

GGGI Responds to the COVID Crisis: Greening Stimulus & Recovery

GGGI, April 23, 2020 – Final

This is the second update on the GGGI response to the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic. While our initial response focused on staff safety and business continuity, GGGI has started to adapt its programming to green stimulus and recovery packages in the face of COVID-19. This note provides an update on the current status of these (re-)programming efforts.

Initial Focus on Staff Safety and Business Continuity

A first update on GGGI and the COVID-19 pandemic (dated March 24, find it [here](#)) focused primarily on GGGI's business continuity. On February 23, GGGI's management changed its annual staff meeting from a physical into a virtual one and gave HQ staff the option to adopt flexible work arrangements in an effort to curb the spread of COVID-19. On March 5, all mission travel was suspended indefinitely. From the middle of March, all 30 GGGI country programs switched to flexible work arrangements as governments implemented lockdowns, quarantines, and social distancing measures.

GGGI was well prepared for the challenges posed by the COVID crisis and by and large we have successfully switched to operating remotely, with all key business processes supported through on-line tools, and the equipment and software in place to support remote working. In April, we have accelerated the roll-out of new software to increase the effectiveness of virtual teams and we are making some additional investments in videoconferencing equipment.

GGGI has followed UN-guidance on evacuations and only evacuated international staff from one country, though our Australian and Korean volunteer / seconded staff have all been evacuated to their home country. Several other staff have opted to work remotely from another duty station or their home country, but by and large our country teams are still intact and in country, working remotely. We continue to monitor the situation closely through daily meetings of our Crisis Management Committee and weekly virtual town halls open to all staff.

Engagement with Member Governments: supporting flexible work in LDCs and SIDS

Project implementation is experiencing some delays, as all face-to-face government meetings, workshops and consultations have been postponed and are gradually being replaced by virtual meetings and remote engagement to the extent possible.

Many government partners have been able to shift to a flexible working environment, adapting to the new normal. Some government partners are struggling to put in place effective flexible working practices. Based on a survey of our country teams, the GGGI management issued guidance on April 17 on IT support for our Least Developed Country (LDC) and Small Island Developing State (SIDS) Members during the COVID crisis, through re-allocation of unused travel budgets (find it [here](#)).

Developing ideas for a green recovery

While the COVID-19 pandemic is initially a public health crisis, the full extent of the economic crisis caused by the unprecedented lockdown of the global economy is still only emerging. Some impacts were swift, such as the immediate catastrophic collapse of the tourism sector on which many SIDS depend as a result of international travel restrictions that are unlikely to be lifted anytime soon, even as countries open their domestic economies.

Other impacts have become clear such as the oil price crisis that led to a zero price for oil this week. The ripple effects will be felt in many other sectors. As we have learned from past crises, people in disadvantaged socio-economic groups in developing countries are the most vulnerable and likely to be hit hardest, as they have little resilience and their governments have not put safety nets in place, nor can they afford the kind of stimulus packages that European countries and the US have implemented.

The overwhelming priority is to get the economy back on track, of course, but the climate crisis has not gone away. While we are enjoying cleaner air than in decades in many cities, re-starting the economy will bring back the same problems which necessitated the green transition. As stimulus and development assistance packages are developed to kick-start the economy and address some of the worst consequences of the economic crisis, key questions therefore are:

1. How can we best ensure that the recovery packages accelerate, rather than slow down, the green transition, and step up climate action, by prioritizing energy transformation / investment in RE; investments in energy efficiency; through investments in green infrastructure or green public works? Can the stimulus package be a Green New Deal?
2. Can the packages, if they provide short-term income support for out-of-work employees, provide cash in exchange for green training or labor on green projects – what we have called the “just transition” when linked to climate action – and can it help stimulate green jobs generation longer term?
3. Can climate action be aligned with COVID recovery, by emphasizing green jobs for example? Can NDC action plans/ roadmaps become part of COVID recovery packages?
4. How to ensure that increased climate resilience / adaptation will be aligned with resilience to health crises and their economic consequences such as COVID?
5. How do we support countries to ensure that the emergency health and greening of economic recovery responses can take place to serve the same climate goals?
6. How can we use the COVID-19 situation as an opportunity to develop/strengthen/shift towards a different but active approach of creating and shaping markets and interventions that ensure resilience and delivery of sustainable and inclusive growth?

Incorporating employment and economic assessment of the mitigation and adaptation measures/actions that are part of the NDCs, NAPs and LEDS is now more relevant than ever. Adding an assessment of short- and long-term employment generation and economic effects of climate actions will provide clear evidence to policymakers on actions to prioritize from a Covid19 crisis recovery perspective.

