Achieving Green Growth & Climate Action Post COVID-19

GGGI Technical Report No. 13

In this report, **GGGI explores the challenges and opportunities posed by the COVID-19 pandemic**, the links between health and climate crises, and the lessons we have learned from past disasters to **build back better.**

July 2020

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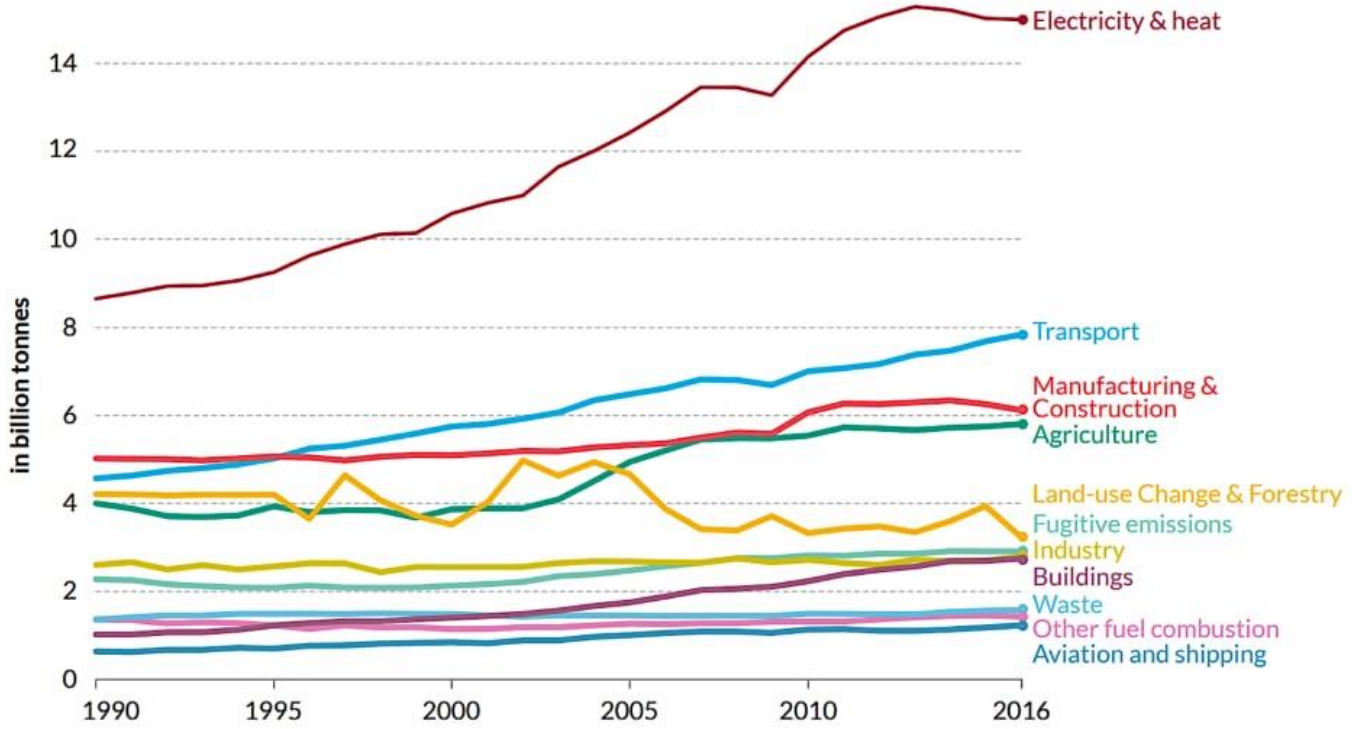

Figure 1. Global GHG emissions in tonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent (CO2e), by sector (1990-2016)
Source: Adapted from Our World in Data based on the data published by the CAIT Climate Data Explorer via Climate Watch

02 | **COVID-19 and Climate Action: Challenges and Opportunities** | **July 2020**

While the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis are seemingly unrelated, they are both critical elements of a broader sustainability crisis that includes biodiversity loss, air pollution, and the ocean plastic crisis.

