

## **End Poverty: Global Challenges, Big Ideas, and Good Practice**

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Poverty and Inequality are inseparable. Unfortunately, ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions is in jeopardy now. ‘UN’s SDG Report 2022’ provides the evidence of the destructive impacts of the cascading and intersecting global crises and conflicts, especially the COVID-19 pandemic, on ending poverty. An additional 75 million to 95 million people living in extreme poverty in 2022, compared with pre-pandemic projections. Extreme poverty means income below the international poverty line of \$1.90 per day. What is more, inflation hikes even per meal. For instance, a big mac costs \$3.99 (price on February 4, 2023).

As poverty pummels the world, the enjoyment of all human rights is in peril, more critical today than ever. Asian Hate is a prime example of this. Whenever looking at the cover photo on The New Yorker (April 5, 2021), as a female professor, Asian, I always feel very sad. Look at them, mother and her darling girl. On their way to home. However, they find themselves isolated in their city, feeling insecure and anxious, keeping looking around, looking up to the hardest glass ceiling of race, and culture. A big sigh!

So, we have to Ask What YOU Can Do? Thanks to the platform of Asia and the Pacific regional seminar on the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights, we can bring together insights and key good practices.

I led my team and conducted a project through international development analysis and area empirical analysis (mainly focusing on Asian Pacific region), and concluded the three key strategies on battling poverty.

### **I Economic Opportunity**

Economic growth is the engine behind the economic opportunity fair for all. For instance, China, from 2020 to 2022, according to the report issued by Department of National Economy of the National Development and Reform Commission of China, on February 7, 2023, the country’s economy posted an annual average growth of 4.5 percent, outpacing the world average of around 2 percent. A total of 11.86 million, 12.69 million, and 12.06 million new urban jobs were created in 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively, all surpassing the targets set for each year.

The beneficiaries of economic growth are the people. For instance, according to the World Bank’s statistics, the ASEAN countries’ unemployment rate has been declined, and more economic opportunities are created driven by the economic growth. Cambodia: decreased to 0.10 percent in 2017 from 0.20 percent in 2016; Laos: a record low of 0.60 percent in 2015, 2016, 2017; Thailand: Averaged 1.41 percent (2019, 1 percent), and Vietnam: averaged 2.34 percent from 1998 until 2019.

### **II Access to Education**

The pivotal role of the digital economy in spurring economic development, in particular, under COVID-19, is globally well-recognized. Not only will the digital

economy bring paid cyber jobs within the reach of millions of households around the world, it will also, by boosting the demand for mobile-internet access, create a virtuous circle which encourages more investment in infrastructure, and in turn puts more people in touch with the growing global economy. It gives people hope and benefits.

However, the project for youth granted by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UNFAO) and led by Ruolin Hou, a Chinese youth found the effects of digital economy go beyond traditional employment and skills to the very organization of work in new ways, which cannot be overcome by individuals on their own. Without action from governments, and international organizations, above all, the UN, one generation may lag behind.

As such, enhancing digital employability, promoting skills and preparedness through vocational education and training hold the key.

China, always puts education for all on the top of its list. In the 1950s, and 1960s, then, poverty, backwardness, and illiteracy—the urgent problems were stinging the whole country. In rural area amounting to 90 percent of China’s total population in the 1950s. To help the Chinese people to learn knowledge with more ease, China took varied efforts including simplifying Chinese characters, crafting Chinese pinyin, and textbooks were compiled, and sold at very affordable price. Free classes were accessible to nearly everyone from workers, peasants, to housewives.

In the new era, to support Chinese shift from low-skilled workers, cheap labor to skilled ones via vocational education is critical for China’s education reform. The major measures include:

- Strengthen class-industry convergence
- Establish modular, competency-based curriculum
- Enhance management, assessment, and quality assurance
- Upgrade the hardware and software (educational quality)

Vietnam, the youth participation rate increased from 37.1 percent in 2007 to 43.8 percent in 2009 to 55 percent in 2019. One of the pillars is the reformation of vocational education policy under digital economy. It is a result of the coupling of internal and external factors in order to stop the foreign investment from draining, and serve the reconstitution of national industry. Vietnam’s primary goal is focused on the national vision on knowledge economy, attraction to foreign investment connected with digital economy, and improvement in quality of labor force. Four major points to this: forming a government-led-and-social forces-supported structure; establishing a five-layer system so as to effectively improve the quality of vocational education; propelling the mode of qualification certificate guided by law; upholding standardization and networking as direction of the development of Vietnam’s vocational education.

### **III Cooperation and coordination**

The World Economic Forum’s ‘The 2021 Global Risks Report’ puts “Fractured Future” as one of the biggest challenges confronting sustainable development. Also, the UN Secretary-General Guterres in his 2023 New Year’s Message emphasized, we need dialogue, peace with one another, peace with nature and our climate.

Asia’s good practice that may ignite the world——focusing on cooperation and coordination. Some prime examples, “APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040”, Belt and Road

Initiative (BRI), Lancang-Mekong Cooperation, and so forth.

Ask what can cooperation and coordination create? The GDPs of the ASEAN countries increased by billions in U.S. dollars over the ten years. The sustainable development entitles a steady poverty reduction in Asia. Cooperation and coordination are the foundation of all of these outcomes.

#### **IV Conclusion**

We live in a globalized world. In this inter-link yet ever-changing world, our behavior and actions shall have consequences for the others, and the world's problems shall have consequences for us (Anthony Giddens).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development identifies the commitment to “End poverty in all its forms everywhere”. We shall never weaken, nor surrender, we will move on together toward an even brighter future but for all countries, for all people. With the UN, we beat on boats against the current.