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## Global Public Goods for Economic Resilience: Preparing for Future Novel Contagious Diseases



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The recent news of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine that is [90% effective](#) has sparked hope in stock markets that a global economic recovery from the Great Lockdown might be in the horizon.

Nonetheless, it would still be useful to reflect on the resilience of today's countries in the face of the risk of such hybrid health-economic crises. The question to ask is, should novel infectious diseases like COVID-19 occur in future, whether the world economy can withstand another year-long wait for a vaccine (in spite of the best efforts of the private sector), and whether the international community is resilient enough to mitigate the damage from such disruptions.

This draws our attention to three facets of the global economy which need to be revisited.

The first facet is international economic interdependence, and trade-offs this brings. Growth and job creation in the world economy depend on the continued movement of people and exchange of goods that globalisation allowed. The vulnerability exposed by the pandemic, however, is that the global economy is only as strong as its weakest link. The stability and prospects for world economic growth will no longer depend on the growth performance of the G-20 countries alone. The first global public good, is thus [global health diplomacy](#), or the international community's ability to ensure

that all countries, regardless of income status, are capable of health governance in managing future pandemics.

Secondly, cities are also critical in mitigating such risks at the country-level. Just like the global economy, the competitiveness, job-creation and growth potential of cities also depend on their highly networked nature. High densities of individuals and businesses in close proximity to one another allow for millions of person-to-person interactions on a daily basis, in the office and in malls/grocery stores, in public transport and along alleyways. As the authors of this article argued in a recent [article on the \*Interpreter\*](#), lockdowns are no longer a matter

of choice when a pandemic as contagious as COVID-19 hits cities, because the density of transactions occurring within them allows for exponential growth in infections. The next global public good will be the transformation of urban infrastructure, industries and ways of life at the country-level, in preparing for the next global pandemic.

Finally, the societal importance of social safety nets needs to be re-framed in the face of hybrid health-economic crises. Within a capitalist free market, those who have more resources, stand to gain more over the long-term from savings and interest; conversely, those having less will have poorer prospects

of growing their savings to weather future economic perturbations. Yet, the plight of less economically secure groups poses a risk to the country as a whole in the face of future pandemics, since the decision to self-quarantine at home translates to inability to work and to provide for the food and economic security of their households, as a previous [RSIS Commentary](#) argued. In this case, the provision of social safety nets no longer becomes a necessity for individuals alone, but a public good, since it enables the country to impose the necessary lockdowns to address the pandemic.

## Suggested Readings

- Nadia Kounang, "Pfizer says early analysis shows its Covid-19 vaccine is more than 90% effective," *CNN News*, 9 November 2020.
- Jose Ma. Luis Montesclaros and Mely Caballero-Anthony, "Lessons from Covid: Tackling disease with a city-by-city approach," *The Interpreter*, 29 October 2020.
- Takeshi Kasai, "From the 'new normal' to a 'new future': A sustainable response to COVID-19," *The Lancet*, 9 October 2020.
- Mely Caballero-Anthony, "Global health security – COVID-19 and global health diplomacy: Can Asia rise to the challenge?" *RSIS Commentary* CO20060, 2 April 2020.
- Jose Ma. Luis Montesclaros and Mely Caballero-Anthony, "Global health security – The burden of COVID-19: Urgent need for social safety nets," *RSIS Commentary* CO20043, 19 March 2020.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

### NEWS & COMMENTARIES

#### Australian scientists discover 500 meter tall coral reef in the Great Barrier Reef - first to be discovered in over 120 years

Scientists have recently discovered a massive detached coral reef in the Great Barrier Reef—the first to be discovered in over 120 years. Measuring more than 500m high, it is taller than the Empire State Building, the Sydney Tower and the Petronas Twin Towers.

**Schmidt Ocean Institute**

26 October 2020

#### UN builds momentum for restoring forests as world enters key decade for ecosystems

Next year marks the start of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, a rallying call for the protection and revival of ecosystems all around the world, which runs from 2021 until the deadline for the SDGs in 2030.

