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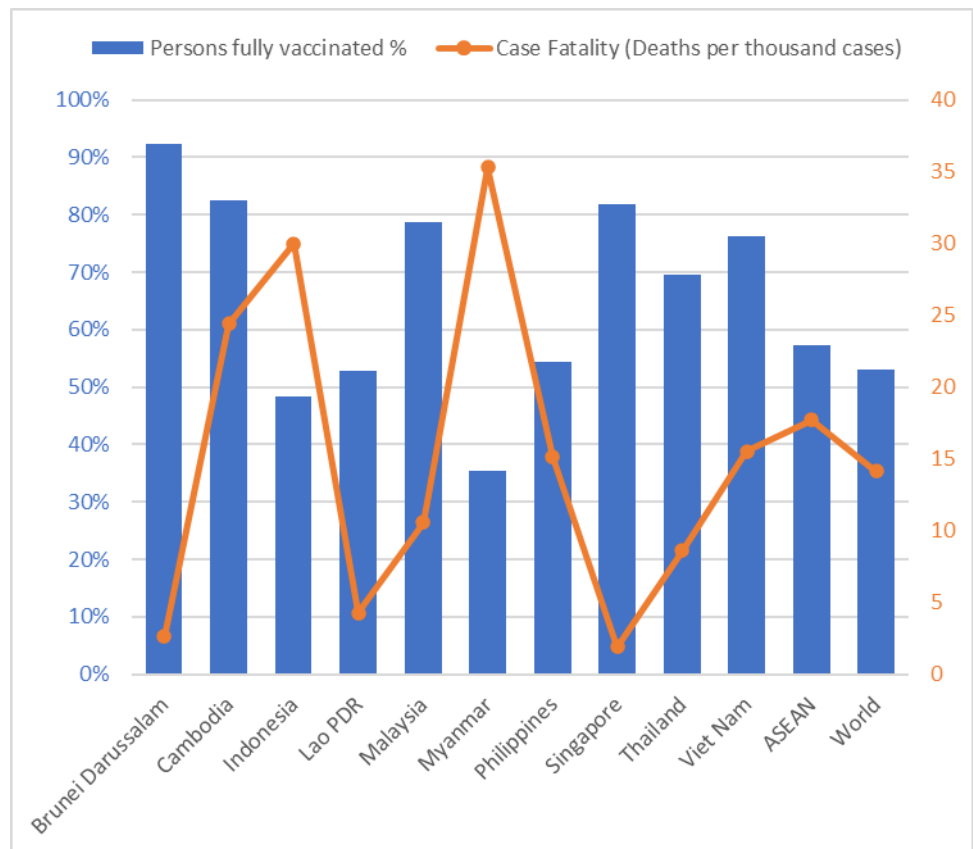
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Building Back Better: Towards Advancing Global Health Security



Source: World Health Organization (2022). WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard.

2022 started with the largest increase in COVID-19 infections globally. Compared to the peaks of less than 900,000 new cases per day in the emergence of the “Delta Variant” in early 2021, the “Omicron Variant” reached a peak of more than 3.8 million new cases per day towards the end of January 2022, according to the Worldometer database. As of mid-February, there have been more than 410 million COVID-19 cases, and more than 5.8 million deaths.

Vaccine Success, But No Panacea

Vaccines have been seen as a key mechanism for addressing the pan-

dem. Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) show that as of mid-February, 4.8 billion individuals (60.7%) have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, of which 4.2 billion are fully inoculated (53%). The ASEAN region showed moderate success. Across its population of 667 million individuals, 458 million individuals (69%) have received at least one dose, of which 382 million individuals (57%) are fully inoculated—which are better than the global average.

However, just because the average vaccination levels in ASEAN are higher than the global average, it does not

mean that ASEAN has been doing better than the rest of the world in preventing deaths. In fact, ASEAN is doing worse in keeping the case fatality rate low: whereas the world average is 14 deaths for every 1,000 cases, ASEAN has an average of 17 deaths per 1,000 cases.

This is not to say that vaccines have not been effective. However, vaccines are no panacea for dealing with the kinds of health security challenges facing the world today. The ongoing pandemic has shown that more lessons are to be learnt and much more should be done to be able to 'build back better' and advance global health security.

