

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT OUTLOOK 2021

Asia remains resilient, amid divergent
recovery paths

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ADO 2021: Key messages

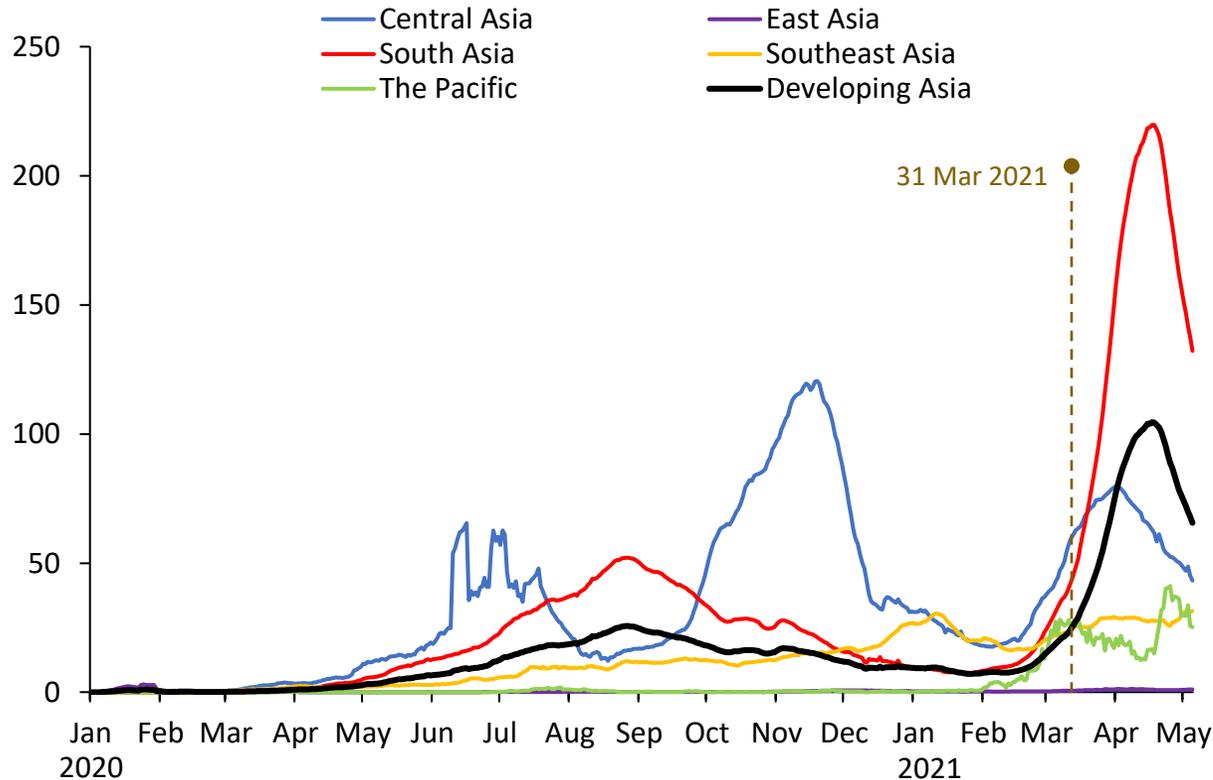
- Renewed COVID-19 outbreaks show **the pandemic is far from beaten**, and vaccination plans are still in early stages
- **Recovery paths diverge**, as exports boost growth in some economies, while containment and travel restrictions restrain it in others
- Developing Asia's **growth will rebound** to 7.3% in 2021 and 5.3% in 2022, while inflation will remain muted at 2.3% in 2021 and 2.7% in 2022
- **The main risk still stems from the pandemic**
- The **theme chapter, *Financing a Green and Inclusive Recovery***, documents the rapid rise of green and social finance and the positive impacts it can bring

The pandemic is far from beaten, and vaccination campaigns are still in early stages in most of the region.

After peaking in September, new cases declined, but they have recently picked up in many parts of developing Asia.

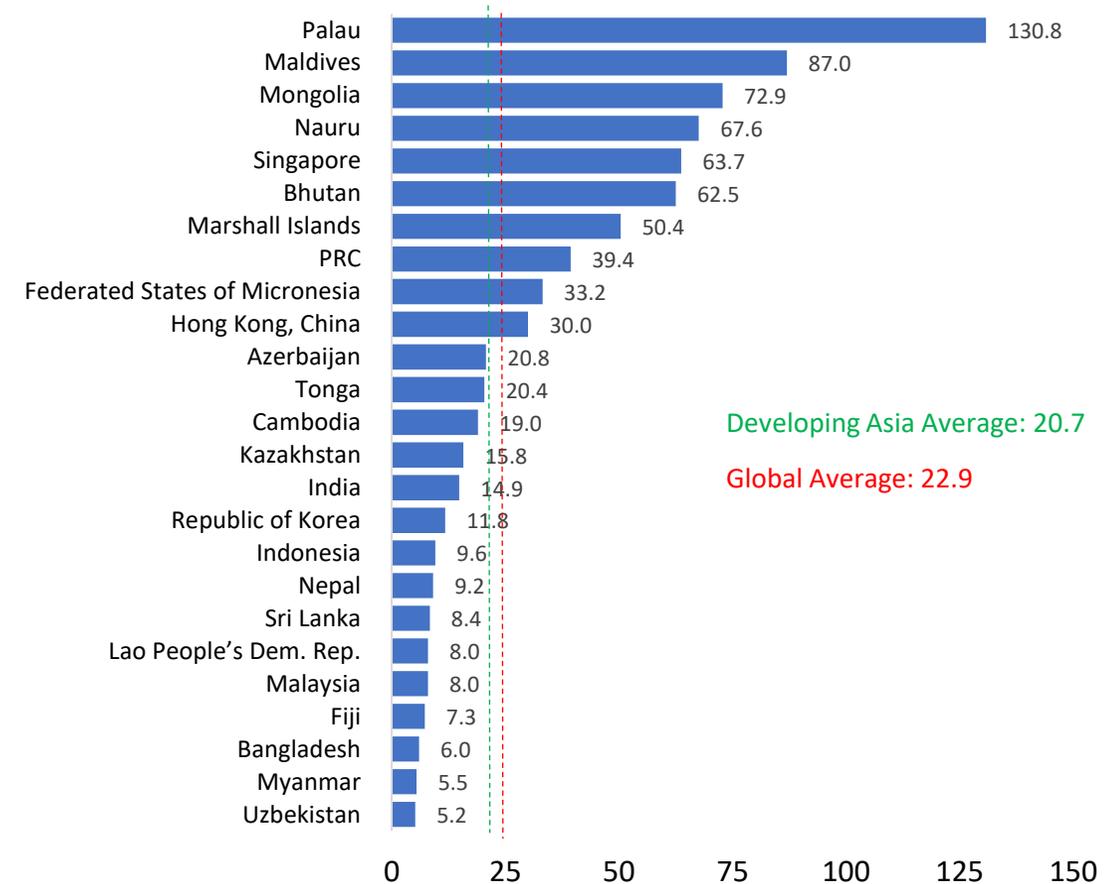
Covid-19 daily cases

New cases, 7-day moving average, per million population



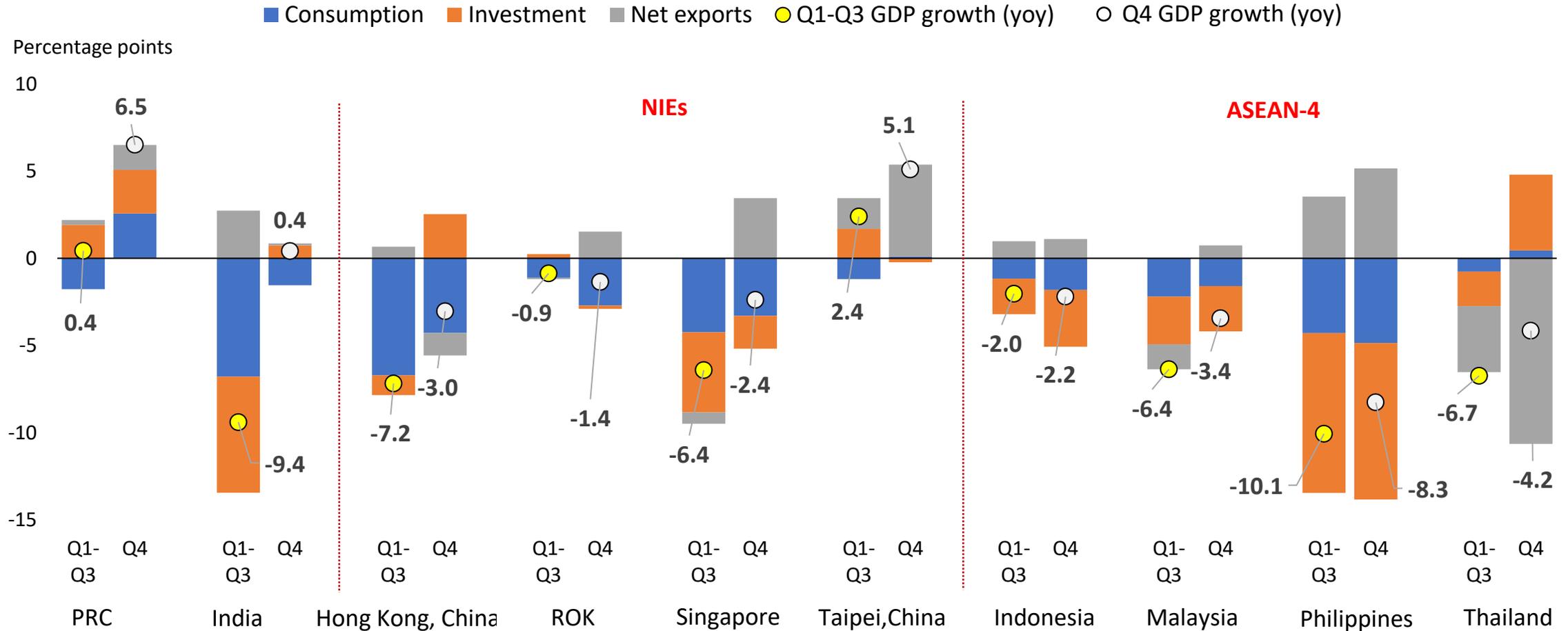
Vaccination progress is uneven and is in early stages in most of the region's larger economies.

Total doses administered per 100 people



Economies are turning the corner at different speeds.

Growth improved in most large regional economies in Q4, but to varying degrees, supported by improving domestic and external conditions.



PRC = People's Republic of China, ROK = Republic of Korea, yoy = year on year.