**UN News**

28 October 2020

#### 3 of every 5 'very high water risk' cities are in India: WWF

With 31 cities exposed to serious water security risks, India has run into a greater challenge than the entire continents of Africa or Europe. Consequently, India faces the second highest basin risk in the world after Palestine.

**Chandrima Banerjee**

**The Times of India**

3 November 2020

#### Glass shortage threatens solar panels needed for climate fix

The solar industry has turned towards bifacial panels. This has led to a shortage of glass, raising its costs and delaying production of new panels. Price hikes are making solar power too expensive and halting the industry's momentum.

**Dan Murtaugh, Qian Chen, and Stephen Stapczynski**  
**Bloomberg**

5 November 2020

#### 2°C of warming could open the floodgates for 230 billion tons of carbon to escape

Earth's soil contains nearly three times as much CO<sub>2</sub>, absorbing roughly a quarter of all human emissions each year. If the world warms by 2 °C or more, we risk turning that vital sink into a carbon spout.

**Carly Cassella**

**Science Alert**

7 November 2020

#### Revealed: Covid recovery plans threaten global climate hopes

The prospect of a global green recovery from the coronavirus pandemic is hanging in the balance, as countries pour money into the fossil fuel economy to stave off a devastating recession.

**Fiona Harvey**

**The Guardian**

9 November 2020

### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

#### Decarbonisation on a finite planet: A preliminary assessment of environmental and social impacts

The production of low-carbon technologies requires many more minerals compared to their conventional counterparts. Recycling technologies are not yet fully developed. These can intensify various environmental and social pressures on the Earth.

**Margareth Sembiring**

**NTS Insight, Singapore: RSIS NTS Centre**

2020

#### Global biodiversity outlook 5

Biodiversity is declining at an unprecedented rate, and the pressures driving this decline are intensifying. None of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets are likely to be fully met, threatening the achievement of the SDGs and undermining efforts to address climate change.

**Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity**  
**Montreal: Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity**

2020

### EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue

The dialogue will provide a space for the UNFCCC Parties and non-Party stakeholders to discuss how to strengthen adaptation and mitigation action on ocean and climate change.

**Virtual Event**

2-3 December 2020

#### 5th Anniversary of the Paris Agreement

The event aims to rally momentum and call for much greater climate action and ambition. These include more ambitious and high-quality climate plans, COVID-19 recovery plans, new finance commitments, and measures to limit global warming to 1.5 °C.

**Virtual Event**

11-12 December 2020



## ENERGY SECURITY

### NEWS AND COMMENTARIES

#### Singapore to import electricity from Malaysia under two-year trial

The trial aims to test and improve the technical and regulatory frameworks for importing electricity into Singapore. It would likewise help facilitate large-scale electricity imports from the region.

**Matthew Mohan**

**Channel News Asia**

28 October 2020

#### Nuclear energy study to be sent to Duterte by December – DOE

An inter-agency body created by Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte will submit to him results of its study on the possible inclusion of nuclear power into the country's energy mix by December.

**Eimor Santos**

**CNN Philippines**

7 November 2020

#### Floating solar farms at estates studied

Thailand plans to build floating solar farms as part of the government's Smart Energy scheme, which is in line with the global clean energy trend. The floating farms will supply electricity to manufacturing plants in the country's industrial estates.

**Lamonphet Apisitniran**

**Bangkok Post**

10 November 2020

#### Start of 140 MW with three new geothermal plants in Indonesia pushed to first half of 2021

Investments in the geothermal sector can be supported by the implementation of tariff arrangements that are deemed to be more competitive, as well as a number of incentives to attract investors.