Dealing with Health Inequities

One of the ugly realities that the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed is vaccine inequity. At the height of the health crisis, many high-income countries (HICs) and wealthy economies had signed exclusive bilateral agreements with vaccine man-

ufacturers to ensure enough doses for their citizens causing severe problems of vaccine access for less developed countries. And despite calls from the WHO for HICs to help ease supply constraints and increase their donations to COVAX facility to help countries in need, many HICs have instead shifted their focus toward giving booster doses to give their citizens more protection against new variants of the virus like Delta and Omicron.

Against these challenges, the Pandemic Treaty has been advanced to make countries more accountable to one another. A key agenda is to support the waiving of intellectual property and promote technology and knowledge transfer to allow production in countries that have the capacity to manufacture vaccines and other therapeutics for COVID-19 and other emerging pandemics.

Another important agenda is to strengthen health systems from the local, national to regional levels in order to 'build back

better'. This requires significant investments of resources, including training the healthcare workforce in the region, greater cooperation in ramping up scientific and medical expertise, and providing resources to build capacity of laboratories and public health facilities.

Last, but certainly not least, is the need to increase protection for more vulnerable groups, particularly those who are extremely poor, the elderly and those with disabilities who have no access to healthcare. Thus, a key priority for advancing global health security in a post-Covid world is to provide universal healthcare. This is certainly one way to build "shock-responsive" social protection systems to help people deal with threats to health and other human security problems.

Suggested Readings

- European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) (2022). *Policy Brief: Developing Shock Responsive Social Protection System to Mitigate the Impact of COVID-19, Enable Speedy Recovery and Strengthen the Resilience of Vulnerable People in ASEAN*. <https://asean.org/book/policy-brief-developing-shock-responsive-social-protection-system-to-mitigate-the-impact-of-covid-19-enable-speedy-recovery-and-strengthen-the-resilience-of-vulnerable-people-in-asean/>.
- European Council (2021). An international treaty on pandemic prevention and preparedness. 6 December. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/coronavirus/pandemic-treaty/>
- World Health Organization (2022). WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard. <https://covid19.who.int/info?openIndex=2>.
- World Health Organization (2021). World Health Assembly agrees to launch process to develop historic global accord on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. 1 December. <https://www.who.int/news/item/01-12-2021-world-health-assembly-agrees-to-launch-process-to-develop-historic-global-accord-on-pandemic-prevention-preparedness-and-response>
- Worldometer (2022). COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>.

CLIMATE CHANGE

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

IN FOCUS: Massive floods and typhoons in Southeast Asia drive home the need to adapt to climate change

In Southeast Asia, developing adaptation policies is underway but mostly still in an early stage. The complexities of the challenge are daunting and the associated costs will stretch current day budgets and undoubtedly burden future political administrations.

Jack Board

Channel News Asia

5 February 2022

Moving beyond emissions: How Canada can weather the floods of the future

The problem is, local governments, especially smaller ones, have no resources or budgets to implement robust climate change adaptation plans on their own. Upgrading drainage systems, constructing a dike, or flood-proofing essential services can come with multimillion-dollar price tags, so they have to look elsewhere for funding.

Krista Hessey

Global News

5 February 2022

Climate change could change the air that we breathe: NTU study

As the world warms, the composition of micro-organisms in the air could change. a changing composition of the air microbiome - micro-organisms in the air - could have implications for human societies.

Audrey Tan

The Straits Times

8 February 2022

Local governments urged to step up in averting water crisis

Local Government Units (LGUs) have been urged to play a greater role in heading off the periodic water shortages during the dry season. Public-private sector partnerships can also increase scale and reach. Innovation makes water more accessible and affordable.

Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson

Business World

9 February 2022

Plastic pollution in Southeast Asia: Wasted Opportunity?

Plastic pollution is clearly a climate problem as it contributes to global greenhouse gas emissions. What has been done in Southeast Asia — one of the plastic pollution hotspots — to reverse the worsening marine plastic pollution?

Julius Cesar Trajano

RSIS Commentary

10 February 2022

UN environmental forum to announce binding resolutions on plastic pollution

The resolutions have a vision to reduce the increasing marine pollution by the year 2050. A number of publications including those on noise pollution, wildfires and the current shifts on weather seasons will be launched during the forum.