The ongoing debate on Green New Deal type policies in the European Union (EU), the U.S., and the Republic of Korea, provides a real opportunity for governments to **link climate action to COVID-19 recovery packages**.

03 | Health and Climate Interactions | July 2020

Air pollution and climate

The number of deaths caused by air pollution each year is over 15 times higher than those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (as of July 2020). Countries should take action to recover from the COVID-19 crisis in a way that increases their resilience to future shocks of this nature.

Sustainable energy and health

Access to energy is a prerequisite for quality health care. Many health clinics, particularly those in rural areas, lack reliable, affordable electricity supplies to power basic services such as lighting, communications, refrigeration, diagnostics, and the medical devices required to provide health services.

Linking health and climate resilience

Even at the early stages of the pandemic, an Ipsos MORI survey in April 2020 in 29 countries, including all G20 economies, shows that 65 percent of all respondents globally favor a green recovery, with government actions that prioritize climate change.

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04 | Employment and Inclusivity Recovery | July 2020

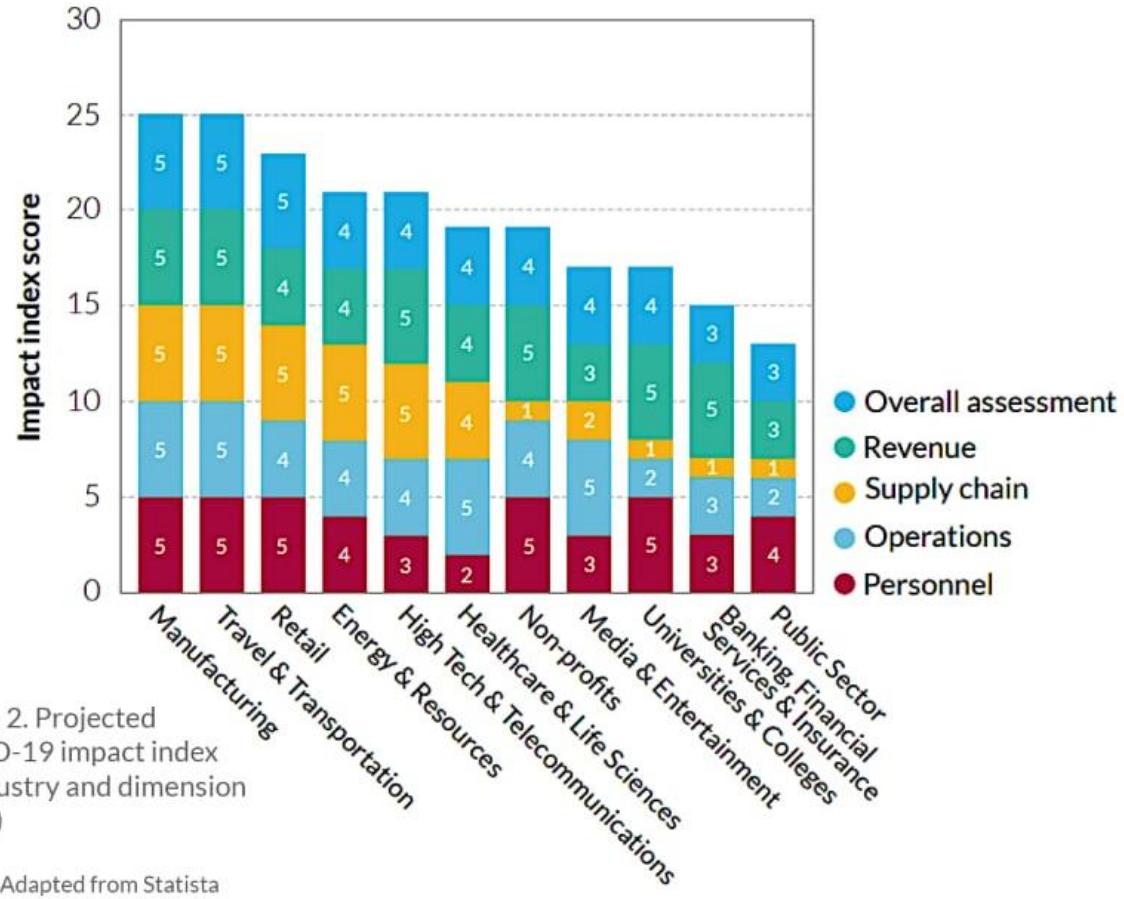

Figure 2. Projected COVID-19 impact index by industry and dimension (2020)

Source: Adapted from Statista

According to Statista's COVID-19 impact index, manufacturing and travel and transportation are the two most impacted sectors, as shown in figure 2.

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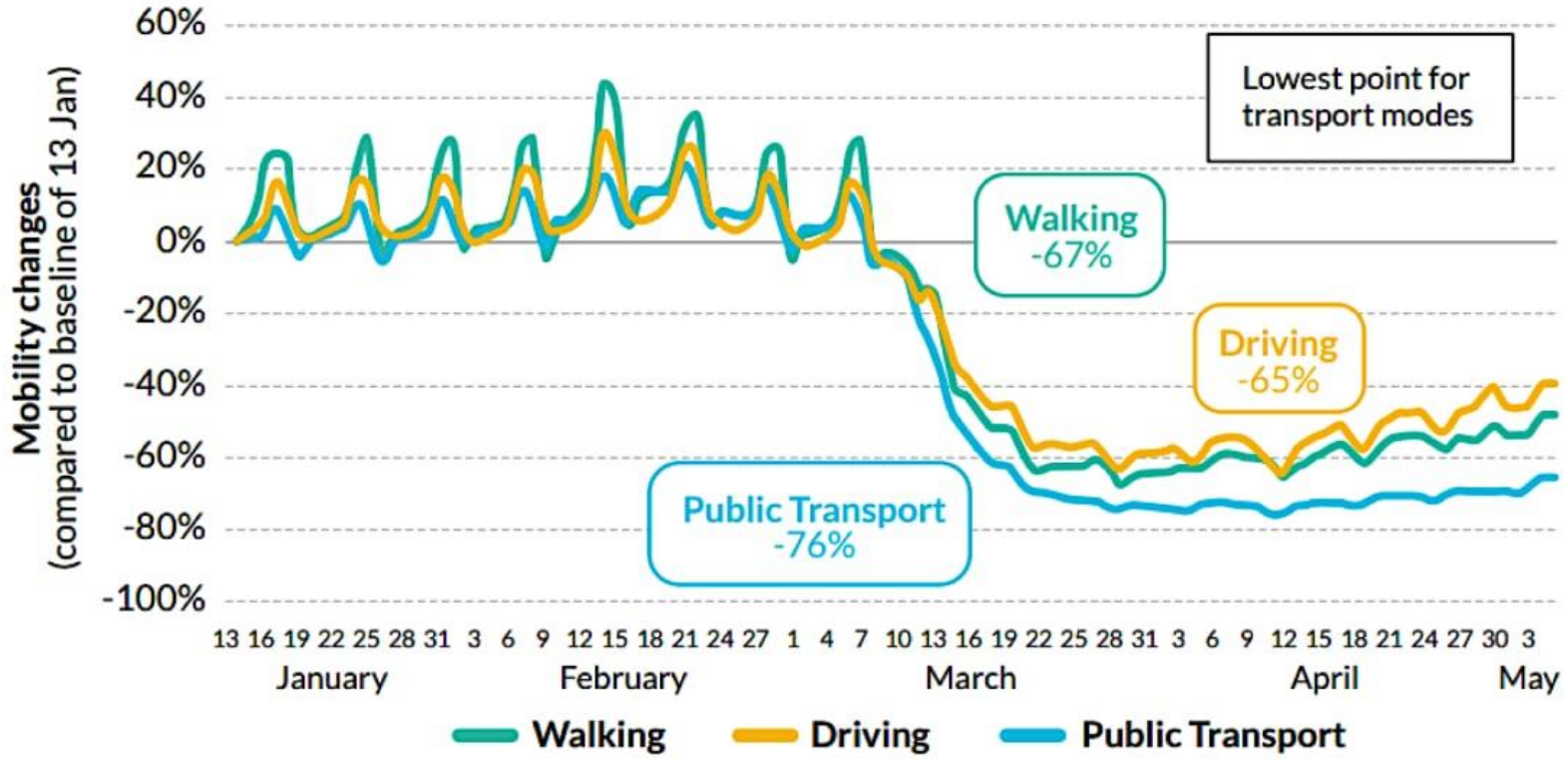