Data refers to calendar year quarters.

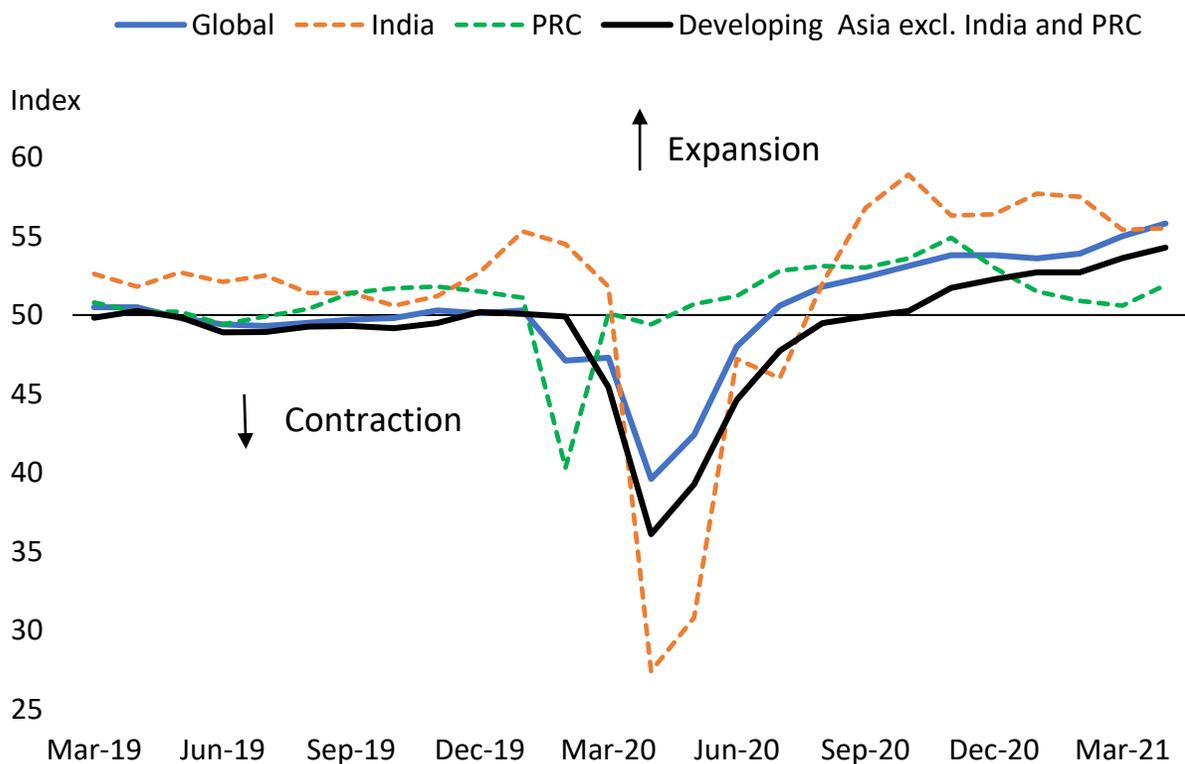
Source: CEIC Data Company.

Positive momentum in global activity is supporting an upturn in Asia, boosted by exports...

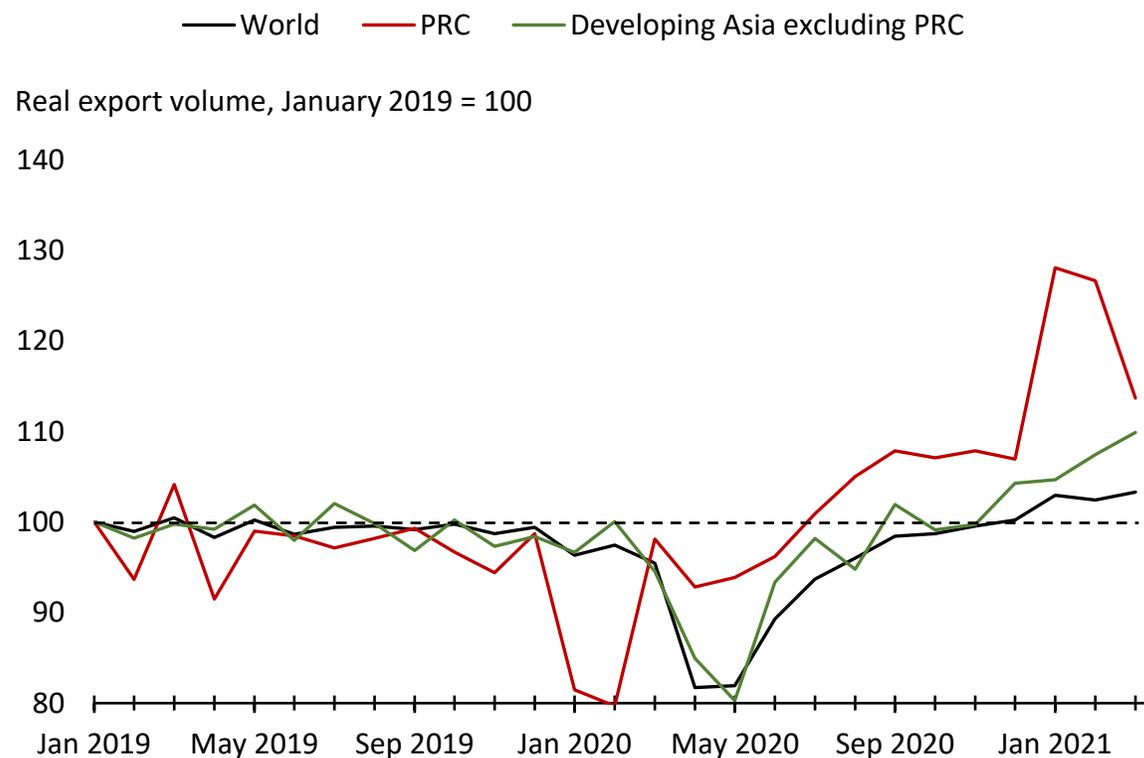
Manufacturing activity continued to improve in early 2021...

...accompanied by a faster-than expected recovery of exports.

Manufacturing purchasing managers' index



Real exports



PRC = People's Republic of China
Source: CEIC Data Company.

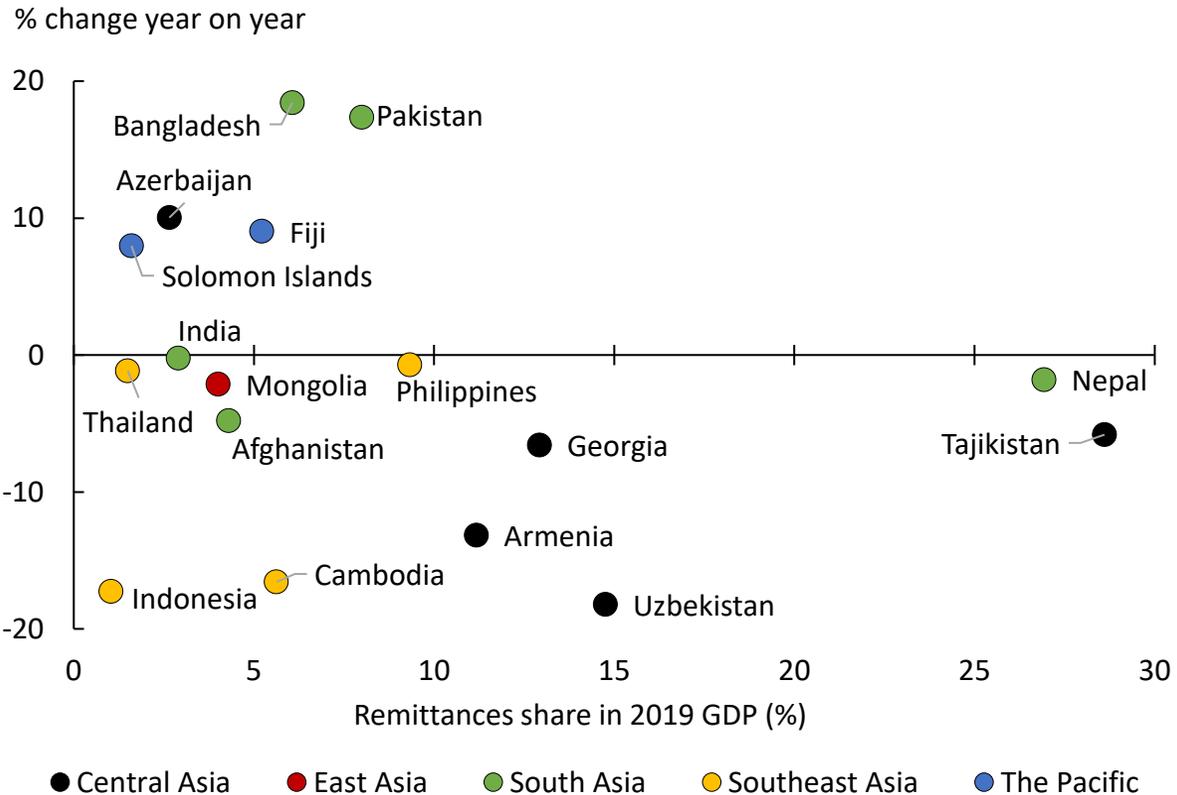
PRC = People's Republic of China; Developing Asia excluding the PRC comprises Hong Kong, China; India; Indonesia; the Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Pakistan; the Philippines; Singapore; Taipei, China; Thailand; and Viet Nam.
Source: CPB World Trade Monitor.