Xinhua

11 February 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Under water: The costs of climate change for Canada's infrastructure

Findings suggest that to ensure new and existing infrastructure is "future proofed," investment must dramatically shift toward making infrastructure more resilient. Policy changes drive that shift: Canada must rapidly update the policies, codes, regulations, and funding decisions that determine what gets built and how it is maintained.

Ryan Ness, et al.

Ottawa, ON: Canadian Institute for Climate Choices

2021

ASEAN state of climate change report

Concerning mitigation, ASEAN member states have proactively taken measures in the areas of greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory and monitoring, reporting and verification for GHG emissions and reductions and sector policy planning in the course of developing their nationally determined contributions (NDC). A key challenge is how to raise the level of ambition of the NDCs and related long-term national strategies and policies.

Jakarta: The ASEAN Secretariat

2021

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

9th World Water Forum

The Forum will, through an innovative framework, seek to identify, promote and implement concrete responses and actions for water and sanitation in an integrated way.

Dakar, Senegal

22-27 March 2022

Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2022

The Forum provides a regional perspective on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by identifying regional trends and sharing best practices and lessons learned.

Bangkok, Thailand

28-31 March 2022

ENERGY SECURITY

NEWS AND COMMENTARIES

The U.S. is divided over whether nuclear power is part of the green energy future

Nuclear power comes with its own set of potential problems, especially radioactive waste that can remain dangerous for thousands of years. But supporters say the risks can be minimised and that the energy source will be essential to stabilise power supplies as the world tries to move away from fossil fuels.

Associated Press

NPR

18 January 2022

How energy is aiding ASEAN's post-pandemic recovery

Authors argue that ASEAN is now on the right track toward low-carbon development. However, the big question remains: Will ASEAN be able to accelerate its energy transition while maintaining energy resilience? Or will it get caught up in another detrimental slowdown? We are looking forward to see what 2022 has in store for us.

Helena Aurellia and Gabriella Ienanto

The Diplomat

22 January 2022

In Southeast Asia, decades-long deals stymie shift away from coal

Power purchase agreements that ensure "coal lock-in" for decades are complicating the region's transition away from fossil fuels.

Nyshka Chandran

Al Jazeera

7 February 2022

Major breakthrough on nuclear fusion energy

If nuclear fusion can be successfully recreated on Earth, it holds out the potential of virtually unlimited supplies of low-carbon, low-radiation energy.

Jonathan Amos

BBC News

10 February 2022

Race to reduce Singapore F1's carbon footprint a good start, but experts are mixed on its impact

While the sustainability audit and green initiatives are a step in the right direction, experts CNA spoke to were mixed on whether the efforts would be enough to reduce the gas-guzzling sport's carbon footprint.

Vanessa Lim

Channel News Asia

10 February 2022

IAEA begins mission to review Fukushima water release

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has endorsed the release, which it says is similar to the disposal of wastewater at nuclear plants elsewhere. But the plan has sparked ire from neighbouring countries over environmental and safety concerns. It also generated fierce opposition from local fishing communities

AFP

Channel News Asia

14 February 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Geopolitics of the energy transformation: Hydrogen factor

This report considers whether and how hydrogen may disrupt future energy systems, reflecting on many of the key themes discussed in the Global Commission's report, *A New World – The Geopolitics of the Energy Transformation*.

Abu Dhabi: IRENA

2022

World energy transitions outlook: 1.5°C Pathway

Against the backdrop of turbulent markets and a crucial meeting of the COP26 conference, this report offers an indispensable guide to the opportunities, benefits and risks ahead at this vital moment for clean energy transitions.

Abu Dhabi: IRENA

2021

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

ASEAN Energy Outlook Forum

Speakers examined the potential dynamics in 2022 that will shape energy development in ASEAN; the challenges in translating the commitments at COP26; and the opportunity from RCEP in supporting the region to build back better and greener amidst the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recorded Event

11 January 2022

Call for Papers: International Conference on Nuclear Knowledge Management and Human Resources Development

The conference will provide participants with practical solutions for developing and maintaining the human resources needed to support safe, secure and sustainable nuclear power programmes.