Figure 4. Decline in urban mobility, based on Google & Apple data sets.
Source: Adapted from SLOCAT

Figure 4 shows a significant decline in the use of public transport across all regions and transport types, with only a few exceptions. **A post-COVID-19 green recovery provides significant opportunities to reinvest in healthier and higher quality public transport systems**, and to reprioritize the transition towards non-motorized modalities, with co-benefits for urban skies, health, and spatial transformation.

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In April 2020, the World Food Programme (WFP) warned that **the number of people on the brink of starvation could double from 135 million pre-COVID-19 to 265 million** by the end of the year.

Adopting nature-based solutions provides a basis to tackle and determine the extent of the interrelated challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, food and nutrition insecurity, water scarcity, unemployment, and poverty.

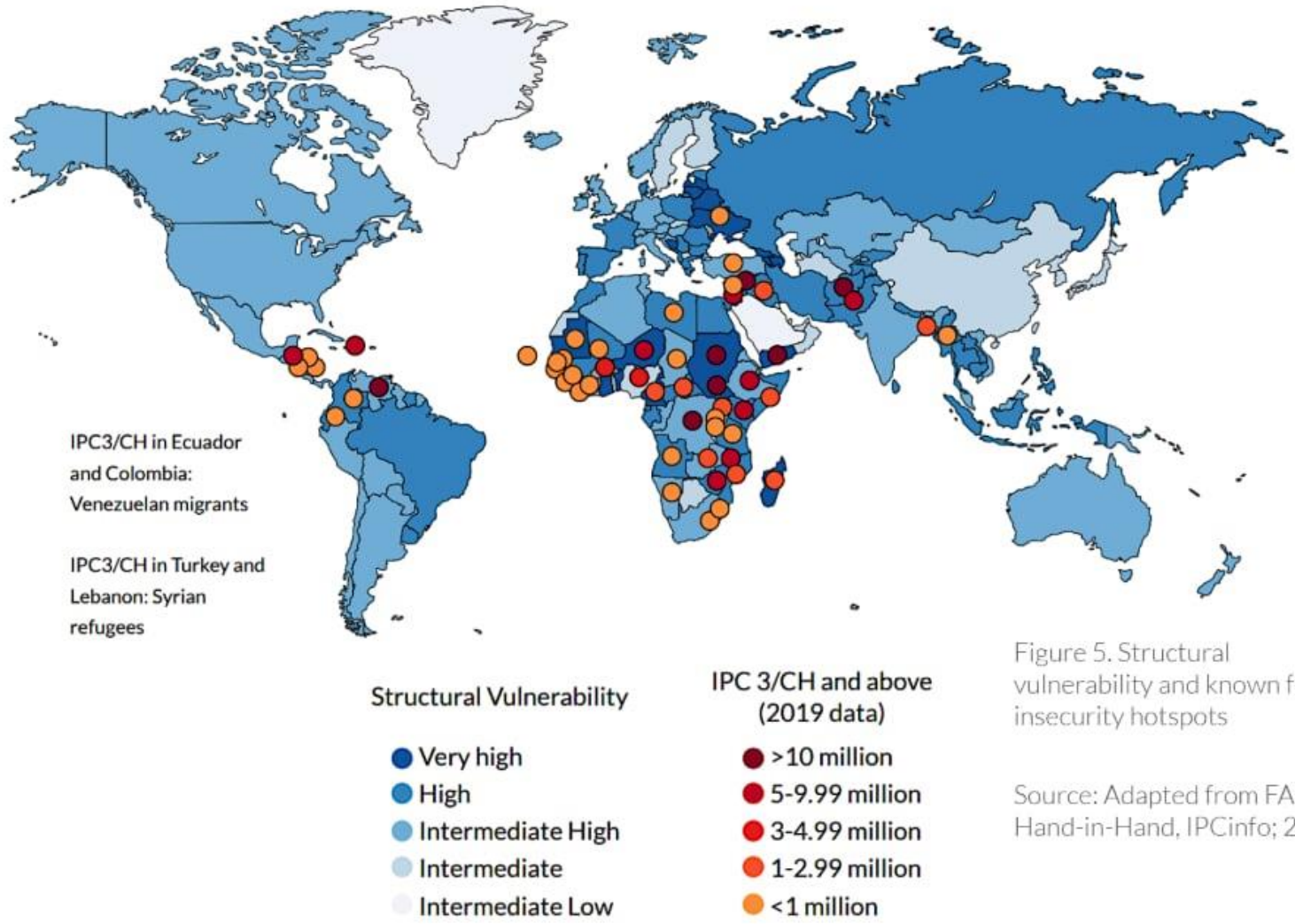

Figure 5. Structural vulnerability and known food insecurity hotspots

Source: Adapted from FAO/ Hand-in-Hand, IPCinfo; 2020

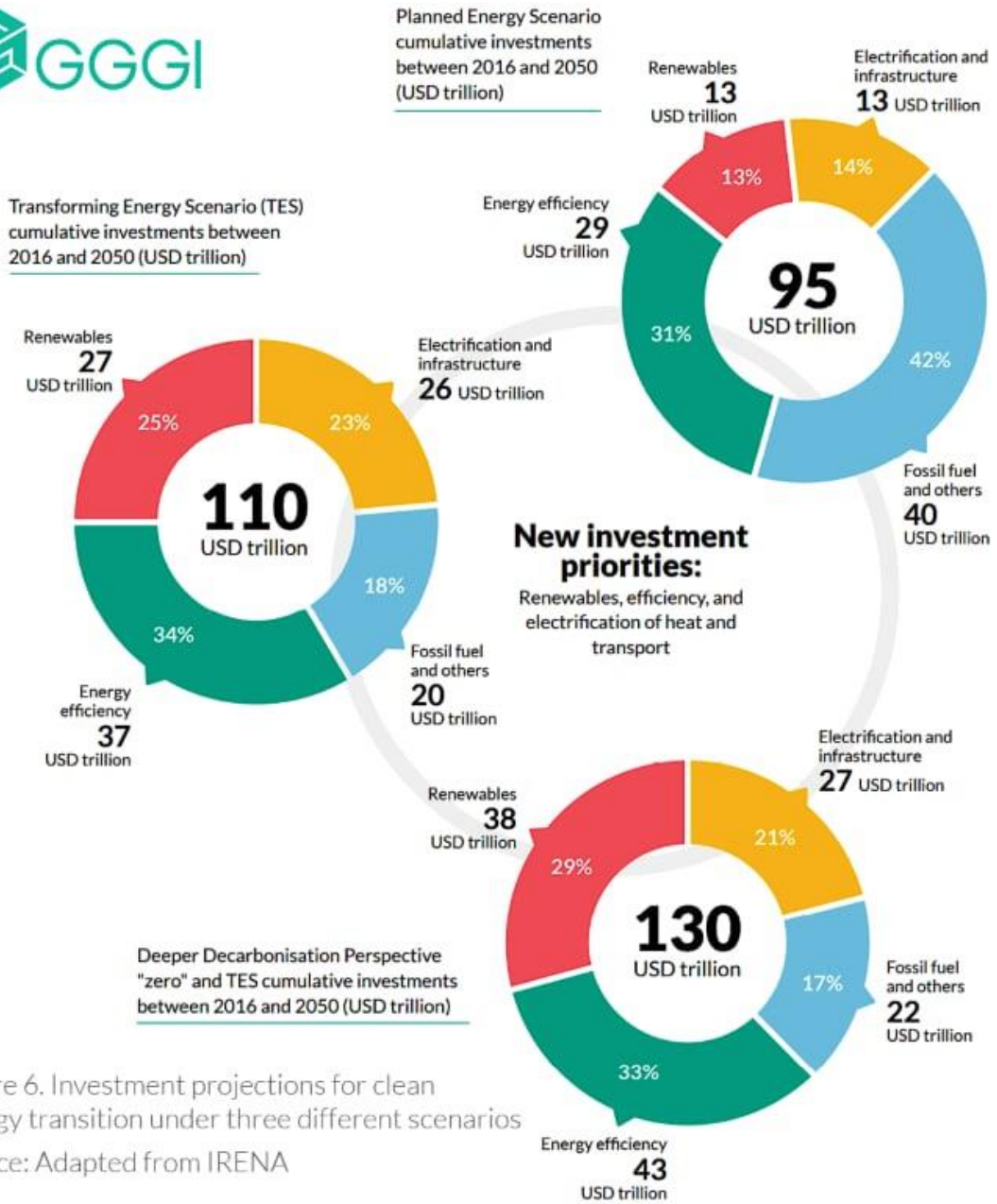

Figure 6. Investment projections for clean energy transition under three different scenarios

Source: Adapted from IRENA

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented supply and demand shocks across the energy sector, with oil prices falling to negative values at one point for the U.S. benchmark price due to lack of storage capacity.

The expected economic downturn will challenge and disrupt existing energy systems, energy sector supply chains, and sector businesses, creating pressure for a new energy order.