**Alexander Richter**

**Think Geoenergy**

11 November 2020

#### Malaysia starts LNG bunkering operations; makes first delivery

Malaysia, through state oil firm Petronas, has ventured into the liquefied natural gas (LNG) bunkering business. It conducted its maiden delivery by supplying 1,150 tonnes of LNG to a vehicle transport ship in Johor.

**Reuters**

11 November 2020

#### Explainer: How hydropower dams can help ASEAN fight climate change

In this commentary, the author recommends that the construction of new dams must be halted or minimised, and instead countries must focus on diversifying the renewable generation mix and trading clean energy among them. While hydropower has negligible carbon footprint, it has an impact on the river ecosystem and adjacent communities.

**Stefano Galelli**

**Channel News Asia**

11 November 2020

### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

#### Advances in small modular reactor technology developments

This booklet provides the latest data and information on small modular reactors (SMRs) around the world, including detailed descriptions of 72 reactors under development or construction in 18 countries.

**International Atomic Energy Agency**

**Vienna: IAEA**

2020

#### The influence on energy and the economy of electrified vehicle penetration in ASEAN

This study analyses the effects of electric vehicle deployment in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam, especially in terms of energy supply and demand, CO2 emissions, the macro-economy, and employment.

**Shigeru Suehiro and Alloysius Joko Purwanto (Eds)**

**Jakarta: Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA)**

2020

### EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### NU-CLEAR: Webinar Series on Nuclear Power- Webinar 1

Speakers debunked the myths pertaining to nuclear energy and discussed the possible role of nuclear power in the Philippines' energy mix.

**Recorded Webinar**

22 October 2020

#### The Role of the Circular Economy in the Future of Fossil Fuels

A panel discussion by experts focused on decarbonisation scenarios and the potential of a circular carbon economy to achieve clean energy transition.

**Recorded Webinar**

30 October 2020

## FOOD SECURITY

### NEWS & COMMENTARIES

#### Food security in a pandemic: Lessons from India's lockdown

While India's ration card system provides food access at subsidised prices, this article argues that implementing such food security policies presents intricate issues especially across state borders, which can leave migrant workers in the lurch.

**Wesley Wu-Yi Koo**  
**INSEAD Knowledge**

19 October 2020

#### Urban farming a solution to food security issues during pandemic

Urban farming is currently on the rise in Indonesia as people across the country are forced to spend more time at home in an attempt to slow the spread of COVID-19. However, more initiatives, including the identification of alternative farming spaces, are still needed.

**The Jakarta Post**  
27 October 2020

#### Pandemic threatens Indo-Pacific food security

The pandemic is exacerbating existing threats to food security in the Indo-Pacific region, including challenges in growing and selling food, reduced incomes, biosecurity threats, and greater exposure to the impacts of climate change, with long-term implications for the region.

**Grain Central**  
10 November 2020

#### COVID-19 worsening food insecurity, driving displacement, warn UN agencies

Global hunger and population displacement, which were already at record levels when COVID-19 struck, could "surge" as migrants and those reliant on a dwindling flow of remittances desperately seek work to support their families, a new UN report has warned.

**United Nations**  
10 November 2020

#### Food security in peril amid suppressed rains: EAC bloc says

According to Intergovernmental Authority on Development, a drier than usual season linked to the La Nina phenomenon is expected in greater horn of the Africa region in the last quarter of this year, hence posing risk to crops and pasture for livestock.

**Xinhua**  
**CGTN Africa**  
11 November 2020

#### Global Food Security Cluster turns 10: Ending hunger is everyone's job

FAO Director-General Qu highlighted that the mission of the GFSC is even more relevant now as the COVID-19 pandemic has been upending other calamities, such as conflicts and pest outbreaks, and tipping more people into high levels of hunger.

**UN FAO**  
**ReliefWeb**  
11 November 2020

### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

#### A review of social science on digital agriculture, smart farming and agriculture 4.0: New contributions and a future research agenda

This article provides a comprehensive review of social science literature on digitalisation in agriculture, highlighting new themes in digital policy making and digital agricultural transitions.