Moscow, Russia

13-16 June 2022

FOOD SECURITY

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

China beefs up food security again with yet another ban on Australian meat imports

Amid news of a COVID-19 outbreak in a meat facility, the Teys Naracoorte abattoir stands as the 10th Australian facility from which China has suspended meat imports. This comes amid bilateral tensions between the two countries, although this has also been seen as a measure to prevent COVID-19 transmission through imported food.

Su-Lin Tan

South China Morning Post

2 February 2022

Addressing the Southeast Asian food security vulnerabilities exposed by COVID-19

Amid climate change, Southeast Asia's food security concerns are punctuated by the current pandemic. The region has suffered from declining availability of water for crop production owing to saltwater intrusion, alongside disruptions to migrant worker flows into agriculture. These are worsened by concerns of "food nationalism", including grain stockpiling and export restrictions.

Mark S. Cogan and Paul D. Scott

The Diplomat

10 February 2022

Simultaneous droughts across globe can threaten food security, study says

A recent international collaborative study has found that simultaneous drought occurrences across different regions of the world are 40% more likely to occur by within the first half of the 21st century, compared to before the year 2000. These can lead to food security risks and raise food prices, which can impact over 120 million people globally.

Indo-Asian News Service

The Business Standard

12 February 2022

First batch of Temasek Rice grown in the community harvested in Tampines

Singapore's Temasek Life Sciences Laboratory (TLL) has developed the Singapore-made "Temasek Rice," which has been locally harvested for the first time in Tampines area. This variety offers the benefit of offering water savings as well as resilience amid two-week-long droughts.

Jessie Lim

The Straits Times

12 February 2022

China's focus on food security

Food remains very much an issue of national security in China, with President Xi Jinping quoted as saying that "The food of the Chinese people must be made by and remain in the hands of the Chinese." Within the country's current push, policies for food security have focused on "grain security" as well as ensuring sufficient pork and vegetable supplies, among others.

Genevieve Donnellon-May

The Diplomat

12 February 2022

Ukraine crisis sends grain prices soaring, threatens food security

As Russia and Ukraine rank highly in wheat exports (first and fifth, respectively), conflict between the two countries could add to the already above-par grain prices globally. This is especially since Russia's food production is concentrated in its southwest region, close to Ukraine's border.

Koichi Minami and Sachiha Kurose

Nikkei Asia

12 February 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Enhanced risk of concurrent regional droughts with increased ENSO variability and warming

This study reveals the potential for a ninefold increase in agricultural area and population exposure to severe compound droughts. Findings are based on analysis of the relationship between the El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and the occurrence of compound droughts, with 68% of historical events occurring during El Niño or La Niña conditions.

Jitendra Singh et al.

Nature Climate Change, Vol. 12

2022

Public food procurement for sustainable food systems and healthy diets - Volume 1

This publication discusses how Sustainable Public Food Procurement (PFP) can present a key game changer for food systems transformation. In particular, it argues that PFP can provide a market for local and smallholder farmers, promote the conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity, and improve the nutrition and health of children and communities.

Luana F.J. Swensson, et al. (eds)

Rome: FAO, Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, and Editora da UFRGS

2021

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

2nd Global Food Security & Sustainability Summit 2022

The event will discuss the critical issues of food security from the local level to the global level, and from an interdisciplinary and systemic food systems perspective. Topics include new technologies, sustainability issues, and how societies and businesses can design more sustainable solutions in their entire food chain to minimize impact to the environment and reduce.

Virtual

30 June 2022 - 1 July 2022

Call for experiences in the use of the CFS-RAI Principles

The United Nations' Committee on World Food Security (CFS) invites stakeholders to share their experiences and good practices in applying the CFS' Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI).

Call for Papers

15 April 2022 (Deadline)

HEALTH SECURITY

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Lassa fever: Patient dies of Ebola-like virus as third case in UK confirmed, health officials say

A patient has died after a third case of Lassa fever was confirmed in the UK, health officials say. Lassa fever is usually caught from exposure to food or household items contaminated with the urine or faeces of infected rats. It can also be transmitted through contact with infected bodily fluids.

