Second International Webinar on Behavioral Insights and Nudges for Combatting COVID-19

14 December 2020

The Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) and the Japan Nudge Promotion Council (JNPC) will co-host the Second International Webinar on Behavioral Insights and Nudges for Combatting COVID-19, with the participation of officials from ADBI, Asian Development Bank (ADB); Ministry of Environment, Government of Japan, experts from the Behavioral Sciences Team (BEST) of the Japan Nudge Promotion Council (JNPC), and others.
Background
At the First International Webinar on Behavioral Insights and Nudges for Combatting COVID-19, participants presented their early assessments of how the COVID-19 pandemic would affect people’s lives and the economy. Since then, the pandemic and its effects have evolved differently from one country/region to another. The range of country approaches included:

- Controlling the infection, initially through lockdowns, followed by social-distancing, hand-washing and mandatory facemasks, along with rigorous testing, quarantine and contact-tracing. These countries are now cautiously reopening their economies;
- Initially imposing lockdowns, but in the interest of the economy, slowly began to reopen, resulting in a slow but significant increase in infections;
- Initially imposed lockdown, followed by a broad and premature reopening, causing a strong resurgence of infections; and
- Did not take the pandemic seriously from the outset, resulting in an uncontrolled spread of the virus.

Since a highly reliable and efficacious vaccine may not become globally available soon, pre-COVID lifestyles may not return in the near future, if at all. There is a growing consensus that trends associated with the COVID-19 era may endure:

- Emphasis on resilience and self-reliance, rather than efficiency, towards “just in case”, rather than “just in time”, both in corporate strategy and policy;
- Interlinking through technology, rather than personal presence (i.e., travel/commute less and interact through videoconferencing/telework more);
- Jobs will change flexibly in their form more; and
- Through EdTech, MedTech and FinTech, there will be winners and losers (both on the provider side and on the user side), with widening digital divide among people, increased concerns about privacy and security, and overwhelming dominance of IT giants (epitomized by “GAFA”).

However, whether the following (possible) trend will hold for long or not is unpredictable:

- Currently, many people obviously feel that public transportation, elevator and office space are all problematic. But will de-urbanization, decentralization and de-densification actually happen and continue through market force/people’s preference (and maybe public policy)?

In this context, we wish to explore how behavioral insights and nudge theory can be used to mitigate economic damages and negative social impact of COVID-19 in the medium term. For example, people’s movements, which changed drastically after COVID-19, and responded vividly to various official restrictions and key events, are available based on Global Positioning System (GPS) location “Big Data” from people’s mobile phones. Interesting early study findings will be shared on people’s behavioral changes in terms of movements, in particular commute (by types of transportation such as train, bus, car, bicycle and walking) in the Tokyo metropolitan area. Going forward, Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) may be a useful tool for figuring out how to reopen schools and economic activities safely. Furthermore, we do not want to ‘just’ recover but rather, develop better, resilient and sustainable societies through a “Green Recovery/Finance” model. As an example, a small electric-vehicle-based (EV-based) experimental public transportation scheme in the Philippines will be showcased, which will also be used for a behavioral survey of target passengers.

Through this global networking and collaboration, we hope to share lessons learned and best practice on building back better after COVID-19, and explore the possibilities of “Green Recovery/Finance”.
About the Japan Nudge Promotion Council (JNPC)

Japan Nudge Promotion Council (JNPC) promotes the mainstreaming of the application of behavioural insights (BIs) in Japan by collaborating with other agencies abroad. JNPC administrates the Japan Nudge Ethics Committee and the Japan Behavioural Sciences Team (BEST) established in March 2017 under the initiatives of the Ministry of Environment (MOE), the Government of Japan (GOJ) in order to apply the BIs, including the nudge theory, to the society as a government policy or a business strategy.

About the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI)

Established in 1997, the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) is the think tank of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Its objective is to share knowledge and skills to reduce poverty and support long-term growth and competitiveness in developing Asia and the Pacific. The ADBI also provides fora for sharing development practices and country experiences in a wide range of research areas such as financial inclusion.

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<td>15:00-15:10</td>
<td>Welcome Remarks: Naoki Sakai, CEO, Japan Nudge Promotion Council</td>
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| 15:10-15:30  | Session 1: Leveraging Behavioural Insights and Nudge Theory to Combat COVID-19  
Moderator: Linda Arthur, Senior Capacity Building and Training Specialist, ADBI |
| 15:10-15:30  | Tetsushi Sonobe, Dean and CEO, Asian Development Bank Institute  
Dean Sonobe will kick off this session by sharing his views on the post-COVID-19 resurgence of developing economies and their subsequent growth. The pandemic has expedited progress in digital transformation and the reconfiguration of global value chains. He will argue that these developments have the potential to enhance steady and inclusive growth, and that behavioral insights and nudges can unlock the potential. |
| 15:30-15:50  | David Raitzer, Economist, Economic Analysis and Operation Support Division, Economic Research and Regional Cooperation Department, ADB  
David Raitzer will present the findings of his team’s study on non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) to suppress the spread of COVID-19. While lockdown measures are strongly associated with a reduction in the reproduction rate (R[0]), gathering bans appear to be more effective than workplace and school closures, both of which are associated with large declines in GDP. As future waves of the disease emerge, control measures proven to be effective and with lower economic costs should be implemented early and fast. Such measures should also be central features of the "new normal" until herd immunity is achieved. |
| 15:50-16:10  | Tadahiro Ikemoto, Director for Behavioral Insights Strategy, the Ministry of the Environment and Deputy Director, Cabinet Office and Founder and President of Behavioral Sciences Team (BEST)  
Tadahiro Ikemoto will present the use of Behavioral Insights (BIs) in Japan, which is spearheaded by the Behavioral Sciences Team (BEST). Public use of BIs has been gradually recognized and accepted in Japan. Recently, it was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, due to the importance of observing behaviour change in an effort to combat the pandemic. He will share various case studies and lessons learned. |
| 16:10-16:30  | Nobuyuki Nakamura, University of Tokyo  
Mr. Nakamura will present his team’s preliminary study findings on COVID-19 and its effect on the labor market in developing countries and labor migration. Restrictions, such as strict border controls and lockdowns, have resulted in adverse effects on labor mobility. His team finds suggestive evidence of the negative effects on labor supply in developing economies and cross-border markets by the quantitative analysis using big data from online search activities. |
| 16:30-16:50  | Q&A and Discussion                                                                                                                                   |
## Session 2: Behavioural Insights and Nudge Theory in Action

**Moderator:** Keiichi Tamaki, Urban Planner

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| 16:50-17:10 | **Naoki Sakai, CEO, Japan Nudge Promotion Council**  
Naoki Sakai will present preliminary findings of location-based Big Data (e.g., trips and movements) from mobile phones in the Tokyo metropolitan region, which show significant effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Movements are categorized into train, bus, car, walk, etc. based on trip characteristics. |
| 17:10-17:30 | **Shoko Yamane, CEO, Papalaka Research Institute, Ltd**  
Shoko Yamane will present findings from the view of Behavioral Economics in Japan, especially among young people, such as the degree of conformity and normativeness among Japanese college students, revealed through data of mask wearing for coping with the COVID-19 pandemic. |
| 17:30-18:00 | **Open Discussion:**  
Participants are free to enter this open discussion, to present their own views/questions regarding behavioural insights and nudges pertaining to COVID-19. |
| 18:00-18:10 | **Closing Remarks: Dean Tetsushi Sonobe, ADBI** |