**Laurens Klerkx, Emma Jakku, Pierre Labarthe**  
**NJAS - Wageningen Journal of Life Sciences, Vol. 90–91**  
2019

#### COVID-19 and global food security

This book provides key insights and analysis on how the global pandemic is affecting global poverty, food security and nutrition, food trade and supply chains, gender, employment, and a variety of policy interventions.

**Johan Swinnen and John McDermott (Eds.)**  
**Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)**  
2020

### EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### 'ASEAN on Point' Public Forum #1 - Ensuring the Resilience and Sustainability of the Agriculture and Food Sector in ASEAN in the context of COVID-19

This forum focused on the opportunity to reset towards more sustainable growth, highlighting the challenges faced by the agriculture and food sector as well as discussing policy options for the agriculture and food sector in ASEAN to overcome the adverse impact of COVID-19.

**Recorded Webinar**  
3 September 2020

#### Virtual WTO Agricultural Symposium: Agricultural Trade and Food System Transformation

This symposium will explore the role of international agricultural trade in transforming how food is produced, transported, and consumed, in light of the continued prevalence of extreme forms of hunger globally and climate change, among others. It will also assess and draw on the lessons learned from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on agricultural trade.

**Virtual Symposium**  
2-3 December 2020



## HEALTH SECURITY

## NEWS &amp; COMMENTARIES

**Lessons from Covid: Tackling disease with a city-by-city approach**

*Where COVID-19 has struck, it has struck hard because of the density of people living in cities. Two examples – Wuhan and Singapore – show that lockdowns of densely populated urban centres are effective if done right.*

**Jose Ma. Luis Montesclaros and Mely Caballero-Anthony**  
**The Interpreter**

29 October 2020

**Covid-19: Austria and Portugal announce restrictions**

*Austria and Portugal have announced new restrictions in an attempt to curb the spread of coronavirus, becoming the latest European countries to enforce new measures as the continent grapples with a second wave of infections.*

**BBC**

31 October 2020

**Covid long haulers describe the devastating after-effects of the disease**

*The damage caused by the virus can be brutal, and the burden of care will weigh on countries for years to come.*

**Jason Gale**

**Bloomberg Businessweek**

10 November 2020

**Where will poorer countries stand in the queue for a Covid-19 vaccine?**

*The news that joint efforts by the US pharmaceutical company Pfizer and the German biotech company BioNtech have produced a vaccine that is 90% effective at protecting people from COVID-19, has been understandably applauded. But how will the distribution of this finite number of vaccines work when there is only enough for one seventh of the global population?*

**Clare Wenham and Mark Eccleston-Turner**

**The Guardian**

12 November 2020

**Commentary: Pfizer reaches Covid-19 vaccine breakthrough – a step closer to pandemic's end**

*News that Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine is 90% effective is promising, but there is a lot more we now need to find out, says an observer.*

**Anne Moore**

**Channel News Asia**

12 November 2020

**China says it faces rising Covid-19 risks from imported cases, 'not right time' for travel bubbles**

*China is facing an increased risk of local transmission of the new coronavirus in the winter due to imported cases as the spread of the global pandemic accelerates.*

**Reuters**

**The Straits Times**

13 November 2020

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

**Hospital-provision of essential primary care in 56 countries: Determinants and quality**

*This study aims to estimate the use of hospitals for four essential primary care services offered in health centres in low- and middle-income countries and to explore differences in quality between hospitals and health centres.*

**Catherine Arsenault et al.**

**Bulletin of the World Health Organization, Vol. 98, No. 11**  
2020

**Addressing social determinants of non-communicable diseases in primary care: A systematic review**

*This study explores how primary care organisations assess and sub-sequently act upon the social determinants of non-communicable diseases in their local populations.*

