

# PROCEEDINGS MALAYSIA SDG CONFERENCE 2022

A CSO & Academic Perspectives  
**MID-TERM REVIEW**  
The Implementation of SDGs in  
Malaysia (2015 to 2022)

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# Introduction



**Prof. Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria**  
**President, The Society for the Promotion of SDG (SDG Society)**

The Society for the Promotion of SDGs and partners hosted between November 25 and 27, 2022, the Malaysia SDG Conference which was participated by 80 passionate and dedicated academics, activists, and community leaders who can be called SDG champions.

Some among us have been involved from the beginning and others might be new comers. This was an important occasion to take stock of what has taken place over the past seven years (2016 - 2022) and what are the future directions over the next eight years (2023 - 2030).

The 2022 SDG conference had six key objectives: -

1. To review the progress made in the implementation of SDGs in Malaysia since the beginning in September 2015 till the current year, 2022
2. To identify achievements and best practices as well as challenges and hurdles
3. To chart out clear directions for the acceleration of SDGs over the next eight years (2023 till 2030)
4. To serve as input to the Malaysian SDG Roadmap II process (2021-2025)
5. To serve as input to the mid-term review process of the SDGs (2015-2022) and for the 2023 SDG Summit to be held at the UN in September 2023
6. To publish the potential 43 presentations as a proceeding document and a selected number of articles in a new book on SDG Policies and Practices in Malaysia: Reflections of academics and civil society activists

This documentation is divided into ten chapters as indicated in the contents page capturing the 43 presentations made. This 2022 conference provided an opportunity to review the progress made so far enabling us to record our achievements, note the challenges and chart out new strategies for 2023 and beyond. While some of the papers are based on individual experiences in the delivery of SDGs nonetheless this documentation illustrates the width and depth of the Malaysian CSO and academic involvement in SDGs.

Many of the presenters had submitted a paper of their reflections, however in the case of five presentations, they are in the form of power points. All these are made available to a wider readership for your understanding, analysis and appreciation of work being undertaken at the grassroots by all our partners in the promotion as well as the localization of SDGs.

I take this opportunity to thank all the guest, speakers, moderators, and rapporteurs for the role they played in creating not just a team of practitioners but also reflective ones. A special thanks to Zoel Ng and her communications team for organising this.

## Chapter 1: SDGs & MALAYSIAN JOURNEY



### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS: A JOURNEY IN SDGs FROM ADVOCACY TO ACTION: PAST & PRESENT (BETWEEN 2011-2022) AND FUTURE (2023-2030)**

By

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### **ABSTRACT**

The UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG) (2000-2015) was replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in September 2015. Civil society was active in the preparatory process by hosting Round-table discussions since June 2012 as well as participating in the Rio plus 20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Jun 20, 2012 – Jun 22, 2012). The first formal CSO discussion was held on Oct 27, 2015 which resulted in the formation of a network of CSOs named Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance. Over the years, the Alliance has become the voice and vehicle for CSO engagement with the government. The Alliance was invited to become a member of the National SDG Steering Committee from November 2016 and the Alliance played an active role in the preparation of the Voluntary National Review (2017 & 2021), the National SDG as well as participation at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) at the UN headquarters in New York. A major breakthrough in policy advocacy and role of the Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance arose, when the Malaysian Parliament in late 2019 approved the formation of the All Party Parliamentary Group Malaysian on Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM- SDG) and approved the Alliance as the Secretariat. Subsequently the APPGM-SDG Secretariat managed to raise funds from the Ministry of Finance since 2020 to funds the activities of localising SDG via Members of Parliament as SDG champions both in parliament at the national level as well as

at the constituency level at the grassroots. This journey of the Alliance and the CSO pioneers is testament to the multi stakeholder engagement indicated in SDG 17.17 where a partnership model is advocated. The Malaysian society is illustrative of this principle and while we have achieved much there are still many challenges CSOs continue to face in ensuring no one is left behind. There is an attempt to chart the future course of action toward 2030.

*Key Words: CSO engagement, Localising SDGs, multi stakeholder partnerships*

## **INTRODUCTION**

We have come a long way in our work in SDGs as CSOs-NGOs in Malaysia. All this took time and we can review it as a journey with many people taking an active role consistently over time. Documenting this is also important as time passes and many forget the events, the personalities and the developments.

This reflection of the journey is entitled from advocacy to action in localising SDGs. It's a story of a group of people who had an idea with no staff, office, funding or legal institution managed to achieve so much within a short period of time. Over time they managed to organise themselves and consolidate the work to become the leading voice and movement for SDGs in Malaysia.

The journey of the CSOs through the Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance can be divided into three phases between 2011 and 2022 pertaining to the past and present :-

- **Phase 1 From MDGs through RIO+20 (2011-2014)**
- **Phase 2 SDGs & Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance (2015-2019)**
- **Phase 3 APPGM-SDG & Localising SDGs (2020-2022)**

The review does look at the chronology of events as well the key developments globally, nationally, and locally. Attachment 1 which is about 10 pages provides basic details of the three phases (including events, dates, organisers, documentation and lessons learnt). In each phase there are various developments pertaining to advocacy and local action in relation to SDGs. Seven key themes guide our reflections.

There is an opportunity at the end of the review of the three phases, to draw pointers on the opportunities, challenges and achievements. In addition, there is the next Phase (2023-2030) which is an agenda for the future over the next eight years.

## **PHASE 1**

### **FROM MDGs THROUGH RIO+20 (2011-2014)**

This is the formative period for ideas on the nature of development and while the discussions are at the global level it has much relevance at the national and local levels.

- **Global Events & Relevance**

The starting point for the SDGs is the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)<sup>1</sup> which is a set of eight development goals formulated by the United Nations between 2000 and 2015. Malaysia was active in this process and undertook the delivery well<sup>2</sup>. In this post MDG period, the UN hosted a global discussion on the global development agenda at Rio, Brazil in June 2012<sup>3</sup>.

- **National Events & Relevance**

Malaysians especially CSOs were monitoring these global events and hosted events in Malaysia. PROHAM, a human rights organisation hosted a RTD on July 18, 2011 on this theme which laid the foundations for future discussion on SDGs. PROHAM reviewed the MDGs from a human rights perspective. The event took place at the SUHAKAM office.

In the context of RIO+20, two Malaysian discussions were hosted before the global event and another after which is very significant as concerns on poverty and human rights are now linked to environment and sustainability concerns. ASLI's Centre for Public Policy Studies then headed by Tan Sri Michael Yeoh hosted them.

- **Local Events & Relevance**

An issue which had a key interest among many was Tasik Chini and the campaign was led by Transparency International. While there was a very strong emphasis on the environment, the discussion also focused on the rights of the Orang Asli community with a very strong human rights focus.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.undp.org/malaysia/publications/malaysia-millennium-development-goals-2015-report>

<sup>3</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/rio20>

- **Multi Stakeholder Partnerships**

We were in the formative stages of the work and therefore much of the discussion was among academics and activists.

- **Institutional developments**

In this formative period, two organizations played an active role namely PROHAM and ASLI Centre for Public Policy Studies in creating the space for the conversations.

- **Challenges Faced**

We were at the formative stage and therefore not many challenges. Not yet any major interaction with government agencies.

- **Lessons Learned**

It is important to note that even at this early stage of the SDG developments we were able to link the global to national and local concerns. The foundational work was undertaken by CSOs and think tanks which had a strong commitment to human rights and development for all.

## **PHASE 2**

### **SDGs & MALAYSIAN CSO SDG ALLIANCE (2015-2019)**

In this phase, the 2030 Agenda is foundational for our advocacy and action with the launch at the UN, the adoption of SDGs by the Malaysian government and incorporation into the national development plans. The vehicle created by Parliament and the role of parliamentarians is key for the localising of SDGs. The APPGM-SDG is promising to be a major example nationally and globally in impacting the grassroots.

- **Global Events & Relevance**

The Sept 25, 2015 launch<sup>4</sup> of the SDGs - 17 goals at the UN provided the momentum for us to organise ourselves for a collective discussion. Malaysian PM spoke on behalf of Malaysia accepting the agenda 2030 framework<sup>5</sup>. Participation at the HLPF event in July 2017 at the UN HQ in New York is also significant including hosting a side event in New York.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://sdg.iisd.org/events/un-summit-for-adoption-of-post-2015-development-agenda/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0-R>



- **National Events & Relevance**

The global launch facilitated a national level discussion on the SDGs by CSOs. This was held on Oct 27, 2015 in Kuala Lumpur. The event drew many organisations to discuss the implications of global SDGs as the framework for national development agenda.

The Malaysian government agency for SDGs, the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) together with the United Nations in Malaysia hosted the national events, a symposium in early 2016 and a conference in late 2016. Both of these provided opportunities for CSOs to engage with government agencies on SDGs concerns especially the cross-cutting nature of SDGs.

CSOs hosted three RTDs before July 2017 with ASLI-CPPS and one as a post HLPF event in Malaysia to review the Malaysian VNR report. Post GE14 reform discussions provided an opportunity for CSOs to present SDGs as a reform agenda on May 28, 2018.

The major breakthrough for the Alliance were the series of discussions (between December 2018 and July 2019 with the Speaker of Parliament on the establishment of a special panel or committee on SDGs which eventually led to the formation of the APPGM-SDG.

The PH government hosted in November 2019, the National SDG Summit and the Alliance organised the CSO forum and submitted the CSO feedback on SDGs.

- **Local Events & Relevance**

In early 2019, CSOs made field visits to flats in Petaling Jaya Desa Mentari and also Selayang to explore local concerns for SDGs mapping. We organised these with the MPs from the two areas. We also explore the methodology for mapping local needs and issues.

- **Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships**

CSOs established good links with the EPU as being the main grouping of CSO-NGOs in dialogue and conversation with government on SDGs. Representatives from EPU participated in Alliance events.

We also secured a good relationship with the UN both at the national and international level. On Oct 24, 2017 the UN formally recognised the work in promoting SDGs by giving the UN Day award.

Finding a receptive Speaker of parliament for greater engagement of CSOs and parliamentarians can be seen as a major achievement. The approval by Parliament on Oct 17.

2019 is a major break through which created a new structure for engagement between parliamentarians and CSOs. Likewise securing the support of seven members of the lower house and one from the Senate with YB Maria Chin Abdullah agreeing to be the Chair and YB Dato' Sri Nancy Hj. Shukri as the Deputy Chair. The approval letter from Parliament was received on Oct 23, 2019.

- **Institutional Developments**

During this period several organisations such as ASLI-CPPS and later KSI headed by Tan Sri Michael Yeoh assisted the Alliance with many different discussions. Likewise, many planning meetings took place at ISIS Malaysia.

- **Challenges Faced**

The expanded work required staff, office and funds; however, this was difficult to secure.

- **Lessons Learned**

The SDGs provided an excellent opportunity to integrate economic, social, environmental concerns along with human rights and governance dimensions. While there were many networks and coalitions however, they were more focused on a single campaign issues. SDGs was cross cutting in nature. The Alliance provided the vehicle for CSOs to express their interest in SDG matters.

The government too was looking for partners and as we had the cross-section of NGOs and academics it made it possible for the government to network with us. Although the Alliance did not have the funds, however, it had the ideas and a very strong network of committed people. It was therefore able to with an entrepreneurship spirit to rise to the opportunities made possible.

## **PHASE 3**

### **APPGM-SDG & LOCALISING SDGs (2020-2022)**

The focus of this phase is the consolidation of the work. From ideas and thoughts on SDGs to delivery and action in the localising SDG plans at the parliamentary constituency level.

The localising agenda.

- **Global Events & Relevance**

Malaysia, in July 2021 presented its 2<sup>nd</sup> VNR report at the HLPF in New York. Due to Covid, the event was held online and we had many opportunities to participate in side events. Malaysia's report was presented by the EPU Minister on July 16, 2021.

- **National Events & Relevance**

Malaysia hosted a series of meetings for the preparation of the VNR and the Alliance and the APPGM-SDG Secretariat in these meetings. The CSOs organised a series of working groups which prepared papers as input to the preparation process.

The 2019 SDG summit is significant as well as the July 2021 Malaysia's report to the VNR preparations. There was a change in the EPU approach between 2017 and 2021 as CSOs were part of the drafting committee and we saw the final report before print as well as CSO input. was included in the VNR report. The localising SDG agenda of both the Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance and the APPGM-SDG was featured in the VNR report in box stories.

- **Local Events & Relevance**

The localising SDG agenda by the APPGM-SDG committee of MPs and the Secretariat has reached 57 parliamentary constituencies. This is the most impressive aspect of our work especially the grounded research methodology, field visits, micro SDG solution projects as well as the mapping report, situational analysis and policy implications.

Also significant are the solution providers. There are now 78 micro solution providers. When we started our NGO base was only Klang valley but now spread out over 57 parliamentary constituencies with new partners from very rural locations especially in Sarawak. Among the

providers are university people, CSO-NGO leaders as well as community-based organisations as well as social enterprises.

The diversity of communities we are in touch at the grassroots is also very significant as we see the different ethnic, religious class differences and citizenship (stateless) including gender concerns in Malaysian society. We have identified 73 local neighborhoods around Malaysia we are working in. We want to build a stronger grassroots movement of local people for SDGs.

Our outreach to young people and also our capacity building programs at the ground level is making an impact but these need to be consolidated in the coming years. Currently we have identified 39 youth-based organisations committed to SDGs. We took an innovative approach to appoint SDG youth agents at the parliamentary level.

In this period, we managed to strengthen our partnership with parliament, the EPU and the Ministry of Finance. We also developed our contact based among government officials at the district and local government level during our field visits and focus group discussions at the parliamentary constituency level.

- **Institutional developments**

During this period, we received strong support from EPU, MoF and Parliament for the localising of SDGs. We also saw several State governments open up to us like the EPU of Sarawak as well as some very supportive district office at the ground like in Jeli and Bera. Over the next few years, we need to strengthen these.

Likewise, we receive strong support from PSSM, ISIS Malaysia, KSI, JCI and IYC including local universities like IIUM in hosting and organising programs. Many of the Alliance members are partners as resource persons and also as solution providers.

- **Challenges Faced**

While we are able to identify the local needs, concerns and issues we face many hurdles in seeking to solve them. One major hurdle is Federal-State government roles and the lack of agency cooperation in solving them due to the silo nature of how government agency operates their mandates. SDGs is more about cross-cutting concerns and here the institutional

mechanisms are lacking at the grassroots due to the way the district office and local authority operate.

- **Lessons Learned**

This phase saw the development of the parliamentary network and involvement in SDGs especially in the localising of SDGs. The breakthrough was the link between grounded approach of local needs with that of macro policy concerns which can be discussed at the parliamentary and national level.

## **REVIEW OF THE THREE PHASES**

We have reviewed the three phases and we can recognise the opportunities, challenges, and achievements in the earlier years. We have been able to take up the opportunities, face the challenges and over the past years achieved much. These are precious lessons for us.

Opportunities

This analysis recognises four key opportunities. The first is that, SDGs provided the platform to bring CSOs together – economic, social & environmental organisations. CSOs organised themselves and took up this opportunity to take up this opening.

Second, parliament provided us with a new institutional mechanism for engagement between elected officials of parliament with other stakeholders such as civil society leaders, academicians and grassroots community leaders on SDG related matters.

Third, grassroots communities became active in the localising of SDGs. These are neighborhoods in rural or urban locations. They were part of the local mapping exercise on local needs as well as in undertaking social projects. There is much diversity among these local communities as they could represent an ethnic or religious or even a refugee community. There is openness in them seeking to finding cross cutting solutions to ground concerns.

## Challenges

There are four key challenges. The first, is the challenge of working with government agencies at the district and local levels. These agencies tend to be fulfilling the mandate but find it difficult due to the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs. Many of them work in silos and therefore, there is a need to clear the formalities on how to work with agencies at the district and local authority.

The second challenge is the many unresolved local issues in each parliamentary constituency. Based on our field visits and mapping of needs report we have identified local issues which inter-agency cooperation of both Federal and State governments. However, we are struggling to find the solutions. There could also be political dynamics especially if the MP is from a party which is different from the ruling party, there might be an uphill battle to resolve them.

The third challenge is the funding. While we have received funds from the Ministry of Finance over the past three years. However as these are annual grants and therefore we are operating on a 12 months calendar. The staff are all on a one-year contract which has long term issues to retain good staff. Furthermore, we need to operate on a one-year calendar cycle.

The fourth challenge is while we do well on economic, social and environmental concerns, there seems to be a lack of emphasis in SDG 16 pertaining to governance and human rights concerns.

## Achievements

Seven achievements can be noted.

- **The first**, is the establishment of the APPGM-SDG which can be seen as a major breakthrough as this is the first time that parliament has created a new vehicle. This parliamentary group is dedicated on SDGs.
- **Second**, we secured the support of 57 MPs between 2020 and 2022 and they have become SDG champions at the parliamentary constituency level. In this context we also managed to undertake the mapping of local needs in the 57 locations.
- **Third**, we managed to undertake 236 micro solution projects which has made an impact on the ground.

- **Fourth**, we have identified and are working with 78 solution providers who are active at the grassroots. They are the key SDG change makers. We have also undertaken capacity building programs.
- **Fifth**, we saw the need to work with young people and therefore we hosted SDG youth summits and developed partnership with 39 youth organisations
- **Sixth**, our major achievement to secure a yearly grant from the Ministry of Finance as well as developed a very strong partnership with the Economic Planning Unit
- **Seventh**, we developed strong partnership with regional and global NGOs especially in the context of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). We have been active in the regional and international SDGs gathering.

## **THE NEXT PHASE:**

### **SDGS & BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE (2023-2030)**

The next phase could be considered as the period of expansion of the localising agenda over the next seven years (2023-2030). It is the period to build community resilience.

The Secretariat team developed a helpful Diagram 1- “SDG Framework for nation building” which could set the light to the future journey.

#### **Framework for the Future**

Diagram 1 provides the framework for nation building based on common ethos and thrust. Our approach is key as well as the institutional structures which we will use to reach the goal of leaving no one behind.

After three years (2020- 2022) of localising SDGs via the APPGM-SDG, we recognise that we must strengthen and adopt a very strong values-based approach which can serve as our ethos and foundational values for what we stand for.

We are a community committed to creating a value based – ideological society. One can recognise eight key values which must become the foundation of all our work in building a better and sustainable Malaysia. These are built on the foundation of the Federal Constitution and the 2030 Agenda and commitments.