...and relatively resilient remittances. Tourism however has yet to recover

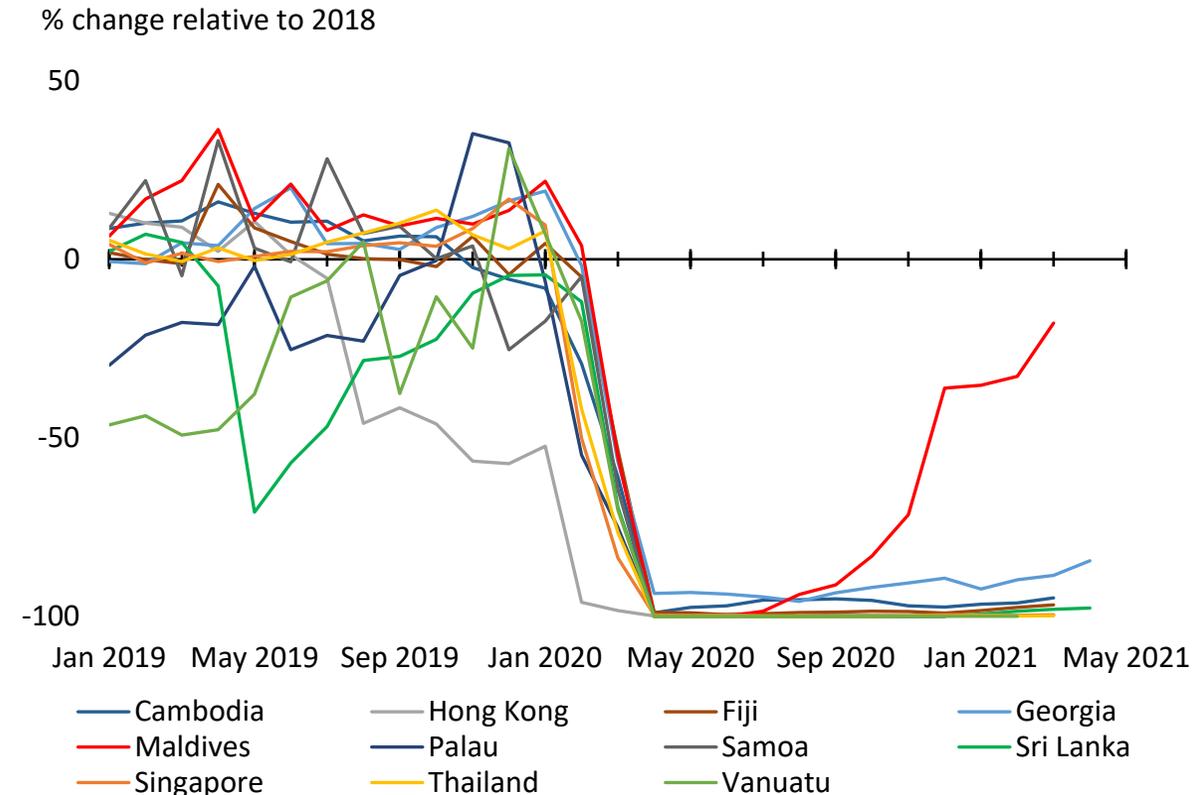
Remittances were relatively resilient, but with wide variation; declines were large in much of Central Asia.

International tourist arrivals, on the other hand, have mostly remained depressed.

Remittances share in GDP and changes in remittance inflows, 2020



Tourist arrivals



Note: The sample is restricted to economies where remittances accounted for at least 1% of GDP in 2019.

Sources: International Monetary Fund; World Bank.

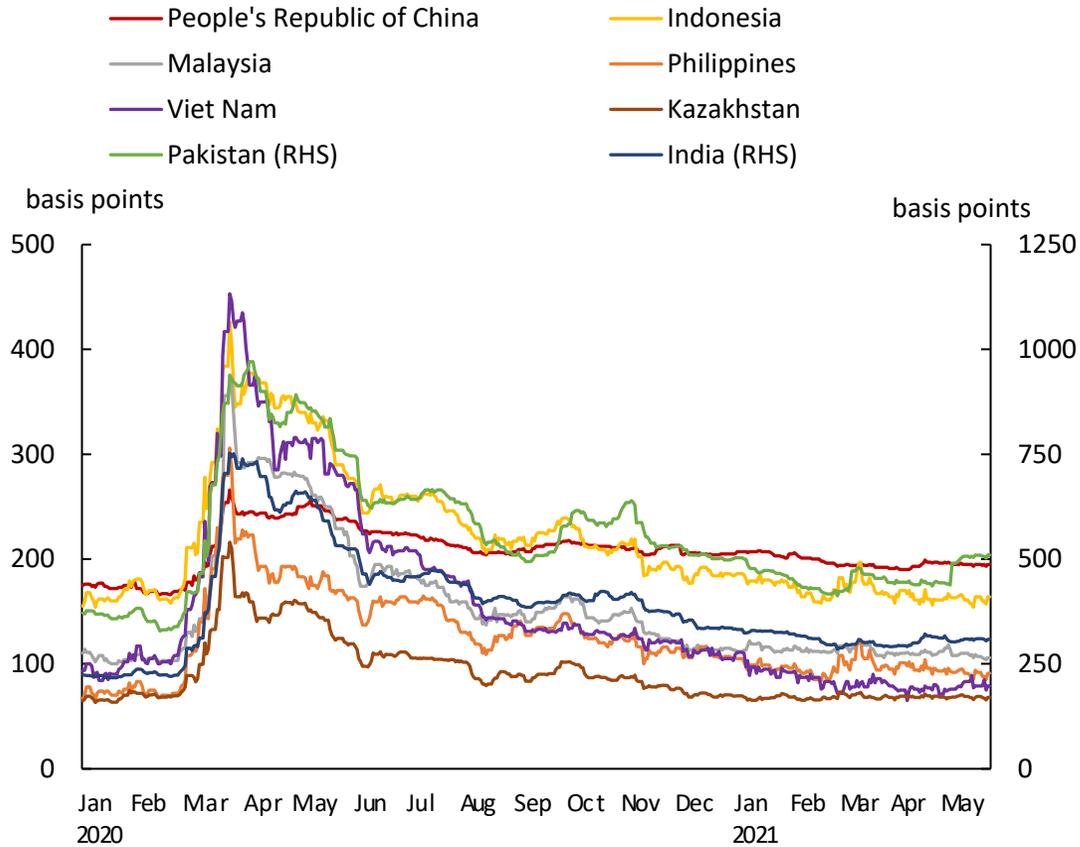
Note: The sample is restricted to economies where tourism accounted for at least 5% of GDP in the latest year with available data during 2017–2019.

Sources: CEIC Data Company; national sources.

Buttressed by the economic recovery and substantial policy support, financial conditions and risk sentiment continued to improve.

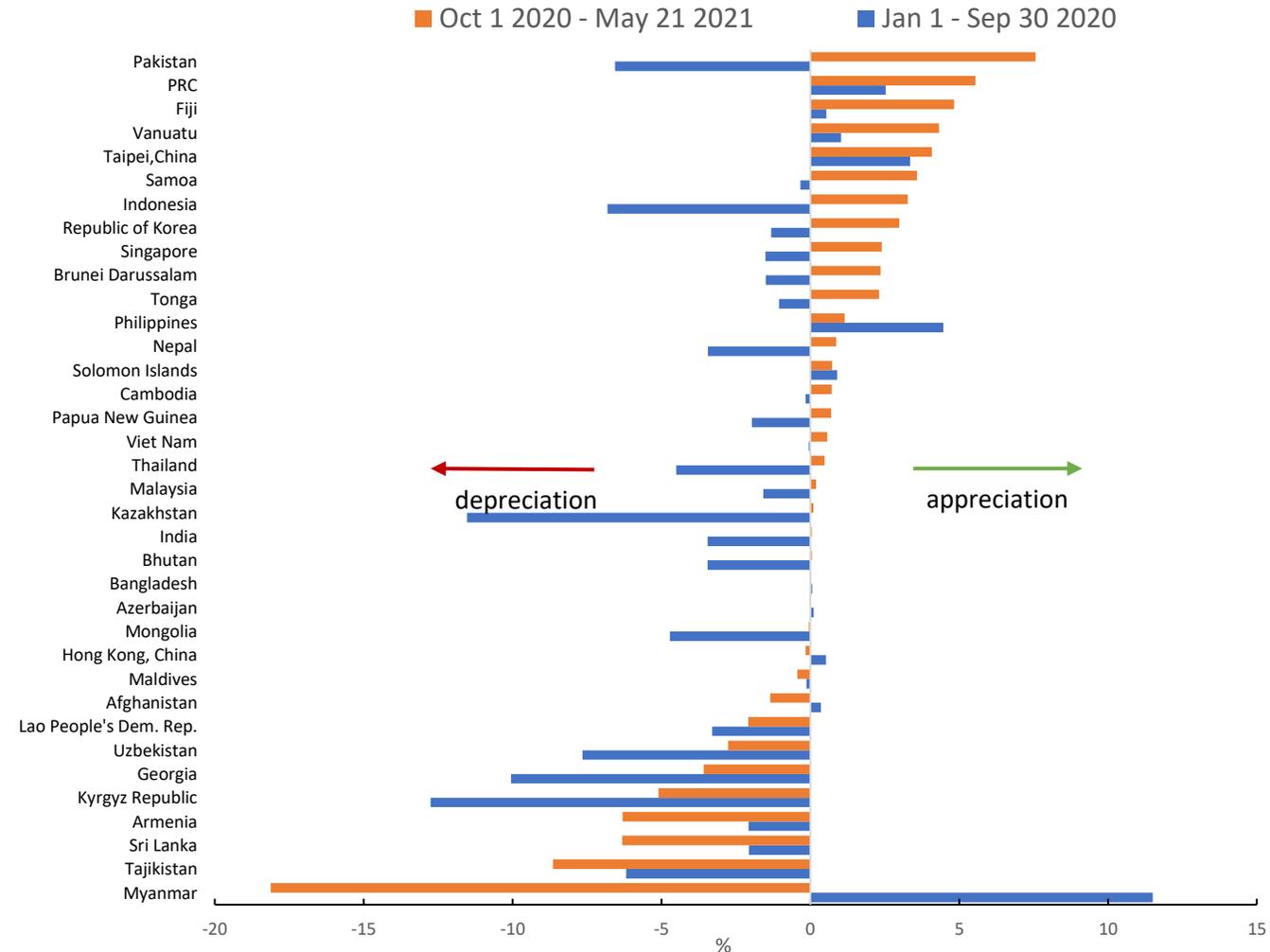
Risk premiums continued to recede since late 2020, but widened slightly in March on rising US bond yields

JP Morgan EMBI stripped spreads



Source: Bloomberg.

Most regional currencies strengthened against the USD since Q4 2020, but a few continued to depreciate



Economic activity in developing Asia is projected to rebound...

The outlook is positive, but recovery paths vary.