**Luke N Allen et al.**

**Bulletin of the World Health Organization, Vol. 98, No. 11**  
2020

## EVENTS &amp; ANNOUNCEMENTS

**COVID 19 pandemic – Challenges and Opportunities for Adolescent Health**

*This webinar focused on the two critical domains that deserve greater attention during the pandemic: needs of adolescents for contraception and domestic violence among adolescents.*

**Recorded Webinar**

15 October 2020

**Exploring Hospital Based Healthcare Innovations from the ASEAN Region to Tackle COVID-19**

*This webinar explored healthcare innovations designed for use in hospital settings targeting patients and healthcare workers. It presented examples of affordable medical equipment, app-based services and patient-controlled technologies developed to tackle health challenges in hospital settings amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.*

**Recorded Webinar**

27 October 2020



## HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF

### NEWS & COMMENTARIES

#### Opinion: To finance resilience in small states, governments and development partners must take some risks

Because of their location and complex topographies with high frequency of hazards, the cost of building infrastructure and insurance expenses in small island development states (SIDS) are typically high. Borrowing their way to resilience is simply not an option; changes in mindsets are needed to tangibly advance the SIDS resilience agenda.

**Pepukaye Bardouille and Emily Wilkinson**  
**Devex**

23 October 2020

#### Shadow pandemic within the garb of Covid-19 in Rohingya camps

As the global attention towards addressing the COVID-19 pandemic is reaching its peak, the ubiquitous crisis of violence against women and children is rising in its frequency.

**Sreeparna Banerjee**  
**Observer Research Foundation**

27 October 2020

#### The death (and life) of the international NGO

After decades of growth, international NGOs (INGOs) are facing grow-ing competition, both within the sector and from sources outside the sec-tor. At the same time, INGOs face looming political challenges, economic headwinds, and ethical questions. The question now is whether INGOs can — or should — be reformed for a role in a rapidly changing world.

**Gawain**  
**Medium**

28 October 2020

#### Crises have changed. Can the aid industry?

The humanitarian system is not broken, or broke. But it is hopelessly ill prepared for our times, out of ideas, and running out of time. The author offers recommendations that may enhance the current system.

**Lydia Poole**  
**The New Humanitarian**

29 October 2020

#### Super typhoon Goni slams into Philippines, makes two landfalls

A super typhoon barreled into the southern part of the Philippines' main island of Luzon in early November, bringing catastrophic violent winds and intense rains that devastated several provinces.

**AFP**  
**Channel News Asia**

1 November 2020

#### Refugee situation worsens with the pandemic: Are we doing enough?

As many countries have closed their borders, which denies people the opportunity to seek/claim asylum, many are struggling to ensure healthy living circumstances and availability of essential goods. States must work closely with global humanitarian organisations and NGOs to effectively aid and protect vulnerable groups.

**Lavanya Pathak and Rishabh Mishra**  
**Plan International**

5 November 2020

### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

#### COVID-19: Six months on report — Asia-Pacific region “Stop the Setback”

The indirect socio-economic effects of COVID-19 are likely to be extensive, potentially reversing decades of efforts dedicated to improving human development in the Asia-Pacific. This report outlines the steps taken to address these issues by highlighting successful initiatives and suggesting ways forward in the region.

**Plan International**

2020

#### Gap analysis: The inclusion of people with disability and older people in humanitarian response (beyond the evidence)

This report looks at insights from individuals working in humanitarian response, and analyses disability and older-age inclusion in humanitarian aid. It identifies key gaps and presents potential methods for innovation in research and practice.

**Wesley Pryor, Manjula Marella, and Alex Robinson**  
**ELRHA and Humanitarian Innovation Fund**

2020

### EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### RSIS Webinar by Dr Kilian Spandler on "Saving People or Saving Face? Narratives and the Humanitarian Order in Southeast Asia"

This webinar examines new research on the narratives through which actors construct and contest ASEAN's role in Southeast Asian disaster relief. By presenting insights into humanitarian action in Southeast Asia, it provides a look into a deeply political arena where different conceptions of order are asserted, contested and negotiated.

