

# G20 mobilization for SDGs advancement in the context of Covid-19

To the attention of the Italian G20 Presidency

31 March 2020

The current pandemic of Covid-19 has already created nearly unimaginable losses – in human lives, livelihoods, the collapse of health systems, and global economic devastation. Nearly 130 million people have been infected and more than 2.8 million people died due to the virus. Restriction measures have also led to world to face the worst economic recession since the Great Depression: most businesses and factories were shut down, up to 90% of students were left out of school, global trade was totally disrupted, etc. The consequences of this joint health and economic crisis are consistently triggering more losses, especially considering the impact on global socioeconomic development, measured by the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The seventeen SDGs were defined in 2015 as a continuation and improvement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), created as a guideline for a global initiative to create a better future for all. The 17 goals cannot be completed without global action and cooperation from both high and low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) countries.

However, the world was already not on track to achieve them before the Covid-19 pandemic. Acc. to the UN, while some goals saw consistent progress in the past years, such as the reduction of poverty, the reduction of maternal and early-childhood mortality, the improvement of gender

equality, access to electricity, and the implementation of policies supporting sustainable development, others were seriously lagging behind before the Covid-19 pandemic. As is the case with food insecurity, which was already on the rise with 26% of the population affected by moderate or severe food insecurity in 2019 compared to 22.4% in 2014, climate change which is accelerating at a dangerous pace, the deterioration of the environment due to CO<sub>2</sub> saturation, the decline of forests, the depletion of oceans, or inequalities. The current crisis has put further strain on the advancement of the latter, with major implications regarding inequalities and access to basic services, but is also threatening existing progress in the most advanced areas of the 2030 Agenda, notably regarding global poverty, health-related issues, gender equality or education. One hindering factor to achieving the goals was and still is financing.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda provides a global framework for financing for sustainable development. While this framework exists, it does not guarantee the necessary level of financing needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030 and there are large financial discrepancies between the funding needed to achieve the goals and the funding available. This discrepancy has only been exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis as many countries have failed to meet their previous financial commitments. The lack of financing in conjunction with other disruptions caused by Covid-19 has severely impacted the advancement of the SDGs. In fact, the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the progress of all seventeen SDGs, and even eroded some of the existing progress. Without substantial changes to the approach for achieving the SDGs, the world will not achieve the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

As the preeminent forum of international cooperation, the G20 has a responsibility to tackle this issue, and in particular the G20 2021 Presidency whose agenda is necessarily linked to building the post-pandemic world.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Covid-19 pandemic has exerted an unprecedented toll on human lives and on economies, seriously impeding the realization of the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs.
- Before the pandemic, the world was already not on track to deliver the SDGs by 2030. However, the world could now witness decades of improvement be reversed as a direct result of the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic, affecting disproportionately the most vulnerable groups.
- In the past year, the world has seen unprecedented mobilization to curb the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, notably by G20 countries. Yet, the livelihood of millions of people is still endangered, and strong and coordinated mobilization is more necessary than ever to ensure the continued progress of SDGs. The G20, as the premier forum for international cooperation, has a responsibility to act on those issues.
- Urgent actions are needed to safeguard livelihoods and end the pandemic everywhere as rapidly as possible. No one will be safe until everyone is.
- In parallel, long-term bold and coordinated actions are required to ensure the world can recover better, in line with the 2030 Agenda, and that it is better prepared to fight future crisis.

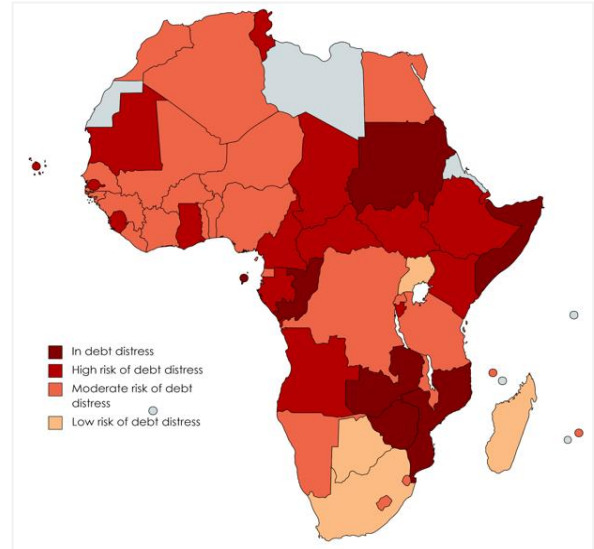
## Problem Statement: the Covid-19 pandemic could reverse decades of progress