GDP growth in developing Asia, in %

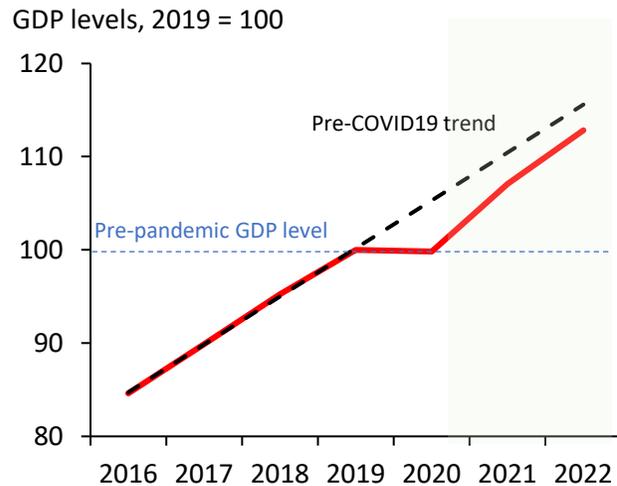
	2020	2021	2022		2020	2021	2022
East Asia	1.8	7.4	5.1	South Asia	-6.0	9.5	6.6
Hong Kong, China	-6.1	4.6	4.5	Bangladesh	5.2	6.8	7.2
People's Republic of China	2.3	8.1	5.5	India	-8.0	11.0	7.0
Republic of Korea	-1.0	3.5	3.1	Pakistan	-0.4	2.0	4.0
Taipei, China	3.1	4.6	3.0				
				Central Asia	-1.9	3.4	4.0
Southeast Asia	-4.0	4.4	5.1	Kazakhstan	-2.6	3.2	3.5
Indonesia	-2.1	4.5	5.0	Uzbekistan	1.6	4.0	5.0
Malaysia	-5.6	6.0	5.7				
Philippines	-9.6	4.5	5.5	The Pacific	-5.8	1.4	3.8
Singapore	-5.4	6.0	4.1	Fiji	-19.0	2.0	7.3
Thailand	-6.1	3.0	4.5	Papua New Guinea	-3.3	2.5	3.0
Viet Nam	2.9	6.7	7.0				
Developing Asia	-0.2	7.3	5.3	Excluding NIEs	0.0	7.7	5.6

Note: Data for Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan are on fiscal year basis, with FY2021 ending 30 June 2021 for Bangladesh and Pakistan and ending 31 March 2022 for India.

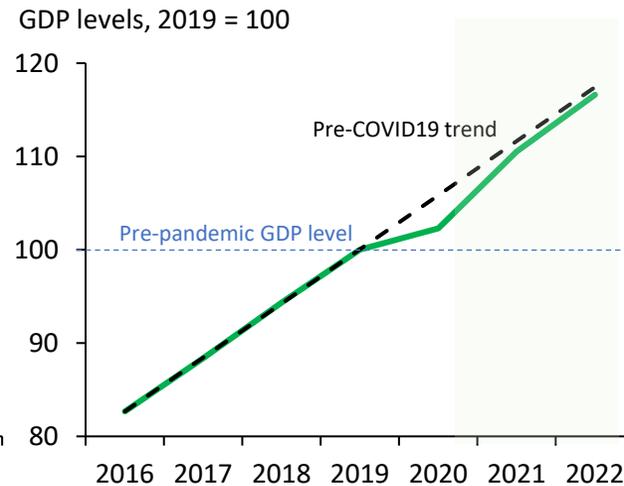
...but the path of GDP will remain below its pre-pandemic trend, to varying degrees.

Developing Asia contracted mildly as resilience in the PRC offset weaknesses elsewhere

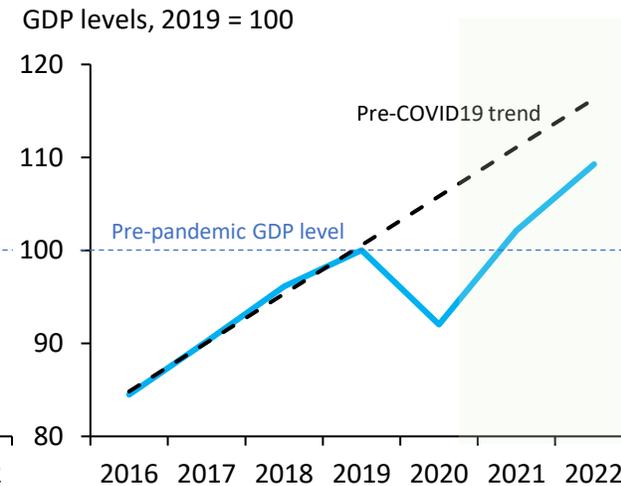
A. Developing Asia



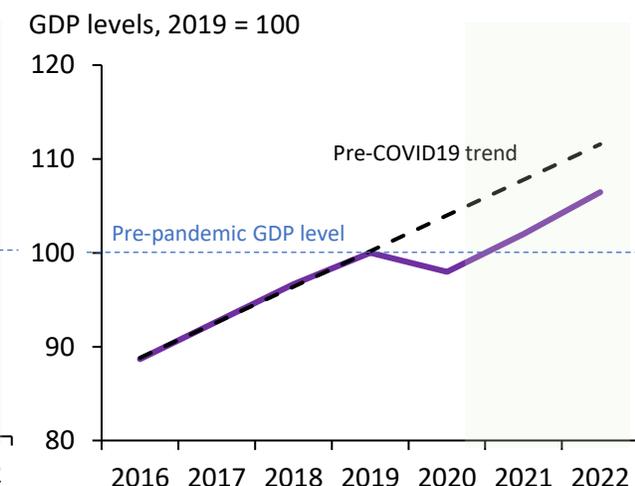
B. People's Republic of China



C. India



D. Rest of developing Asia

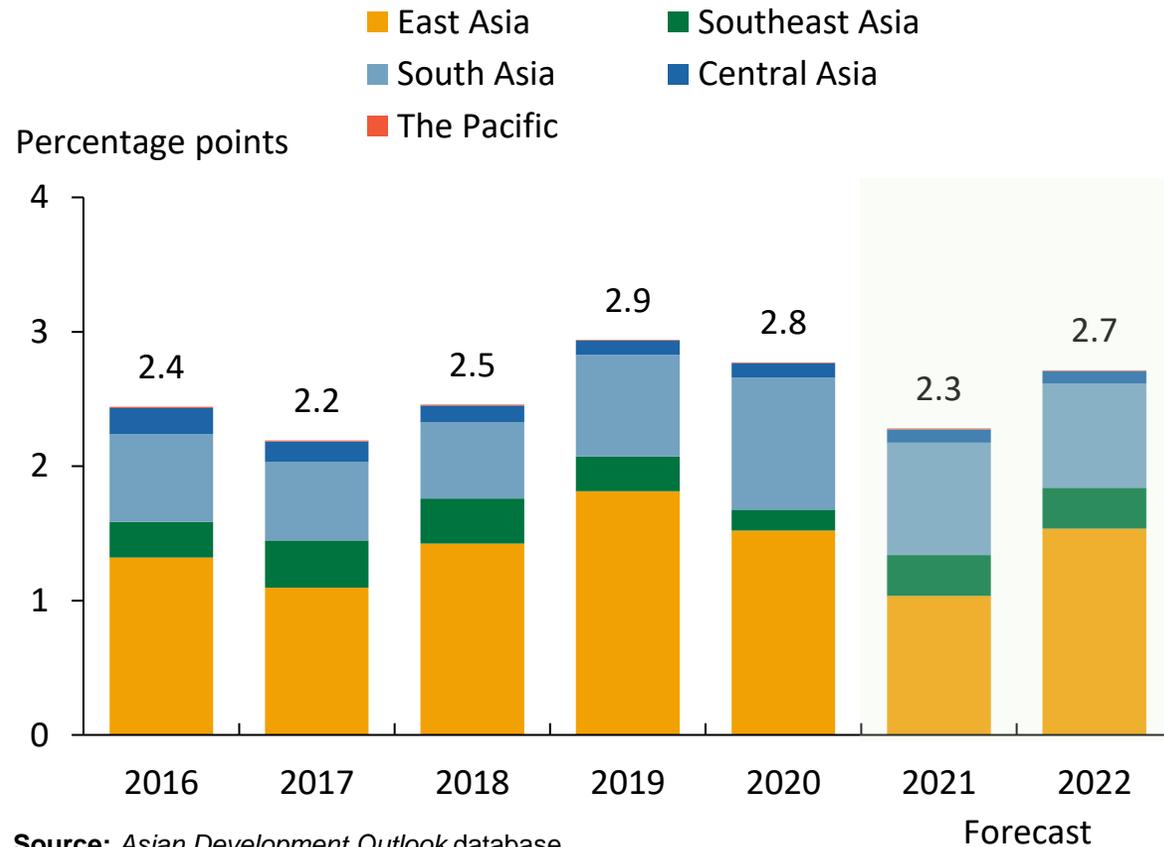


Source: Asian Development Outlook database.

Inflation will remain benign.

Economic slack due to the pandemic will dampen inflation this year.

Inflation in developing Asia



Source: Asian Development Outlook database.

In a still uncertain environment, risks remain tilted to the downside.

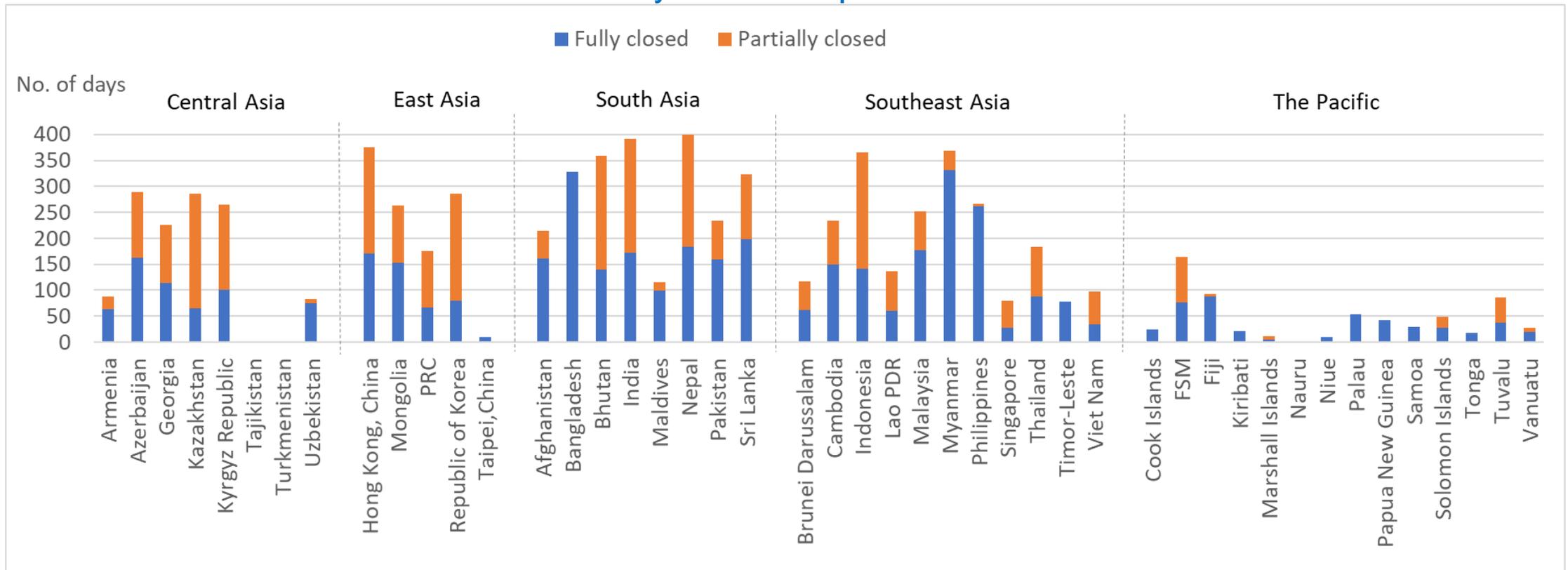
- The most significant threat to the outlook is an unfavorable evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic—significant renewed outbreaks, and delayed vaccine programs.
- Other risks to the outlook include geopolitical tensions (including between the US and the PRC), political turmoil, supply chain bottlenecks, and possible tightening of financial conditions.
- The COVID-19 pandemic may leave behind long-term scarring effects, such as learning losses from school closures or limited ability to invest in a green and inclusive recovery.