**Webinar**

17 November 2020

#### The State of Protection in the COVID-19 Era

COVID-19 and its effects have increased the need for protection services all over the world. This event brings together a panel of experienced humanitarian actors to reflect on the state of protection in the COVID-19 era.

**Webinar**  
30 November 2020



## MIGRATION

### NEWS & COMMENTARIES

#### Migration plunges in Covid crisis, raising global economic risks

International migration has drastically decreased since COVID-19 pandemic began, with the issuance of new visas and permits by OECD members falling 46% in the first half of 2020 compared with a year earlier. This has raised concerns about the longer-term outlook of labour migration, a key driver of the global economy.

**William Horoin**  
**Bloomberg**

19 October 2020

#### Children, women, migrants all at increased risk of exploitation and trafficking during second COVID wave, UN expert warns

UN special rapporteur on trafficking, Siobhán Mullally, highlighted risks of exploitation faced by vulnerable groups including women, children and migrants in the current economic climate. While human traffickers are quickly adapting to online methods of exploitation, governments are struggling to catch up.

**United Nations**

28 October 2020

#### The EU migration pact: Why effective returns are necessary

The European Commission's New Pact on Migration focuses on strengthening returns and border security. However, if EU members hope to reduce irregular migration, more still needs to be done on opening up legal pathways for migration and improving the effectiveness of the system.

**Helen Dempster and Anita Käppeli**  
**Centre for Global Development**

30 October 2020

#### Women at the forefront of COVID-19 containment in Cox's Bazar

The Women's Committee in Cox's Bazar is on a mission to prevent misinformation about COVID-19, and ensure that women and girls are able to access essential health services.

**Hanindha Vidyasti**  
**International Organization of Migration**

3 November 2020

#### Mass migration: The deadliest factor in climate change

Climate refugees are fast becoming a reality, with regional migration being the mostly likely to take place and with it, increased border confrontations. Ten key migration routes will generally be from the tropics, which are likely to be highly affected, towards the less-affected temperate regions.

**Dan Lennon**  
**The Good Men Project**

4 November 2020

#### Joint statement from INGO's: ASEAN must prevent another "Rohingya boat crisis"

Groups such as the Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children, ActionAid and World Vision International have come together to issue a statement calling on ASEAN and the leaders of Southeast Asia to do everything they can to protect refugees ahead of the upcoming 37<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit.

**Norwegian Refugee Council**

11 November 2020

### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

#### Populations at risk: Implications of COVID-19 for hunger, migration and displacement

This report analyses the food security trends in major migration hotspots across the world. It examines the linkages between the current migration landscape and the implications of COVID-19 on people's mobility, livelihoods and food security.

**International Organization of Migration and World Food Programme**

2020

#### World Risk Report 2020 - Focus: Forced displacement and migration

With COVID-19 aggravating the precarious situation of many refugees/displaced persons, it is likely that the situation will worsen further the longer the pandemic rages unchecked. This report calculates the disaster risk of 181 countries by looking at natural hazards and the vulnerability of society.

**Benedikt Behlert et al., Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft and Ruhr University Bochum – Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict (IFHV)**

2020

### EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### The Post-Pandemic Ascent: The Role of Migration in Emerging from the Economic and Labor Market Turmoil

This webinar looked at the impact of the coronavirus on migration and mobility systems. It discussed the findings of the OECD's recently released International Migration Outlook 2020, on recent developments in migration movements and policies around the world.

**Recorded Webinar**

9 November 2020

#### Climate Mobilities: Migration, Im/mobilities, and Climate Change

This webinar seeks to investigate the assumption that climate change is directly causing millions of people to move from the Global South to the Global North. Examining this assumption from a 'climate mobilities' perspective, it highlights the diversity of mobility responses in the context of climate change.

**Webinar**

18 November 2020