strengthened commitment for accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action so as to make gender equality a reality for all women and men, girls and boys, in the region.

Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction
Persons with disabilities are up to four times more likely to die when a disaster strikes. ESCAP has successfully advocated for disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction through several regional meetings leading up to the adoption of the post-2015 Disaster Risk Reduction Framework at the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in 14 to 18 March 2015 in Sendai.

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Asia and the Pacific
The first Ministerial Conference on CRVS was held in Bangkok from 24 to 28 November 2014 and declared 2015-2024 as the CRVS Decade. Collecting this type of data is key to inclusive development and at the core of rights-based development. It lays the cornerstone for legal identity, good governance and accountability. In addition, well-functioning CRVS can provide essential data to improve the health of women, children and other disadvantaged groups, as well as support effective service delivery.

Time-use Data Analysis Initiative
Time-use statistics (TUS) address issues such as paid and unpaid work, care economy, time poverty and well-being. TUS underpin policy planning and programming that advance gender equality both at the macro level and at home. The time-use data analysis initiative 2014-2015 aims to raise awareness of the potential of TUS in addressing key gender-related policy priorities and enhancing the capability of countries in conducting rigorous gender-based analyses using their time-use datasets. The inception workshop of the initiative took place from 11 to 15 October 2014 in Bangkok.

Asia-Pacific High-Level Consultation on Financing for Development
The Asia-Pacific Consultation held in Jakarta, Indonesia on 29 to 30 April 2015, ahead of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held from 13 to 16 July 2015 in Addis Ababa, conveys the region’s unique perspectives and recommendations to the global level. 2015 is a year of global action and countries in the Asia and Pacific region are already actively engaging in innovative policies to further reduce extreme poverty and turn the tide of rising socio-economic inequalities. In this context, financing plays a critical role.

Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2015
The 2015 edition of the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific highlights that while policy focus on economic growth is necessary, it is not sufficient for achieving development. Policymakers in the region would need to internalize aspects of inclusive growth and sustainable development into their domestic policy frameworks.
Resilience

Photo: (Tyler Olson/Shutterstock)
Building resilience against natural disasters and combating growing pressure on natural resources is increasingly urgent. In 2014 alone, the Asia and Pacific region witnessed 119 disaster events, impacting the lives of almost 80 million people, costing US$59.6 billion and wreaking havoc on ecosystems and services on which many rely for their livelihoods.

Asia and the Pacific region, in fact, is the most disaster-prone region in the world, with 52.7 per cent of all natural disasters occurring here. At the same time, resource-intensive production and consumption patterns are further straining natural resources and planetary boundaries, limiting our capacity for building resilience against economic shocks and natural disasters. Energy, water and food are vital to sustain communities and development efforts, but they are also vulnerable.

ESCAP’s work on disaster risk reduction revolves around finding practical solutions for mitigating the effects of extraordinary events while helping countries in the region withstand, or better recover from, future ones. We endeavour to help our members improve their resilience in view of the fact that risk reduction and preparedness are less costly, yet far more effective, than after-the-fact responses such as relief, recovery and reconstruction.

At the global and regional level, we have advocated that the potential impacts of natural disasters and climate change will need to be factored into long-term initiatives and strategies for sustainable development – both in terms of enhanced economic stability and lives saved.

Our particular advantage is the ability to address the transboundary nature of disasters in the region. Some, such as droughts in arid regions and typhoons in cyclone-prone areas, can be more readily identified when countries work together within ESCAP-led frameworks. Others, such as earthquakes and flash floods, are not as predictable. Yet in both cases adequate preparedness can mean the difference between life and death for people in affected communities.

In this vein, we work to strengthen regional cooperation mechanisms and support the use of innovative technologies. For example, the Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness has contributed significantly to improved early warning for tsunamis and other coastal hazards in the Indian Ocean and South-East Asian countries. In all approaches, ESCAP promotes the application of science, technology and innovation, particularly the effective use of satellite-derived products and ICT - to save lives, reduce economic losses and build resilience to disasters in the region.

This is not the only factor at play. From an environment and development point of view, counteracting the potentially destructive effects of a changing climate and the adjustments wrought through urbanization is essential for a shared sustainable future. Overexploitation of resources precipitates natural disasters and climate change, both of which aggravate social injustice.

The urban poor are highly exposed to this as they often lack the capacity to improve their resilience, and their communities are especially vulnerable due to limited resources and marginalization. Much can be achieved in building resilience by addressing the needs of vulnerable and poor populations, and by including their voices in decision-making.

ESCAP advocates for strengthening community resilience by enhancing systems of protection, such as sustainable land and water management practices, rapid response mechanisms, and microinsurance schemes amongst others. As such, we believe integrated resource management in Asian cities is an opportunity for increasing resilience.

At the macroeconomic level, closer international collaboration on all of these issues is vital since catastrophes know no borders and even relatively minor disasters can have wide-ranging impacts. Insufficient planning, policy gaps and a lack of infrastructure investment to build resilience threaten many of the hard-earned development leaps of the past decades.

Subprogrammes

- Information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction
- Environment and development
“The region needs to build resilience to disaster in order to protect its growth prospects. Economic losses have increased by almost 15 times in the last 45 years,” said Dr. Shamshad Akhtar.

