



COVID-19: Ten Priority Options for a Just, Green & Transformative Recovery

The COVID-19 crisis has painfully exposed the deep inequalities and fragilities of the social, financial, political and economic systems under which we live. It has amplified already existing inequalities and exclusion, both within and between countries and communities. As such, it offers a moment for global society to ask: How did we get here? Why are we vulnerable on this scale? And how can we recover?

Since 2015, the *Partners for Inclusive Green Economy* have been working together to build social, economic and environmental resilience, both globally and locally, through policy reforms that reduce system vulnerabilities.

Our work has led us to the following conclusions on the COVID-19 crisis:

- Our societies and economies must become better informed by science and better positioned to respond to uncertainty.
- The recovery should recognise the connections between human and environmental health, and go beyond merely responding to the pandemic towards building resilience to risks, including climate change, biodiversity collapse and widening inequality.
- To achieve this, stimulus and recovery efforts should address the underlying causes of these systemic risks, through inclusive, practical and targeted reforms and investments which balance socioeconomic and environmental priorities.
- Recovery plans should build towards the shared global vision of the Sustainable Development Goals and 2030 Agenda, which remain the most comprehensive and inclusive roadmap towards a positive future.
- The scale of public debt arising from the COVID lockdown risks severely reducing real or perceived fiscal space for public investment in many countries, particularly in the global South. Recovery spending should align with - rather than displace - essential spending on a green and fair transition.
- Collective action is needed to fund a strong, equalising and smart recovery. Investment will need to be driven by advanced economies with the fiscal space to make the crucial investments needed.
- Adequately addressing underlying systemic risks will require sustained effort beyond stimulus and early recovery phases, including longer term public spending and private investment. This necessitates strong support from society, implying that social dialogue and civil engagement in developing recovery policy is essential.

Informed by these conclusions, the *Partners for Inclusive Green Economies* offer 10 practical considerations for governments and other stakeholders, as we begin to look towards policies for our long term economic recovery and resilience.

We commit to collaborate with and support our partner countries and others in implementing this agenda. We invite other institutions to join our efforts to support all stakeholders to build back better, in a way that is just, green, smart, risk-informed and transformative.

10 priority options for a *Just, Green & Transformative Recovery*

- 1. The [Green Economy Principles](#) of Wellbeing, Justice, Sufficiency & Efficiency, Planetary Boundaries, and Good Governance** should guide recovery plans and actions. A just transition is one that leaves no one behind, upholds human rights, protects [the most vulnerable](#) in our societies and [creates new, green jobs](#). Underpinning these principles is the recognition that the participation of all stakeholders is core to a transformative recovery. Recovery plans should try to ensure diverse visions, values and priorities - of women, youth, and indigenous peoples - are considered. Many policy makers are already beginning to put some of these principles in practice, including in Amsterdam, Bhutan, Costa Rica, Iceland, New Zealand and Scotland.
- 2. Develop and actively use national green economy plans, 'Green Deals' and green industrial strategies and green COVID-19 recovery plans to build long-term resilience and prosperity.** Governments can integrate inclusive green economy approaches into initial macro and micro-level ['rescue' policies](#), medium term economic stimulus packages, and longer-term transition planning. The surge of support from [17 European member states](#) to keep the European Green Deal on track is testament to the broad consensus that a green transition is a prerequisite for future prosperity. Countries should use this opportunity to redouble efforts to meet the ambitions of the SDGs and Paris Agreement, monitoring their green recovery plans against NDCs.
- 3. Structure fiscal stimulus and financial aid packages to accelerate the transition to a fair and green economy - [not to undermine it](#).** For example, in response to COVID-19 governments can provide tax measures such as deferral or relief for vulnerable communities and industries, including small businesses, as in the case of Kenya, Italy and others. Austria and France are making their airline bailout conditional on adhering to the Paris Agreement; while Poland and Denmark are only providing financial aid to companies not registered in tax havens. Governments can also use [green economy assessment tools](#) to maximise alignment of proposed COVID-19 monetary and fiscal policies with a green recovery, and explore approaches such as debt-for-nature/climate swaps, biodiversity bonds, ecological fiscal transfers and other innovative, sustainable financing mechanisms. We encourage the transparent publishing of recovery plans and budgets so that civil society can help build consensus and [hold government to account for public spending](#). This should assist the balance between investment for recovery and longer-term transformation.
- 4. Recognise and value the role of nature in reducing risks.** Our societies and economies are dependent on nature, and [highly vulnerable to its accelerating decline](#). Governments and stakeholders should mitigate the risk of future zoonotic disease outbreaks by addressing their root causes. Governments should also look to renew environmental protection efforts towards CBD targets, as well as adopting nature-based solutions, natural capital accounting, and [public environment restoration schemes](#) which create jobs while restoring the environment. Historically Ethiopia, India and South Africa have implemented large scale public employment programmes that provided social protection and income while contributing substantially to environmental rehabilitation and resilience.
- 5. Build resilience to external shocks.** Investing in sustainable infrastructure and service provision for energy, food, water, health and sanitation is essential for building resilience to external economic shocks. These should go hand in hand with stronger public health and [environmental protection institutions](#) which ensure better air quality, water and sanitation, waste management and efforts to safeguard biodiversity. Resilience will also be strengthened by supporting small businesses, jobs and livelihoods; improving skills and education for a future-orientated labour force; and accelerating the deployment of digital and other emerging technologies. We urge support for grassroots efforts to build local resilience and put the sufficiency principle into practice through more sustainable consumption patterns.

