

How COVID-19 is impacting adaptation efforts

Adaptation Gap Report 2021: The Gathering Storm

As the world looks to step up efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions – efforts that are still nowhere near strong enough – the sixth edition of the *UNEP Adaptation Gap Report: The Gathering Storm* finds that the growth in climate impacts is far outpacing our efforts to adapt to them. This factsheet looks at how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting adaptation, and how recovery from the pandemic could still help nations to adapt to climate change.

The world needs to step up efforts to adapt to the irreversible impacts of climate change.

Current promises under the Paris Agreement point to global warming of 2.7°C by the end of the century. Even if the world limits warming to 1.5°C or 2°C, as outlined in the agreement, many climate risks remain. Adaptation can reduce these risks and their costs, which increase with temperature.

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit, and will hit, efforts to adapt.

The pandemic is compounding risks by affecting the world's ability to respond to climate change: as demonstrated in 2020's Pacific cyclones, where COVID-19 restrictions impeded disaster-response efforts. Meanwhile, economic slowdowns, job losses and increased poverty disproportionately affect vulnerable groups and further reduce their capacity to adapt to extreme climate events. Finally, the heightened cost of servicing debt, combined with decreased government revenues, may hamper future government spending on adaptation, particularly in developing countries.



The opportunity to use COVID-19 recovery stimulus packages for stronger adaptation is being missed.

Estimated adaptation costs in developing countries are five to ten times greater than current public adaptation finance flows. Meanwhile, only a small portion of the USD 16.7 trillion of fiscal stimulus deployed around the globe has targeted adaptation. Fewer than one third of 66 countries studied explicitly funded COVID-19 measures to address climate risks up to June 2021.

The COVID-19 crisis nonetheless provides lessons to improve climate adaptation planning and financing and opportunities for a green recovery.

Governments should:

- Address compound risks through integrated risk management approaches: such as country-specific risk assessments of vulnerable groups.
- Use the fiscal recovery from the pandemic to prioritize interventions that achieve both economic growth and climate change resilience.
- Establish flexible disaster finance frameworks: to ensure predictable, timely and cost-effective finance is available to immediately respond to any emergency.



Advanced economies should help developing countries to free up fiscal space for green and resilient COVID-19 recovery efforts through concessional finance and substantive debt relief.