Diagram 1

# SDG FRAMEWORK FOR NATION BUILDING

Leaving no one behind

## Ethos

We are a community which is committed to the:-

- 1- Federal Constitution
- 2- Sustainable Development Goals
- 3- Value Based Society
- 4- Reflective Society

## Thrust

- Localising SDGs is our key agenda
- Showcase the bi-partisan collaboration among the Members of Parliament (MPs)
- Work with MPs on bringing to public's attention the SDG policy concerns.
- Work from the grassroots especially with solution providers on providing local solutions
- Establish SDG Living Labs
- Establish district level multi-stakeholder working groups
- Strengthen the human rights and justice aspects of SDGs

## Approach



## Institutions



The Enabling Secretariat - The Society of the Promotion of SDG (PPM-023-14-07012020)

(SDG Society, Nov 2022)



**Table 1 Value-based Approach**

VALUES	MEANING
<b>Appreciates diversity</b>	Diversity recognises different ethnic, cultural, linguistic groups in the community. Each is important and we must appreciate them like our own. In our daily dealings we can have an appreciation of them. We must not look down on others.
<b>Ensures sustainability</b>	Sustainability is a life style theme which we need to understand and apply. Applied to personal like, organisational cultural as well as in the management of natural resources. Some examples are related to how we undertake recycling (paper) or conserve energy (electricity & water) in the office and house.
<b>Respects women</b>	Position of women and adopting an empowerment strategy including providing equal opportunities and ensure equality of outcomes.
<b>Inclusive development</b>	Inclusion of assistance and support for all is key. Here “all” means irrespective of ethnicity, gender, age, location, disability. It is about “leaving no one behind” and can be applied to family or community.
<b>Ensures non-discrimination</b>	We must not discriminate against any one or have views which look down on the others as inferior. We are all equal as human beings.
<b>Justice based</b>	We recognise “needs based approach” but this must be “rights based approach”. Our actions must be based on the principle of justice and fairness to all.
<b>Good governance</b>	Integrity, honesty, and accountability is key. This must be the principle which governs personal conduct and must be a cornerstone of our organisation.
<b>Teamwork and partnerships</b>	Working as a team is key. We need to support each other and ensure an effective team.

## Future Targets

The next eight years are before us as we race towards 2030. We have the SDG Summit in September 2023 which is a Mid Term Review of the SDGs as well as Malaysia presenting the VNR report for the third time in July 2024.

Over the next eight years we can set some specific targets for expansion especially in reaching target of all the 222 parliamentary constituencies. With these targets, a focus on solution projects, solution projects and resource persons.

A key focus is in reaching grassroots communities with the SDGs sustainability message with an empowerment strategy. We are currently undertaking micro projects in at least 73 local neighborhoods in the past three years and we project to reach another 240 neighborhoods. In the next phase, we will need to undertake community profiles and work with the local leadership and empower them to adopt an SDGs framework for their grassroots.

**Table 2 Expanding our Outreach in Localising SDGs**

	2020-2022	2023- 2030 (8 years)	Total
Reaching Parliamentary Constituencies	57	165 @24 per year	222
Micro SDG Solution Projects	236	1,600 @200 per year	1,836
Solution Providers (CSO, NGOs, SE, Universities)	111	495	606
Resource Persons (CSO, NGOs, SE, Universities)	28	80 @10 per year	108
Local Communities at the grassroots (Leaving no one behind)	73	240 @30 a year	313
Impact on individuals at the grassroots (Leaving no one behind)	9,800	40,000 25 persons x 1,600	49,800

District level SDG Multi stakeholder groups	2	40 @ 5 per year	42
Capacity Building workshops & target numbers	29	200	229
Reaching youth organisations and numbers	39	280	319
Full time staff at the secretariat	15	30	45
Funding needed (RM)	<b>17 million</b>	<b>110 million</b>	<b>127 million</b>

### Policy Coherence and Advocacy

Over the past three years, we have undertaken the mapping of local needs in 57 parliamentary constituencies using a ground research methodology where we went to the ground and interacted with the local communities. Through focus group discussions we were able to hear the views of the grassroots.

We recognise that there are many unresolved local concerns. These have been well documented in the mapping of needs reports and situational analysis. A formal publication of the researchers' work on the 2020 materials is now ready for release. The recent policy Round-table discussions hosted with ISIS Malaysia held in early November 2022 also highlights the potential of multi stakeholder dialogues.

The findings from the 2021 and 2022 grounded work will be released in 2023 which will be a compelling story of unresolved concerns at the grassroots. We do recognise that each parliamentary constituency there are about 10 to 15 unresolved concerns. This requires inter agency cooperation and in majority of the cases an inter government cooperation especially between Federal and State governments.

We are facing an uphill task in securing the partnership and support of all parties in finding lasting solutions. There might be a need for a dedicated team to take up the gaps and unresolved issues to finding lasting solutions.

We could consider setting up a Centre for Social Inclusion which is a small team with a focus on follow up to all the unresolved issues identified at the grassroots. This could be similar to the mySDG Academy which is the training arm of our SDG Society.

## **Conclusion**

We can recognise that the APPGM-SDG experience of multi stakeholder partnerships with parliamentarians, CSOs, academics and grassroots organisation is a major development in Malaysian society. We believe that over the next eight years we will see the expansion of this vision and the impact of the work in localising SDGs. We have a major task and we seek the support and cooperation of all to ensure no one is left behind in Malays.

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## A Journey in SDGs From Advocacy to Action

### Phase 1 From MDGs Through RIO+20 (2011 – 2014)

EVENT	DATES/PLACE	ORGANISER/ RESOURCE PERSONS	DOCUMENTATION
<b>MDG from a human Rights Perspective</b>	July 18, 2011 @ SUHAKAM KL	PROHAM & SUHAKAM  Dr Lin & EPU Rep Mr Mohd Idris	Chapter 4 in PROHAM & Human Rights Concerns in Malaysia (2013)- pages 110-138. PROHAM initiated the review of MDGs which sets the stage for fresh discussions on SDGs
<b>RIO+20 Agenda &amp; implication for Malaysia</b>	June 4, 2012 @ MIM	ASLI Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS). Datuk Yusof Kassim, Dr Hezri (ISIS Malaysia), EPU Rep	This is one of the first discussions on the post MDGs development agenda
<b>Rio+20: The Future We Want: United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development). The outcome of the Conference</b>	20-22 June 2012 @Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	United Nations	The future we want (June 2012) <a href="https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/futurewewant.html">https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/futurewewant.html</a>
<b>The Future we want: A post RIO+20 Discussion, Lessons learnt &amp;</b>	July 9, 2012 @ Sunway University	ASLI Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS). Tan Sri Navaratnam, Dr	Chapter 2 in Malaysian Issues & Concerns. Some policy responses (2013), CPPS pages 25-40

<b>implications for Malaysia</b>		Hezri (ISIS Malaysia), Mr Gurmit Singh (CETDEM)	
<b>A National Campaign to save Tasik Chini, Pahang</b>	Aug 5, 2012 Field visit to Tasik Chini, Pahang	Transparency International (TI) Ms Josie M. Fernandez (TI) & Dr Hezri (ISIS Malaysia)	<a href="http://www.transparency.org.my/events/selamatkan-tasik-chini-warisan-negara-rizab-biosfera-unesco-national-campaign">http://www.transparency.org.my/events/selamatkan-tasik-chini-warisan-negara-rizab-biosfera-unesco-national-campaign</a>  Help save the “dragon” of Tasik Chini IN UKM Ethnic Studies Paper series No 23 Dec 2012

**Phase 2 SDGs & Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance (2015 – 2019)**

<b>EVENT</b>	<b>DATES/PLACE</b>	<b>ORGANISER/ RESOURCE PERSONS</b>	<b>DOCUMENTATION</b>
<b>SDG Gap analysis consultancy and report</b>	Sept 12, 2015	Commissioned by EPU & UNDP Dr Hezri & Alizan (ISIS Malaysia Team)	Gap analysis for the implementation framework – post 2015 development agenda. Unpublished report, A foundational paper for the Malaysian government
<b>Summit for the adoption of the SDGs</b>	Sept 25, 2015 United Nations, New York	United Nations	<a href="https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/summit">https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/summit</a>
<b>SDG &amp; Human Rights, A framework for conflict resolution &amp; mediation: Implications for Malaysia &amp; ASEAN</b>	Oct 27, 2015 @ KL Convention Centre, KL	PROHAM, GMM & KITA-UKM EPU Rep Datuk Yoges, Mr Alizan Mahandi (ISIS Malaysia),	Sustainable Development Goals & Malaysian society: Civil society perspectives. UKM Ethnic Studies Paper series No 45, Feb 2016 <a href="https://base.socioeco.org/docs/kita-book-45-text-sdg.pdf">https://base.socioeco.org/docs/kita-book-45-text-sdg.pdf</a>
<b>SDG Symposium</b>	Feb 23, 2016	EPU and UN Team in Malaysia	The first major national discussion and the Alliance was represented (Ref on page 11) <a href="https://www.epu.gov.my/sites/default/files/2021-05/SDG_Roadmap_Phase_I_2016-2020.pdf">https://www.epu.gov.my/sites/default/files/2021-05/SDG_Roadmap_Phase_I_2016-2020.pdf</a>
<b>SDG Multi-stakeholder</b>	Nov 15-16, 2016	EPU and UN Team in Malaysia	The second major which discussed the SDG Roadmap and preparation

<b>partnership Conference</b>			for the 2017 VNR (Ref on page11.) <a href="https://www.epu.gov.my/sites/default/files/2021-05/SDG_Roadmap_Phase_I_2016-2020.pdf">https://www.epu.gov.my/sites/default/files/2021-05/SDG_Roadmap_Phase_I_2016-2020.pdf</a>
<b>National SDG Steering Committee</b>	Dec 2016	DG of EPU Chair Alliance rep – Denison & Dr Lin	Alliance was invited along with a number of CSOs including COMANGO & MENGGO
<b>Series of 4 SDG RTD’S in2017</b>	March 14; May 22; July 3 & Sept 28, 2017	ASLI-CPPS & Alliance	Publication Launched on May 28, 2018– SDG: Policy Coherence & Malaysian Society.
<b>National SDG Roadmap from CSO Reflections, -Development policies (Vision 2020, SDG 2030 &amp; Transformation 2050) -Sustainability Agenda -Science &amp; technology</b>		Panel speakers	A major policy discussion exercise hosted by Tan Sri Michael Yeoh while he was with ASLI-CPS <a href="https://base.socioeco.org/docs/sustainabledevelopment_goals.pdf">https://base.socioeco.org/docs/sustainabledevelopment_goals.pdf</a>
<b>Malaysia VNR Report presentation at HLPF</b>	July 17, 2017 at UN HQ New York	UN- HLPF EPU Minister	Malaysian VNR Report (2017) <a href="https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/15881Malaysia.pdf">https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/15881Malaysia.pdf</a> CSOs asked key questions during the session and later



			had lunch with the EPU Minister in New York
<b>CSO Discussion on the Malaysian VNR Report</b>	July 18, 2017 at the UN Plazar, New York	Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance- Mr Alizan, Ms Lavanya, Ms Loke Lin (Third World Network), Mr Rizal (Empower), EPU Rep Datuk Yoges & Denison	SDG Implementation in Malaysia: CSO Reflections on the VNR (2017). Unpublished report (Aug 4, 2017) Alliance hosted the first global discussion in New York and UN ESCAP & UNDP from the Bangkok office participated
<b>Post VNR dialogue among CSOs</b>	Aug 4, 2017 at the Wisma UN KL	Alliance Denison & UN Resident Coordinator, Mr Stefan	SDG Implementation in Malaysia: CSO Reflections on the VNR (2017). Unpublished report (Aug 4, 2017)
<b>UN Award for SDG Work</b>	Oct 24, 2017	Alliance & Denison For the promotion of SDGs First major recognition	<a href="https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2017/10/24/three-receive-un-sustainable-development-awards/">https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2017/10/24/three-receive-un-sustainable-development-awards/</a> <a href="https://www.unhcr.org/en-my/news/latest/2017/10/59eee4dc4/un-calls-on-malaysia-to-champion-sustainable-development-goals.html">https://www.unhcr.org/en-my/news/latest/2017/10/59eee4dc4/un-calls-on-malaysia-to-champion-sustainable-development-goals.html</a>
<b>Alliance dialogue with EPU on feedback to the SDG Roadmap</b>	Feb 21, 2018	Denison & 20 other CSO leaders including Dr Lin, Prof Rasilah, Omna, Bathma, Shanti, Andrew Khoo, Zara & Jeffery Phang	Major meeting with EPU hosted by the Alliance as input to the SDG Roadmap

<b>RTD on Review of UPR from SDG Perspectives</b>	Feb 28, 2018	ASLI- CPPS & Alliance	
<b>Alliance together with other CSOs presenting recommendations to Institutional Reform Committee</b>	May 28, 2018	Alliance & CSOs	SDGs as the foundation for reforms <a href="https://www.malaysiakini.com/letters/427553">https://www.malaysiakini.com/letters/427553</a> 12 major recommendations (78 page document) A key meeting post GE14 and the PH government hosted a committee to review reform. We proposed based on SDGs
<b>RTD on Institutional Reform &amp; SDGs</b>	June 5, 2018	ASLI-CPPS & Alliance  Panel include speakers from G25, SUHAKAM & Ms Lavanya of WWF	A discussion on this reform theme from SDG perspective
<b>National SDG Summit</b>	Nov 6 & 7, 2019	EPU and UN Team in Malaysia. PM & EPU Minister	<a href="https://www.epu.gov.my/sites/default/files/2021-07/Malaysia-SDG-Summit-Report-2019.pdf">https://www.epu.gov.my/sites/default/files/2021-07/Malaysia-SDG-Summit-Report-2019.pdf</a>
<b>National SDG Summit Whole of Nation approach</b>	Plenary 3	Denison speaker in panel	<a href="https://www.epu.gov.my/malaysia-sdg-summit-2019">https://www.epu.gov.my/malaysia-sdg-summit-2019</a>
<b>National SDG Summit : Civil Society Forum</b>	Parallel Session 3- Nov 7, 2019  11am to 1pm	Denison and Alliance panel of 16 presenters	Document: Accelerating SDGs in policy & services at the local levels: Civil society perspectives

			<a href="https://www.epu.gov.my/m/s/malaysia-sdg-summit-2019">https://www.epu.gov.my/m/s/malaysia-sdg-summit-2019</a>
<b>Three dialogue sessions with the Speaker of Parliament – Tan Sri Dato Mohd Ariff on setting up a Parliamentary group on SDGs</b>	Dec 19, 2018, Jan 30, 2019 & May 16, 2019	Speaker, Denison & key leaders of the Alliance	A major break through for CSOs to form a parliamentary level committee. Speaker was open and parliament was undergoing greater people participation
<b>Workshop on the UK system of the APPG</b>	March 22, 2019	Ms Zoe Watts of Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)	A good introduction to the UK system of bi partisan politics
<b>A dinner hosted by Speaker of Dewan Rakyat</b>	Monday July 1, 2019 Parliament House, KL	Parliament speaker, potential MPs, academics and CSO leaders	<a href="https://www.ukm.my/kita/news/secretariat-of-the-all-party-parliamentary-group-a-ppg-on-sdgs-1-july-2019/">https://www.ukm.my/kita/news/secretariat-of-the-all-party-parliamentary-group-a-ppg-on-sdgs-1-july-2019/</a>
<b>National Forum on SDGs</b>	July 19, 2019 Parliament House, KL	KSI & Alliance Tan Sri Michael Yeoh hosted this event with the Speaker to create awareness	<a href="https://kasi.asia/events/national-forum-on-sustainability-csr-sdg-2019/">https://kasi.asia/events/national-forum-on-sustainability-csr-sdg-2019/</a>  <a href="https://www.qigroup.com/news/qi-group-at-the-national-forum-on-sustainability-corporate-social-responsibility-sustainable-development-goals-2019/">https://www.qigroup.com/news/qi-group-at-the-national-forum-on-sustainability-corporate-social-responsibility-sustainable-development-goals-2019/</a>
<b>Budget 2020</b>	Oct 11, 2019	Finance Minister	Allocation of RM2 million a major break through (Page 73)

			<a href="https://www.bnm.gov.my/documents/20124/761679/bs2020.pdf">https://www.bnm.gov.my/documents/20124/761679/bs2020.pdf</a>
<b>Establishment of the APPGM &amp; the APPGM SDG</b>	Oct 17, 2019  Parliament House, KL	YB Datuk Liew Vui Keong, Minister in PM Department read a resolution	Mohamad Ariff Md Yusof, et al., Law, Principles and Practice in the Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives) of Malaysia (Malaysia: Sweet & Maxwell, 2020), 477
<b>1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the APPGM SDG committee &amp; election</b>	Oct 22, 2019	YB Maria Chin elected as Chair and YB Dato Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri as deputy	Minutes documents the decisions
<b>Establishment of the Secretariat and the framework of the localising SDGs</b>	Nov- Dec 2019	Core Alliance members as Lead coordinators for 10 selected parliamentary constituencies	The approaches are documented in different handbooks pertaining to mapping exercise & situational analysis and also the procedures on solution projects

**Phase 3 2020 – 2022 APPGM-SDG & Localising SDGs (2020- 2022)**

<b>EVENT</b>		<b>DATES/ PLACE</b>	<b>ORGANISER / RESOURCE PERSONS</b>	<b>DOCUMENTATION</b>
<b>ROS Society registered</b>		Jan 7, 2020	Pro-term Committee members	Registration of Society for the promotion of SDG under ROS as the legal entity to manage the MOF funds and employ the staff.
<b>APPGM SDG 2020 field visits and solution projects</b>		Between Jan and August 2020	All the field visits & mapping exercise	Alliance members were the anchor of the secretariat during the formative period. Only one full-time staff (Rahmah) with another part- time (Anthony) 2020 Annual report documents all the plans & activities carried out in 2020 <a href="https://www.parlimen.gov.my/images/webuser/jkuasa/LAPORAN%20KRPPM/APPGM-SDG%20ANNUAL%20REPORT%202020.pdf">https://www.parlimen.gov.my/images/webuser/jkuasa/LAPORAN%20KRPPM/APPGM-SDG%20ANNUAL%20REPORT%202020.pdf</a>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> AGM Meeting of the SDG Society</b>		July 9, 2020	Election of 8 SDG Society officials	The legal entity
<b>APPGM SDG change of leadership (chair &amp;</b>		August 17, 2020	Yb Dato Sri Hajah Rohani Abdul Karim as Chair & Yb	A change due to the rule that the Chair must be from the Government party without Cabinet post