Sky News

11 February 2022

Next Covid strain could kill many more, warn scientists ahead of England restrictions ending

A future variant of Covid-19 could be much more dangerous and cause far higher numbers of deaths and cases of serious illness than Omicron, leading UK scientists have warned.

Robin Mckie and Michael Savage

The Guardian

12 February 2022

Guinea worm disease nears eradication

Just 14 cases of the scourge that once infected millions of the world's poorest people were reported last year. But infections in animals complicate efforts to stamp it out.

Freda Kreier

Scientific American

14 February 2022

Collective efforts of people in Singapore formed 'strongest defence' in fight against COVID-19: Ng Eng Hen

Singapore has been putting up Total Defence against an "enemy that threatened death and destruction" for the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Natasha Ganesan

Channel News Asia

14 February 2022

Twenty minutes of daily exercise may cut heart disease risk in over-70s

Twenty minutes of daily moderate to vigorous exercise for those over the age of 70 may help ward off heart disease and heart failure later in life, long-term research suggests.

Andrew Gregory

The Guardian

14 February 2022

Talk to the public like you would talk to a patient

The most effective public health communication channels the qualities that primary-care pediatricians put into practice every day.

Aparna Bole

The Atlantic

15 February 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Training community health workers for the COVID-19 response, India

The success of training programme illustrates how local initiatives can help address gaps in the healthcare workforce and extend the reach of public healthcare into rural areas, in addition to improving COVID-19 responses.

Sachin S. Singh and Lal Bahadur Singh

Bulletin of the World Health Organization, Vol. 100, No. 2
2022

National policy responses to maintain essential health services during the COVID-19 pandemic

Future policy development efforts must aim to integrate across essential health service areas, an important step towards integrated, person-centred primary healthcare.

Nikki Gurley et al.

Bulletin of the World Health Organization, Vol. 100, No. 2
2022

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Roadmap to Endemic Covid-19: Shaping Policy and Planning in Singapore & USA Webinar

Two years after the emergence of Covid-19, countries around the world are transitioning to an endemic state after the initial period of emergency and concentrating efforts in trying to live with the pandemic. The role of policy and planning is still of great importance in shaping the direction each country will take, which in turn can influence approaches at a global level.

Recorded Webinar

25 January 2022

COVID-19 Year 3: How to Live With the Omicron Variant Webinar

Covid and the Omicron variant are surging in the US and around the world. What do we need to know about, vaccines, Covid treatments, and the risk of Covid for people with or at risk for cardiovascular disease? Family Heart Foundation's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Mary McGowan, presented an update and answered questions.

Recorded Webinar

27 January 2022

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Third-costliest year on record for weather disasters in 2021: \$343 billion in damages

For the first time on record, 2021 had four individual weather events topping the US\$20 billion economic loss threshold. As the effects of climate change continue to wreck a world built for the needs of the 20th century, the costs of major disasters are set to rise.

Jeff Masters

Yale Climate Connections

25 January 2022

Preventing sexual abuse in humanitarian settings 'high priority': WHO chief

In response to an independent commission which found that WHO employees participating in the response to a 2018-20 Ebola outbreak in the DRC had committed abuses against dozens of people, WHO Chief described them as "horrifying" and that investigations are being conducted.

Channel News Asia

28 January 2022

Multiple crises spiral in Myanmar one year after coup

As existing conflicts in border areas deepen and new crackdowns are emptying entire towns or villages, local aid workers face an increasingly dangerous working environment even as hundreds of thousands desperately need relief assistance.

Irwin Loy

The New Humanitarian

1 February 2022

Localisation only pays lip service to fixing aid's colonial legacy

Rather than a sincere effort at de-colonisation, most localisation practices still tend to work within existing power structures. For it to be anything more than tokenism, it must include people from the Global South.

Maha Shuayb

The New Humanitarian

8 February 2022

Vietnam joins Southeast Asia Disaster Risk Insurance Facility

Vietnam joins SEADRIF as its 8th member, allowing it to gain access to regional and international technical and financial solutions to increase its financial protection at a time of increasing disaster and climate shocks.