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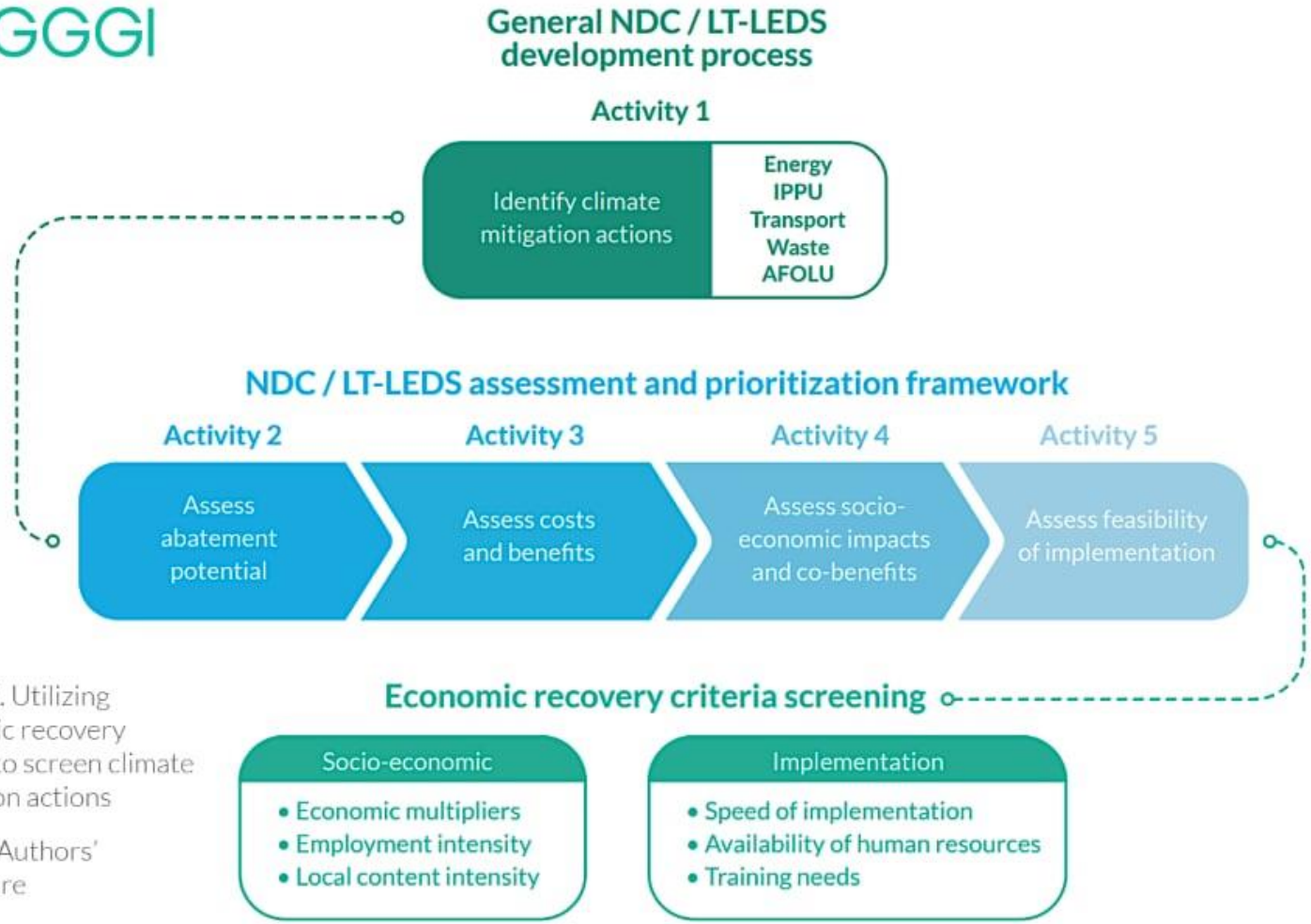