<b>deputy) with the change of the Federal government</b>			Maria Chin as deputy	Change of speaker of parliament. Also supportive of APGM multi-stakeholder engagement process
<b>Budget 2021</b>		Nov 6, 2020	Finance Minister	2nd allocation for the APPGM SDG localising SDG work (Page 54) <a href="https://belanjawan2021.treasury.gov.my/pdf/speech/2021/bs21.pdf">https://belanjawan2021.treasury.gov.my/pdf/speech/2021/bs21.pdf</a>
<b>2021 Localising SDG agenda New staff recruitment &amp; 2021 plans</b>		Jan to Dec 2021		2021 Annual Report – all details of plans and activities carried out in 2021 <a href="https://www.parlimen.gov.my/images/webuser/jkuasa/LAPORAN%20KRPPM/APPGM-SDG%202021%20Annual%20Report%20.pdf">https://www.parlimen.gov.my/images/webuser/jkuasa/LAPORAN%20KRPPM/APPGM-SDG%202021%20Annual%20Report%20.pdf</a>
<b>SDG 16 Monitoring &amp; review</b>		Oct 2020 to Jan 2021	Asian Development Alliance (ADA)	Monitoring and Review of SDG 16 plus in Malaysia (2015 – 2020) <a href="https://ada2030.org/adda-admin/images/Malaysia-SDG-16-Plus-National-Case-Study.pdf">https://ada2030.org/adda-admin/images/Malaysia-SDG-16-Plus-National-Case-Study.pdf</a>
<b>VNR 2021 Preparatory meetings</b>		Six different meetings -Feb 2, 5 & 8; May 3, 7 & 20, 2021	EPU hosted the meetings Alliance represented by Denison, Dr Lin, Lavanya & Rasilah	2nd round of VNR preparation Good CSO representation

<b>CSO Five Thematic working groups as input to the VNR process</b>		Feb 8, 2021	Alliance & CSOs	CSO Report (May 2021) <a href="https://kasi.asia/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/APPGM-SDG-CSO-SDG-Alliance-Submission-To-Malaysias-2nd-VNR-Online-SDG-2021.pdf">https://kasi.asia/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/APPGM-SDG-CSO-SDG-Alliance-Submission-To-Malaysias-2nd-VNR-Online-SDG-2021.pdf</a>
<b>The Malaysia Sustainability Leadership Summit 2021 (MSLS)</b>		March 9, 2021 Putra World Trade Centre, Kuala Lumpur	KSI, Alliance The Speaker, Tan Sri Michael Yeoh	A major conference hosted by Tan Sri Michael Yeoh & KSI team Launch of the APGM SDG Annual report (2020) with the Speaker of Parliament <a href="https://kasi.asia/events/the-malaysia-sustainability-leadership-summit-2021/">https://kasi.asia/events/the-malaysia-sustainability-leadership-summit-2021/</a> <a href="https://www.parlimen.gov.my/images/webuser/bkk/APPG-SDG%20MSLS%20speech%20-%209%20March.pdf">https://www.parlimen.gov.my/images/webuser/bkk/APPG-SDG%20MSLS%20speech%20-%209%20March.pdf</a>
<b>Poverty Circle</b>		July 1, 2021	EPU Chaired by EPU Minister	Monthly meeting with all the relevant agencies APPGM-SDG Rep: Datuk Denison / Dr. Lin Mui Kiang / Nur Rahmah Othman
<b>HLPF &amp; VNR Malaysia</b>		July 16, 2021	EPU Minister & online presentation	<a href="https://www.epu.gov.my/sites/default/files/2021-07/Malaysia_Voluntary_National_Review_%28VNR%29_2021.pdf">https://www.epu.gov.my/sites/default/files/2021-07/Malaysia_Voluntary_National_Review_%28VNR%29_2021.pdf</a>

<b>HLPF and side events</b>		July 2021	Side events	Participation in 4 different side events. Details in 2021 Annual report pages 48-49
<b>Global CSO SDG Scorecard Report</b>		July 8, 2021	Side event Alliance	<a href="https://kasi.asia/publication/malaysia-cso-sdg-alliances-submission-to-peoples-scorecard-process-assessing-national-delivery-of-the-2030-agenda/">https://kasi.asia/publication/malaysia-cso-sdg-alliances-submission-to-peoples-scorecard-process-assessing-national-delivery-of-the-2030-agenda/</a>
<b>Impact Evaluation</b>		23 - 24 Oct 2021	PSSM/IKMAS-UKM	Dr. Rashila Ramli and Impact Evaluation Team of university people. Hybrid meeting with about 25 persons
<b>First Briefing Session on SDG Policy Issues with parliamentarians</b>		28 Oct 2021 & 22 Nov 2021	APPGM SDG Alizan & Zainal briefed the MPs on the 2020 research findings	
<b>Budget 2022</b>		Oct 29, 2021	Finance Minister	3rd Allocation (RM3 million) but raised to RM10 million by Finance Minister (Page 49) <a href="https://budget.mof.gov.my/pdf/2022/ucapan/bs22.pdf">https://budget.mof.gov.my/pdf/2022/ucapan/bs22.pdf</a>
<b>Youth SDG Summit</b>		Nov 6, 2021	Online event Ms Zoel Ng & youth team	<a href="https://sharing4good.org/article/malaysia-youth-sdg-summit-2021-6th-nov-2021-10am-1pm-kl-time">https://sharing4good.org/article/malaysia-youth-sdg-summit-2021-6th-nov-2021-10am-1pm-kl-time</a>



<b>SDG Steering Committee</b>		Nov 16, 2021	EPU DJ & Rahmah attended	
<b>Building Inclusive Communities</b>		Dec 1 & 2, 6 & 7 and 13 & 14, 2021	One day – PJ, Selayang & Kuala Selangor	On day workshop in three locations & training module development <a href="https://www.facebook.com/APPGMSDGMYP/posts/building-inclusive-community-bic-training-funded-by-undp-kuala-selangor-day-1/449917460034722/">https://www.facebook.com/APPGMSDGMYP/posts/building-inclusive-community-bic-training-funded-by-undp-kuala-selangor-day-1/449917460034722/</a>
<b>Rental of new office at Avenue</b>		Jan 2022 onwards	Avenue 8, 2022	Secured an office space for the first time as the APPGM SDG secretariat
<b>2022 Annual planning &amp; staff recruitment</b>		Feb 4-6, 2022	Hotel in Selayang	Setting up a new team for the 2022 task & orientation
<b>2022 plans and activities</b>		Jan to Dec 2022		Parliamentary constituencies have expanded to 57. Details in the 2022 Annual Report (To be published in early 2023)
<b>SDG Technical Committee</b>		March 30, 2022	EPU DJ & Rahmah participated	

<b>Malaysian Youth SDG Summit 2022</b>		June 11, 2022 International Youth Centre (IYC) Physical & online	In partnership with International Youth Centre in Cheras & Youth and Sports Ministry (KBS). Ms Zoel Ng & youth team	<a href="https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2022/06/804036/sdg-summit-empower-and-inspire-youths">https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2022/06/804036/sdg-summit-empower-and-inspire-youths</a>
<b>Solution Providers Retreat</b>		June 17-19, 2022	Armada Hotel, PJ	Capacity Building workshop for solution providers. Recognizing the potential of 78 solutionprovider as ground agents for SDGs
<b>Alliance Co Chair Elections</b>		June 29, 2022	CSO SDG Alliance	Election of co chairs and handling over leadership from Denison to Lavanya and Jai Yaw
<b>Pre HLPF event</b>		June 30, 2022	APPGM SDG, Alliance & Ministry of Foreign Affairs	<a href="https://www.kiu-co.com/copy-of-news/hybrid-pre-hlpf-event%3A-global-sharing-of-best-practices">https://www.kiu-co.com/copy-of-news/hybrid-pre-hlpf-event%3A-global-sharing-of-best-practices</a>
<b>HLPF</b>		July 2022 Side events	YB Rohani, Denison, Rahmah & Zoel in New York at UN HQ	Printed report (26 pages) – HLPF Report (July 5-18, 2022) a good documentation

<b>2023 Budget Consultation</b>		August 15, 2022 Aug 23, 2022	Ministry of Finance	Input to pre-budget discussion and consultation. A presentation of APPGM SDG localising agenda and a request of funding for 2023 <a href="https://z-upload.facebook.com/APPGMSDGMY/posts/609992437360556">https://z-upload.facebook.com/APPGMSDGMY/posts/609992437360556</a>  <a href="https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2022/08/23/pm-budget-2023-prepared-with-peoples-wellbeing-at-its-core/24298">https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2022/08/23/pm-budget-2023-prepared-with-peoples-wellbeing-at-its-core/24298</a>
<b>National SDG Council</b>		Sept 5, 2022	EPU PM Office, Putrajaya	Presented the findings on APGM SDG field study and feedback from CSO Committee on SDG matters
<b>Budget 2023</b>		Oct 7, 2022	Finance Minister	4th Allocation from MoF APPGM SDG & localising SDGs well recognised by Federal Government (Page 70) <a href="https://budget.mof.gov.my/pdf/2023/ucapan/buku-budget-speech-2023.pdf">https://budget.mof.gov.my/pdf/2023/ucapan/buku-budget-speech-2023.pdf</a>

<b>Parliament dissolved</b>		Oct 10, 2022		APPGM SDG dissolved and the Secretariat cannot use APPGM SDG logo. Visibility during this period for the secretariat to use the logo and name of the Society for the promotion of SDGs
<b>Staff orientation after the recruitment for 2023</b>		Nov 1, 2022	Avenue 8, PJ	New document: SDG Values, framework & priorities for 2023 delivery
<b>Expansion of the office</b>		Nov-Dec	Avenue 8, PJ	Rental & Renovation of the next block as more space needed for staff and meeting. Expansion & consolidation of the full time
<b>SDG Policy Forum</b>		Nov 2-4, 2022	ISIS Malaysia	The first major policy conversation. Good participation although no MPs participated. 5 SDG Policy RTD based on the research undertaken in 2020 & 2021
<b>SDG Roadmap 2 Meeting</b>		Nov 15, 2022	EPU Putrajaya	Alliance invited to attend the technical working committee Kiu Jai Yaw & Zoel Ng represented the Alliance EPU continues to recognise the Alliance

## Chapter 2: SDG & DEVELOPMENT



1. Government and CSO Collaboration in SDG Implementation -  
**Dr. Lin Mui Kiang** (PROHAM)

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2. Human Security & SDGs: Malaysia's Experience in Linking the Global to the Local -  
**Prof. Dato' Dr Rashila Ramli** (UNU-IIGH & PSSM) & Prof. Dr. Sity Daud (UKM)

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3. The Influence of the SDGs for Policy Change on Sustainable Development Integration -  
**Alizan Mahadi** (ISIS Malaysia)

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4. Addressing SDG Implementation Challenges: Can SDG Centre Solve the Problem? -  
**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zainal Abidin** (Pusat Sejahtera, IIUM)

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5. Grounded Research in localising SDGs - **Dr. Teo Sue Ann** (SDG Society)

## **Government and CSO Collaboration in SDG Implementation**

by

**Dr Lin Mui Kiang**

### **ABSTRACT**

While the SDGs are not legally binding, governments are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for the achievement of the 17 Goals. Countries have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review of the progress made in implementing the Goals, which will require quality, accessible and timely data collection. Regional follow-up and review will be based on national-level analyses and contribute to follow-up and review at the global level. The Economic Planning Unit (EPU) is the focal point for Sustainable Development (SD) and act as a coordinating agency on the initiatives related to SD including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the process to embrace and implement the 17 SDGs in a systematic and measurable manner, Malaysia has put in place an enabling environment. This encompasses the inclusion of CSOs in the implementation of the SDGs to complement and supplement the role of the government. The CSO-SDG Alliance played a substantial role and made contributions in policy input through its membership in the National SDG Steering Committee, contributions to SDG Roadmap formulation and the two Voluntary National Reports, provision of comments to the draft of the 12<sup>th</sup> Malaysian Plan; capacity building in SDGs for both government officials and communities on the ground; as well as in the localisation of the SDGs in parliamentary constituencies. Recent inclusions by EPU include membership in the Poverty Circle to eradicate hardcore poverty and to the Task Force to improve the multi-dimensional poverty index for Malaysia. While much has been done, much more need to be done in the remaining half of time to achieved the SDGs in 2030. The call to Reset Malaysia calls for the greater involvement of the Third Sector and the CSO-SDG Alliance should step up its role in contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

## **Background**

On 25 September 2015, Malaysia together with other 192 world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) at the United Nations General Assembly in New York. This is a global commitment towards a more sustainable, resilient and inclusive development, with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. The SDGs is a new, universal set of goals, targets, and indicators that UN member state will be expected to use to frame their agenda and political policies over 15 years (2016 – 2030). With its 17 Goals, 169 Targets and more than 200 Indicators that cover 5 dimensions namely People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership, the SDGs will stimulate action over the next fifteen years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the plane

The 2030 Agenda has been shaped by relevant United Nations (UN) agreements and Conventions as well as the experiences and achievements gained through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the global development agenda spanning the period 2000–2015. The 2030 Agenda was the result of two years of intensive public consultation and engagement with civil society and other stakeholders around the world. It transcends the MDGs to include wider economic, social and environmental objectives, and with a greater focus on peace, participation, and inclusiveness.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development serves as our collective blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. The new Goals are unique in that they call for action by all countries (poor, rich and middle-income countries) to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. SDGs recognise that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and addresses a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection. It challenges us to get serious about delivering an integrated and balanced social, economic and environmental agenda. While the SDGs are not legally binding, governments are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for the achievement of the 17 Goals. Countries have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review of the progress made in implementing the Goals, which will require quality, accessible and timely data collection. Regional follow-up and review will be based on national-level analyses and contribute to follow-up and review at the global level.

## **Formation of the CSO-SDG Alliance**

Following the launch of the SDGs by the United Nations in September 2015, a small group of CSO leaders met in October 2015 to discuss the role that CSOs can play in the implementation of the SDGs in Malaysia. They then invited all related CSOs to give their opinion and discuss the areas where they can contribute. This resulted in the formation of the CSO-SDG Alliance with 50 members in 2015 to harness their collective strengths, expertise and experience of the CSO groups in the country. As the founding members met and further discussed the contributions that can be made by the diverse nature and attributes of the many organisations, many more have opted to join the CSO-SDG Alliance with membership reaching 70 organisations in 2022, several of which are umbrella bodies with nation-wide branches. The Alliance started work with no office, no funds and no staff, often meeting in mamak restaurants and tea stalls. But their enthusiasm and commitment overcame the lack of resources.

From the beginning, the Alliance has engaged with the EPU, which is the focal point for the SDGs. The Alliance was invited to be a member of the National SDG Steering Committee established by EPU in 2016. The Alliance has actively participated at all national SDG summits and seminars in 2016 and 2019, and have provided input to the National SDG Roadmap, Malaysian Voluntary Reports for 2017 and for 2021, as well as provided input into the 11MP MTR and 12MP.

## **Institutional Mechanisms for SDG Implementation**

The Economic Planning Unit (EPU) in the Prime Minister's Department is the focal point for Sustainable Development (SD) and acts as a coordinating agency on the initiatives related to SD including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the process to embrace and implement the 17 SDGs in a systematic and measurable manner, Malaysia has put in place an institutional setup and an enabling environment.

EPU established a multi-stakeholder, participatory governance structure helmed by the National SDG Council chaired by the Prime Minister. It held its first meeting on 6 September 2022 where the Prime Minister reiterated Malaysia's strong commitment to achieve the SDGs and announced the setting up of the National SDG Centre in EPU, and the requirement



for states and local authorities to prepare and submit voluntary local reports on the progress made in their localities. The APPGM-SDG was represented by its Chairperson Hon Dato' Sri Rohani Abdul Karim who, supported by its Secretariat which is the CSO-SDG Alliance, made a progress report to the Council, after which the prime minister requested that his constituency Bera be covered under its program as well.

The Council is supported by a National SDG Steering Committee (NSC), chaired by the Minister of Economic Affairs, and a National SDG Technical Committee (NTC) chaired by the Director General of the EPU. The National SDG Council reports to the UN via the High-level Political Forum (HLPF). The NTC consists of five SDG Cluster Working Committees (CWCs), under which are Task Forces for each set of Goals. The five CWCs are responsible for Inclusivity, Well-Being, Human Capital, Environment and Natural Resources, and Economic Growth which are related to their respective SDGs. The CWCs are tasked with identifying indicators for each SDG, as well as with developing and implementing programmes and reporting progress to the NSC. Each CWC is led by a Section Head in EPU and includes representatives of Government Ministries/agencies, civil society, the private sector, academics, United Nations agencies and youth representatives. The inclusive and participatory approach used in this governance structure is in line with the 11MP, which focuses on a paradigm shift towards more participatory government by citizens, including NGOs/CSOs, as partners in service design and delivery. The CSO-SDG Alliance is well represented as members of the NSC, and also was invited to assign members to the 5 CWCs to formulate a National SDG Roadmap to guide implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

### **Alignment of the SDGs with the Five-Year Development Plans**

The Government recognises that a comprehensive implementation of SDGs will require the mobilisation of resources, including manpower, capacity building, and physical spaces as well as funding. Since Malaysia's national development plan has always been geared towards economic, social and environmental agenda, the implementation of SDGs in Malaysia is aligned with the five-year national development plan, which utilises the government development budget starting from the 11th Malaysia Plan. The alignment of SDG and national development is realised through a mapping exercise which involves the integration

of the national development plan's action plans, initiatives and outcomes to the SDGs' goals, targets and indicators. The Shared Prosperity Vision (SPV) 2030 was announced in 2019 with the underlying principle of achieving economic growth through "equitability of outcome". The 12<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan, covering three development dimensions – economic empowerment, environmental sustainability and social reengineering will further crystallise the implementation of the SPV 2030. The CSO-SDG Alliance was invited to review drafts of the 12<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan and was able to provide comments and feedback to many of the chapters.

It is important for the federal government to mobilize and engage state and local institutions and stakeholders on the priorities that should be addressed by the SDGs. Multi-level governance platforms should incorporate state, local and district governments by setting up SDG Committees and other mechanisms to jointly assess their needs, define their SDG priorities and develop programmes and plans at territorial level. They can work together to ensure a more integrated and efficient approach to local development through cooperation in service delivery, infrastructures and, where possible, through the pooling of resources and capacities. Peer learning and teamwork can be an effective way to improve service delivery, change working methodologies and promote problem-based learning, and improve their political and technical decision making and performance. Localization of the SDGs can therefore provide a framework for local development and to how constituencies can support the achievement of the SDGs through action from a bottom-up approach and to how the SDGs can provide a framework for local development policy.

Capacity building is crucial for the transformation of human resources and institutional capabilities. The achievement of the SDGs requires the empowerment of individuals, leaders, organizations and societies. Building endogenous capacities is necessary for institution-building, policy analysis and development management, including the assessment of alternative options. In order to achieve this, specific knowledge and skills must be developed to perform tasks more efficiently and mind-sets and attitudes must be changed.

There is need to address poor service delivery. It is to be noted that many of the projects cover grounds that are under the purview and responsibility of government agencies but they do not seem to have been effectively addressed and met the needs of the local communities. As such it is important to review public development policies and service delivery modes, as well as the performance of front-line agencies and to find ways for their improvement.