The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted education...

Schools were closed to varying degrees across developing Asia, leading to substantial learning losses.

Number of days schools were partially or fully closed

February 2020 to April 2021



Sources: UNESCO COVID-19 Response. <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>; for Hong Kong, China and Taipei, China, Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker (Hale et al. 2020). www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/covidtracker.

...leading to substantial losses in learning and earning.

Present value of lost future earnings

Subregion	Losses in lifetime earnings, current \$ million			Losses in lifetime earnings, % of 2020 GDP		
	Optimistic	Intermediate	Pessimistic	Optimistic	Intermediate	Pessimistic
Central Asia	8,127	11,361	15,572	2.2	3.1	4.2
East Asia	551,989	896,251	1,340,785	3.3	5.4	8.1
South Asia	171,866	195,787	230,083	5.1	5.9	6.9
Southeast Asia	109,454	147,503	197,366	3.6	4.9	6.5
The Pacific	169	247	349	2.5	3.7	5.2
Developing Asia	841,604	1,251,149	1,784,155	3.6	5.4	7.6

Note: These estimates do not include the following economies because data are not available for at least one parameter: Afghanistan; Bhutan; the Cook Islands; Maldives; the Federated States of Micronesia; Kiribati; the Marshall Islands; Niue; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Solomon Islands; Taipei, China; Tonga; and Tuvalu.

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Financing a green and inclusive recovery

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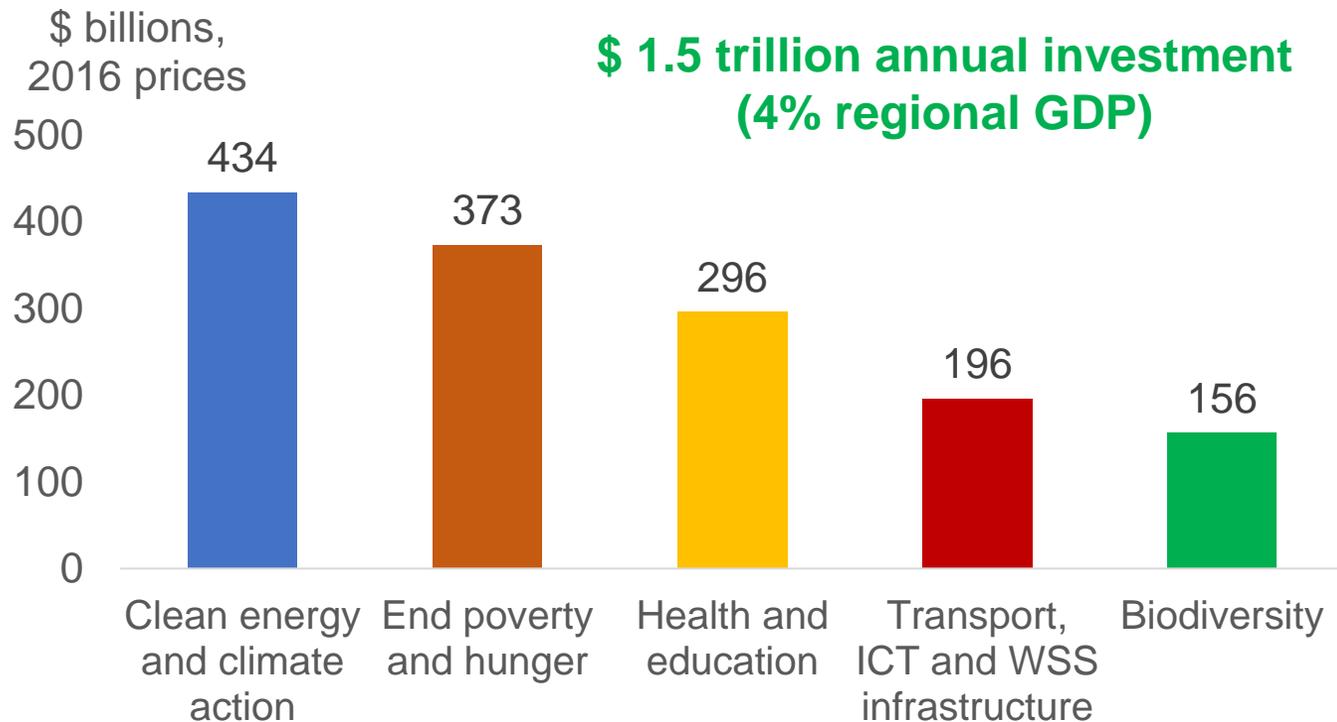
THEME CHAPTER

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Building back better requires green and social finance

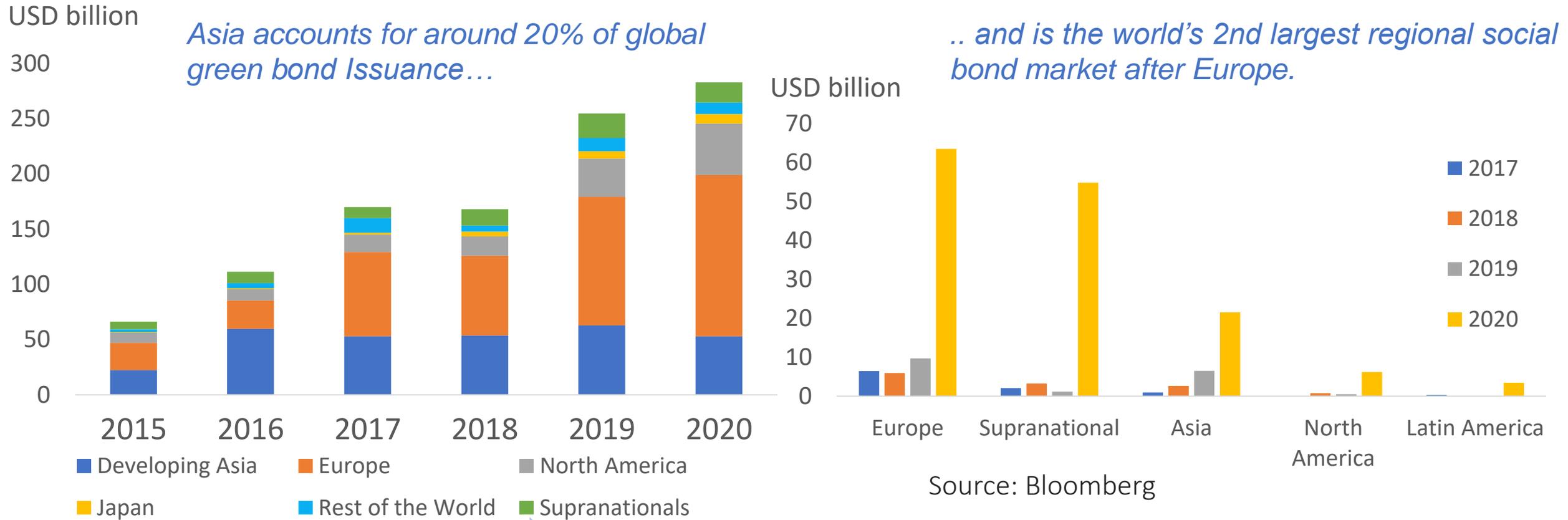
Asia Pacific region's annual investment requirements, 2016-2030, to meet SDGs (by broad SDG sectoral groupings)



ICT = information, communications and technology, SDG = sustainable development goals, WSS = water, sanitation, and safe water. Source: UNESCAP (2019).

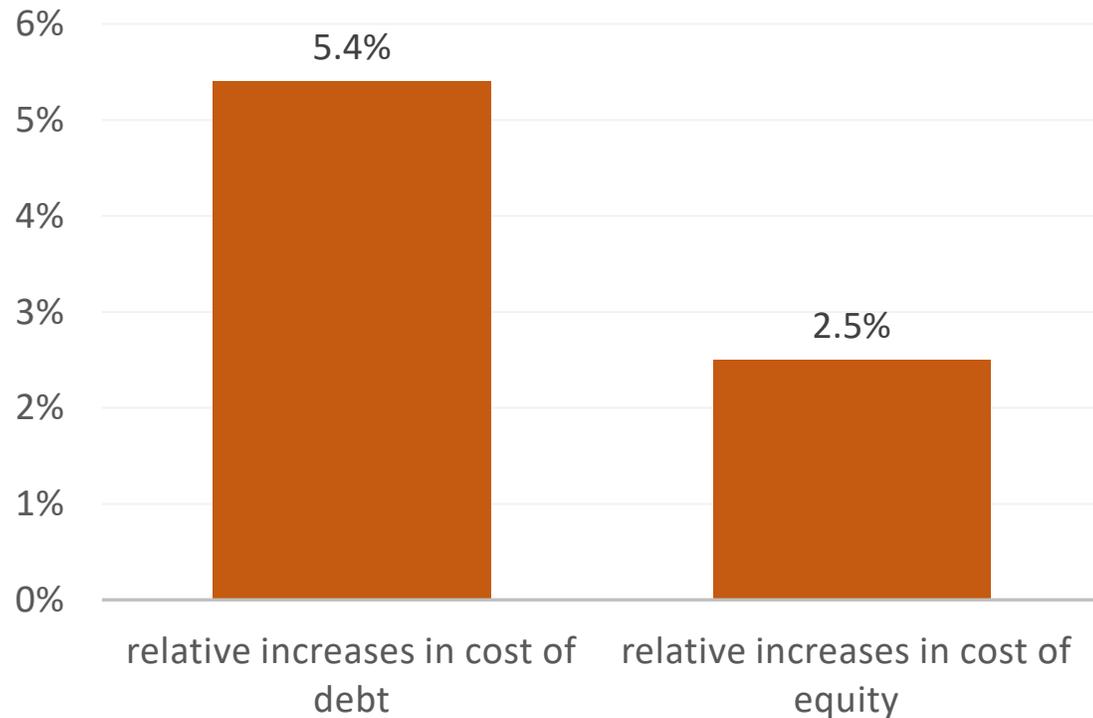
- Developing Asia needs to build back better
- Green and social finance are specifically targeted toward SDGs
- With limited public resources, private capital must be mobilized.

