

Climate Resilient Low Carbon & Inclusive Growth in Asia

Background Note

The decade 2001-2020 was the hottest decade of the last century. The mean temperature in Asia rose to 1.39 degrees C compared to the average of years from 1981-2000 (WMO, 2021). Climate change is causing frequent and intense extreme events and has caused widespread adverse impacts and related losses and damages to nature and people. (IPCC, 2021). Asia reported the highest number of global disasters (2010-2019), leading to an estimated 1 million deaths and \$ 2 Trillion in economic losses (WMO, 2021). South Asia and the South-East Asia region is the most vulnerable region to the impacts of climate change. With the temperature rise, glacial melt is likely to increase, leading to flash flood episodes and reduced glacial cover over time, which is likely to lead to water insecurity in the region, affecting agriculture and hydropower. Increased ocean warming will further threaten coastal ecosystems, affecting the livelihoods of millions of primary producers dependent on fishery resources. Economic damages from climate change have been detected in climate-exposed sectors, with regional effects on agriculture, forestry, fishery, energy, and tourism sectors. It is likely to further exacerbate the vulnerability and exposure of billions of people in the Asia region, further compromising the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The region is likely to miss the SDGs unless efforts are accelerated to build resilience. (ADB, 2021).

The region also has the highest urban population in the world. Cities are the engines of economic growth, but with a highly dense population and aggregated assets, they are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Extreme events can lead to high damages to life, assets, interruptions in business continuity, opportunity loss, displacement of populations

in urban areas, further enhancing economic and social vulnerability and reducing the capacity of urban systems and services. Climate resilience response takes into account the anticipation and preparedness to respond to the climate stress/disturbance to continued functioning/minimal disturbance of the functioning of the systems and processes which could be affected by climate hazards. Resilient infrastructure is critical to building the resilience of the region. Climate-resilient infrastructure investments in power, telecommunication and transport are important to build the climate resilience in addition to improvement in infrastructure services and governance.

Energy demand in the region has almost doubled in the last two decades (2000-2020), which is majorly dependent on fossil fuels and coal. The region is also seeing one of the fastest urbanisation rates in the world. Urbanisation is one of the key drivers of global warming and the associated climate change. Cities worldwide consume a massive 78% of the energy and contribute to 60% of Green House Gas emissions. (UN-Habitat). The region is urbanising at a faster pace and is likely to further accelerate carbon emissions. Though the countries in the region like India, Indonesia and Vietnam have historically contributed to very low carbon emissions compared to the US, Russia, China, and European Union, the region is now facing a complex situation in curbing carbon emissions at the cost of compromising economic growth, which is essential for the socio-economic development of these countries. To reduce dependence on fossil fuels, investments in clean energy transition and decarbonisation are critical to achieving Net Zero commitments. The pursuit of inclusive economic growth and meeting climate commitments is a tough one which needs strategies, financing and collaboration in the region.

IPCC Sixth Assessment Report on Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability underscores how climate change is increasingly and disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable. It emphasises the urgent need for adaptation and the critical need for solutions that cut across

the sectors and systems and address social inequities to enable a more climate-resilient future for everyone. Climate Resilient Low Carbon Strategies combine strategies to deal with climate risks and action to reduce carbon emissions with a focus on improving social, economic, health and livelihoods. There is a need for analysing and deliberating on the pathways which are required to achieve Net Zero commitments for the countries in the region and also regional approaches to achieve climate commitments and sustainable inclusive economic growth.

IRADe with support from Asia Regional Office, IDRC, is convening consultation with key regional stakeholders, policymakers, and researchers to deliberate on the pathways and priorities to achieve climate-resilient inclusive development in the background of achieving Net Zero commitments. *Some of the key questions which we aim to discuss and deliberate are:*

- 1. What are the country-level/regional policy interventions to drive green infrastructure/ low-carbon pathways in the region?*
- 2. What could be the climate adaptation priorities to reduce the vulnerability of primary livelihoods of millions of people engaged in agriculture, forestry and fisheries sector?*
- 3. What is the importance and benefits of regional co-operation approach in building climate resilience and achieving climate goals?*
- 4. What are the research and Capacity building requirements to enable policy for gender sensitive and inclusive growth?*

References:

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