### Major mechanisms at stake

The Covid-19 crisis has caused major economic and logistical disruptions, which have harmed socioeconomic development and will continue to negatively impact SDGs progress so long as they are not entirely addressed. Three major mechanisms are at stake.

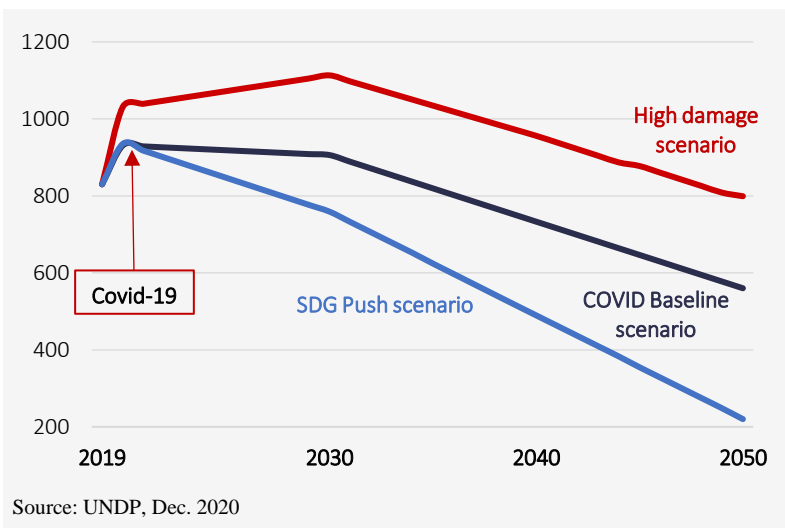
- In most economies, and especially in low-income countries (LICs), the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a dramatic increase in national debt. In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), debt-to-GDP ratio attained 70% at the end of the year<sup>1</sup>. Alongside widening budget deficits and growing costs of debt servicing, rising debt burdens are expected to raise concerns over several economies' risks of debt distress and lead to lowered investment in health and social services. As it becomes more difficult to access credit for those countries, this issue might turn into a vicious circle lasting for several years.
- All supply chains have been disrupted, leading to an increase in prices of common goods such as food or medical supplies, and affecting the most vulnerable households. Countries with high reliance on food imports have been particularly hard hit. Shortages of medical products have also had terrible consequences on health, even and especially for diseases others than Covid-19.
- Governments', NGOs' and International Institutions' priorities have all switched towards eradicating the Covid-19 pandemic, leaving other major development and social issues apart.

Figure 1: Debt distress across Africa – IMF classification



### A direct impact on all SDGs, affecting disproportionately vulnerable populations

Figure 2: Projected number of people in poverty under different scenarios (mn)



Source: UNDP, Dec. 2020

As a direct effect of these mechanisms, the scale and severity of the Covid-19 pandemic on health, society and the economy are unprecedented. In UNDP's worst-case scenario, the pandemic could push the number of people living in extreme poverty to **over 1 billion by 2030**, compared to about 800 million in 2019, representing the first increase in poverty in 30 years.