READ MORE
The Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness

The Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness builds resilience by strengthening early warning systems for coastal hazards, such as tsunamis and tropical storms, using a regional approach. It pools resources from multiple donors and works with partners such as national governments, UN agencies, regional organizations and NGOs to assist high-risk, low capacity countries. Established following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, the Trust Fund has to date supported 26 projects with a combined budget of US$13.6 million, benefiting 19 countries in South and South-East Asia.

Quick Guide for Policy Makers on Pro-Poor Urban Climate Resilience in Asia and the Pacific

The Quick Guide for Policy Makers on Pro-Poor Urban Climate Resilience in Asia and the Pacific focuses on the need to enhance understanding of the region’s key urban stakeholders on climate change, discusses how it affects efforts to realize sustainable urban development, and explores what actions can be taken to synergize continued commitments to poverty reduction alongside urban climate resilience.

Resilient Business for Resilient Nations and Communities

Building resilience to disasters is becoming increasingly recognized as a priority area for protecting hard-earned development gains in the Asia and Pacific region. The private sector alone is estimated to hold 70 to 85 per cent of the investment in most national economies and makes over US$80 trillion worth of institutional investments globally on an annual basis. Recognizing that the involvement of the private sector in disaster risk management (DRM) is still in a formative stage and good practices are yet to be systematically analyzed, this report represents a first step to documenting the evolving thoughts and practices of the private sector in DRM, particularly from the Asia and Pacific region.

Asia-Pacific Regional Drought Mechanism: Effective Monitoring and Early Preparedness for Drought

This webpage introduces the Regional Drought Mechanism, a tool for effective monitoring and early preparedness for drought, helping save lives and livelihoods. The mechanism brings regional resources in space applications directly to decision-makers in drought-affected developing countries and helps them build operational monitoring systems through integrated analysis of space-derived information and in-season ground data. It also enhances the institutional capacity of national stakeholders, particularly the various line ministries and agencies, for effective drought management.
Effective Partnerships for Sustainable Development

Photo: (Naypong/Shutterstock)
Effective partnerships have long been critical to unlocking the human and financial resources, knowledge and skills necessary for the Asia and Pacific region to reach its potential in achieving inclusive and sustainable development. This is a future that is also resilient in the face of natural and economic shocks, thereby transforming the lives and futures of citizens in the Asia and Pacific region.

ESCAP has a long history in working to address regional challenges and priorities with a wide range of partners, including governments, donor agencies, United Nations and other international organizations, multilateral development banks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the business sector, and research and academic institutions. Drawing on this expertise, the secretariat has identified several critical success factors for partnerships that work best in the interests of peoples and governments in the region.

We strive to maximize the impact of resources, networks, experience, technical knowledge, skills and linkages that partners bring to the implementation of our work. Some of the key achievements under the ESCAP technical cooperation programme in 2014 are illustrated by the following selected examples:

• In cooperation with the Republic of Korea, ESCAP continued to implement the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific and promote eGovernment for women's empowerment policies and tools. ESCAP also partnered with the Government of the Republic of Korea in support of trade facilitation, transport, green growth policies and solutions, and the dissemination of capacity-building programmes on the use of ICT for development.

• Cooperation with the Russian Federation was instrumental in promoting the policy, normative and capacity development work of ESCAP in support of the energy and transport sectors, as well as in other joint priority areas, such as migration, statistics and ICT.

• Partnering with Germany, in particular Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), ESCAP worked to strengthen early warning systems for coastal hazards in the Asia and Pacific region through its Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and South-East Asian Countries. This partnership with Germany is part of the Global Initiative on Disaster Risk Management that is implemented through GIZ. The initiative brings together a wide range of stakeholders from Germany and the Asia and Pacific region, providing a forum for new and innovative ways of cooperation in disaster risk management.

• In cooperation with the European Union, ESCAP continued to promote sustainable agriculture and food security in member States through the Network for Knowledge Transfer on Sustainable Agricultural Technologies and Improved Market Linkages in South and South-East Asia by building technical and analytical capacity through technical cooperation in the area of food security and poverty reduction.

• With support from Switzerland, ESCAP organized a successful Asia-Pacific Outreach Meeting on Sustainable Development Financing (Jakarta, June 2014) aimed at fostering regional financial cooperation and strengthening the regional voice in global processes.

• Positioning itself as a regional hub for statistical training activities, ESCAP’s role, in cooperation with Japan, was further strengthened by the establishment of the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific under the ESCAP Committee on Statistics.

• In cooperation with China, ESCAP has been implementing a regional programme to promote the economic empowerment of women based on the South-South cooperation model. The programme promotes integration of a gender perspective into national development strategies, with a particular focus on gender-responsive budgeting, women's economic empowerment and gender-sensitive poverty eradication.

• With support from Kazakhstan, ESCAP initiated a project to support the development of biogas-based renewable energy solutions in the Pacific, focusing on the installation and roll-out of sanitation and energy systems in 10 SIDS. The project is based on successful experiences and lessons from existing biogas approaches in the Pacific subregion.
Did you know?

Total cash contributions received by ESCAP in 2014 for technical cooperation from sources within and outside the United Nations amounted to US$18.2 million.

Bilateral donor country contributions amounted to US$8.5 million, representing 46.4 per cent of total financial contributions.

The largest multilateral donor was the European Union with US$1.9 million.

The largest overall bilateral donor contributions were received from the Republic of Korea, Japan, the Russian Federation, Germany and China.