

Science to Enable and Empower Asia Pacific for COVID 19 response – special webinar -

19 May 2020, Jakarta, Indonesia

Asia Pacific Recommendations of Action by the UNESCO Science Family in Asia and the Pacific in response to COVID-19 challenges

A webinar on COVID-19 was held on 19 May 2020, hosted by UNESCO Jakarta Office with support from Japanese Funds-in-Trust (JFIT) and Malaysia Funds-in-Trust (MFIT). The event attracted more than 1,600 regional stakeholders.

The webinar was a special event in the series of regional coordination meetings - “Science to Enable and Empower Asia Pacific for SDGs (SEE-AP)” - which have been serving as a platform to promote inter-disciplinary discussion and collaboration for peace and sustainable development. As a special webinar of SEE-AP series, experts from across UNESCO’s regional science networks and collaborators provided recommendations for action through an animated, interactive and constructive discussion. These recommendations reflect the result of these deliberations aimed at engaging the UNESCO science family to help resolve both technical and community challenges.

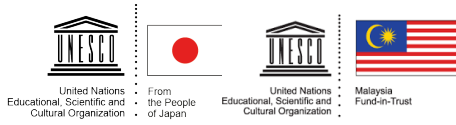
The Asia Pacific Recommendations reaffirms that UNESCO and its science networks will **work collaboratively to mobilize scientific research and innovation across Asia and the Pacific to strengthen the interface between science and society and to help deliver evidence-based policy actions for managing COVID-19 and other emerging challenges.**

Access to scientific knowledge is a basic human right. UNESCO and its scientific networks have a key role to play by helping to bridge the divides between advanced research institutes and emerging centres of excellence in both the academic and private sectors. Importantly, it can also bring much needed emphasis on region-wide and interregional south-south cooperation for sustainable development. The mobilization of this global scientific community during COVID-19 is testament to the increasing value of science without borders enabled by political leadership.

Science, Engineering, Technology, and Innovation (SETI) plays a critical role in ensuring the availability of up-to-date and reliable scientific data and educational resources through open science, citizen science, and sharing innovative solutions through ICT. Mobilizing science is critical to improving our understanding of the virus, and mobilizing water and environmental sciences, in particular, can help develop and implement measures to reduce its negative impacts on both people and the environment.

UNESCO’s site-based networks – World Heritage sites, Biosphere Reserves and UNESCO Global Geoparks – represent a unique regional platform through which we can focus actions to deliver the benefits of science, technology and innovation in response to the challenges posed by Covid-19, in cooperation with leaders and communities that are committed to serve as the vanguard for implementation of the SDGs.

The current COVID-19 is an unprecedented opportunity to rethink what we need to do and how we need to do it in order to achieve the future we want for all. This may well involve changes no one ever dared dream of, with new norms for work, school, consumption, and redefinition of critical basic services that provide greater resilience to disasters such as a pandemic and at the same time put the world on a better, more sustainable path.



Therefore, the Asia Pacific Recommendations for Action:

- Recalls the commitment made by participants at the 30 March 2020 webinar UNESCO Ministerial Forum for Open Science for COVID-19, on sharing data, scientific knowledge and tools for solving the COVID pandemic affecting Asia and the Pacific and the wider world;
- Reaffirms that pandemics extend beyond national and geographic borders and therefore, the value of scientific cooperation and the convening 'soft power' of science and science diplomacy is critical in ensuring widespread and timely data collection and sharing, conversion of data to information and knowledge, and sharing of knowledge widely to support evidence based responses at all levels.

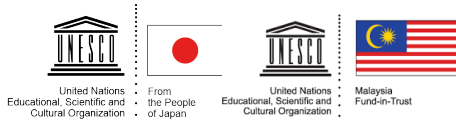
These recommendations call for immediate (up to 1 year) and medium term (2 to 3 years) actions outlined below:

Immediate Actions during Covid-19

- Formulate public and private research partnerships to reaffirm commitments to improve preparedness, capacity to develop mitigation measures and strengthen resilience to disasters including pandemics such as COVID-19 by providing open access to data, knowledge and information and capacity building staying vigilant to unexpected unknown subsequent risks;
- Strengthen national SETI ecosystems to support public–private partnerships for the design and upscaling of solutions and innovations for the benefit of all;
- Mobilize UNESCO-designated sites to serve as key places for delivery of science- and community-based Covid-19 responses and solutions;
- Engage and encourage youth and young professionals to continue to work on SETI for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), especially in relation with COVID-19 pandemic and to pioneer active sharing of information, data and outputs to be more widely accessible among the youth networks as well as the society;
- Urge UN partners, donors, professional bodies and academic institutions to establish a Regional Open Science Platform to enable accessibility and sharing of scientific information aligned to national priorities and international best practices, and to develop effective tools for mainstreaming science for peace and sustainable development nationally and regionally;
- Call on the UNESCO Science Family in Asia and the Pacific to use its long-standing role promoting international scientific collaboration to boost science, technology and innovation in order to reduce remaining knowledge gaps.
- Promote success stories which demonstrate the benefits of strengthening the interface between science and society to help deliver evidence-based policy actions for managing COVID-19.

Longer Term Actions – Post Covid-19

- Call upon all UNESCO science family members and their networks to mainstream gender equality, in both the research process and research content, and take into account the ethical dimension, while promoting efficient science communication, formal and informal science education as well as science literacy and capitalizing on emerging new realities and still unknown subsequent risks;
- Request sub-regional and regional science bodies to take leadership to mobilize science for disaster risk reduction partnerships in for all stakeholders by reducing the knowledge gap, sharing values and promoting the spirit of 'open science';
- Enable and mobilize UNESCO-designated sites to serve as key focal areas for the delivery and trialing of innovation and science-based solutions to emerging global and regional challenges, drawing on the particular strengths and qualities of each network.



- Urge the UN system to accelerate Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the spirit of the General Assembly resolution A/RES/69/313, known as the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda*.
- Empower the UNESCO extended science family to work on multi-stakeholder south-south collaborations between civil society, the private sector, the scientific community including regional science networks and organizations, United Nations entities and other stakeholders on open science, technology and innovation for the sustainable development goals.
- Review the cases, demonstrated benefits and outcomes of strengthening the interface between science and society to help deliver evidence-based policy actions for managing COVID19 to draw lessons for the management of future pandemics and other emerging challenges.