Similarly, supply chain disruptions and reduced financial resources for governments and households have led to an increase of chronically food insecure people at least by **up to 132 mn in 2020**. For 2021, the World Food Program (WFP) fears that a wave of famine could sweep

the globe, mostly in countries already weakened by conflicts and instability, such as in Eastern Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia) where conflicts could have ripple effects on the surrounding countries which would then not be able to address them due to the pandemic already destabilizing public finances. Countries like Nigeria, Burkina Faso, RDC, or Yemen are also at high risk of famine in certain regions. Acc. to the WFP, 34 million people could die from starvation in 2021, in 20 countries identified by UN agencies as "hunger hotspots".<sup>2</sup>

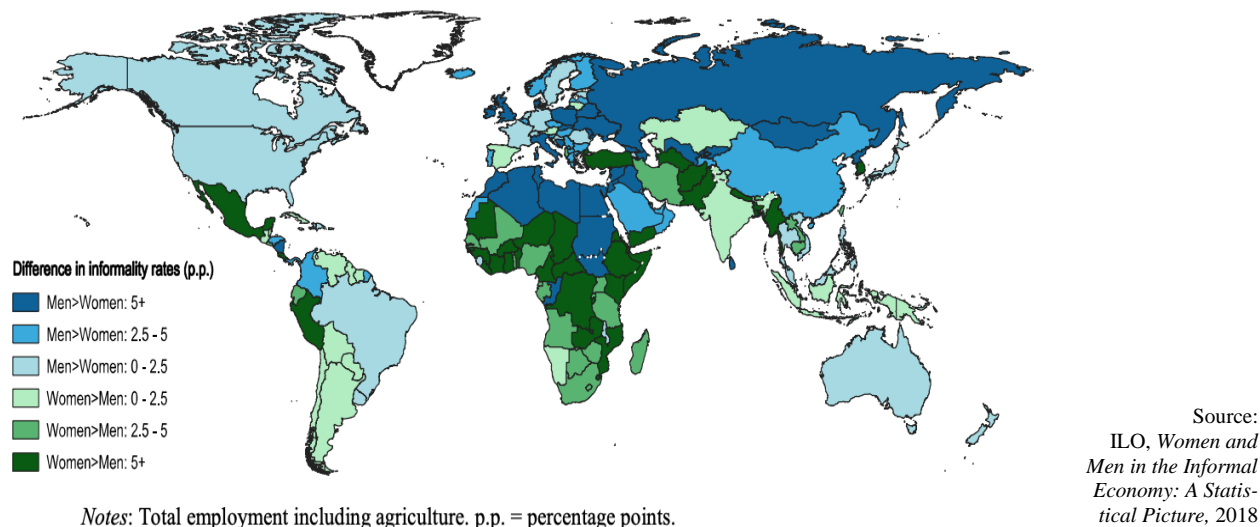
<sup>1</sup> IMF, *Regional Economic Outlook, Sub-Saharan Africa*, Oct. 2020

<sup>2</sup> UN News, *UN agencies call for urgent action to avert famine risk in 20 'hunger hotspots'*, March 2021

The pandemic has not had an equal impact around the world as people in more vulnerable and precarious situations continue to suffer the most. Vulnerable populations differ by country but may include low-income families, racial and ethnic minorities, and immigrants and refugees, members of the LGBTQ+ community, among others. These populations are not only more vulnerable to social and economic consequences of the pandemic but may also face worse medical outcomes if infected with Covid-19<sup>3</sup>. Given the lack of research on how medical outcomes differ based on these demographics, it is difficult to know the exact scope of these inequalities and therefore to address the problem or accurately target policies. This is a huge concern on the road to achieve SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) as the pandemic has only worsened existing inequalities.

Economic inequalities are exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis notably because marginalized populations comprise a higher percentage of workers in sectors most impacted by the pandemic, including the informal sector. This is especially true for women in LMICs. Up to 92% of employed women in low-income countries are in informal employment<sup>4</sup>.

Figure 3. Share of men and women in informal employment



Notes: Total employment including agriculture. p.p. = percentage points.

These differences between men and women in the informal economy, and thus the differential impact on men and women during the pandemic, is of concern for achieving SDG 5 (gender equality). Beyond the economic impact on women in the pandemic, there has been an increase of domestic violence, increase in poor health outcomes, and greater incidence of disrupted livelihoods among women. This matter is further complicated given that many countries do not report gender disaggregated data so the true differences are not known. In any case, there is clear evidence that impacts of the pandemic are not felt equally and any further considerations for addressing SDGs in relation to the pandemic must consider these vulnerable populations, and especially the intersection with gender.