### **Malaysia SDG Summit 2019**

In September 2019, Malaysia hosted the Malaysia SDG Summit 2019 themed “The Whole of Nation Approach: Accelerating Progress on the SDGs” to create public awareness and understanding on SDGs as well creating a platform to discuss the progress, opportunities, challenges and solutions with various stakeholders, i.e. public and private sectors, academia, non-government organisations. The event was co-organised by the Government of Malaysia and UN Malaysia and demonstrated Malaysia’s commitment, to bring together a broad range of stakeholders to take stock of SDG progress, gaps and explore ideas and solutions to bridge these gaps. With over 2,600 registered attendees across the two- day Summit, numerous critical themes were discussed, from ideating on strategies to leave no one behind; ensuring that environmental sustainability is placed central in Malaysia’s development paradigm; highlighting the challenges and opportunities in unlocking the potential of women in Malaysia; to emphasizing the role of institutional reform and ensuring a whole of nation approach in order to accelerate her progress on SDG achievement. This platform is important in bridging the gaps and the summit acted as a catalyst for future dialogues and collaborations across sectors, to ensure that the nation achieves the 2030 Agenda together. The CSO-SDG Alliance played an active and important part in these sessions with papers delivered by its prominent members and resource persons, answering questions and following up with participants and the public. These high-profile public appearances helped to establish realization of the strength and the diverse expertise of the CSO-SDG Alliance and led to it being sought as a resource organization in SDG policy planning, capacity building and implementation.

## **Malaysia's Voluntary National Reviews 2017 and 2021**

In support of the global monitoring and reporting of the 2030 Agenda, Malaysia is committed to undertaking broader country reporting every four years. The government has presented two Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) at the 2017 and 2021 global High-level Political Forums (HLPF). The first VNR in 2017 at the High-level Political Forum theme of “Eradicating poverty and promoting Malaysia’s prosperity in a changing world”, reported on the achievements of Malaysia on SDG. The theme for the 2021 VNR is Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the Global Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development. The CSO-SDG Alliance played an important role in contributing to contents and review of the drafts. Working groups were formed with CSOs, academic institutions, think tanks and the private sector to discuss the various themes and papers were written and submitted to the EPU Secretariat for inclusion into the report. This was acknowledged by the Minister of Economic Affairs Dato' Sri Mustapa bin Mohamed who said in the preface of the 2021 VNR, “This report would not have been possible, if it were not for the strong support and encouragement from the Right Honourable Prime Minister and my Cabinet colleagues. Of course, my team at the Economic Planning Unit, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on SDGs, United Nations’ agencies in Malaysia, participating private sector, civil society organisations, academia, and individuals all deserve their due recognition for their contribution to this report.”

### **The All-Parties Parliamentary Group on SDGs for Localising SDGs at the Parliamentary Constituency Level**

Although Malaysia has adopted the SDGs in development planning and made specific references to SDGs in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> MP, there are many challenges in the localisation of SDGs at the State and district levels. The interconnected nature of the SDGs requires a cross-cutting and multidimensional approach in delivery. This is where the CSO-SDG Alliance can play a major role in multi-stakeholder engagement. This is the major partnership thrust of SDG 17.17, where the call is for the promotion of effective public, private and civil society partnerships are made. The Alliance participated in a series of public engagement

events organized by the Parliamentary Speaker which had direct relevance to SDGs, and hosted a series of conversations with the Speaker. On 1 July 2019, a dinner was hosted as an interaction between MPs and CSOs. This was followed by a National Forum on SDGs held on 19 July 2019 in Parliament hosted by KSI, Parliament and the Alliance. The Alliance called for greater parliamentary involvement at two levels, namely at the policy-making and monitoring the delivery at the local level. CSOs saw the MPs as enablers for localising the SDGs.

Parliament Malaysia approved the formation of All-Party Parliamentary Groups on Oct 17, 2020 which are bipartisan, multi stakeholder groups of Members of Parliament, civil society, academia, public and private sector members. On the same day Parliament approved the establishment of the first APPGM group on Sustainable Development Goals with the Malaysian CSO-SDG Alliance as the secretariat. An APPGM-SDG committee was established by Members of Parliament from both houses. The current chair is YB Dato Seri Hajjiah Rohani Abdul Karim and the Deputy is YB Puan Maria Chin Abdullah. The Secretary is YB William Leong Jee Keen & Treasurer is YB Dr. Kelvin Yii Lee Wuen. The other two members from Dewan Rakyat are YB Tuan Wong Tack, YB Tuan Ahmad Hassan, YB Tuan Ahmad Fadhli Shaari and Dewan Negara members are YB Senator Datuk Paul Igai and YB Senator Adrian Bannie Lasimbang who subsequently left after completing his Senator term. The committee agreed to undertake a pilot project in ten parliamentary constituencies in ten states with the theme of localising SDGs at the parliamentary constituency level.

For 2020 and 2021, the secretariat was made up of senior founding members who served as heads of the respective sections of solutions, research, finance, audit, and other responsibilities. They were from CSOs, academia from public universities and think tank groups who undertook research and policy work as well as CSOs and social enterprises who carried out solution projects at the ground level. This SDG team is highly motivated and work in close partnership with the office staff of the MPs as well as with all the key district level government staff in localising the SDGs. From 2022, the Secretariat was fully staffed with fulltime employees funded from the allocations from the Ministry of Finance, and the core founding members serve as resource persons.

The secretariat made representations to EPU and the Ministry of Finance (MOF) with proposals and plans of implementation. A major breakthrough for the APPGM-SDG was the allocation of RM2 million in the 2020 Budget by the MOF for the localising of SDGs, and this was used to implement 34 projects in 10 constituencies. Similarly, the 2021 Budget has allocated RM5 million to increase the outreach to another 20 parliamentary constituencies for which we have managed to implement another 87 projects. Due to the commitment and hard work put in by members of the team, the APPGM-SDG have received strong endorsement from the MPs, EPU as well as the MOF. MOF has doubled its allocation to RM10million for 2022, which was used to reach another 27 constituencies. In terms of governance, the funds are managed by the Society for the Promotions of SDGs, which is the legal entity for the Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance. The secretariat submits monthly activity and financial reports to Parliament and the MOF

There are four phases in this implementation. Phase one is the mapping and awareness. A three-day field study is undertaken in each of the ten constituencies during which time, local issues and needs are identified. There is local prioritization of the issues. The second phase is designing local solutions to address the concerns. The third phase is the execution of the solution projects by solution partners which could be undertaken by CSOs and social enterprises in partnership with local actors. The final stage is the project review and evaluation.

The key priorities of the APPGM-SDG are to address poverty and inequality in Malaysian society; main-stream gender perspectives in SDG delivery; ensure greater multi-stakeholder partnerships among MPs, government agencies, CSOs, academics, private sector and local communities; strategically ensure that there is an effective cross-cutting of the 17 SDG goals to foster balanced development (economic, social & environmental); and to give greater visibility of SDG at the local level through the delivery of services as well as at the national level through policy discussions at Parliament and with decision-makers in Putrajaya. They are equally important as the SDG priority is "leaving no one behind", and a balanced approach should be followed. In our APPGM-SDG work, there is a focus on specific target groups such as the rural and urban poor, the B40, women, children, indigenous people, refugees and undocumented, disabled persons, the elderly and rural smallholders and the fishing community. The list is non-exhaustive and their issues are cross-cutting. Based on the

identification, mapping and prioritization of issues based on site visits on the ground by the research team, round table sessions are held to propose recommendations to the government on policies and programs that can be adopted to address them. An annual integrated and comparative APPG report that highlights the common issues and challenges across the parliamentary constituency studies is presented to the Speaker and Secretary of Parliament. The findings could be shared via speakers by APPGM members in parliamentary debates and question time as well as special RoundTable discussions that could be hosted to discuss the findings.

The APPGM solution projects are designed to address the issues and challenges identified during the field visits and discussions with the Members of Parliament (MPs)'s office, government agencies, NGOs, community leaders and the community. Upon prioritization of the issues to be addressed under the APPGM-SDG programme with its allocation of RM120,000 for each constituency, calls for proposals are made to interested and competent parties to submit their project proposals. They are wide ranging and cover many sectors and SDGs. The APPGM-SDG seeks to maximise the contribution from the expertise, experience, dedication and commitment of related organizations to assist the communities on the ground. They range from CSOs/NGOs, local universities, community associations and even private sector firms. Proposals are then reviewed by the Solutions Committee which emphasises on the criteria of their effectiveness in addressing the issue(s) that they purport to resolve, their sustainability, and replicability or scalability. The suitability and capacity of the project proponents are also assessed. The reviewed projects are then endorsed by the respective MPs before being presented to the APPGM-SDG Executive Committee for final approval.

From 2020 to 2022, about 300 solution projects were approved and implemented in 57 parliamentary constituencies. Feedback has been very positive and many NGOs, local communities and even government agencies have been energised to make improvements to further overcome local issues that are addressed by the solutions projects. Partners include city councils, municipal councils, district council, universities, think tanks, partners in 57 constituencies, and private firms. Partners with expertise and local knowledge are crucial to achieve objectives of the projects. They include local universities, specialised CSOs, and local NGOs such as SAWO, PSPK, SADIA, ROSE, MyPJ, Tamarai, and Youth Clubs in Pensiangan. The bottom-up approach is enhanced with the involvement of CSOs and

Community-based Organizations (CBOs). Local authorities and community leaders will also be empowered to identify and alleviate pockets of poverty at the community level. Designated government officials at the local level can be assigned to coordinate and implement the grassroots approach to ensure the success of poverty alleviation initiatives.

In preparation for the implementation of the solutions projects, capacity sessions were carried out for government agencies from federal, state and local levels, NGOs, community leaders and communities to raise awareness of the SDG principles and how they are relevant to them in their work and daily lives. They include joint sessions for increase understanding among them and to mainstream the SDGs. There were also sessions to resolve issues on specific subject matters such as health and well-being, women and youth empowerment, needs assessment for community development, problem solving for squatter communities, rights and responsibilities of flat dwellers, community health screening, increasing youth readiness for employment, natural farming principles for sustainability and quality produce, and dialogues with agencies to discuss specific issues. The solutions projects are wide ranging to address the diverse issues that have been prioritized. They cover many sectors including poverty alleviation, health, education, waste management, entrepreneurial development, income-generating projects, skills training and community development.

In addition to solutions projects the APPGM SDG members from various civil societies, public universities and think tank groups have been providing policy input to the Economic Planning Unit as input to the Voluntary National Review Report, 2021 Budget, Post Covid National Economic Recovery Plan, the Twelfth Malaysia Plan and enhancing the multidimensional poverty indicators as well as effective district and local government level delivery of services especially to Bottom 40 and vulnerable communities.

Overall, it is an amazing journey of the CSO-SDG-Alliance working in close partnership with the MPs, EPU, community leaders and civil servants at the local level. Its accomplishment and progress so far need to be taken to a higher level especially with the rapid expansion of its responsibilities in more constituencies and also much expectations that have been put on the Alliance. The Alliance hopes to further work together to enhance its effectiveness in the implementation of the SDGs on the ground.



## **Way Forward for Government-CSO Collaboration**

Government-CSO collaboration can be further strengthened. CSOs can support policy making by bringing realities on the ground to the process and act as a source of citizen science data for bottom-up information for targeted sustainable development planning. CSOs should thus be seen as partners to disseminate sustainable development plans to local stakeholders and to implement the 12th MP which seeks to further the implementation of the SDGs. In this sense, CSOs can both offer perspectives on shaping policies as well as be partners to implement strategies and actions. Active participation of CSOs in developing development national plans from the onset till implementation.

Service delivery can be enhanced and be more impactful if the strengths of CSOs who have wide coverage and trust on the ground are combined with those of Government agencies who have resources and longer-term goals. CSOs can also help define, develop and implement projects that serve multiple purposes in meeting the SDGs in a holistic and integrated manner. CSOs can be appointed and mobilised to carry out many government functions and to carry out service delivery, ranging from social welfare, health, education, environment, and other sectors. CSOs can help bridge Government Agencies with the communities to enhance delivery of public services.

CSOs can also provide an independent and objective assessment of the progress being made in the 12th MP implementation by providing constructive feedback. CSOs can contribute towards developing robust measures to assess and monitor project impacts to track SDG implementation, and identify gaps, to ensure the feedback provided is evidence based. Mid-term review of the 12<sup>th</sup> MP the plan should include CSO SDG Alliance and its partners to get feedback and work towards improving and implementing changes. What is needed is a screening and monitoring group to select responsible and capable CSOs to reach out to left behind groups. Funding could be provided for CSOs to be the independent monitoring body to ensure effective delivery of the plan.

On 14 February 2022, the CSO-SDG Alliance was invited to a conversation with Prof Tan Sri Dato Seri Dr Noor Azlan Ghazali, Executive Director of the Economic Action Council (EAC) Secretariat on the new policy document entitled “Resetting Malaysia: Aligning to The

New Economic Landscape”. The outline highlights eight change agenda and two of the change agenda are:

Reset 4: Promoting shared responsibility, good governance and sustainability

Reset 7: Attending vulnerable communities, and mainstreaming the Third Sector. In how to take the Third sector forward, the recommendations are to:

- Formalize the role of 3rd sector as partners in development;
- Formulate a national policy for the official recognition of the role of the 3rd sector as partners in development;
- Establish a clear governance (formation, finance, reporting, monitoring, accreditation, etc), scope of involvement, and a 3rd sector national referral centre;
- Formation of a multi-stakeholder partnership coordination taskforce for the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector at the federal, state and district levels;
- Introduce training and educational programmes to strengthen the 3rd sector’s capacity and social work professionalism;
- Develop a standard template for systematic impact assessment and evaluation of community-based transformation projects;
- Develop a dedicated 3rd sector web portal to enhance sharing of best practices and to promote collaborative initiative amongst the 3rd sector organizations; and
- Set up a national grant to support advocacy-based 3rd sector (e.g. SDG, Science & Technology, Democracy, and etc.) through competitive bidding with stringent performance and impact evaluation.

This will open up further the role of CSOs as partners in national development. As the CSO-SDG Alliance has had a head start with more than seven years in policy research, capacity building and localising of the SDGs, it is in a strong position to take up expanded responsibilities and tasks to supplement and complement the government’s efforts and look forward to this beneficial collaboration.

## **Conclusion**

SDG achievement depends strongly on progress made at the local level. There is now a growing recognition of the need to localize the SDGs as witnessed at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2021, with a number of initiatives and discussions giving attention to the need to accelerate SDG implementation through increased efforts at the local level. Through the lens of policy coherence and a multilevel governance approach, effectively leveraging SDG localization is critical for achieving sustainable development by 2030. Overall, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a unique opportunity to rethink public management and local development. Without localizing the SDGs, much progress on implementation of the SDGs will be left untapped.

The government, specifically EPU and MOF, has recognised the unique contribution of CSOs and would like to strengthen the role of the third sector as part of the agenda to move towards a whole of nation and whole of society approach. APPGM-SDG has demonstrated how CSOs can complement the role of government in development delivery and at the same time build capacity at the local level. In localizing SDGs, a holistic approach is needed to push for promoting policy coherence, multilevel governance, adopting a public management approach that promotes a whole-of-nation approach can help facilitate SDG localization and mechanisms that support the alignment of national and local sustainable development agendas must be in place. At the national level, this requires commitment, advocacy, and continuous support for local governance as well as national policy and legal frameworks that integrate local SDG plans. At the local level, effective localization requires, first and foremost, awareness of the SDGs. Translating the SDGs into local contexts is needed to define how communities can benefit from achieving the SDGs through inter alia issue mapping and conducting needs assessments.

It is important to promote ownership and co-responsibility for the implementation of strategic projects. The implementation of projects need to include the full involvement and participation of local stakeholders such as NGOs, research organizations, academia, private sector, community-based organizations and community members. This multi-stakeholder approach should create ownership and co-responsibility among all actors and serve to mobilize and reallocate resources effectively. The MPs play an important role to promote the involvement of citizens, particularly the most vulnerable groups. When citizens are involved

in the planning stage of a plan or project, they are usually keener to participate in the implementing and monitoring stages too.

The APPGM-SDG programme demonstrates the power of the bottom-up approach that is used in the localization of the SDGs. The process of issue mapping and prioritization has led to the design of solution projects to address the specific challenges as there is no one size fit all solutions for addressing problems on the ground. It enables the leap-frogging from traditional businesses to high tech e-commerce, provides valuable transformation for local communities to catch up and create a more level playing field. Feedback has been very positive and many NGOs, local communities and even government agencies have been energised to make improvements to further overcome local issues that are addressed by the solutions projects. It is a good approach to empower the local community and to achieve the Agenda 2030 and should be stepped up in order to leave no one behind (LNOB). The experience gained from 2020 onwards will serve to enhance their implementation and impact.

Much have been achieved during the period 2015-2022. However much more needs to be done in the remaining eight years in order to build back better, especially when we have been adversely affected by the two years of the Covid 19 pandemic. Apart from socio-economic undertakings, efforts should also be made towards reforms such as in corruption, judiciary, good governance, transparency, justice, racial discrimination, social protection rights for the refugees, parliamentary reform etc. as stated in SDG16, and putting up the right policies. Moving forward, we must recognize that localising SDGs is a crucial prerequisite for nationwide SDG adoption. There is a need for a whole of nation approach and greater coordination across Government, from the Federal level all the way down to the local level, in order to facilitate SDG adoption. In this regard, the Parliament of Malaysia established the All-Party Parliamentary Group on SDGs to assist the Government in reaching out to the most vulnerable groups in society, particularly those who reside in remote areas. This initiative is part of Malaysia's effort in ensuring that everyone in the country will enjoy the benefits of economic development. This journey of the Government with the CSO pioneers is testament to the multi stakeholder engagement indicated in SDG 17.17 where a partnership model is advocated. The Malaysian society is illustrative of this principle and while we have achieved

much there are still many challenges ahead in our quest to achieve the SDGs by 2030 in order to leave no one behind.

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# **Human Security and SDGs: Malaysia's Experience of Linking the Global to the Local**

by

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In developing a country, policy makers can adhere to various development models. At times, a global framework is transplanted into the country. It might be an adapted model, or a homegrown model befitting the needs of a country. In developing a country, another important element is the security of the country. The Human Security approach where development is seen as a peace promoting mechanism (minimizing insecurity) provides a conceptual foundation in understanding and applying the Global Agenda 2030 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

This paper focuses on the relationship between Human security and SDGs in three ways. First, it presents an in-depth discussion on the relationship between Human security and the Principles of SDGs. Second, it reviews Malaysia VNR 2017 and 2021 from the framework of Human Security and the SDGs principles. Third, using empirical data from APPGM-SDG Impact Evaluation Program, it will showcase Malaysia's effort in localizing SDGs in 10 Parliamentary constituencies with the intention of enhancing human security.