Another issue that is becoming increasingly important is the level of self-sufficiency and economic resilience of the economies of our members, particularly SIDS.

Employment, self -sufficiency and climate and economic resilience were already planned to be included in some of GGGI’s projects, such as the Tonga LEDS which is under way. Going forward GGGI will be careful to explicitly include such considerations in all new project development.

GGGI is also engaging with national counterparts and the international community (GGKP, Partnership for Green Economy) to systematically and strategically reflect on COVID’s impacts and how to “build back better”. What is our shared vision? What needs fixing? And what solutions will be effective in solving both short- and long-term problems? This work is scheduled to lead to a co-created policy brief on the COVID response in early May.

GGGI's Green COVID Recovery Proposals and Policy Advice to Members

In early April GGGI shared the first two COVID recovery Concept notes with key donors:

- Greening the Tourism Sector's COVID-19 Recovery in Pacific and Caribbean SIDS; and
- Supporting Africa's Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic: Green Job Creation, Financial Incentives to Restore Degraded Forest Landscapes and Build Climate Resilient Agricultural Systems.

We are inviting interest in these ideas from donors and stand ready to take these multi-sector, multi-country ideas forward as a package or as a more focused project.

In addition, we are currently developing an additional set of project proposals at the request of the Qatar Fund for Development that combine climate action and COVID response for LDCs and SIDS. Focus areas of these proposals are on some of the priorities GGGI has identified as high-potential for a green transition in its ongoing country work, combined with COVID-response elements linked primarily to both short term income support and longer-term green job creation:

- Green entrepreneurship, innovation and green employment for SIDS in the Caribbean and Pacific;
- Solar irrigation system development in African countries; and
- Climate and COVID resilient agriculture and nutrition systems in Kiribati.

Through the development of these new proposals GGGI aims to build on its ongoing partnership with the most vulnerable countries and support them in the COVID recovery as well as a green transition that increases their resilience to climate as well as health and other shocks. These proposals also serve to discuss, internally and with partners, how to respond to the COVID pandemic generally and the lessons will be applied in GGGI's work more broadly, as discussed hereafter.

GGGI is developing its in-house expertise related to effective greening of the COVID response, collaborating with the international community, with the intent to make this expertise and experience available to its Members. GGGI targets being able to support the design of the economic recovery plans, advising how to green such packages, much like we are doing with LEDS and NDCs in our ongoing work. Key to this ability is the expertise and experience GGGI has built in the area of green employment, both overall green jobs modelling and assessments such as the green employment potential of implementing the NDC renewable energy targets in Indonesia, Mexico and Rwanda.

Incorporating COVID Response into our Work Program and Budget (WPB) and earmarked project portfolio

In addition to the development of special or additional projects, GGGI should- and will – also incorporate a response to the COVID pandemic in all its other work. We will do so along two major axes:

1. ***Incorporating COVID into the next WPB 2021-2022:*** Currently all country teams are preparing their 2021-22 country business plans, which will be combined into the **GGGI** Work Program and Budget for 2021-22, to be approved by the Council at its October 2020 session. In these country business plans, all country teams have been asked to consider how to incorporate the COVID response into their business planning. This will help program all of GGGI's core resources to become more COVID relevant.

2. **Assessment of COVID-19 risks and opportunities in the current project portfolio:** GGGI is now undertaking an assessment of its entire project portfolio to determine whether there are any unforeseen COVID-related risks for these projects designed pre-COVID. All project managers are requested to update the risk tab in GGGI Online (our project management tool) by 24 April. When there are likely risks, we will assess what mitigating actions exist to address these risks, and whether we need to involve the project partners in putting those measures in place. In addition we will now initiate an assessment of the opportunities to make our projects more relevant in a post-COVID world – contributing to recovery packages, for example - then we will determine whether we can take advantage of these opportunities unilaterally, or need to work with our partners to assess whether any changes can be made to re-allocate funds to new COVID response related activities. More generally, we will assess if we would have made any changes to project designs post-COVID. If we believe we can make these projects (more) COVID response relevant, then we can initiate a dialogue with the respective donor to see what it would take to implement such changes.

Policy advisory work on effective Green COVID Recovery packages

Many development partners have shared or are drafting white papers and blogs on the consequences of the COVID crisis, as is appropriate for this crisis that is overwhelming all other priorities. GGGI is likewise contributing its thought leadership to a Green Growth Knowledge Platform (GGKP) webinar series on the COVID response as well as developing key COVID messaging via collaboration among international organizations (find it [here](#)).

GGGI has also been invited by the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as organizers of the P4G Summit that is now delayed till 2021, to develop a White Paper on the most effective ways in which the COVID response can be aligned with climate action. This paper is intended to stimulate discussion in the preparation for the P4G Summit.