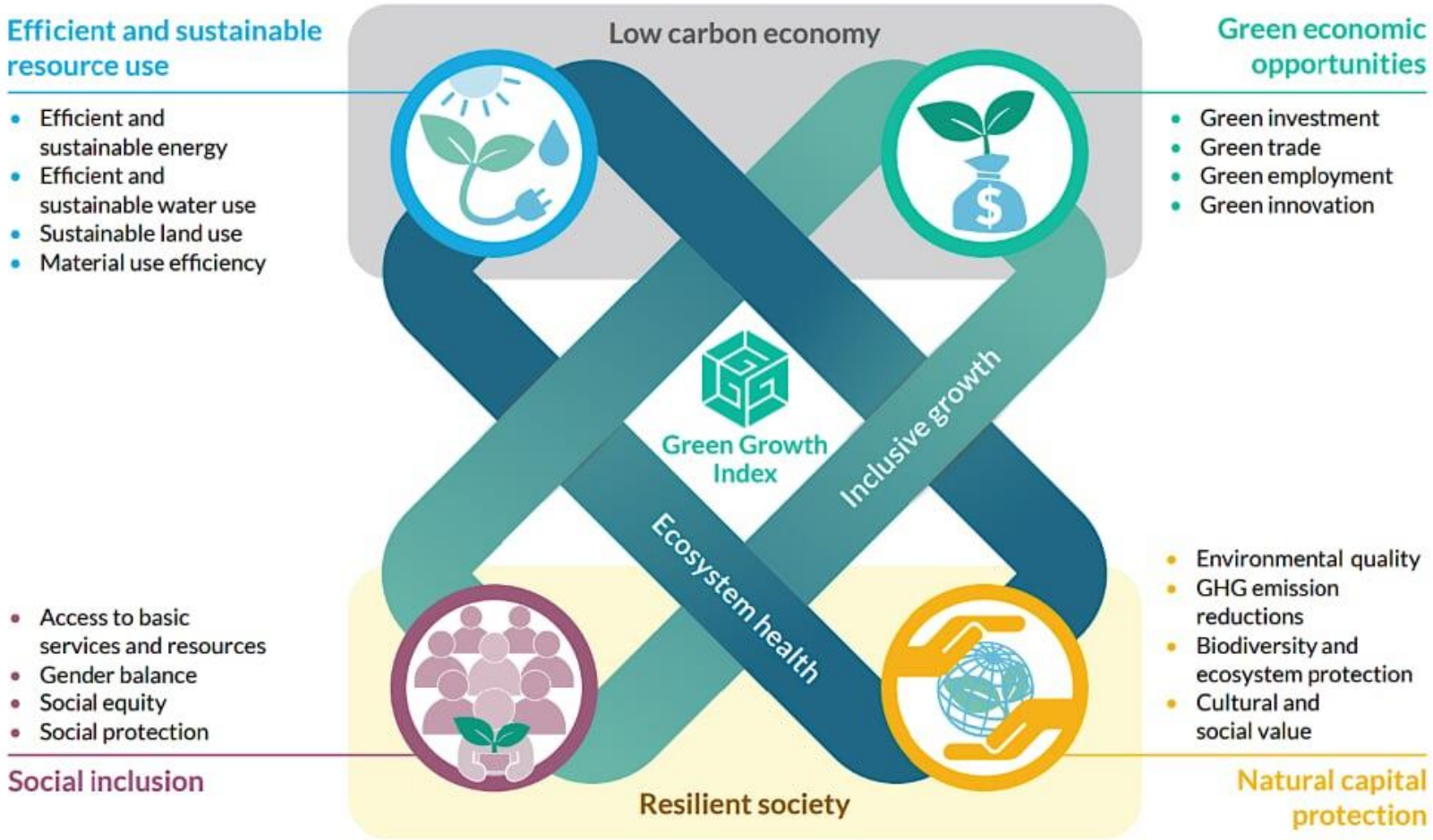
Figure 8. Utilizing economic recovery criteria to screen climate mitigation actions

Source: Authors' own figure

There are great opportunities in linking the COVID19 economic recovery packages with climate and green actions already included in NDCs, LT-LEDS, National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and green growth plans prepared by country governments

As governments are currently seeking the right economic recovery measures, projects, and investments, they can **screen the climate and green growth actions in NDCs and LT-LEDS against economic recovery criteria.**

Figure 8. Conceptual framework for the Green Growth Index
Source: GGGI



Assessment tools are playing a critical role in tracking and projecting not only hotspots of infections and mortalities but also impacts on businesses and unemployment

Impact assessment of COVID-19 recovery plans requires a tool that is explicitly aligned to the SDGs. GGGI's Green Growth Index is such a tool because it is based on the concept of sustainable development & integrates SDG indicators

The Green Growth Index generates country performance scores ranging from 1 to 100, with 100 implying the achievement of a sustainability target for a given indicator

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COVID-19 & Climate Policy Recommendations

01 Apply green stimulus priorities

02 Transition fossil fuel subsidies to renewable energy subsidies

03 Set ambitious targets as part of recovery packages or "green deals"

05 Phase out coal

06 Stimulate green innovation & green jobs

07 Combine digital and green new deals

08 Promote nature-based solutions through employment-based social assistance programs

04 Align with climate and green growth strategies and plans

09 Accelerate solar-powered irrigation

10 Upgrade health facilities with clean energy