## **Linking Human Security and SDGs- the HS-SDG Matrix for Analysis**

When we talk about security, the general understanding is that the government and its machineries (ministries, police, court of justice) are responsible for the protection and well-being of the people. The term national security is another important one to keep in mind since the government of the day must do all that it can to protect the country. National Security is usually associated with the national interest of the country

Human Security, known as non-traditional security, focuses on the individual and the communities, unlike national security which focuses on the state. At the heart of Human Security, is the enduring universal principle that all humans should be free from fear, free from want and free from indignity. The normative strand here are the values upheld by proponents of the Human Security Approach.

According to the The UN General Assembly Resolution 66/290 of 2012 on human security stated that:

...human security is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to survival, livelihood and dignity of their people. Based on this, a common understanding on the notion of human security includes the following:

**(a)** The right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair. All individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential;

**(b)** Human security calls for people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people and all communities;

**(c)** Human security recognizes the interlinkages between peace, development and human rights, and equally considers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights..." (UN General Assembly 2012; from item 3).<sup>2</sup>

These core ideas combine concerns with first, fulfilling priority human needs and preventing deprivation, and second, addressing the specific threats that in situations of vulnerability can damage attainment of important values. Where the two concerns intersect, they cover threats to survival, livelihood and dignity for persons in their everyday life, notably for the more marginalised (Gasper and Gómez 2014). The SDGs, like the MDGs, appear more oriented to dealing with basic deprivations and less oriented to understanding and responding to threats, although compared to the MDGs they include some steps in relation to threats arising from unsustainability.<sup>3</sup>

These values are closely related to the principles of SDGs which are universality, Leaving No one behind, Interconnectedness and indivisibility, Inclusiveness and multi-Stakeholder partnerships. Human Security and the principle on Leave no one behind are two sides of the same coin: They seek to benefit all people and commit to leave no one behind by reaching out to all people in need and deprivation, wherever they are, in a manner which targets their specific challenges and vulnerabilities. People must live in dignity by having their basic needs.

Furthermore, the 17 SDGs can be mapped to the seven dimensions of Human Security of espoused by UNDP in 1994. The seven dimensions of human security: • Economic • Food • Health • Environment • Personal • Community • Political. All 17 goals of SDG are also classified under 5Ps (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership)., For example SDG 8 falls within the economic dimension, while SDG 13, 14, 15 are within the scope of the environment. SDG 16 and 17 can be linked to Community and Political Dimensions. The final goal is to have a sustainable development for all.

Human Security and the principle of leaving no one behind are two sides of the same coin: They seek to benefit all people and commit to leave no one behind by reaching out to all people in need and deprivation, wherever they are, in a manner which targets their specific challenges and vulnerabilities.



## Linkage between HS tenets and SDGs Core Principles

### The proposed HS-SDG Matrix

HS/SDGs	Planet	People	Prosperity	Peace	Partnership
<b>SDG</b>	<b>Planet</b> <b>6, 12, 13,</b> <b>14, 15</b>	<b>People</b> <b>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</b>	<b>Prosperity</b> <b>7, 8, 9, 10, 11</b>	<b>Peace</b> <b>16</b>	<b>Partnership</b> <b>17</b>
HS-Economy			8, 9	16	17
HS-Food		1, 2		16	17
HS-Health		3		16	17
HS-Environment	<b>6, 12, 13,</b> <b>14, 15</b>		7, 12	16	17
HS-Personal		4, 5	10	16	17
HS-Community		5	10, 11	16	17
HS-Political				16	17

The proposed HS-SDG Matrix can be used to prioritize policy issues because it can indicate possible level of threat faced by beneficiaries or communities. If there is a higher the level of threat in the areas of needs, want and dignity, then, there is a need to include the issue for policy consideration.

In reviewing VNR2017 and VNR 2022, the proposed HS-SDG Matrix will be used .

### **Review of VNR 2017 and 2021**

VNR is a voluntary process for government to report the progress and challenges in implementing SDGs. Malaysia submitted the first VNR in 2017 as part of the country's commitment to the SDG process. For 2017, SDG 1, 2, 3, 5, 9,14,15,17 were covered whereas for 2021, the focus was on SDG 1,2,3,8,10,12,13,16,17. In Malaysia, the Economic Planning Unit was the lead agency that started the process in February 2021 and completed it in May 2021. The Consultants are from UKM, ISIS and Galen Centre. Consultations were done with many sectors including the academia including those from the My-SDG Academic Network.

Source: ESCAP SDG Progressive Report 2016-2021/

Based on the ESCAP report, only SDG 15- Life on Land is seen to have achieved the targets. However, the achievement is also questionable because the evidence strength is not strong. SDG 1 and SDG 6 came close to the 50% achievement. In the case of gender equality and Strong institutions, there is an indication that there was insufficient data. However, three SDGs which did not meet the targets are SDG 11, 12, 13. Two of these goals (SDG 12 and 13 are reviewed in VNR 2021.

With the availability of regional data, we translate it to the national level. At this level, the VNR 2017 and VNR 2021 can provide some insights on the indicators given by ESCAP.

## Comparison between VNR2017 and VNR 2021

	2017	2021
Theme	“Eradicating Poverty and Promoting Prosperity in a Changing World”	Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic”
SDG Focus	1,2,3,4,5,9,14,15 & 17	1,2,3,8,10,12,13,16 & 17
Highlight	Poverty	Progress of Sustainable Development Goals Post Covid-19 Pandemic
Reporting	Government Driven Initiatives	Whole-of-nation approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public-Private reporting/ implementation</li> <li>● SDG initiatives supported by NGOs, CSOs and private entities</li> </ul>
Recommendations	<p><b>From VNR 2017 Malaysian Report:</b></p> <p><b>ON participation,</b> non-Government actors are included in the SDG implementation process in the National SDG Council, the NSC and the CWCs.</p> <p>The challenge also exists of ensuring that the spirit of the</p>	<p><b>From VNR 2021 Malaysian Report:</b></p> <p>Addressing the COVID-19 pandemic in the near term, which has exacerbated poverty, nutrition and health challenges, especially in the most vulnerable communities.</p> <p>Addressing poverty and building an inclusive society. This includes the development of existing metrics and analytics to better track key</p>

	<p>2030 agenda trickles down to local levels and makes real impacts.</p> <p>Moreover ensuring the comparability of these indicators globally while also balancing the needs and costs of collecting the data and information, will be needed.</p> <p>Moreover ensuring the comparability of these indicators globally while also balancing the needs and costs of collecting the data and information, will be needed.</p> <p>Localising, mainstreaming , promoting ownership and partnership</p>	<p>deprivations, including across groups and regions.</p> <p>Enhancing and expanding TVET provision to offer the right skills to current and future workers;</p> <p>Promoting greater women’s participation in the labour force including in digital economy;</p> <p>Accelerating the implementation of circular economy and improving waste management;</p> <p>Promoting development of green and resilient cities and townships as well as enhancing green mobility;</p> <p>Strengthening national security, unity and social cohesion and ensure access to justice for all.</p> <p>Enhancing well-being by ensuring people’s rights are protected.</p> <p>Leveraging key CSO and other non-governmental partners – the CSO Alliance and the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the SDGs to enhance localising SDG initiatives.</p> <p>Enhancing participation of local governments in localising SDGs.</p>
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Malaysia **presented Voluntary National Review 2017** at the High-level Political Forum theme of “Eradicating poverty and promoting Malaysia’s prosperity in a changing world”. The report presenting the achievements of Malaysia on selected SDGs. Some of the achievements are as below:

- SDG 1 & 2: Absolute poverty reduced from 49.3% (1970) to 0.6% (2014) with no reported cases of hunger.
- SDG 3: Child and maternal mortality rates are almost at the level of developed countries; eradicated endemic small pox and polio and reversed the spread of HIV/AIDS. Drastic reductions in water-borne diseases, deaths from treatable childhood diseases and malaria. Government has been taking ownership of the national response towards non-communicable diseases while working strongly with non-governmental partners.
- SDG 4 & 5: More than 90% enrolment rates for primary and secondary school levels for both boys and girls and 33% for higher education with gender ratio slightly in favour of girls. Education is a tool to foster unity and national harmony, greater emphasis to inculcate good values, promote tolerance and nurture respect for fellow human beings, also for the law and the constitution.
- SDG 6: Over 95% coverage for water and sanitation, and electricity supply at national level. Which through developing mechanism to coordinate engagements and empower non-government stakeholders and communities.
- SDG 7, 12 & 16: Laws, regulations, policies and plans in place to better protect and ensure sustainable use of natural assets.
- SDG 8: Full employment since 1992, at the work place, various laws has been amended to improve work conditions, anti-discrimination and various aspects of industrial relations.
- SDG 10: Income inequalities reduced, as indicated by lower Gini Coefficient from 0.513 (1970) to 0.401 (2014). Government protect workers via a minimum wage policy, provided better labour market information and voluntary separation schemes. Policies were formulated, which include improve labour migration management including a commitment to phase out outsourcing agencies, clearer statutory

responsibility of employers, a minimum wage law that covers migrant workers and bilateral MOUs with countries of origin to limit the fees charged to workers.

- SDG 13, 14, 15, &17: As of 2015, Malaysia maintained more than 50% forest cover, 10.76% as terrestrial protected areas and 1.06% as marine protected areas. Carbon intensity reduced by 33% since 2009 and renewable energy capacity increased.

Malaysia **presented Voluntary National Review 2021** at the High-level Political Forum theme of “Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic”. The report presenting the achievements of Malaysia on selected SDGs. Some of the achievements are as below:

- Malaysia has successfully transformed its economy, raised living standards, and moved from a low-income to an upper-middle- income economy within a generation. The gross national income (GNI) per capita, expanded about 29-fold, from US\$347 in 1970 to US\$10,118 in 2020.
- Among the significant achievements are in eradicating poverty and narrowing inequalities as well as providing better quality of life for the people. The incidence of absolute poverty reduced from 7.6 per cent in 2016 to 5.6 per cent in 2019. Hardcore poverty has almost been eradicated, though pockets among selected groups, and multidimensional deprivations remain.
- The COVID-19 crisis resulted in some vulnerable households within the B40 income group fell into higher incidence of poverty and widened the inequality. In response, the Government has implemented a series of special economic recovery packages to boost growth and protect the vulnerable.
- Malaysia has also enhanced its food production, where the self- sufficiency levels of 10 major agri-food commodities continue to improve. However, the nutritional aspect of food security has become more pertinent as Malaysia faces double burden of malnutrition, particularly involving vulnerable groups and in times of unexpected emergencies.
- Malaysia has been successful in providing quality, accessible and affordable healthcare, on par with those in more developed countries, based on the principle of universal health coverage. The country’s health security preparedness was demonstrated by successfully managing the COVID-19 outbreak.

- However, health burdens are rising due to an ageing population, demands for better healthcare, and the increasing NCDs, which currently is responsible for more than 70 per cent of deaths. Initiatives to enhance the healthcare delivery system to promote a better and healthier lifestyle through a multi-sectoral nutrition framework are currently being implemented. ( VNR 2021p.10)

The Pandemic Covid 19 intensified the fear from want, fear from need and fear from indignity when vulnerable groups relevant to one of the 5Ps are impacted. In order to see the application of the HS-SDG Matrix, , we can map it to the preliminary findings on vulnerable groups.

### **Application to SDG Localization Effort in Malaysia**

These are the Preliminary Findings on Similarities and New Findings with identified target groups.

1. Saturated findings of same target groups that are left behind:
  - 2020 -2022: Fishers, farmers (paddy, vegetables [kontang]), tappers, OA, squatters, single mothers, youth, and migrants
2. Saturated findings of persistent issues:
  - Single mothers (unemployed or working at informal sectors): negligence, lack of supports
  - Youth: drugs, dropouts, lack of employment opportunities (mismatch of degree and demand of jobs)
  - Farmers (paddy and vegetables): price hike of fertilizers and pesticides, poor maintenance of irrigations
  - Fishers: trespassing of zone and state borders, pollutions
  - Orang Asli: Land Ownerships, integrations
  - People with Disabilities: Employment mismatch, social stigma and bullying
  - B40 group: Squatters and PPR, conditions of living, social security.
  - Sabah & Sarawak: Lack of infrastructures are major concerns
3. Most issues are not new or came as a surprise for the local government and district officers.

Who are left behind?	Cross-cutting issues
1. Farmers	<p>Increasing cost of production, pollution, poor maintenance of irrigations, lack of interests among the younger generations</p> <p>Place: Kangar, Jerlun, Parit Buntar, Kuantan, Setiu, Tangga Batu</p>
2. Fishers	<p>To obtain license, Environmental pollutions and exploitations (destructions of mangrove forests), trespassing of fishing areas. Illegal fishing activities, drugs</p> <p>Place: Kangar, Parit Buntar, Tampin, Setiu, Tangga Bati</p>
3. Youth	<p>Lack of employment opportunities, some lack of interests. Drugs, Dropouts</p> <p>Place: Kangar, Jerlun, Merbok, Parit Buntar, Kuantan, Tebrau, Beaufort, Setiu, Tangga Batu</p>
4. Single Parents	<p>Mostly involved in informal economic activities. Involved in entrepreneurship but not registered. Some chose to give up business registrations for BRIM.</p> <p>Lack of social protection from JKM and lack of the healthcare subsidies. (Specifically the elderly single mothers)</p> <p>Place: Kangar, Jerlun, Merbok, Parit Buntar, Sungai Buloh, Cheras, Tampin, Kuantan, Kalabakan, Setiu, Tangga Batu, Tenom</p>
5. People with Disabilities	<p>Employment, social stigma, lack of social protection</p> <p>Place: Kangar, Tampin, Beaufort, Cheras, Tangga Batu</p>



6. Senior Citizens (including single mothers)	Employment, lack of social protection  Place: Kangar, Jerlun, Merbok, Parit Buntar, Sungai Buloh, Cheras, Tampin, Kuantan, Kalabakan, Tangga Batu
7. Orang Asal/Asli	Land Ownership, Employment, Pollutions  Place: Sungai Buloh, Tebrau, Tampin, Tangga Batu, Gua Musang
8. B40	Poor living conditions (cleanliness, congestions, lack of security, poor maintenance of facilities), drugs  Place: Beaufort, Kangar, Jerlun, Parit Buntar, Sungai Buloh, Cheras, Kuantan, Kuala Kerai, Tenom

The groups are then located within the HS-SDG Matrix

<b>HS/SDGs</b>	<b>Planet</b>	<b>People</b>	<b>Prosperity</b>	<b>Peace</b>	<b>Partnership</b>
<b>SDG</b>	<b>Planet</b> <b>6, 12, 13,</b> <b>14, 15</b>	<b>People</b> <b>1,2,3,4,5</b>	<b>Prosperity</b> <b>7, 8, 9,10, 11</b>	<b>Peace</b> <b>16</b>	<b>Partnership</b> <b>17</b>
HS-Economy	Farmers	Farmers Youth	8, 9	16 Youth (social protection)	17
HS-Food		1, 2		16	17
HS-Health	Single parents	3 Fishermen		16 Fisherman	17
HS-Environment	<b>6, 12, 13,</b> <b>14, 15</b>		7, 12	16	17

HS-Personal		4, 5 Single mothers	10	16 Single Mothers	17
HS-Community		5 Oral Asal	10, 11	16 Orang Asal	17
HS-Political		B40		16 B40	17

From the above preliminary analysis from the SDG Five Ps, it is apparent that the policy focus can be taken on specific HS-Dimension by asking and answering these questions:

- What are the threats to major values aspect in people's life?
- What is affected and How?
- How can one prevent and or counteract the threats and their effects?

### **Conclusion**

The SDGs document, United Nations (2015), makes little or no use of the terms 'threat', 'hazard', 'downturn', 'downside', 'crisis', or even 'risk' or 'security'. It makes much more use of 'vulnerable', but almost always only as a partner term for 'the poor', and of 'resilient', which it applies more often to ecosystems, habitats, buildings, cities and other infrastructure than to people and communities (Gasper et., 2020)

As we work towards preparing for the VNR2024, there are a number of issues that we need to consider the following vulnerable group.

- Women: 15of 64% of women experiencing physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of intimate partner over their lifetime
- Children: 32 million are affected. Girls in rural areas and poor household are being more disadvantaged
- Refugees and migrants: Asia Pacific hosts 19% of world' total refugee population. Death and migrants disappearance of migrants increased in 2020

- Person with Disabilities: Only 21.6% of persons with severe disabilities obtained disability cash
- Older persons: Universal coverage with some form of pension has not been achieved in most countries

The HS-SDG Matrix is a flexible tool for map out the issue of threat to the individual. The groups identified at the Asia Pacific level coincide with the groups identified by researchers at the local level.