Green and social finance has grown rapidly in recent years

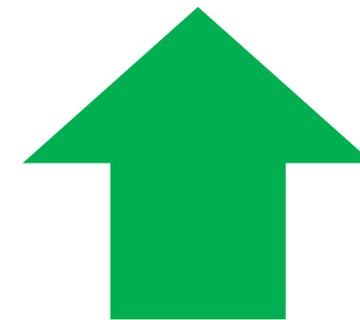


Financial motives are driving companies and investors towards sustainable activities

After the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, high emitting Australian firms witnessed increase in relative financing costs



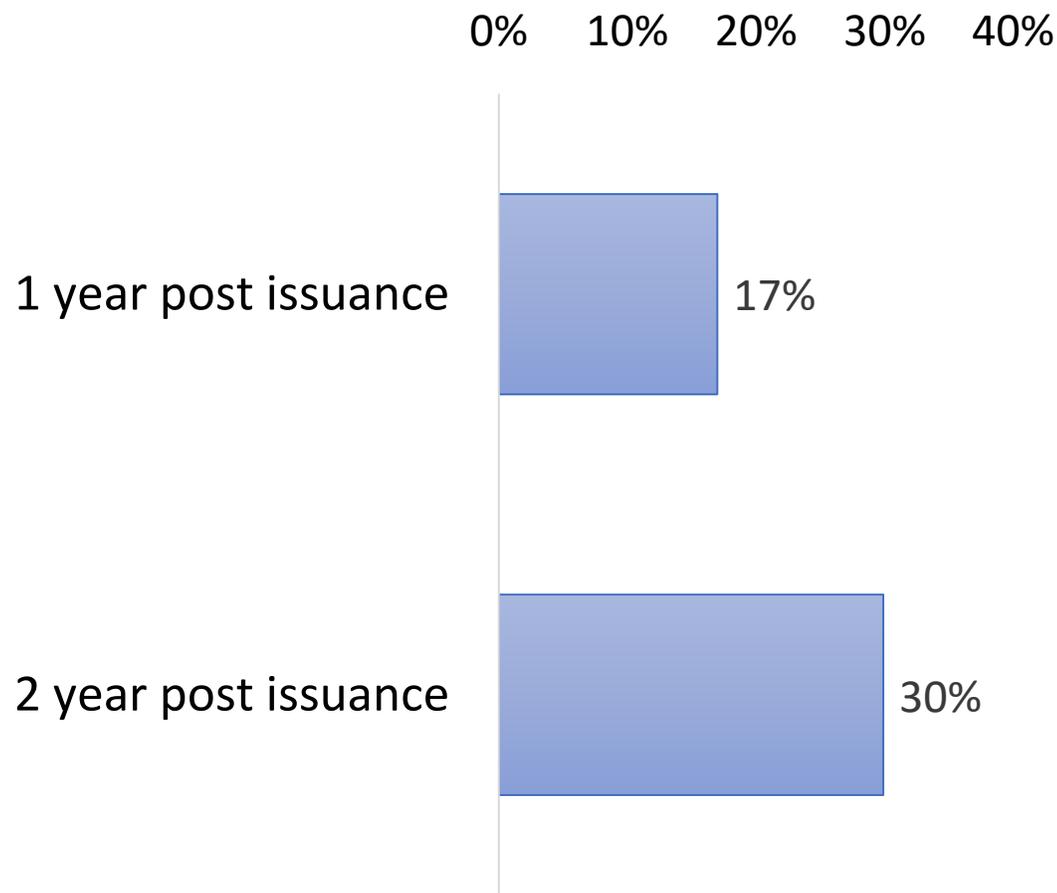
Stock prices respond positively to green bond issuance announcements in Asia



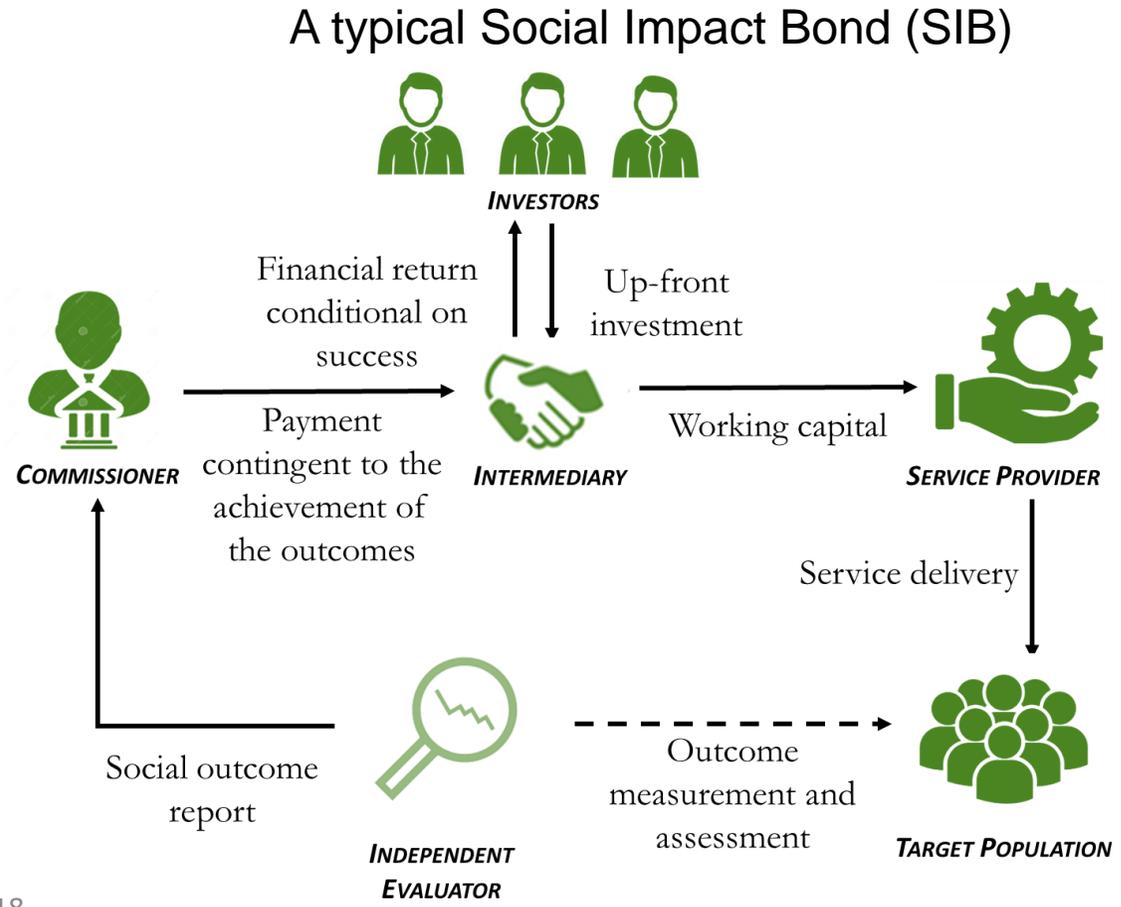
0.5% 16-day cumulative abnormal stock return around announcement of green bond issuance (8% annualized)

Evidence shows that green and social finance generate positive impacts.

Asian green bond issuers show improved environmental score after green bond issuance



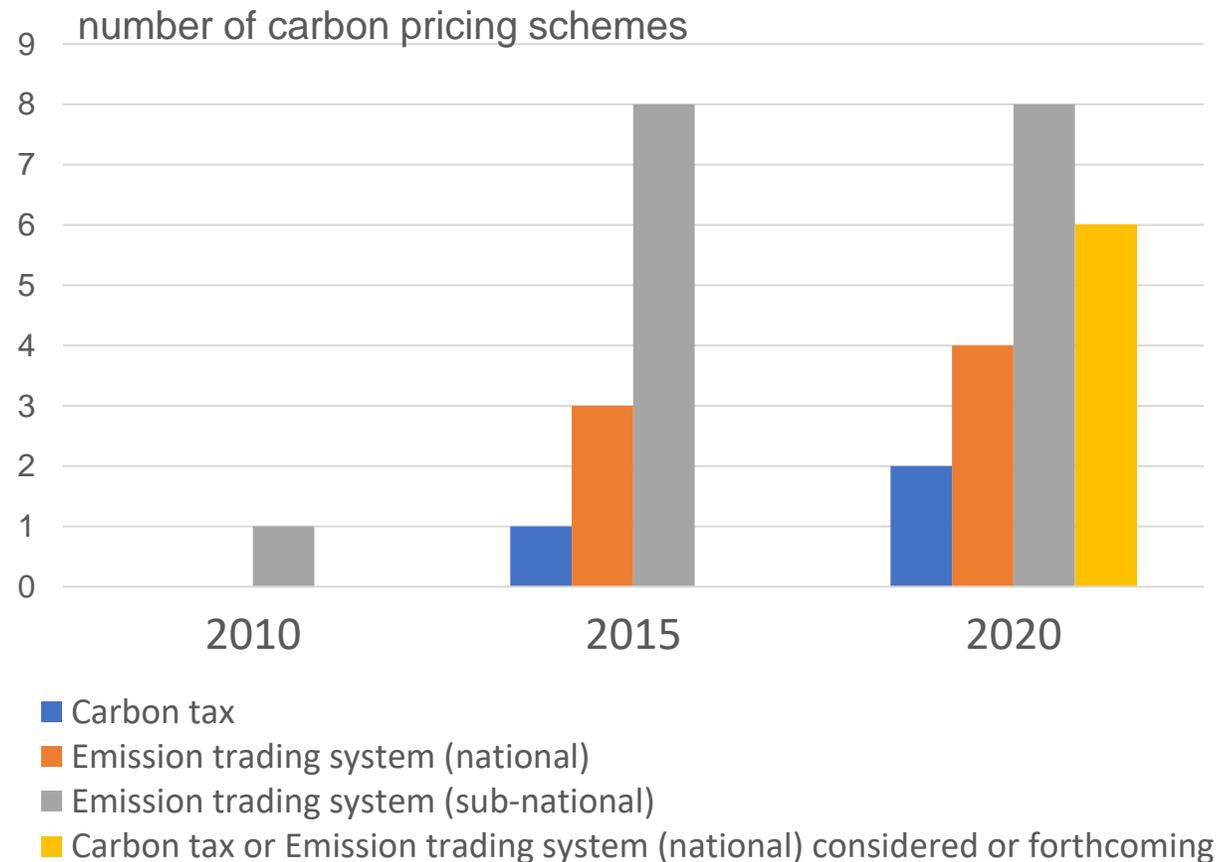
Innovative instruments such as impact bonds help achieve social impacts efficiently and effectively