Chia Sé

Vietnamnet Global

11 February 2022

Tonga's recovery effort hampered by COVID lockdown, 1 month on

Tonga cleanup and aid distribution efforts have been hampered by its first local COVID-19 outbreak. This has also been further hampered by communication disruptions on the island itself.

Fumi Matsumoto

Nikkei Asia

15 February 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Towards a comprehensive security alliance: Evolving dynamics in the United States' humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to the Philippines

This article argues that humanitarian norms and frameworks in the Philippines now focus on disaster preparedness, multistakeholder participation at the local level and community resilience. The US-Philippines alliance has moved beyond US military's participation in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Julius Cesar Trajano

Asian Journal of Comparative Politics, Vol. 6, No. 4
2021

The state of open humanitarian data 2022

This report highlights the steady progress in closing data gaps across most humanitarian operations. This momentum is the result of global advocacy and investment paired with field-level data sharing and outreach.

The Centre for Humanitarian Data

2022

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Saving Lives with Predictive AI for Disaster Management

The webinar focused on how non-profit organisations can mine valuable insights from their data by using cutting edge AI technology and leverage it to plan impactful disaster management interventions.

Recorded Webinar

3 February 2022

Artificial Intelligence for Natural Disaster Management

This webinar will explore the main barriers to the adoption of disruptive technologies in the area of disaster management and will also examine the integrated approaches related to machine learning, big data analytics, and AI for supporting the detection, forecasting, and communication of natural hazards and disasters.

Webinar

16 March 2022

MIGRATION

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Climate migration is now a major geopolitical risk

With climate migration increasing, this is likely to place stress on already weak government institutions in the developing world, which in turn will create political and security flashpoints in the West.

Erin Sikorsky

BRINK

16 January 2022

Channel migrants: Armed forces set to take over English Channel operations

With increasing numbers of people crossing the English Channel in an attempt to seek asylum in the UK, the Home Secretary has commissioned the Ministry of Defence to take charge of operations looking to limit these crossings.

Adam Durbin

BBC News

17 January 2022

One year on, is Biden living up to his refugee and asylum promises?

While less xenophobic than the migration rhetoric of the previous administration, there is still an underlying message of migration as a problem. In order for any real change to occur beyond the superficial, there first needs to be a shift in the narrative.

Eric Reidy

The New Humanitarian

24 January 2022

Myanmar refugee numbers swell in India's Mizoram state

As displaced civilians from Myanmar's Chin state are entering India due to conflict, there is an increasing need for humanitarian aid. While the Thailand-Myanmar border has an established aid infrastructure, the India-Myanmar border is less well equipped.

Sebastian Strangio

The Diplomat

25 January 2022

Economic migration: The root problem is not smugglers but global inequality

In order to address mass economic migration, there is a need to look at its root causes and address it as an inevitable by-product of global inequality. Concentrating only on the means of 'illegal' migration and cracking down on smugglers is only a short-term solution.

Seb Rumsby

The Conversation

4 February 2022

Philippines 'modern-day heroes' sent record remittances last year

Record amounts of remittances have been sent back to the Philippines in 2021 with the reopening of sectors, the easing of restrictions and rising vaccination rate in developed countries. However, this may not last due to potential threats, including the emergence of new COVID-19 variants and tightening of government policies.

Cliff Venzon

Nikkei Asia

15 February 2022

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration Report of the Secretary-General

This report evaluates the implementation of the Global Compact on Migration and the functioning of the institutional arrangements. It also provides recommendations that might be considered by Member States engaging in the International Migration Review Forum process.

United Nations General Assembly

2021

Quarterly mixed migration update: Asia

Covering South and Southeast Asia, this report analyses the updates that have occurred in the 4th quarter of 2021 related to migration. It uses this analysis to highlight the new trends and dynamics, bringing them within a regional framework.

Mixed Migration Centre

2022

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

IMRF Dialogue Series – Gaps and emerging challenges: The impact of our evolving climate on migrants

This webinar looks at the impact of climate on migrants as part of the lead-up to the International Migration Review Forum.

Webinar

23 February 2022

The Road from COP26 to the International Migration Review Forum

International cooperation to address climate migration has increased in recent years. This event looks at what outcomes from COP26 should be brought forward for further discussion at the 2022 IMRF.

Event

24 February 2022