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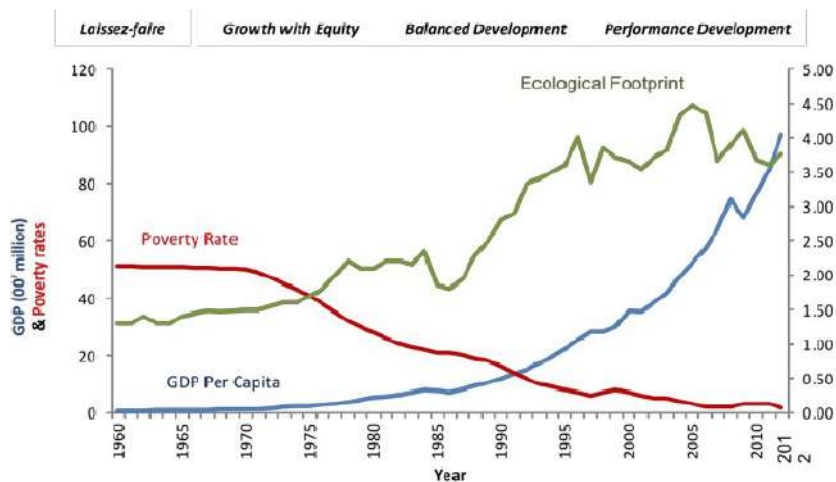
# The Influence of the SDGs for Policy Change on Sustainable Development Integration

by

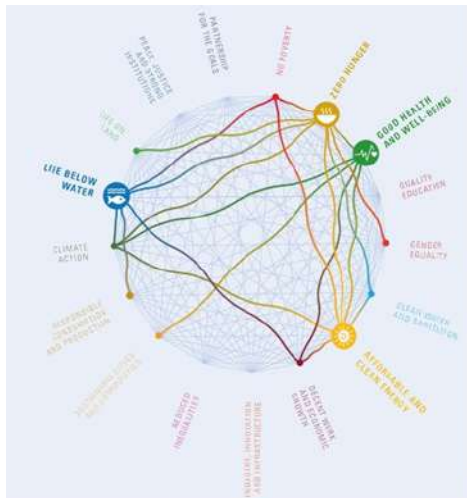
Alizan Mahadi (ISIS Malaysia) - [alizan@isis.org.my](mailto:alizan@isis.org.my)



## Sustainability Shift



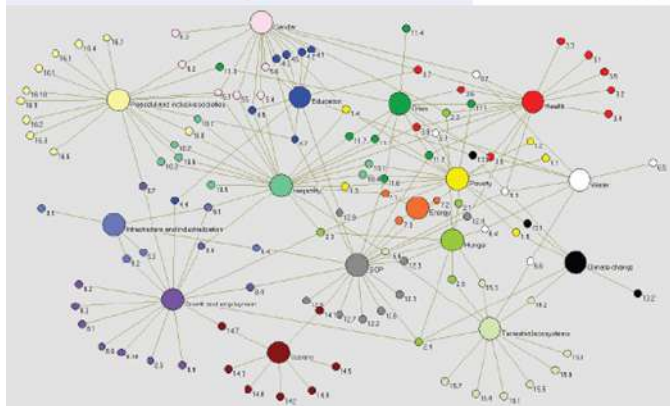
National Sustainable Blueprint (unpublished); Hezri 2017



## Problem: How to implement SDGs in an integrated manner

Many efforts to identify the interlinkages across goals and targets ( for example see ICSU 2017, IGES 2017 and Le Blanc 2015)

However, the interlinkages are **contextual** depending on geography, governance and technology (Nilsson et al 2016)



And while efforts mostly focus on identifying interlinkages, less efforts are undertaken to understand how to **implement synergies and manage trade-offs**

3

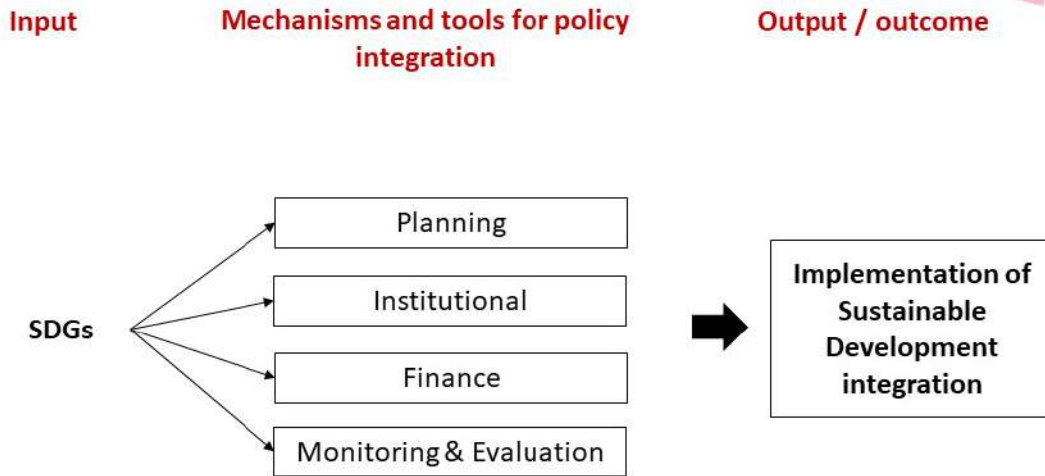
## Research Questions

1. Has the SDGs resulted in **policy change** towards sustainable development?
2. If and how is the SDGs utilised as a policy tool to **influence integration** in Malaysia?
3. As an **outcome**, has the SDGs increased the **integration** across the pillars of sustainable development (people, prosperity and planet)?





# Mechanisms and tools for policy integration



# Policy changes for integration in Malaysia



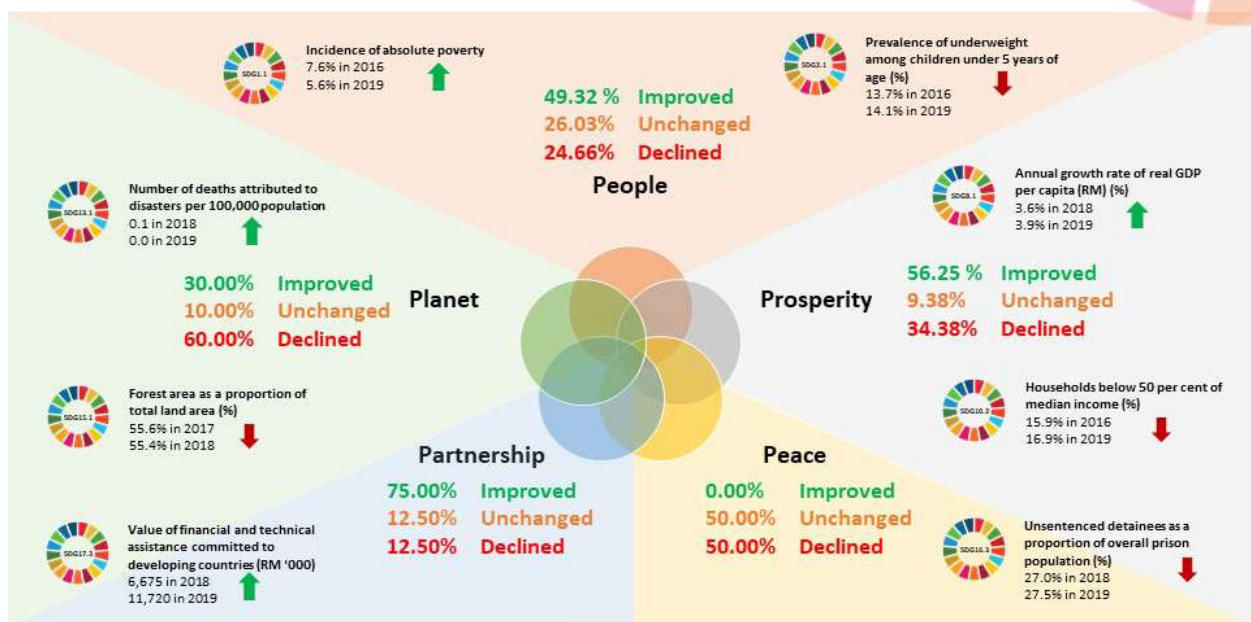
Planning	Institutional	Finance	Monitoring & Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malaysia Plans</li> <li>• Spatial Plans</li> <li>• Sectoral Policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National SDG council and Steering Committee</li> <li>• CSO-SDG Alliance</li> <li>• APPGM-SDG</li> <li>• SDG Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voluntary National Reviews (2017 &amp; 2021)</li> <li>• SDG Indicators Report</li> </ul>

# Finance as a tool for policy integration

Matlamat Pembangunan Mampaan (SDG)	2021 Peruntukan Asal (RM bilion)	2022			
		Syor	Bahagian	Perubahan	
		(RM bilion)	(%)	(%)	
Matlamat 1	Tiada Kemiskinan	7.2	7.3	2.4	1.4
Matlamat 2	Kebuluran Sifar	5.3	5.5	1.8	3.8
Matlamat 3	Kesihatan dan Kesejahteraan yang Baik	36.6	37.7	12.2	3.0
Matlamat 4	Pendidikan Berkualiti	72.4	74.5	24.0	2.9
Matlamat 5	Kesaksamaan Gender	2.5	2.7	0.9	8.0
Matlamat 6	Air Bersih dan Sanitasi	5.1	5.3	1.7	3.9
Matlamat 7	Tenaga Mampu Bayar dan Bersih	3.5	3.5	1.1	-
Matlamat 8	Kerja Wajar dan Pertumbuhan Ekonomi	25.6	24.0	7.8	(6.3)
Matlamat 9	Industri Inovasi dan Infrastruktur	29.7	29.8	9.6	0.3
Matlamat 10	Pengurangan dan Ketidaksamarataan	12.3	12.0	3.9	(2.4)
Matlamat 11	Bandar dan Komuniti Mampaan	25.7	24.3	7.9	(5.4)
Matlamat 12	Penggunaan dan Pengeluaran Bertanggungjawab	3.0	4.6	1.5	53.3
Matlamat 13	Tindakan Iklim	3.1	3.3	1.1	6.5
Matlamat 14	Hidupan Dalam Air	2.7	2.9	0.9	7.4
Matlamat 15	Hidupan di Daratan	3.4	3.7	1.2	8.8
Matlamat 16	Keamanan, Keadilan dan Keutuhan Institusi	64.2	64.5	20.9	0.5
Matlamat 17	Kerjasama Demi Matlamat	3.2	3.5	1.1	9.4
<b>JUMLAH KESELURUHAN</b>		<b>305.5</b>	<b>309.1</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1.2</b>

Source: Ministry of Finance 2022

## Outcome: Imbalanced achievement of goals



# Outcome: Imbalanced progress towards goals



Source: Sachs et al, 2018, 2022

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## Conclusion

1. There has been various **inclusions of SDGs** in national policies
2. This can be through the use of different **mechanisms** of planning, institutional, finance or monitoring & evaluation as tools and mechanisms for policy integration
3. **Institutional mechanisms** are the most directly influential mechanism utilised for policy integration
4. **Trade-offs and conflicts** are still rarely being addressed in policy formulation
5. As an outcome, progress is still imbalanced and **not integrated** across the various goals
6. SDGs as a **process** rather than only goal attainment is an important benchmark

# **Addressing SDG Implementation Challenges: Can SDG Centre Solve the Problem?**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

The whole challenge in achieving SDGs for Malaysia is all about efficient and effective delivery mechanisms. Therefore, SDGs requires the highest level of coordination and synergies among all agencies involved ranging from the government sector, business, and industrial players, academia, and most importantly, the communities. Without a drastic change in the implementation strategies, especially the actors and process involved, not much can be expected in Malaysian achievement for SDGs in 2030. For this coordination and synergies building purposes, a National SDG Centre is seen as a new catalyst that can bring the much-needed drastic change in the implementation strategies. However, the same challenge remains how do we inculcate the change in mindset and practices on the ground? While capacity building is not a new mechanism, but in line with the new approach, the approach and content of the capacity building are seen as another possible means to bring about the much-needed changes coordinated by a central body such as National SDG Centre.

*Keywords:* Localising SDGs, whole of government, whole of society, governance, sustainable development, National SDG Centre, capacity building.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presents 17 goals for United Nations' signatories as a global universal framework to balance social, economic, and environmental development. Our Common Future report states, "Sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for a better life" (Brundtland Commission, 1987). Additionally, the Brundtland Commission defined a crucial emphasis of sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Thus, it

shifts the focus on sustainability towards the assessments of needs so that the necessary actions can be of the main interest in pursuing development, even beyond 2030.

The best way of identifying these needs is through deep engagement with various stakeholders who are either the implementors or the beneficiaries of the development plan. Agenda 2030 is the first global development plan that represents a complex holistic challenge of interlinkages and interconnectedness. Understanding the scope of interlinkages among SDGs is key to unlocking their full potential and ensuring that progress in one area is not made at the expense of another. Social and economic development can positively impact the environment instead of harming the environment. Therefore, capacity-building program has gained importance in achieving development needs. According to SDplanNet (2014), different capacitybuilding agendas have overlapping needs in which multi-stakeholder participation is fundamental to integrated planning, sectoral integration, and the development of monitoring, evaluation, and reporting mechanisms. Further, the synthesis of capacity-building needs across regions suggested that effective monitoring, evaluation, and reporting mechanisms serve as the foundation for integrated planning, sectoral integration, and effective stakeholder engagements (SDplanNet, 2014). This shows that the capacity-building mission reinforces each interconnected element of sustainable development goals. Thus, capacity-building serves as an opportune platform to understand the trade-offs and synergies emerging from relationships between the goals is crucial for achieving long-lasting sustainable development outcomes.

This paper argues that the implementation of SDGs is centered on localising and contextualising the agenda to the ground of implementation. Since it is a national commitment that requires a seamless cascading process from top to bottom, it needs a centralised supporting mechanism as a coordination platform that catalyses myriads of localised action, and further discuss the possible model for SDGs implementation at the local level through an invigorated function of an SDG Centre. The centre is envisaged as a focal point to plan, monitor, and evaluate the various programs, including capacity building and through effective engagements and meaningful partnerships that will take place throughout Malaysia. Thus consequently, strengthening the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach for the implementation of SDG in Malaysia.

As the establishment of the centre is in its nascent stages, it is essential to analyse the existing governance structure and initiatives of the ongoing localising agenda and identify key lessons for the optimal contribution of the National SDG Centre. In the following sections, this paper identifies the approaches, gaps, and challenges of current localising SDGs approaches, highlighting the APPGM-SDG activities and their contribution. The last section will further argue that one of the most important strategies for localising SDGs is the capacity-building program while presenting the need for a coordinated platform to further the agenda of localising SDGs.

### **Institutional Mechanism for Localising SDGs**

Localising the SDGs has been a standard call to action since 2019 when the UN Secretary-General called for the participation of all sectors of society in pursuing the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It was a crucial encouragement for a 'Decade of Action' to fully operationalise the goals, targets, and indicators by all the UN signatories. According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific [UNESCAP] (n.d), "localising is to consider subnational contexts from setting goals and targets, defining implementation strategies and measurement indicators while monitoring and evaluating progress at the local or subnational level." Furthermore, in the localisation of the SDGs, bottom-up perspectives and action is emphasised alongside the function of the SDGs as a framework for national and local development policy. SDGs are a means and a desirable end to meet the development needs for this decade.

While the call for the Decade of Action is targeted toward governments, the actual implementation of the SDGs and the benefits of the achievements involve all agents of society. Localising SDGs then becomes a significant action in recognising the role of other agents and allowing them to participate in the implementation and achieving the Agenda 2030. One of the fundamental guiding principles to implement the SDGs is to 'leave no one behind'. United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] (2018) defines those left behind as the people who "lack the choices and capabilities that enable others to participate in or benefit from human development" (UNDP, 2018, p. 7). This goes hand in hand with the concept of sustainable development introduced by the Brundtland Commission (1987), where the basic needs of all are met while further positive life aspirations can be satisfied. Both

concept and principle put people and their aspirations at the centre of development, and this should be noticed in localising the SDGs.

Localisation of SDGs suggests crucial approaches in governance: the whole-of-government (WoG) and the whole-of-society (WoS) approaches. Biggeri (2021) further asserts that achieving the transformational 2030 agenda requires a participatory, whole-of-government approach, "which is in line with the Sustainable Human Development paradigm and its pillars of equity, sustainability, productivity, and participation." According to Cázarez-Grageda (2019) WoG approach indicates that various parts of government cooperatively facilitate synergies, manage trade-offs and avoid or minimize negative impacts on economic, social, and environmental aspects of development. Governments are also required to engage with various stakeholders under the WoS approach to implement the Agenda 2030. This meaningful participation "requires an enabling environment that promotes partnership and contributions by a wide range of stakeholders to collective impact." (British Columbia Council for International Cooperation [BCCIC] & Canadian Council for International Co-operation [CCIC], 2019).

This brings forth a renewed mandate for the government, which is to provide service to its people and engage and consult the people for their developmental needs. Smoke and Nixon, 2016 argued that an innovative multilevel governance approach driving policy coherence towards a shared vision is required. It was further asserted that the multilevel governance approach needs "a vertical alignment between the various levels of governance (i.e., international, national, regional and local) and horizontal engagement between public, private and social actors" (Smoke & Nixon, 2016). The focus on localising SDGs has resulted in various initiatives and discussions with regard to multilevel governance and accelerating local actions for SDGs implementation (Oosterhof, 2018). Within the SDGs themselves, there are two different goals supporting localisation: SDG 16 and SDG 11, respectively, suggesting targets related to governance and local implementation and achievements of the SDGs.

The current initiatives and discussions concerning the localisation of SDGs have illustrated good examples as well as challenges. Among the most common challenges for SDGs implementation is the need for coordination for vertical alignment and horizontal stakeholders engagement, as well as the lack of capacity of local stakeholders. While the SDGs are universal and applicable widely throughout its signatories, these challenges too, are

universal. Local stakeholders' lack of capacity had long been identified in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which also included a localisation component (Oosterhof, 2018). In Malaysia specifically, local governments are often undercapacity and under-resourced that they can only take mitigation measures for short-term issues rather than dealing with long-term developmental challenges (Mahadi, 2019). It can also be seen that the need for effective multilevel coordination has been present in the localisation of SDGs through the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). While the Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance, as a civil society organisation, has been in engagement with the EPU, the engagement with civil societies for the VNR was done on an ad-hoc basis collecting inputs regarding SDG achievements from the perspectives of civil societies. This lack of coordination affects meaningful participation during multi-stakeholder consultations for aligning sustainable development agendas among various stakeholders or for establishing partnerships at the national and sub-national levels (Cázarez-Grageda, 2019).

The identified challenges must be addressed to operationalise the SDGs at all the local levels involving local and regional governments or local authorities. Localisation of SDGs thus requires the focus on improving multi-stakeholder and multilevel governance coordination while increasing the capacities of local governments and other stakeholders. This is imperative for a more sustained development that benefits the people and planet while contributing to economic growth. Biggeri (2021) asserts the importance of governance mechanisms at the local level taking into consideration the interactions among authorities, institutions, and society as a whole, and the prevalence of forms of exclusions, inequalities, power imbalance, and vulnerabilities are immediately experienced by the people. In localising SDGs, putting peoples' vulnerabilities and lived experiences at the centre of its coordinating mechanism is vital to ensure the implementation of SDGs. This cannot happen through the top-down approaches at the local level but to be balanced with a robust bottom-up mechanism supporting meaningful partnerships among governments, corporations, academia, and civil society organisations.



## **Malaysian Approaches for Localising SDGs: Lessons and opportunities from APPGM-SDG & VNRs**

The identified challenges for localisation of SDGs serve as crucial areas for developing strategies for implementing and achieving the SDGs. While the lack of capacity in local governance and the lack of effective governance mechanisms can be seen as separate issues, they are intertwined in pursuing the SDGs at the local level. For instance, SDGs 11.3 and 16.7 call to enhance the capacity for participatory decision-making, SDG 11 specifically targets human settlement planning and management. In contrast, SDG 16 broadly focuses on governance at all levels. Furthermore, critical messages consulted by the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, UN-Habitat and UNDP (n.d) highly suggests that effective local governance ensures the inclusion of stakeholders. Localisation of SDGs requires an integrated multilevel governance and multi-stakeholder approach with a strong national commitment of providing adequate legal frameworks, institutional and financial capacity. Effective multi-stakeholder and multilevel governance is crucial so that the capacity of local government is increased.