### [The impacts of Covid-19 on SDG 3 \(Good Health and Well-Being\)](#)

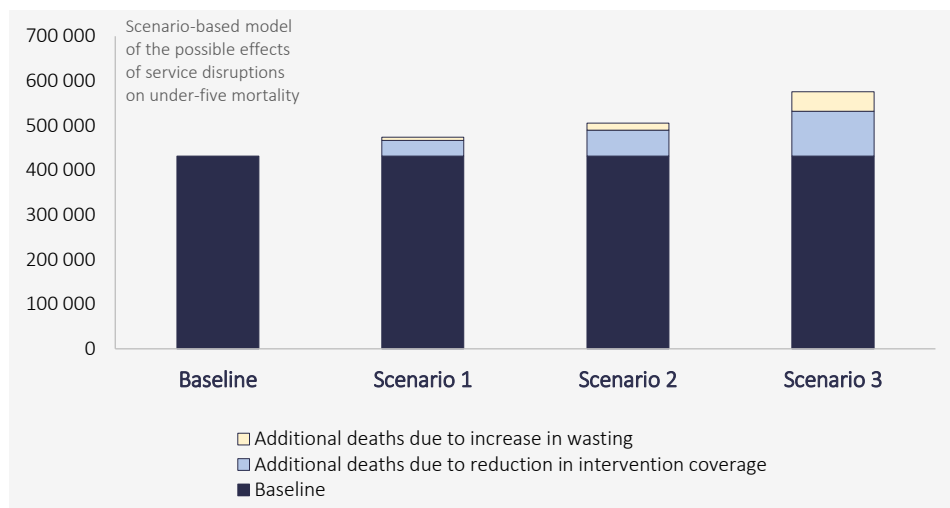
While all 17 SDGs have been impacted by the pandemic, SDG 3 provides a particularly good example of the progress being lost while the world battles Covid-19. The global priority shift has led the world and governments to focus more on Covid-19 leaving many other medical conditions or campaigns to be set aside. Health systems across the globe are overwhelmed and this has led to a restricted capacity to provide standard care. Again, this has a greater impact on vulnerable individuals and LMICs. Across the African continent, the socioeconomic and sanitary implications of Covid-19 are expected to cause more than one million excess deaths from other major diseases in Africa<sup>5</sup>, notably malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. Beyond this, Covid-19 could reverse decades of progress towards eliminating preventable child deaths. There is indeed the potential for an additional two million deaths in children under-five in LMICs due to reductions in routine health services and increases in child wasting as a result of Covid-19. Figure 4 compiles the data outlining three possible scenarios for increases in child mortality.

<sup>3</sup> Wolters Kluwer, *Focusing on Vulnerable Populations During COVID-19*, Jul. 2020

<sup>4</sup> OECD, *Tackling Vulnerability in the Informal Economy*, May 2019

<sup>5</sup> World Economic Forum, Thomson Reuters Foundation Trust, *Africa: COVID-19 could cause a million excess deaths from these 3 diseases*, Jan. 2021

Figure 4. Possible Scenarios for Increases in Child Mortality from July 2020 to July 2021



Source : Robertson et al. *Early estimates of the indirect effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on maternal and child mortality in low-income and middle-income countries: a modeling study.* *The Lancet Global Health.*, 2020

Advancements towards SDG 3 has therefore been particularly challenged by the combination of the priority shift and supply chains disruptions across the globe, as many essential goods, such as medicines and PPE, have not able to reach their destinations, notably for LMICs. This has left many without quality access to care or barrier methods meant to curb the spread of Covid-19. In addition to the disruption of the provision of essential goods, we are seeing increases in malnutrition associated with school closures, delays in prevention and treatment of existing diseases, and the suspension of vaccination campaigns<sup>6</sup>. The delays in treatment could see tremendous increases in death from diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDs, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa where cases remain high. The suspension of vaccination campaigns could mean an upsurge of polio, measles, or yellow fever in countries that had previously been making progress in controlling the spread. While all of these factors impact SDG 3, it is clear that the disruption goes beyond health and addressing this challenge implies a holistic response, starting with safeguarding the economies.