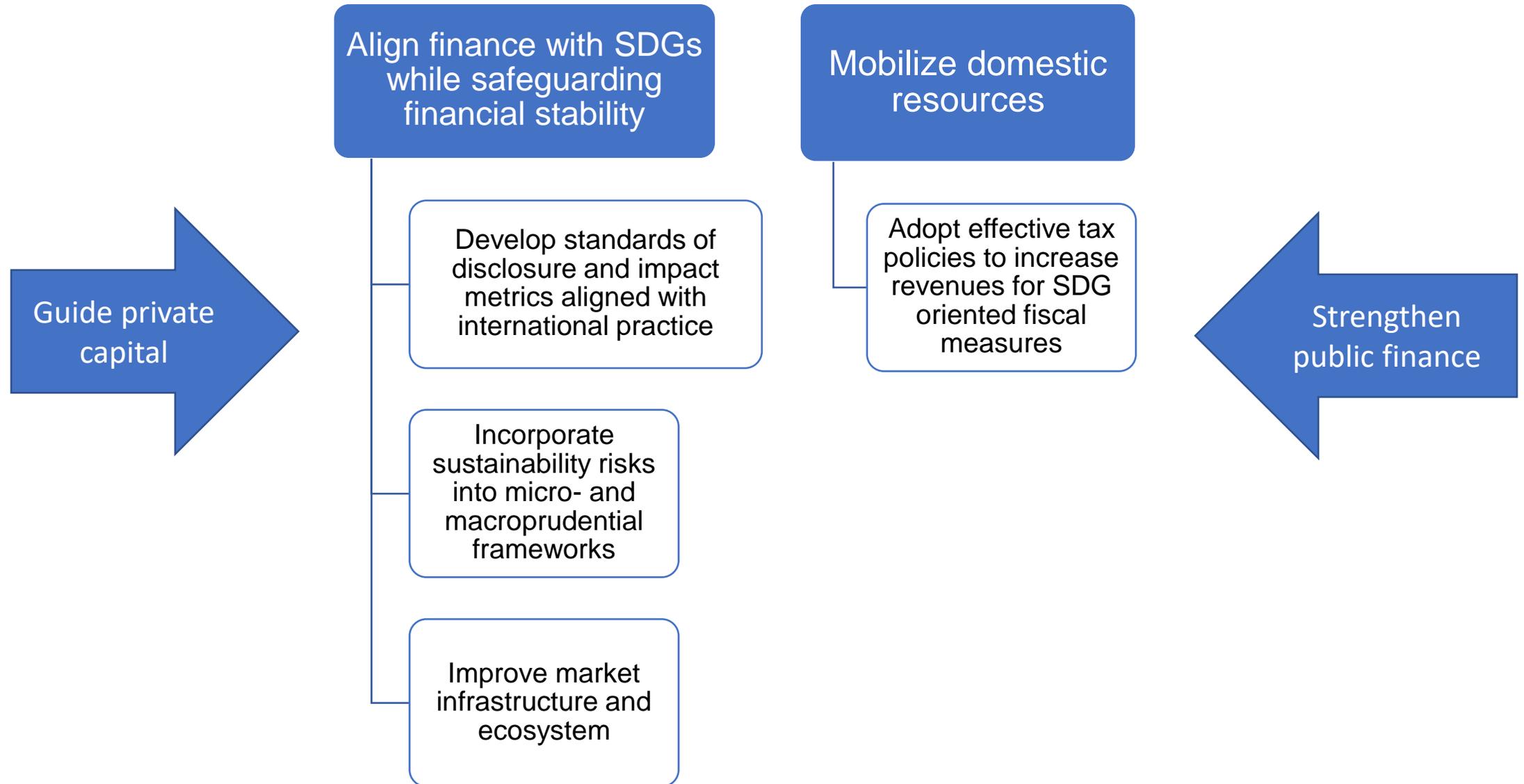
Multiple funding instruments complement and catalyze private capital

- Fiscal revenues for SDG-oriented public spending remains important
- Microfinance provides vital financial services to underserved groups
- Carbon pricing helps to close the funding gap during the low-carbon transition
- Multilateral development banks can be a catalyst for unlocking green and social finance

Asia & Pacific sees a growing momentum in the use of carbon pricing instruments



Policy options for nurturing green and social finance in Asia



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APPENDIX

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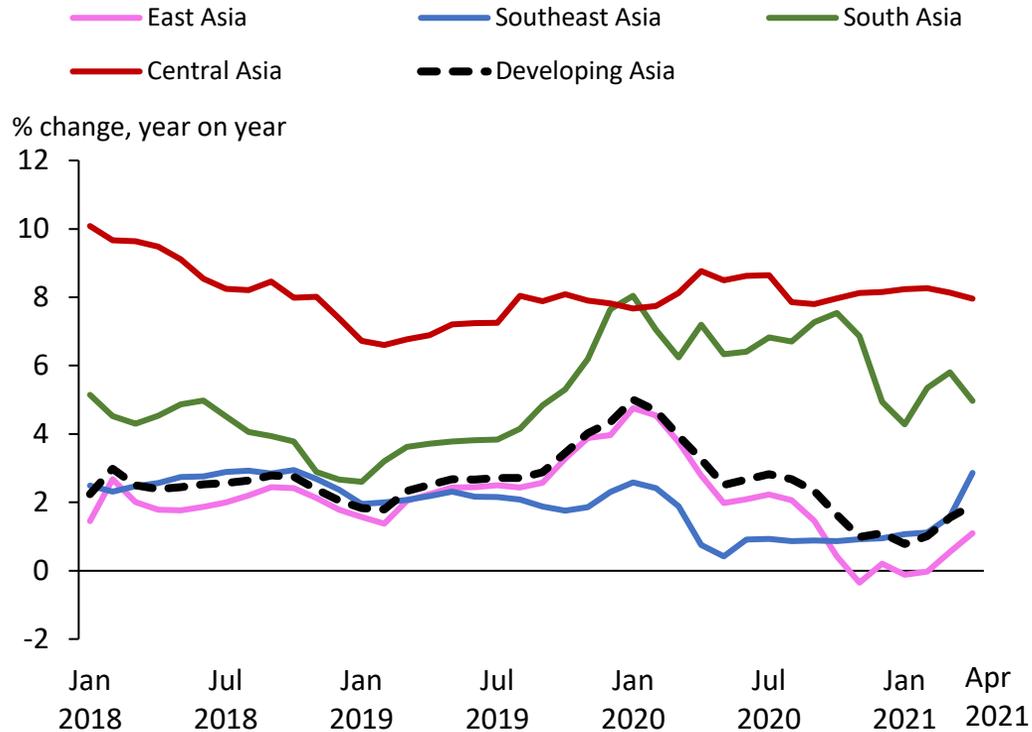
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Inflation in Asia declined as the crisis hit economic activity.

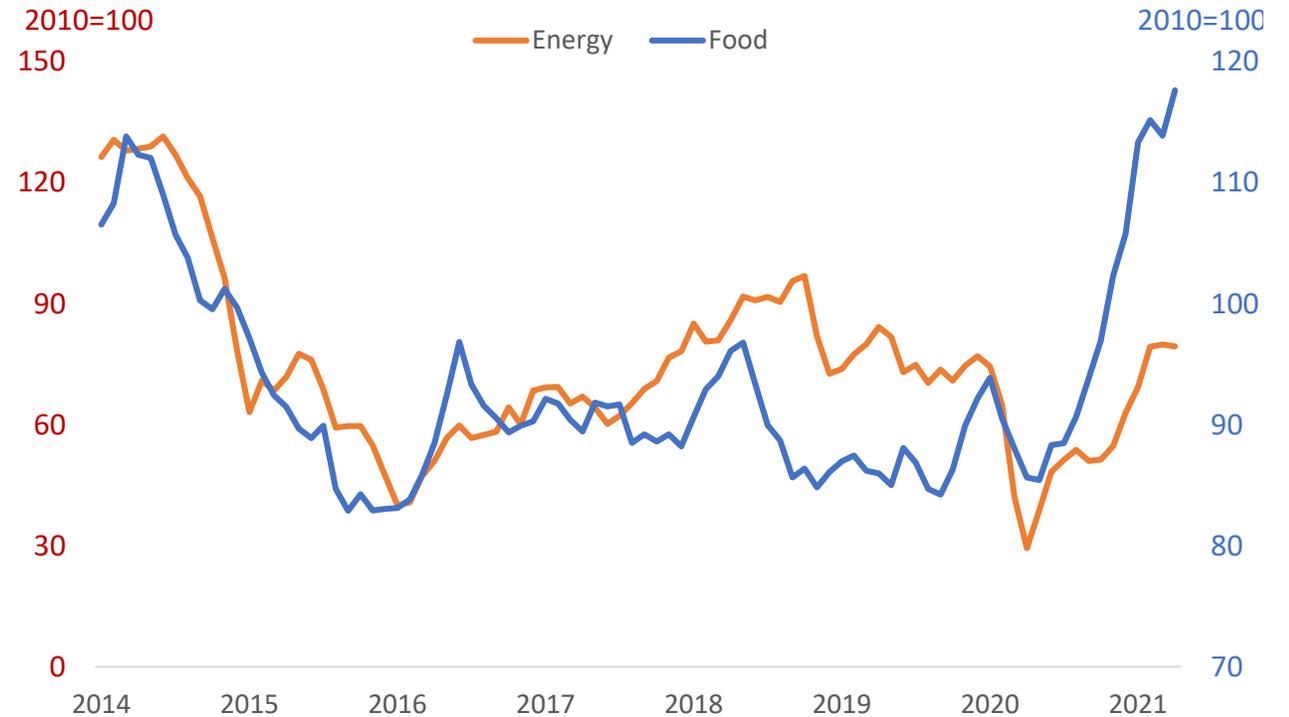
Regional headline inflation fell in 2020, but with substantial variation across sub-regions

Global commodity prices have been rising in the second half of last year

Inflation in developing Asia



Global food and energy indexes



Source: World Bank Commodity Price Data (Pink Sheet) (accessed 3 April 2021)