The government of Malaysia has agreed to establish the National SDG Centre "aimed at empowering and accelerating programmes for a better and sustainable future for the nation" while encouraging the development of Voluntary Local Review (VLR) reports (Povera, 2022). Similar to the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process, it assesses the achievements of the SDGs at the local level emphasising the local contexts instead of the national contexts. Currently, the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) is the primary coordinator for mainstreaming SDGs at the national level and utilising the SDGs for national planning. However, the SDGs are yet to be fully translated and operationalised at the local level to further pursue sustainable development from a localised perspective.

In Malaysia particularly, Mahadi (2019) expands that the localisation of SDGs faces the following issues: 1) fundamental structural challenges where the local authority lacks mandate and institutional support, 2) lack of funding and resources at the local government level, 3) lack of awareness of the SDGs at the state and local government level, and lastly, 4) the overall national political landscape exacerbating silos due to the opposing political configuration between the state and federal government, and or the Parliamentarians and state

government. Besides these challenges, there are key lessons from the work of the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on the Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG).

The APPGM-SDG has garnered the participation of Parliamentarians as local champions with the convening power to gather multi-stakeholders, including civil society representatives and local businesses, in utilising the SDGs. The activities of APPGM-SDG in its pilot phase (2020) are issue mapping, capacity building, and implementing small-scale solution projects addressing the identified issue. In 2021, it further expanded from 10 parliamentary constituencies to 20 constituencies with a strengthened capacity for policy advocacy. The utilisation of SDGs through its activities shows the possibilities for SDGs as an effective tool for integrated policymaking throughout the whole policy cycle considering its interlinked targets and indicators (Mahadi, 2019). Furthermore, in exploring the possible mechanism for the localisation of SDGs, all its activities actively engage with governments, academia and think tanks, businesses, and civil society organisations. In particular, the implementation of the capacity-building activity significantly requires a whole-of-government and multilevel approach with state government, local district offices, and local councils.

The implementation of capacity-building activity further highlights the challenges, especially concerning the present silos within the governance and the lack of awareness and communication regarding the SDGs at the district level. The present silos within the multilevel governance are seen as the lack of integration of SDGs from the national level planning towards the state level and from the state level to the district level. In order to implement the capacity building programme at the district level, the main stakeholder identified is the district office to become a collaborating partner. The silos are evident when some of the district offices were not able to collaboratively execute this project because matters concerning the SDGs are beyond their mandate, and it is the responsibility of the local authority or the local council. In this case, buy-in and support from local councils are required to execute the programme successfully.

Besides, there had been challenges in getting buy-ins directly from the local district offices, despite the SDGs being mentioned in their respective state-level development plan. The approval for collaboration is only sometimes directly granted by the District Officers, but the endorsement from the State Secretary or the Chief Minister is required in certain states. Therefore, in getting the approval to conduct the programmes in the respective states, the

organiser had to play a more active role in advocating for the SDGs and communicating to all state-level stakeholders for their buy-ins and, ultimately, their support in executing the programmes.

In organising the capacity-building programmes, it is evident that there are varied attitudes and awareness concerning the implementation the SDGs at the local level. Biggeri (2021) stated that taking the "whole-of-government" approach, which "integrates and aligns across sectors, departments and administrative organisations to design and implement integrated, balanced and mutually reinforcing policy packages" is urgent in this Decade of Action, to implement SDGs strategies more coherently. However, considering the low level of awareness of SDGs, the effort to integrate and align the SDGs could be futile. Indicators and targets may not be adequately developed according to the local context, which further undermines the effort to monitor and evaluate the progress of SDGs. At this point, nationally, governments are putting considerable efforts into aligning existing laws, policies, and programs. At the same time " they have been less adept at developing new integrated strategies for achieving the SDGs and in devising evaluation strategies" (Ansell, Sørensen, Torfing, 2022, pg. 43).

Participation and engagement with local governments in the preparation for the VNRs has not been significant. In the preparation for the latest VNR for Malaysia, engagements with civil society organisations and Parliamentarians were more obvious than the participation of local governments. While the government of Malaysia has encouraged the preparation of Voluntary Local Review by the local government, this is not an alternative to an integrated policy planning process; rather, it is an opportunity for vertical alignment and complementary roles of multilevel governance. Biggeri (2021) asserts that complementary actions are imperative as "territorial development processes depend on policies, norms, and coordination rules at both national and international levels" (pg. 708). This is an opportunity to utilise the SDGs as a capacity-building tool not only at the local level but throughout all the levels in a meaningful way and provides recognisable action items fitting to the local contexts.

## **APPGM-SDG Capacity Building Programme as A Key Agenda SDG Localisation**

“Capacity building has long been recognised as one of the means of implementation for the achievement of sustainable development” (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], n.d). Between the national and sub-national development plans and their delivery at the local level,

implementation challenges persist, particularly regarding the misalignment of sustainable development expectations due to the low level of awareness. The SDGs, with the 17 goals spread over the critical aspects of the development needs of people, prosperity, and planet, serve as a strategic foundation for pursuing a balanced development for Malaysia. The identified challenges discussed in the previous section suggest that capacity building is a valuable initiative for localising the SDGs. Capacity building on SDGs is a foundation that shall bring together all stakeholders, especially within the multilevel of governments with other sectors, to not only set development agenda but also to raise awareness while inculcating the necessary understanding of sustainable development and the skills to carry out the development plans.

The capacity-building initiative led by APPGM-SDG and the Sejahtera Centre, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), exhibits the essence of the localisation of SDGs. This is done by increasing awareness, knowledge, and skills regarding the interlinked nature of SDGs and their implementation by translating the SDGs based on the contexts of local development agenda and fostering multistakeholder partnerships to overcome silos. Implementing the program in 13 districts illustrates that capacity building is a powerful platform for creating awareness of the goals' interlinkages and interconnectedness and how it relates to the agencies' mandate and functions for service delivery on the ground. As such, the capacity building programme facilitates the translation of the SDGs at the local level, considering its local context, and subsequently contributes to the implementation of service delivery with awareness of the SDGs. At best, if done systematically, this will also support the monitoring, evaluation, and reporting mechanism for SDG achievements in Malaysia. This is paramount to the overall role of the National SDG Centre as a focal point to coordinate and implement the SDGs through various programs as well as monitor and evaluate the overall achievement of SDGs through the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach for Malaysia.

The objectives and the module of the capacity building program were developed in consultation with the members of the secretariat as well as other resource persons that have contributed to APPGM-SDG since its inception in 2019. This deliberately consultative process was also based on key experiences gathered in the implementation of capacity building programme during the pilot phase of APPGMSDG in 2020, where APPGM-SDG conducted 34 programs with the collaboration between the Sejahtera Centre, IIUM as well as Malaysian Social Science Association (PSSM). This capacity-building program is mainly targeted to officers at the local government agencies, district offices, state government, as well as representatives from local communities and civil society organisations. The key objectives of the capacity-building program are:

1. To enhance the understanding of government officers and community representatives at the district level on the SDGs and the National Development Plans
2. To identify the role and functions of stakeholders from the perspectives of SDGs that are integrated and comprehensive to overcome silos of federal, state, district, and government agencies
  - To foster cooperation and collaboration among the targeted stakeholders (government officers, MPs, and community representatives)
  - To increase the level of involvement of communities in the planning and monitoring of local developmental projects
3. To operationalize SDG17 Briefly, the modules created for this programme covers four following components:
  - Introduction to the SDGs,
  - National Development Plan and SDGs Governance in Malaysia,
  - Community Engagement Towards Achieving the SDGs, and
  - SDGs Issue Mapping and Case Studies of Solution Projects.

In the first component of Introduction to the SDGs, representatives from the local authority or PLAN Malaysia responsible for the town planning would present the relevant strategic or action plan for the respective districts. In certain locations, it was observed that the SDGs were considered and tagged to the initiatives and action plans proposed in the plans. As it was found, each district has its separate development agenda to pursue social, economic, and environmental development. This is imperative to create awareness of the local development agenda, which would provide a contextualised perspective as a basis for sustainable development in each district. In the second component, the governance structure in Malaysia from federal, state to local authority was briefly discussed to make participants aware of the mandates and responsibilities of governance functions. In the third component for community engagement, participants were informed on the importance of stakeholder engagement and the effective models that can be used to engage with local communities. In the last component, the respective APPGM-SDG researchers would present their issue, mapping the findings and case studies of the small-scale solution projects that have taken place in all the Parliamentary constituencies. During this session, participants were given guiding questions and were instructed to map the projects' relevance to the SDGs and the respective local plans.

Capacity building as a programme promotes understanding the SDGs' interlinkages and interconnectedness. Due to the interlinked and integrated nature of the SDGs, the achievement of SDGs relies on fostering the mindset for an integrated policy design at the national level, which trickles down to the implementation of action at the local level. Ansell et al. (2022) argued that SDGs require "highly distributed collaboration – one that cascades downwards from the global to the national level than from the national to the local level" (pg. 42). At the global level, capacity building for the SDGs is led by the Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) under the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). This division supports the Member States to prepare the VNRs and "building capacity for integrated planning and policy design, linking to the national planning process key sectoral areas such as transport, agriculture, energy, water and sanitation, sustainable cities, waste management, and disaster reduction, as appropriate" (UNDESA, n.d). In Malaysia, these sectoral areas are not only the responsibility of the federal government but also the responsibility of the state government and local agencies and

authorities. Therefore, the capacity-building mechanism must cascade and be implemented locally.

During the capacity building programme, discussions are focused on the reality on the ground rather than the general and overarching policy agenda at the national level. This is essential considering that the current approach to identifying synergistic opportunities and the interactions between the SDGs is technocratic and relies on modelling exercises, which often take place in highly developed institutions and communities (Ansell, Sørensen, & Torfing, 2022). Considering the limitations of local government and local authorities in Malaysia, capacity-building serves as a more accessible platform for SDGs integration at the local level as an avenue to exchange ideas and information about local sustainable development. Further asserted by Ansell, Sørensen, and Torfing (2022), “the work of integration must proceed through interaction, negotiation, and exchange of ideas between existing institutions and groups” (pg. 44). Participants of the capacity building program were able to discern local development priorities with the provided local datasets and necessary information, and are instructed to make connections to the SDGs and its targets. The goals and targets are discussed more specifically during the discussion of local solutions projects that were provided as case studies on SDGs-related programmes. The solution projects executed in each Parliamentary constituency were crafted by the local CSOs informed by the situational analysis and issue mapping exercises conducted during the first phase of activities by APPGM-SDG. Thus, the capacity building program involving the state government, local agencies, and authorities serves as a platform to further mainstream and realign governance for SDGs localisation.

Due to the interlinked and integrated nature of the SDGs, achieving SDGs relies on engagement between various stakeholders, ultimately leading to partnerships and breaking the silos in implementing the development agenda. In this sense, robust multilevel governance with the capacity to meaningfully engage with stakeholders is required. Cross-sector partnerships for sustainable development have been in the discourse since the adoption of Agenda 21 (Ansell, Sørensen, & Torfing, 2022; Florini & Pauli, 2018; Oosterhof, 2018). For the Localisation of SDGs, the APPGM-SDG has leveraged state actors, including Parliamentarians and non-state actors such as academia, civil society organisations, and social entrepreneurs, to implement local actions. Besides focusing on enabling local

stakeholders, crosssector partnerships are also vital. This can be deepened through capacity-building programs where the roles and responsibilities are discerned further not with antagonism but with a collective mission to align interests and actions for delivery service. In addition, a framework for facilitated dialogue and negotiation would be valuable as "misunderstandings and misalignments remain common" between governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and private sectors (Florini & Pauli, 2018). Further, the study has shown that the agribusiness employees engaged in cross-sector partnerships demonstrated small "understanding or accepting of any business role in economic or social development" (Florini & Pauli, 2018, p. 591).

While the capacity building program provided an interactive space to cocreate and increase comprehension of the SDGs, there remains a lacuna for an institutional and structural mechanism to advance partnerships and implement the SDGs. With the federal government's encouragement for VLRs, meaningful consultative measures are required to be done in a participatory, inclusive, and transparent manner. As such, the VLRs and SDGs localisation "represent an innovation by and for cities to advance local priorities" by contributing to the integration and alignment between national and local development strategies (Biggeri, 2021). (Biggeri, 2021, pg. 710). Beyond the VLRs, considering the geographical diversity of Malaysia, local actors must be enabled according to their contexts. This is also an opportunity for local leaders and, potentially, the private sector and small-scale social enterprises to influence the policy agenda and its implementation. Thus, a centralised, coordinated approach for SDGs localisation is essential, even more so as the localising SDGs movement is shown to reshape the national SDG processes.

## **Conclusion**

Localising SDGs is an essential process to pursue sustainable development in a diverse local context where geographical and cultural contexts coalesce. Capacitybuilding programmes that centre around providing local contexts to the SDGs as a means and an end to be achieved is a critical platform to provide an understanding of the interlinkages and interconnectedness of SDGs. Through the capacity-building program, multi-stakeholder partnerships and multilevel governance can be fostered toward a more coordinated action. In essence, developing a specialised platform for a coordinated SDGs implementation relies on overcoming silos and forming partnerships and the space to develop understanding and



alignment of interests of various stakeholders. Through a highly contextualised capacity-building program, the input can be reported to the national coordinating body of the SDGs. Through an established reporting mechanism, an agency like National SDG Centre will have a better and deeper understanding of SDGs among different states and districts in Malaysia. Hence, setting up a National SDG Centre as a coordinating body to provide an institutional framework, facilitate funding and resource mobilisation, and closely monitor the mechanism for SDGs localisation and its implementation strategies is very timely and vital. To make a difference from other centres of national locus standi, the National SDG Centre must champion the Malaysian process of achieving SDGs through capacity-building programmes as a space for meaningful interactions and developing understanding of highly interlinked and interconnected nature of SDGs.

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## Grounded Research in Localising SDGs

by

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# Issue Mapping for the localisation of the SDGs in Malaysia

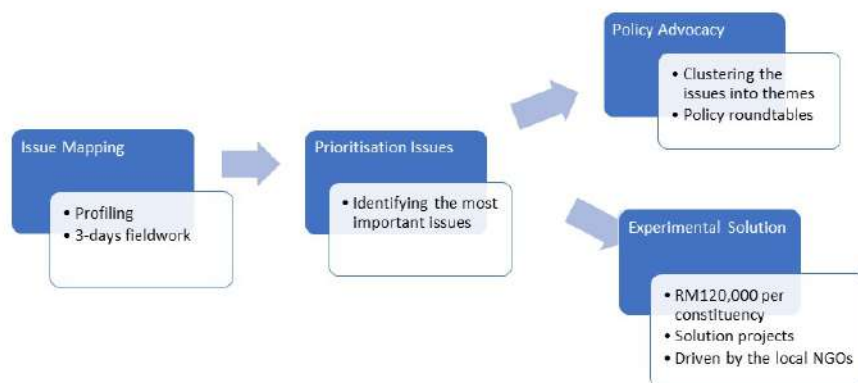
## Introduction

- Localisation of the SDG by the APPGM-SDG: Issue mapping
- Why is the process by the APPGM-SDG unique
- Challenges, hindrances and limitations (2021)
  - Kubang Pasu, Baling, Sik, Permatang Paun, Batu Kawan and Ipoh Barat
- What are the reflections from these obstacles?
- Recommendations for the way forward.

## Defining the localization the SDGs

- 'A process of defining, implementing and monitoring strategies at the local level for achievable global, national and subnational sustainable goals and targets'.
- Localization relates both to how the SDGs can **provide a framework for local development policy** and to how **local and regional governments** can support the achievement of the SDGs through action from the **bottom up** and to how the SDGs can provide a framework for local development policy.
- All of the SDGs have targets directly related to the responsibilities of local and regional governments, particularly to their **role in delivering basic services**. That's why local and regional governments must be at the heart of the 2030 Agenda.

# Localisation of the SDGs by the APPGM-SDG



Multi-stakeholders involvement: MPs, local leaders, NGOs, grassroots communities, district offices, local authorities and the state government (ADUN)

## The journey so far...

- 2020: **10 parliamentary constituencies**
- 2021, **20 parliamentary constituencies**
- 2022, **27 parliamentary constituencies**

## 2021 as a turbulent year for Malaysia

- COVID pandemic – crippled the healthcare system
- MCO – thwarted many local small businesses
- “Party-hopping” – changed of ruling government
- Najib Tun Razak – charged with IMBD scandal



## Challenges and hindrances: FGD with grassroot communities



- Difficulties to obtain participation from the grassroots.
  - Disappointment
  - Betrayal
  - Distrust
- RM120,000 allocation become a focal point

Sekarang tak ada rukun tetangga. Dulu ada JKK masa UMNO, lepas tu MPKK, sekarang ada JPKK. Sekarang masalah kampung ini tak boleh jadi disebabkan perbezaan macam tui. Bila kawasan diambil alih, dia tak ada kerjasama. Padahal apa yang kita buat untuk kebaikan semua, hanya membantu penduduk...

- MPs have different perceptions about the APPGM-SDG
  - Selection of community and place for visit
  - Formality of the presence of the MPs
  - “Who are being left behind?” can be an offensive
  - Hand-outs for materials and food items
  - RM120,000 become a focal point



## Engagement with the local governments

- Responses from the district office and local authorities are varied
  - Permatang Paung – full support from the district office
  - Kubang Pasu – only the AADK attended.
  - “Kumpulan Rentas Parti Malaysia – Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari”



## Reflection on the challenges and hindrances

- MPs can be the local champion for the localization of the SDGs
  - Understanding and appreciating the localization process.
  - To effectively reaching out to the marginalized groups – refugees, stateless, OKU.



## Effective partnerships with local government agencies

- District office and local authorities are at the forefront for solving the actual issues on the ground
  - Mechanisms assisting the grassroots
  - The gaps of delivering solutions to the grassroots can only be bridged by the local government agencies
  - Effective partnerships are needed.

PSBM orang pandang atau tak pandang kita buat kerja. Macam COVID-19 Kita banya buat kerja bantuan. Kita back-liner. Kita yang sediakan face shield beribu. Kita buat dan serahkan kepada hospital dan ke tempat2 yang susah. PPA kita buat juga Bersama dengan pejabat YB Kepala Batas. Kita serah kepada hospital dan sebagainya.



## Grassroots communities as stakeholders

- The grassroots communities play important role as stakeholders in the localization of the SDGs
  - Understanding the issues at the forefront – their difficulties
  - Local mobilization – Local NGOs

Yang tak dapat adalah yang berhenti kerja, seperti yang tua 60 tahun lebih. Ada JKM bantuan, ada yang tak dapat. Apabila bagi borang kepada orang kampung, tiba-tiba tanya borang permohonan daripada JKM, mereka kata borang dah hilang. Orang kampung telah pergi sekali tak dapat, mereka tak akan pergi, mereka akan rasa malu. ( Padang Rakyat, Kubang Pasu, 27 March 2021)

Participant: Banjir itu serius... air turun naik...

Researcher: Kerosakan perabut?