### The challenge of measuring the impacts of Covid-19 on SDGs

The SDGs are inherently interconnected in nature. As we saw in the previous example, we can consider malnutrition as a health disparity impacting SDG 3, however, it is also directly linked to SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 6 (clean water & sanitation), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), in addition to others more indirectly. This leads to a great logistical challenge when attempting to measure the progress of the SDGs and to target programs to improve specific SDG scores. Given this, it is difficult to state with certainty which SDG setbacks are attributed directly to the pandemic, especially considering the world was already off track to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

This is further complicated by a lack of international cooperation during the pandemic. Countries hoarding resources and tightening border restrictions could create political tensions which impact SDG 16 (promoting peace and safety form violence) as well as SDG 17 (strong international partnerships)<sup>7</sup>. The pandemic cannot be overcome without international cooperation, including comparable data sharing to track SDG progress.

### Current state of action

In the past months, the world has seen unprecedented mobilization and policy making to curb the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, notably by G20 countries. Notably, in 2020:

- ✓ **Over \$11 trillion** have been injected in the world economy to protect livelihoods, a record high.
- ✓ **More than \$21 billion** has been deployed to support immediate funding needs (multilateral and bilateral), notably for the development of vaccines and effective treatments and for humanitarian aid.
- ✓ **The Debt Service Suspension Initiative** was initiated. The initiative has made available \$14 bn in debt relief to more than 43 countries.

<sup>6</sup> UN/DESA, *Impact of Covid-19 on SDG progress: a statistical perspective*

<sup>7</sup> The Lancet Public Health, *Will the Covid-19 pandemic threaten the SDGs?*, Sept. 2020

- ✓ Over **\$300 billion** has been mobilized via development banks, the IMF and the World Bank in conjunction with the G20, for emerging and low-income countries with over \$75 billion for the most vulnerable countries just in the latter half 2020.
  - ✓ **The ACT-Accelerator** was created to accelerate the development, manufacture, and equitable access to diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines against Covid-19. Within the ACT-A, the **COVAX** facility was launched to make safe and efficient Covid-19 vaccines accessible to all.
  - ✓ **The One Planet Summit** was held: Initiative on Financing for Development in the Era of Covid-19 and Beyond
- Despite all these actions, the livelihood of millions of people is still endangered, and strong and coordinated mobilization is more necessary than ever to ensure the continued progress of SDGs.

## Rationale for action

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Since the adoption of the G20 Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2016, G20 Leaders have consistently recognized the key role of the G20 in advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development (AAAA).

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a deep global recession, potentially reversing years of progress in human development and reducing per capita income to 2010 levels in many developing countries. Moreover, vulnerability to the risk of debt distress has increased and addressing the impact of the pandemic has pressured both public and private resources in all countries, especially in low-income countries.

G20 countries account for 85% of GDP, 75% of world trade, 80% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and 70% of global plastic pollution<sup>8</sup>. Additionally, G20 countries account for 66% of outward international investment flows and are the source countries for 75% of remittances. For all these reasons, the scope of action of the G20 as a forum has expanded from ensuring financial stability to addressing social and environmental challenges, from reducing inequalities, to preventing the spread of pandemic, safeguarding oceans, or restoring degraded lands. Faced with the incredible threats to global development caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the importance of the G20 as the premier forum for international organization and global mobilization has never been greater.

G20 countries have both a responsibility and an interest in financing for development and generally acting for the realization of the 2030 Agenda. As shown during the current pandemic, the cost of inaction is greater than the cost of action. For that matter, we recommend that the Italian G20 Presidency takes bold action to integrate in its agenda short-term and long-term action, first to counter the direct socioeconomic consequences of Covid-19 on the most vulnerable, and then to ensure that the post-pandemic world is more resilient, more sustainable, and more inclusive.