Note: The Pacific is excluded because data is not available.
Source: CEIC Data Company (accessed 3 April 2021)

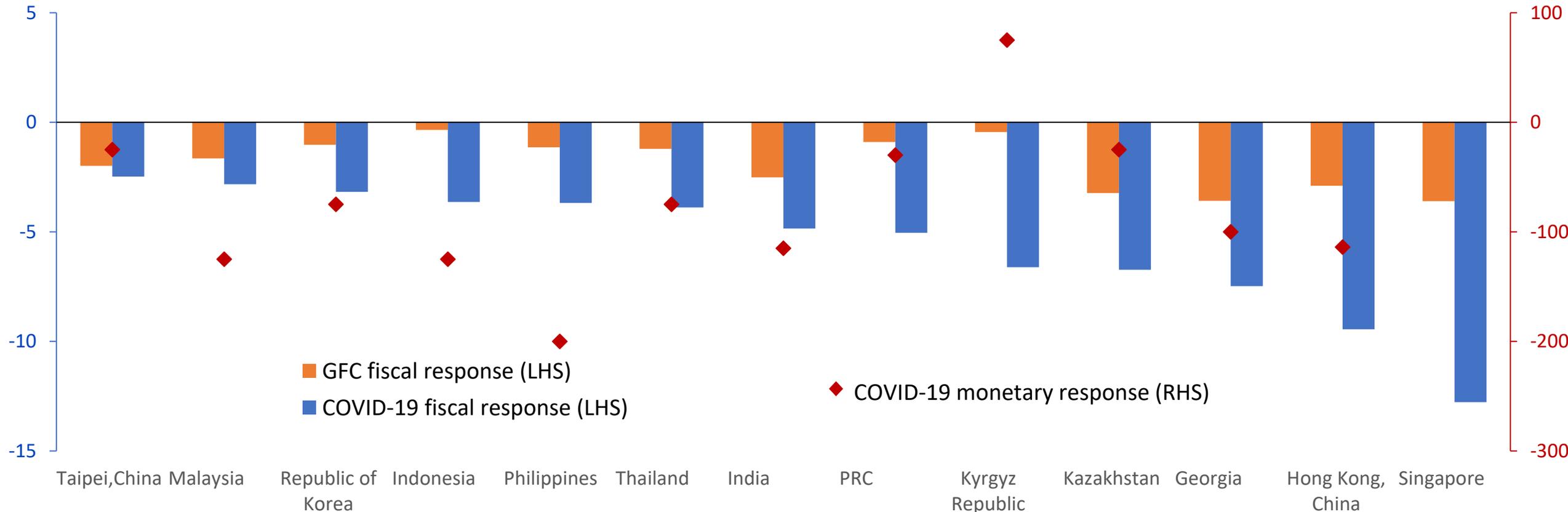
Asian governments deployed fiscal and monetary support to mitigate the impact of the crisis

In most economies, the fiscal response in 2020 was much larger than during the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), while central banks reacted promptly and then maintained an accommodative monetary stance.

General government balance as a share of GDP, change from the previous year

Fiscal and monetary responses for selected DMCs

Policy rate change in 2020, basis points



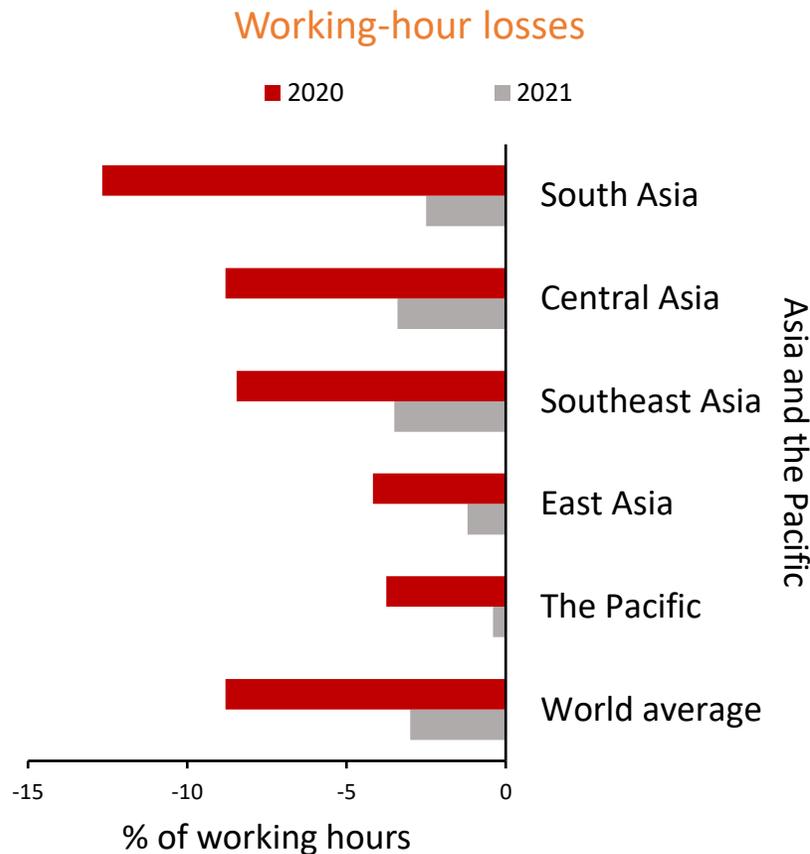
Note: Selected DMCs included on the basis of data availability. Data for GFC fiscal response refers to averages over 2008-2009. Data for COVID-19 fiscal and monetary responses refers to 2020.

Sources: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2021. Bloomberg (accessed 7 April 2021).

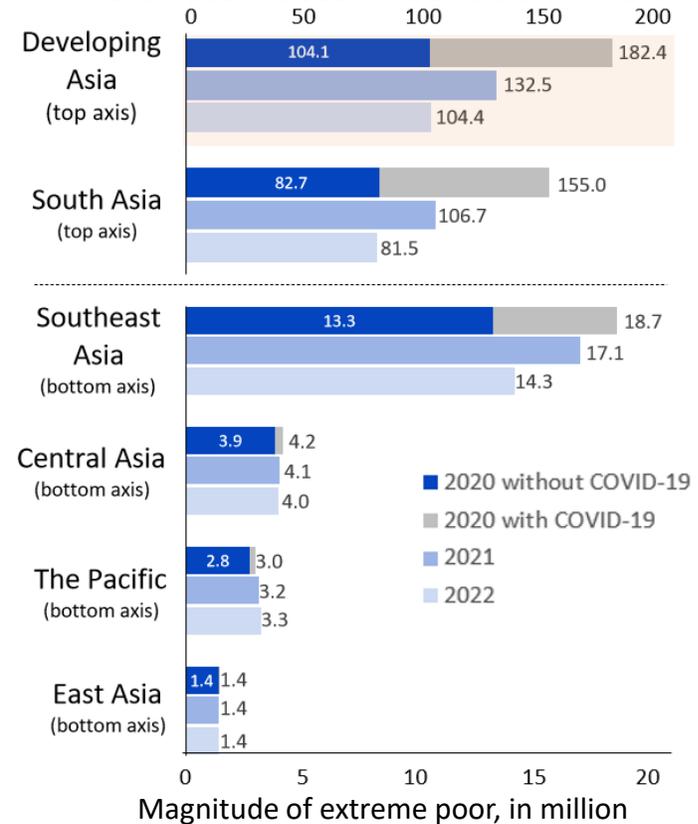
The pandemic has adversely affected labor markets and poverty reduction efforts

Working-hour losses in Asia in 2020 were severe, with South Asia sustaining the largest impact

Poverty reduction was set back last year, but it will resume in 2021 and 2022.



Poverty estimates in developing Asia



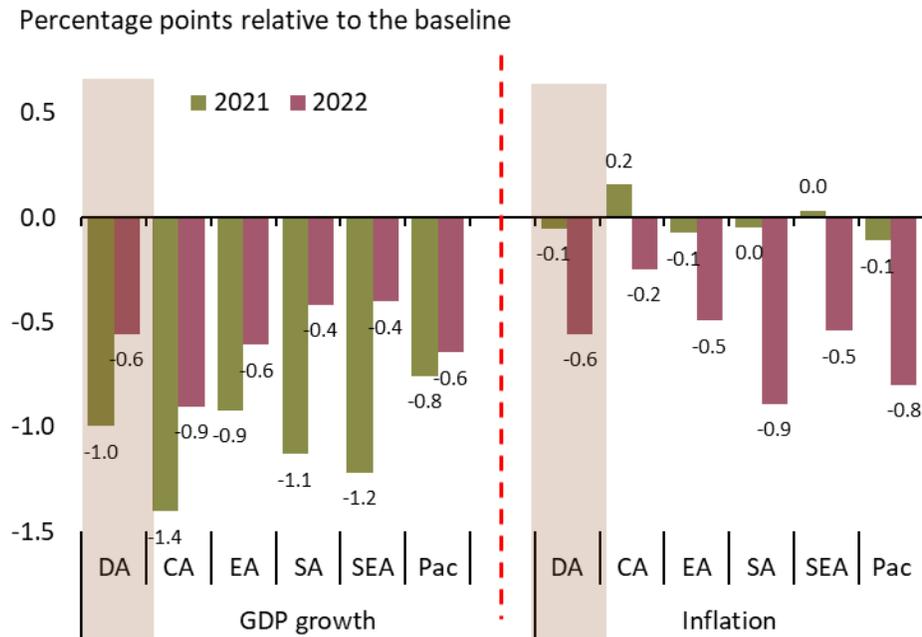
Note: 2020 estimates and 2021 projections Working hours loss covers all workers (aged 15+) and refers to annual average based on ILO modelled estimates. A 10% loss indicates that hours worked were 10% below what we would have expected without the pandemic. Regions and subregions are based on ILO groupings.

Source: ILO. 2021. ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. 7th edition.

Note: This only includes 34 developing Asian economies with available data. **Sources:** World Bank's PovcalNet Database (March 2021 update) and Asian Development Bank estimates.

Growth falters under a delayed vaccine rollout scenario.

Postponed reopening of economies weighs on growth prospects



- Social distancing measures relaxed only gradually in 2021.
- Consumption declines as a result of lower consumer confidence, higher unemployment, and lower disposable incomes.
- Investment takes a hit as investor sentiment deteriorates amid rising uncertainty over the recovery's trajectory.

DA = developing Asia, CA = Central Asia, EA = East Asia, SA = South Asia, SEA = Southeast Asia, Pac = The Pacific.

Source: Global Economic Model, Oxford Economics.