- 6. Strengthen and broaden inclusive social protection mechanisms and advance human rights.** The pandemic is having a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups in society and accentuating both horizontal and vertical inequalities. Enhancing human rights - including social, economic, civil, and environmental rights - alongside the work to improve the [social safety nets](#) is of critical importance. Social protection measures include emergency social assistance, extending access to unemployment benefit to [informal sector](#) workers, assisting [enterprises and workers in the informal economy](#), one-off payments to affected workers, universal basic incomes, universal health care, labour market interventions, and more comprehensive social insurance systems. These must address longstanding deprivations, ensure minimum living standards for all, and renew the government - citizen social contract. The Spanish government's decision to lay the foundation for Universal Basic Income (currently means tested) as part of their welfare response to COVID-19 is one example; while France and Germany have retooled existing unemployment insurance to cater for workers in urgent need.
- 7. Accelerate the energy transition and tackle fossil fuel subsidies.** Ensure recovery accelerates and broadens the achievement of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, and that social, economic and health system resilience are prioritised in updated NDCs. According to the [IEA](#), low oil prices offer a unique opportunity to remove fossil fuel subsidies, which are economically as well as environmentally damaging; Nigeria's decision to scrap its subsidies is expected to save the government [at least \\$2 billion a year](#). The [African Union](#) has committed to advance renewable energy across the continent, where 600 million people do not have access to electricity, as part of the region's response to COVID-19.
- 8. Apply a gender-responsive lens to the recovery to effectively address underlying issues of gender inequality.** The pandemic has clearly led to gender-differentiated impacts, exposing women to poverty and inequalities. [Labour market inequalities](#) are visible in the wage gap between women and men, the high proportion of women in vulnerable employment in the informal economy, and the disproportionate burden of unpaid work which falls to women and girls. Intersectional gender analysis can be conducted across all plans and actions to better assess financial and social distributional impacts. Gender-sensitive emergency response measures that deliver decent wages and working conditions for women and men are being implemented in [Hawaii](#), under a feminist economic recovery plan that seeks to build an economic system capable of delivering gender equality.
- 9. Prioritise small and informal enterprises to accelerate the private sector transition to greener practices.** Small enterprises account for 70% of total employment globally and - though especially [vulnerable](#) to economic shocks - offer an important conduit for stimulating social uptake of green innovations. [Chile's Emergency Family Income](#) for around 4.5 million of the country's most vulnerable households illustrates the kind of tailored support that is needed for those in informal employment. Similarly, the Indian government is preparing a post-lockdown action plan to reskill unemployed migrant and informal economy workers, which comprise 90% of India's 500 million-strong workforce.
- 10. Improve global cooperation and coordination.** Strengthening shared governance in order to mitigate emerging economic and environmental risks is a particularly important priority. There is a role for a renewed multilateralism and collaborative crisis management, based on a strong science-policy interface and in support of societally-defined values and priorities. Supporting civil society in building alliances between diverse groups is key in developing a more coherent movement to express these values. A priority for this cooperation will be to resolve the resulting debt crisis and lack of fiscal space for recovery in many developing countries. Peer-to-peer exchange is to be encouraged as all nations are facing COVID-19 and need to prepare for a better recovery. Establishing national monitoring platforms to chart the impact of recovery measures on progress towards the SDGs, climate goals, biodiversity targets offers a potential opportunity for improved national and regional coordination.

Partners for Inclusive Green Economy is an initiative involving [UN Environment](#), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit ([GIZ](#)), the Global Green Growth Institute ([GGGI](#)), the Green Economy Coalition ([GEC](#)), the Green Growth Knowledge Partnership ([GGKP](#)), the International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ([OECD](#)), Poverty-Environment Action for SDGs ([PEA](#)), the United Nations Development Programme ([UNDP](#)), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization ([UNIDO](#)), and the United Nations Partnership for Action on Green Economy ([UN-PAGE](#)) and UN Research Institute for Social Development ([UNRISD](#))

The partnership shares a vision of a green economy that provides prosperity for all within the ecological limits of the planet.

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