*“Investment in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will cost an approximate annual investment of 6 trillion dollars annually – or 9 trillion over 15 years – but the cost of inaction will be far greater.”*

Peter Thomson, the President of the 71st Session of the UN General Assembly

## Proposed outcomes

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### Short-term recommendations

As the Covid-19 pandemic has not been overcome yet, the first priority for the international community is to address the immediate health, social, and economic impacts of the crisis on the most vulnerable. Without strong short-term actions, the immediate effects on the realization of the 2030 Agenda will further be felt, and reversing the situation will be more costly and more difficult each day.

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<sup>8</sup> OECD, UNDP, *G20 Contribution to the 2030 Agenda, Progress and Way Forward*, 2019



## Recommendation 1: Close COVAX' financing gap

⇒ **Overall objective: Ensure that Covid-19 vaccines are accessible to all, as a common public good, to end the pandemic and its consequences as rapidly as possible**

The key priority for all is to end the transmission of the virus and its severe forms so that economies can go back to normal. No one will be safe on the planet until everyone is. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary, both on epidemiological and economic grounds, to ensure that Covid-19 vaccines are produced and rolled-out as quickly as possible for the adult population in every country. Everything necessary should be done to guarantee that supplies are used fully and fairly as they become available. Failure to do so would raise the long-lasting economic and social costs from the pandemic, not only for the countries lacking access to Covid-19 vaccines but for the wider economy, and therefore further delay the achievement of SDGs.

COVAX is the only end-to-end global solution designed to accelerate the development and manufacture of Covid-19 vaccines, and guarantee fair and equitable access. However, at present, the supplies of vaccines for the poorest countries, and the funds committed to the COVAX initiative remain well below what is required if vaccinations are to be provided to all in need. The ACT-Accelerator, of which COVAX depends, is currently calling for urgent action to address their financing requirements, which in total equal \$38.1 billion<sup>9</sup>. Acc. to the WHO, the COVAX facility is currently lacking \$3.1 billion for its 2021 budget. As of late March, the facility has shipped 32 million<sup>10</sup> Covid-19 doses to 60 countries. It represents only 22% of the doses administered in the United States, and 30% of the doses administered in China. There is an urgency to support COVAX so that the most vulnerable countries can drastically increase the pace of their vaccination programs.

Acting towards this goal is not just philanthropy, it is also of interest for high-income countries. A report from the Eurasia Group released in Dec. 2020 found that the economic benefits of a global equitable vaccine solution for the 10 countries included in their analysis (Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Qatar, South Korea, Sweden, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and the United States) would be at least \$153 billion in 2020-2021, and up to \$466 billion by 2025.

*"There is a clear humanitarian and ethical case for supporting the ACT Accelerator and the Covax facility, [...] ; doing nothing risks reversing years if not decades of economic progress. But our analysis shows that the program is likely to yield economic and other returns for major donor countries as well.."*  
Alexander Kazan, Managing Director for Global Strategy at Eurasia Group

### G20 recommended outcome:

- G20 countries commit to provide additional funding to the COVAX facility, building on the relation established between ACT-A and the G20 in 2020.
- The G20 Italian Presidency organizes a pledging event to gather funding from all voluntary entities (private, public, NGOs, philanthropies, etc.) dedicated to bridge COVAX' \$3bn gap.

## Recommendation 2: Unleash remittances' potential to finance development

⇒ **Overall objective: Improve remittances' flows by lowering costs**

While Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the regions most affected by the development setbacks caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, it is also the region where the cost of remittances is the highest. According to UNCTAD, remittances account for about half of private capital flows to Africa and make up 2.5% of the region's GDP. Some countries are particularly dependent on those remittances, such as Liberia (26.7% of GDP in 2019) or Lesotho (18.2%). In 2018, about \$40 billion were sent to SSA countries from people working abroad. Yet, the high cost of transferring remittances reduces the impact of migrations on local economies. This cost of transferring remittances to SSA is more than 20% higher than the charge for a remittance to any other region. According to a 2019 World Bank study, the average cost of sending \$200 to SSA is 9.3%.

<sup>9</sup> WHO, Access to Covid-19 tools funding commitment tracker, March 2021

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gavi.org/covax-vaccine-roll-out>

Moreover, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and shutdowns, and more precisely to a loss of wages of migrant workers, global remittances were projected to fall by as much as 20% in 2020<sup>11</sup>, the sharpest decline in recent history. This situation represents an important loss of a major financing lifeline for the most vulnerable households.

