

1. Realising economic social and economic rights are integral to achieving an end to poverty. Ending poverty in all forms is now, a much more complex in the context of Asia's rising debt, debt itself that has become much more expensive to pay back, and in many countries there is now inflation, linked to global conditions, along with the impacts of job losses from the pandemic and vast vaccine inequity.
2. In addition, we see that Asia has the deep inequalities, as a legacy of various policies and the conditions linked to loans from bilateral and multilateral lenders. There is also the deprivation that decades of colonialism has left too, where many communities have been marginalised, forced off their land, and left without assets and resources to ensure a right to development.
3. It is this context of growing economic divide that we recognise that ending poverty requires an integrated vision of States providing the minimum core essential levels of health, education and social protection. Contrastingly the progressive realisation of those rights is also possible in a number of countries in the region that are now comfortably in the middle income category.
4. In the Surge Initiative, we work as an interdisciplinary team of macroeconomists, sustainable development specialists and ESCR experts to understand the impacts of these issues that impact a country's ability to provide comprehensive social protection measures and address the underfunding of public services. It is the lack of a human rights approach to ending poverty is a barrier as well and in many ways, this is what the Surge is trying to address. For example, recent work has shown despite gaps in the quality and availability of education, budgets on a downward trend for education across the region. Undertaking budget analyses helps to provide evidence that can demonstrate how a lack of funding detrimentally affects different groups, like women and marginalised groups. It can also demonstrate whether States are meeting their obligations to provide economic, social and cultural rights.
5. We carry out this work with view to offering an understanding of the national policies related to spending in the vital areas of health, education and areas that would be required to see an end to poverty. Based on this, we suggest how human rights can be built into macroeconomic frameworks with a focus on bringing a reflection of root causes into Country Frameworks and Common Country Assessments. What we know from the experience of who has been most impacted by the pandemic is that particular groups experience deprivation on several levels to the point that their exclusion will require remedying income

poverty, as well providing their rights to essential services. For example, in Nepal we have worked with civil society to analyse the right to reproductive and sexual health of women in Nepal working in exploitative layers of work in the informal sector.

6. The resources to realise these rights is the biggest challenge today. Debt levels and the risk of debt distress has made fiscal space restricted, as we have seen in our recent analysis in Lao PDR, working with the Resident Co-ordinators Office. There is a change in policies that will be needed to achieve Goal 1 and to protect and promote ESCRS. Most immediately, **fiscal measures to shield incomes from shocks will continue to be needed**. Food and energy are a large share of consumption for low and middle-income households. The surge teams work is geared towards the need for fiscal budget has to be re-orientated to address the protection and promotion of ESCRS. It is also important to do this work with a long-term focus - when subsidies are provided, they usually end up being paid for by indirect taxation, on commonly consumed items, which is often detrimental for groups experiencing poverty as a large share of their budget is usually allocated to consumption. Overall, there must be a focus on improving transparency and public participation, including of women and marginalised groups in the design and implementation and evaluation of fiscal policies to ensure minimum core essential obligations for the rights to food, health, education and social security are delivered to meet those most left behind.
7. Finally, we do consider the impact of economic inequality, the gap between the wealth of the richest people and those who own and earn the least means, especially as we see rising inequality regionally, and what this means effort to protect and promote economic and social and cultural rights. This is a region where it is not unusual to see the wealthiest 10% consuming as much as all of the 50% at the bottom end of the income distribution. People's ability to thrive is linked to the ability to feed themselves and their families and for children and to be able to access work and be able to afford transport to their livelihoods. The number of protests on these issues alone across the region tells us that the prevailing economic model is failing most people.
8. **Longer term:** Reform of tax structures and the need for progressive principles that will be rights'- enabling and promote gender equality would be important. There is also a need to expand fiscal space through a tax on wealth and the obligation for the private sector to pay its fair

share and consider inclusive economic models that reflect policies for the achievement of rights.