



Accelerating progress: AN EMPOWERED, INCLUSIVE AND EQUAL ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



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Preface

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development pledges to leave no one behind. At the heart of this ambition is a commitment to empower people, reduce inequalities and promote social, economic and political inclusion. This commitment defines the theme of the 2019 United Nations High-level Political Forum: ‘Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality’. It is directly relevant to countries in Asia and the Pacific.

Progress has been achieved on many fronts. Yet despite governments’ efforts, wide disparities remain in a rapidly changing region. Additional action is imperative and the inclusion and participation of marginalized groups such as women and youth must be part of our response. These are central to the region’s productivity and future. Giving them a voice and improving their prospects can make a major contribution to more prosperous societies.

To help translate aspiration into concrete policy actions, this report identifies four elements necessary to advance inclusion, empowerment and equality: rights and justice; norms and institutions; resources and capabilities; participation and voice. These are four areas where governments, development partners and the United Nations system can work with society more effectively to further empowerment, inclusion and equality.

Building on analyses, case studies and consultations, this report recommends that action should focus on three main areas. First, investment in research, disaggregated data and constructive social dialogue to address vulnerabilities. This will help refine our understanding of these groups, identify barriers and shape solutions. Second, the current unprecedented opportunity to harness new technologies and innovation, in particular information and communication technologies. Third, the urgent need to strengthen the participation and voice of people in the region. Enhanced civic engagement, which institutionalizes civil society participation across government structures, is critical to ensure that the interests of the most vulnerable are considered.

More agile, innovative and responsive approaches are needed to tackle risks, such as climate change, that disproportionately impact marginalized communities. Recognition of the rights and perspectives of these communities is integral to an effective climate response. Resources and financing will be critical to realizing these aspirations. More equitable approaches to domestic resource mobilization through taxation and public expenditure to meet the needs of those who are left behind can also play a critical role. While much work remains to be done, countries across the region are taking steps to modernize, simplify and extend tax administration systems.

The 2030 Agenda needs creativity and dedication from all sections of society. By harnessing the expertise, technology and financial resources of the private sector, financial community, academia and civil society, we can advance equality. We are pleased to issue this joint report as a contribution to the ongoing national, regional and global dialogues on opportunities to empower people, ensure their inclusion and advance equality.



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