A first step to reestablish global flows of remittances, especially towards SSA, G20 members could agree on lowering costs of remittances to the G20 previously agreed target of 3%. It would indeed considerably facilitate the participation of the diaspora in protecting economies and communities from the effect of the pandemic. In particular, under the leadership of the Italian Presidency, G20 countries, could:

- Build on, leverage and accelerate previous G20 Initiatives regarding lowering costs of remittances, among which the Global Remittances WG (2010), the G20 Plan to Facilitate Remittance Flows (2014), and the 2016 G20 Target to reduce to less than 3% the cost of remittances and to eliminate remittance corridors higher than 5% by 2030.
- Make rapid regulations for money transfer operators less onerous, particularly for transactions of small amounts.
- Fight monopolies of money transfer operators (which often happen in Africa) with coordinated and rapidly-actionable regulations.
- Foster the development of digital payments for remittances.

**G20 recommended outcome:**

- G20 countries commit to lower the cost of remittances to LICs to 3% as set by SDG 10 by implementing necessary measures
- Establish a Task Force to foster the development of digital payment for remittances

### Long-term recommendations

Achieving the SDGs by 2030 now requires a major realignment of G20 countries' long-term priorities towards cooperative and ambitious actions.

### Recommendation 3: Include SDGs in G20 countries' recovery plans

⇒ **Overall objective: Fight against development setbacks caused by the Covid-19 and steer the recovery toward a more sustainable and inclusive path, guided by the common goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

While the G20 aims at steering the global recovery, the Italian G20 Presidency's priority should be to contribute to the design of a more sustainable and inclusive future. Financing for sustainable development must be kept front and center in the agenda to ensure that the most vulnerable countries do not endure development setbacks in 2021 and the years to come and that the gains on the SDGs are not sacrificed durably. A stronger focus on financing sustainable development linking the crisis response with longer-term structural development issues, including in the provision of universal health coverage, will give the opportunity to the presidency to set its legacy through a flagship deliverable for the Rome Summit. Indeed, as shown in the scenario SDG Push in Figure 1, targeted policy interventions that can accelerate progress towards a more fair, resilient and green future have the potential of reducing the number of people living in extreme poverty by 146 million in 2030 relative to the 'COVID Baseline' scenario, which would be a great achievement for the world, and for G20 countries.

The policies put in place to foster the recovery from Covid-19 are a great opportunity to address the old and new challenges. To make sure that the recovery packages include some effective measures to invest in and foster the achievement of SDGs, developing global methodologies for data collection, adaptable to every country, will be key. Indeed, data is fundamental to guide policy responses to crisis, as it has been shown during the Covid-19 crisis. However, while the Covid-19 pandemic has put even more pressure on the most vulnerable countries, in many countries even the most basic health, social and economic data are absent. Acc. to UNSTATS, serious data gaps remain in assessing country-level progress towards the SDGs. For still 4 out of the 17 Goals (5, 12, 13, 14), less than half of the countries have internationally comparable data<sup>12</sup>. This lack of data makes it more difficult to policymakers to design

<sup>11</sup> World Bank, *World Bank Predicts Sharpest Decline of Remittances in Recent History*, April 2020

<sup>12</sup> UNSTATS, *The need for data innovations in the time of COVID-19*, 2020

effective, targeted actions to improve SDGs advancement. According to the UN, reducing the risk of future disasters and getting closer to achieving the SDGs require targeted actions that will not be possible without data. Investing in data is a recommendation particularly put forward by UN DESA to policy-makers, in order to build efficiently the major policies of the decade.

The Italian G20 Presidency should take the opportunity given by the G20 forum to foster alignment among G20 countries in including financing for SDGs as key pillars of their recovery plans, with a particular focus on health and sustainability issues. 2021 is a pivotal year: it can either be the year of the recovery or of the disaster. For high-income countries, and especially G20 countries, it is no time to break away from humanitarian assistance and long-term planning for development aid.

**G20 recommended outcome:**

- Invest in data to assess the impact of the crisis on SDGs in all 194 countries
- Include health and sustainability as major pillars of the strategy
- Build a multiyear financing plan for SDGs based on G20 countries' recovery plans

**Recommendation 4: Initiative to strengthen global pandemic preparedness and response capacities**

⇒ **Overall objective: Address global gaps in pandemic preparedness to be better prepared to future infectious diseases.**

The Covid-19 pandemic prompted a strong and, in many cases, unprecedented policy response by country authorities, both on the public health front (to contain the spread of the disease and treat the infected) and on the economic front (to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic and of the containment measures).

While the response by each country has been strong, the experience revealed gaps in information-sharing and multilateral cooperation. In the first instance, this externality affects the most vulnerable countries with the weakest public health systems; and results in jeopardizing economic and social development in those countries.

All experts, especially from the GPMB, the WHO or the International Working Group on Financing Preparedness, warn that Covid-19 will not be the last pandemic of the century, and that the world is not prepared enough to fight future pandemics. A major lesson from Covid-19 has been the lack of adequate long-term financing for epidemic preparedness and vaccine development. Addressing this extraordinary challenge and those to follow in the coming years and decades will require to fill this financing gap while avoiding the duplication of existing efforts. The global community has the duty to address at this moment the challenges from infectious diseases.

While many International Organizations, NGO's and private companies operate in this space, the G20 can assume a leading role by creating a Fund dedicated to attracting, leveraging, and investing additional resources to national, regional, or global projects aimed at preventing, detecting, and stopping disease outbreaks. Indeed, no longer can it be accepted that spending on health is considered as current account spending rather than as valuable investment. A global fund for pandemic preparedness can therefore encourage spending, with valuable long-term returns, given that, acc. to the WHO, the cost of being prepared for the next pandemic is only a tiny fraction of the cost of this pandemic. This issue of preparedness is completely linked with the 2030 Agenda for two major reasons: (i) had the world been more on track to realize the SDGs, it would have been better prepared to avoid the pandemic or at least to curb its impacts; (ii) had the world been more prepared to address infectious diseases, the crisis would have had less affected progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

**G20 recommended outcome:**

- Establish an independent Task Force with a mandate to assess gaps, derive "lessons learned," and make operational recommendations for the creation of a funding vehicle and an institutional structure to allocate funding.
- Create an international platform gathering all relevant stakeholders to focus on long-term planning to strengthen pandemic preparedness and response, especially in LIDC, with a strong focus on the prevention of zoonotic diseases, and in line with the One Health approach.



## Conclusion

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The SDGs posed a great challenge at their inception in 2015, as they were far more ambitious than the MDGs. The SDGs address issues that cannot wait and the ground lost due to the Covid-19 pandemic could be catastrophic. All 17 SDGs are impacted by the pandemic and it will take a substantial effort, especially in terms of financing, if the world is to reach the original goals.

As a result of the pandemic, supply chains disruptions hamper the shipment of essential goods to communities in need, those in precarious positions are slipping further into despair, violence against women and minority groups is on the rise, the health of billions is at stake, and we lack the proper tools and data to appropriately analyse the complexities and interconnectedness of these issues. That being said, we have witnessed an unprecedented mobilization of resources and policies to tackle the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, but a greater effort is needed.

We call on the G20 countries to utilize their resources to close the COVAX funding gap and ensure LMIC countries can be vaccinated, unleash remittances' potential to finance development and unload some of the burden on LICs, take an SDG-centred approach in recovery plans to support the success of the 2030 Agenda, and strengthen pandemic preparedness and response, notably by filling some funding gaps, to ensure such crisis does not happen again. While these goals are ambitious, they are necessary to address the turmoil caused by the pandemic. Lessons have to be learnt, progress towards SDGs has to be re-established and the cycle of panic and neglect has to be stopped.

Tackling the Covid-19 pandemic will not be an easy challenge. However, if the world can show unity in this time of crisis, we all stand a better chance of recovering, and recovering better, on the road to the 2030 Agenda.