Participant: Mereka buat tambatan, air nak kemana? Jadi air laut bertampung.

Participant B: Air pasang, sampah akan masuk dari tempat lain. Sampah akan masuk ke Pulau Aman. Sampah di Pulau Aman kuti tiap-tiap hari. Ini sampah dari luar? Tak tahu sampah dari mana. Memang selalu ada masalah ini.

(Pulau Aman, Batu Kawan, FGD, 27 April 2021)





## Chapter 3: SDG & PEOPLE (POVERTY & GENDER)



1. The Development State of Sabah: An Observation based on SDGs -  
**Dr. Wong Sing Yun** (UMS), Dr. Jain Yassin (UiTM) & Faerozh Madli (UMS)

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2. Risk Management System for Food Security - **Oswald Edward**  
(Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Johor) & Firdausi Suffian  
(Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Sabah)

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3. SDG 5 and SDG 16 in Review: Relating the Convention of Elimination of All Forms of  
Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and VNR 2021 through Feminist  
Governance -  
**Dr. Sharifah Syahirah Syed Sheikh** (Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA)

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4. Charting Orang Asli's Progress and Sustainable Development Goals through the Lens  
of Land Rights Recognition (2015-2022) - **Kon Onn Sein** (YKPM)

# **The Development State of Sabah: An Observation Based on SDGs**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

The UN-adopted sustainable development has often been described as a transformative agenda that focuses on poverty eradication, the establishment of social-economic inclusion, and environmental sustainability. This review based on the observation from literature and discussion from an academic perspective that stressed on the concerning current development state of Sabah. As reported by the mass media recently, statistically Sabah has been reflected as the poorest state in Malaysia with a lagging poverty rate of 19.5% in 2019. There was no doubt that one of the main contributing factors to such inequality will be the poor infrastructure available to attract potential investors that could stimulate the state's economic development. In this review, some critical issues that were still found at large in most rural areas of Sabah will be highlighted and mapped into the relevant sustainable development goals (SDGs). It is hoped that through such review and discussion, some insights can be provided to answer the question as to what are the most critical issues that press for urgent attention and in need of addressing at present.

*Keywords: sustainable development goals, infrastructure, development, review, Sabah*

## INTRODUCTION

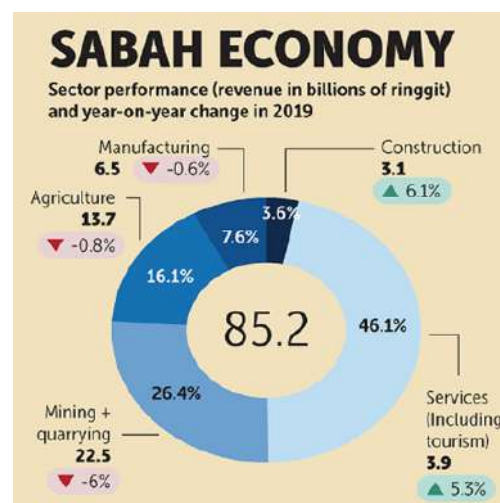
The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in 2015 by the United Nations as part of the Agenda 2030, a mutual agreement drawn by 193 members of the United Nations. The SDGs consist of 17 goals and 160 targets that cover all aspects of sustainability. Researchers in the past (Hák *et al.*, 2016; Smith *et al.*, 2017; Bexell and Jönsson, 2017; Fleming *et al.*, 2017; Swain and Wallentin, 2020) had provided a critical review on sustainable development. Hák *et al.* (2016) stress the need to operationalize the Sustainable Development Goals targets and evaluate the indicators' relevance. Meanwhile, Smith *et al.* (2017) demonstrated that greater attention should be emphasized on the interlinkages and interdependencies among goals. Bexell and Jönsson (2017) developed a three-fold conceptual framework that allows the identification of key issues and concerns emerging from the way responsibility is framed in two key SDG documents.

On a separate note, findings by Fleming *et al.* (2017) revealed that businesses can fruitfully engage with the SDGs by broadening their interpretation of business sustainability and being reflective of the values. Swain and Wallentin (2020) advocated that the synergies, trade-offs, and inter-linkages between SDGs may be better leveraged in achieving sustainable development, by focusing on the economic and social factors in developing countries. In another study by Swain (2018), analyses of the data revealed that developing countries are better off being focused on their economics and social policies in the short run. More real-world case discussions of practical applications of the SDGs are still required to better understand how they can be applied and to achieve the broader uptake that is necessary to achieve the ambitious targets of the SDGs (Fleming *et al.*, 2017).

In wake of the necessary review to be conducted on the achievement of the SDGs within the local context, this paper aims to shed light on some of the critical issues that are relatable to the SDGs in the state of Sabah. Besides that, the lagging development of Sabah making it the poorest state had called for a critical need to review the issues in an effort to strategies necessary remediation actions. The remainder of this paper will be structured as follow: Section 2 to provide an overview of Sabah's economy, Section 3 to review the publications in Malaysia conducted spanning over 2017 to 2022 evolving sustainable development goals, and Section 4 to present the issues and implications in the state. In the last Section 5, strategies will be suggested and a conclusion presented.

## Brief Overview of Sabah's Economy

As found in much of the literature (for example, Firdausi *et al.*, 2021; Idris and Mansur, 2020), a common question of “Why Sabah’s development is falling behind despite having rich resources” was frequently debated among the researchers. In view of this, scholars had shed light on some of the many issues that require serious attention such as non-favorable food self-sufficiency level or deficit food trade balance position, regulation, and institution transformation issues in areas such as labor and business licensing and even unstable water supply in certain areas (Idris and Mansur, 2020). Sabah’s economy was mainly driven by commodity-related sectors, especially agriculture, mining, oil and gas, and tourism as illustrated in Figure 1 making the state highly vulnerable to global economic shocks. The vulnerability of the Sabah state was further exposed during the pandemic crisis in the form of a high unemployment rate, an increasing poverty rate, and the shrinking of Sabah’s economy by 9.5% which was even worse than the national contraction by 5.6% (Bangkok Post, 2022).



**Figure 1. Sabah's Economy Performance**

**Source: Bangkok Post (2022)**

Idris and Mansur (2020) shed light on the importance of infrastructure or enablers such as port facilities and airports in improving Sabah’s economic performance. A stable water and electricity supply plays an important role to support production activities and supply which will further attract more investment. Meanwhile, Firdausi *et al.* (2021) advocated that bottom-up economic planning is rather crucial rather than a top-down approach. It is imperative, therefore, to carefully review and revamp the existing government plans, policy,

and target to ensure that Sabah's development is well-achieved. The subsequent section will revolve around the issues and challenges of Sabah's development as highlighted by previous literatures and studies.

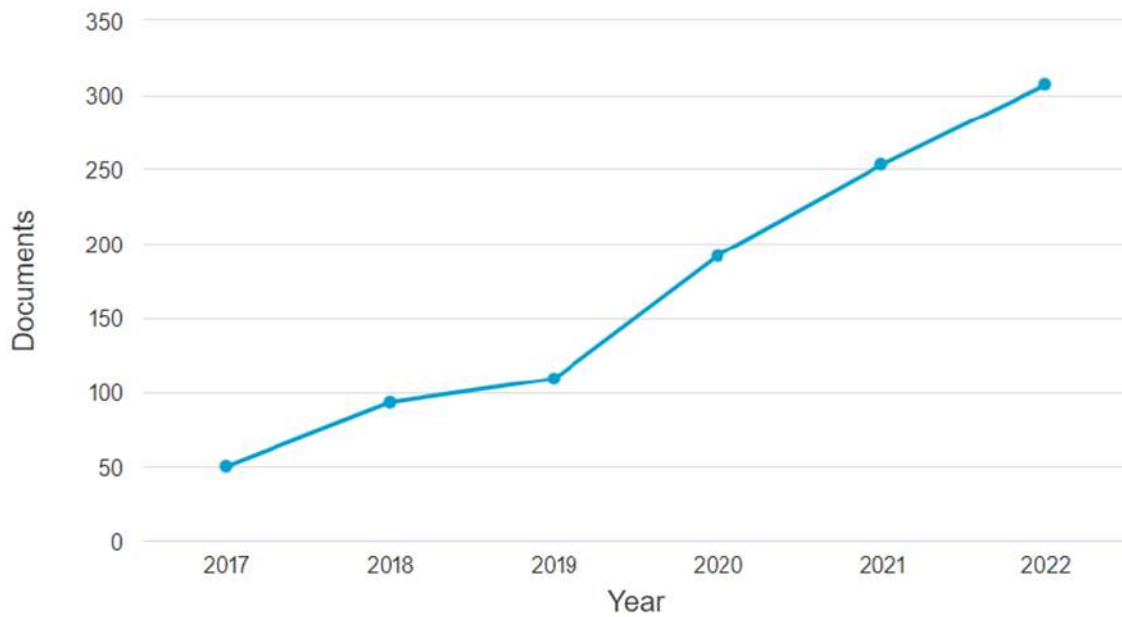
### **Malaysia's Publication on SDGs**

In order to provide an extensive review of the existing studies that relate to sustainable development goals, a database search was conducted on the SCOPUS database. Search results are examined and filtered based on the search criteria in Table 1. As illustrated in the table, a total of 16,165 articles were found by the keyword search of "sustainable development goals". By limiting the search results to the years spanning from 2017 to 2022, the research results retrieved were 11,186. This search finds further was limited to 10,954 English-language article types. In our intention to examine the past research that had been done specifically within the local context of Malaysia from 2017 to 2022, the search finding revealed 420 publications.

Figure 1 showed the trend of publications conducted on sustainable development goals in Malaysia spanning from 2017 to 2022. Based on the Figure, it is clear that the publications on sustainable development goals have been steadily growing over the years. From only 50 publications in the year 2017, the publications in Malaysia have multiplied to 307 publications by the year 2022. This could imply that there is growing awareness of the importance of sustainable development goals as reflected by the impressive increasing number of publications evolving on this topic. The following Table 2 showed the document profiles of the publications in Malaysia on sustainable development goals spanned over the years 2017 to 2022. A consistent growth of the publications can be observed from this review and there is a 43.76% annual growth. Based on the document profiles extracted using R (as displayed in Table 2), the average citation per document is 12.21 and the total references involved is 67,046. Most of the documents type found are articles (62.45%), followed by conference papers (15.64%) and review papers (14.14%). The review done in this section shed light on the growing trend of research interest for the sustainable development goals theme in Malaysia. This gives the motivation for this paper to extensively review on the development state of Sabah in relation to the SDGs.

**Table 1. Search Criteria**

No.	Search Criteria	Number Of Articles
1.	“Sustainable Development Goals”	51,165
2.	Limit to Research Years 2017 – 2022	35,823
3.	Restrict to the English Language written publications	34,573
4.	Limit to Malaysia publications	1004



**Figure 2. Number of Publications Documents by Years (2017 – 2022)**

**Source: SCOPUS Database (2022)**

**Table 2. Document Profiles**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Results</b>
<b>Main Information About Data</b>	
	<b>2017:2022</b>
<b>Timespan</b>	<b>518</b>
<b>Sources (Journals, Books, etc)</b>	<b>1004</b>
<b>Documents</b>	<b>43.76</b>
<b>Annual Growth Rate %</b>	<b>1.58</b>
<b>Document Average Age</b>	<b>12.21</b>
<b>Average citations per doc</b>	<b>67046</b>
<b>References</b>	
<b>Document Contents</b>	
<b>Keywords Plus (ID)</b>	<b>5160</b>
<b>Author's Keywords (DE)</b>	<b>3192</b>
<b>Authors</b>	
<b>Authors</b>	<b>7242</b>
<b>Authors of single-authored docs</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Authors Collaboration</b>	
<b>Single-authored docs</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Co-Authors per Doc</b>	<b>11.9</b>
<b>International co-authorships %</b>	<b>51.69</b>
<b>Documents Types</b>	

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<b>Article</b>	<b>627 (62.45%)</b>
<b>Book</b>	<b>2 (0.20%)</b>
<b>Book Chapter</b>	<b>55 (5.48%)</b>
<b>Conference Paper</b>	<b>157 (15.64%)</b>
<b>Data Paper</b>	<b>2 (0.20%)</b>
<b>Editorial</b>	<b>8 (0.80%)</b>
<b>Letter</b>	<b>2 (0.20%)</b>
<b>Note</b>	<b>7 (0.70%)</b>
<b>Review</b>	<b>142 (14.14%)</b>
<b>Short Survey</b>	<b>2 (0.20%)</b>

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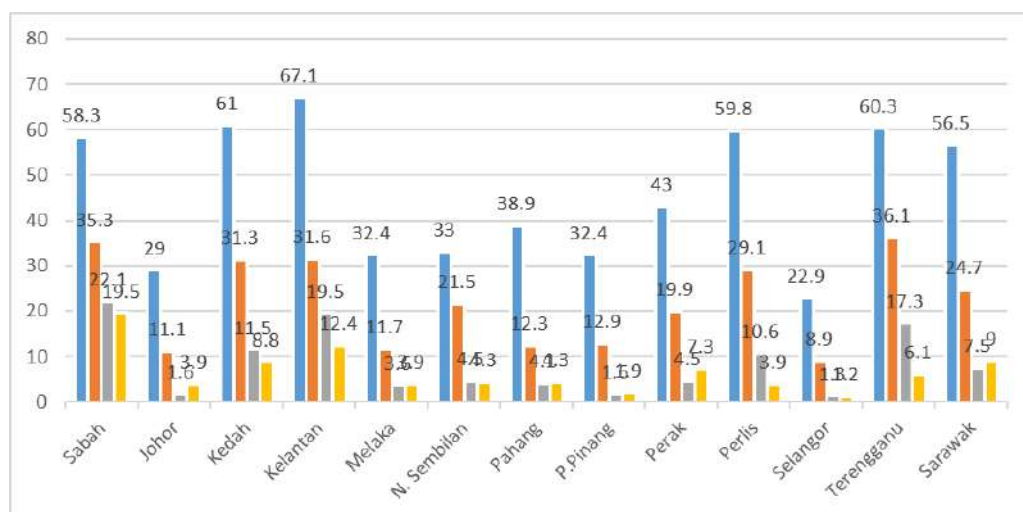
### **Issues & Implications: Imbalance Development in Sabah**

Absolute poverty can be easily defined as the lack of ability to meet fundamental basic human needs, for example, food, clothing, and shelter. A household would be considered as living in absolute poverty when its gross income falls below the poverty line income (PLI). Sabah Development Corridor (SDC) is a development corridor in Sabah, launched on 29 January 2008 by the Malaysian fifth Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. The SDC is implemented over a period of 18 years from 2008 to 2025 and is designed to achieve the socio-economic objectives for Sabah by alleviating poverty and balancing economic growth between urban and rural areas in the state. The first phase (2008 – 2010) mainly focuses on building the foundation for growth via infrastructure development as well as initiating high-impact economic and poverty eradication projects. The second phase (2011 – 2015) targets the acceleration of economic growth intensified by higher-order value-added economic activities. Meanwhile, the third phase (2016 – 2025) is considered the expansion period. The SDC was guided by three key principles: firstly, to promote the higher value of economic activities; secondly, to promote balanced economic growth and distribution and lastly, to ensure sustainable development by conserving its environment. The review by Mulok et al. (2015) pointed out the increase in household income and reduction of poverty with the implementation of SDC. Despite the positive progress reviewed, Sabah had remained to be the poorest state in Malaysia with a high incidence of absolute poverty being recorded. In the regard to further boosting the development of the state and in redefining the



direction of SDC towards 2030 as a response to the pandemic crisis, a newly completed SDC Blueprint has been formulated to chart the development of the state from 2021 to 2030.

Figure 3 shows the incidence of absolute poverty across the different states over the decades. As reflected in the diagram, the incidence of absolute poverty was found declining for all states reaching less than 15 percent except for the state of Sabah. The rate of decline for Sabah has remained rather slow in comparison to other states. As reported not long ago by the mass media, the highest increases in poverty rates for states like Sabah can be explained by the inequality and imbalanced development across countries in terms of wealth, income, and infrastructure (FMT, 2022).



**Figure 3. Incidence of Absolute Poverty by States Year 1976, 1987, 1997 and 2019**

**Source: Economic Planning Unit**

There are many examples of cases of the people of Sabah who are lagging in terms of infrastructure development. For example, the viral incident of students cramped into a boat to travel to SK Mangkapon Pitas which was accessible through Sungai Bongkol. Another viral incident includes the SK Sibugal Besar students using a 300-meter dilapidated suspension bridge in Kampung Nelayan to cross a river on their way to school. These are only a few examples of the many cases of road connectivity problems, dilapidated infrastructure, and poor internet connectivity issues which may have gone unheard.

Here are some of the highlighted issues with the consequences on sustainable development as shown in Table 3 and each issue being mapped into the relevant SDGs as illustrated in Figure 3.

**Table 3. Issues and Consequences on Sustainable Development**

No	Issues	Highlight	Consequences
1.	Road	No road access/ poor road conditions found especially in rural Sabah. Sabah students and teachers living in remote areas have to resort to commuting to school by boat.	<p>Failure to attract investments, hence, limits economic growth. (SDG 8)</p> <p>Widening gap of inequalities. (SDG 10)</p> <p>Students may have difficulties going to school. (SDG 4)</p> <p>Locals will have limited access to economic resources and become highly vulnerable (SDG 1)</p> <p>The absence of resilient infrastructure can promote inclusive industrialization. (SDG 9)</p> <p>The absence of sustainable and resilient infrastructure to support human well-being. (SDG 11)</p>
2	Network connectivity	Poor internet connectivity especially in rural areas.	<p>Poor internet connectivity affected students' online learning process, especially during COVID-19. (SDG 4)</p> <p>Fewer investments are being attracted due to poor internet connectivity in the affected areas. (SDG 8)</p> <p>Widening gap for those living in areas with network connectivity. (SGD 10)</p>

			The absence of sustainable and resilient infrastructure to support human well-being. (SDG 11)
3	Water supply & poor sanitation	Frequent disruption of water supply and untreated water supply.	<p>The problem of untreated water supply in remote areas will affect the health and well-being of the residents. (SDG 3)</p> <p>The frequent disruption of the clean water supply fails to ensure the achievement of equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all. (SDG 6)</p> <p>The absence of resilient infrastructure can promote inclusive industrialization. (SDG 9)</p> <p>Widening gap of inequalities. (SDG 10)</p> <p>The absence of sustainable and resilient infrastructure to support human well-being. (SDG 11)</p>
4	Electricity supply	Issue of electricity disruption.	<p>There is no universal access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy services as some areas cannot be reached. (SDG 7)</p> <p>Low levels of economic productivity are affected by frequent power shortages (SDG 8).</p> <p>The absence of resilient infrastructure can promote inclusive industrialization. (SDG 9)</p>

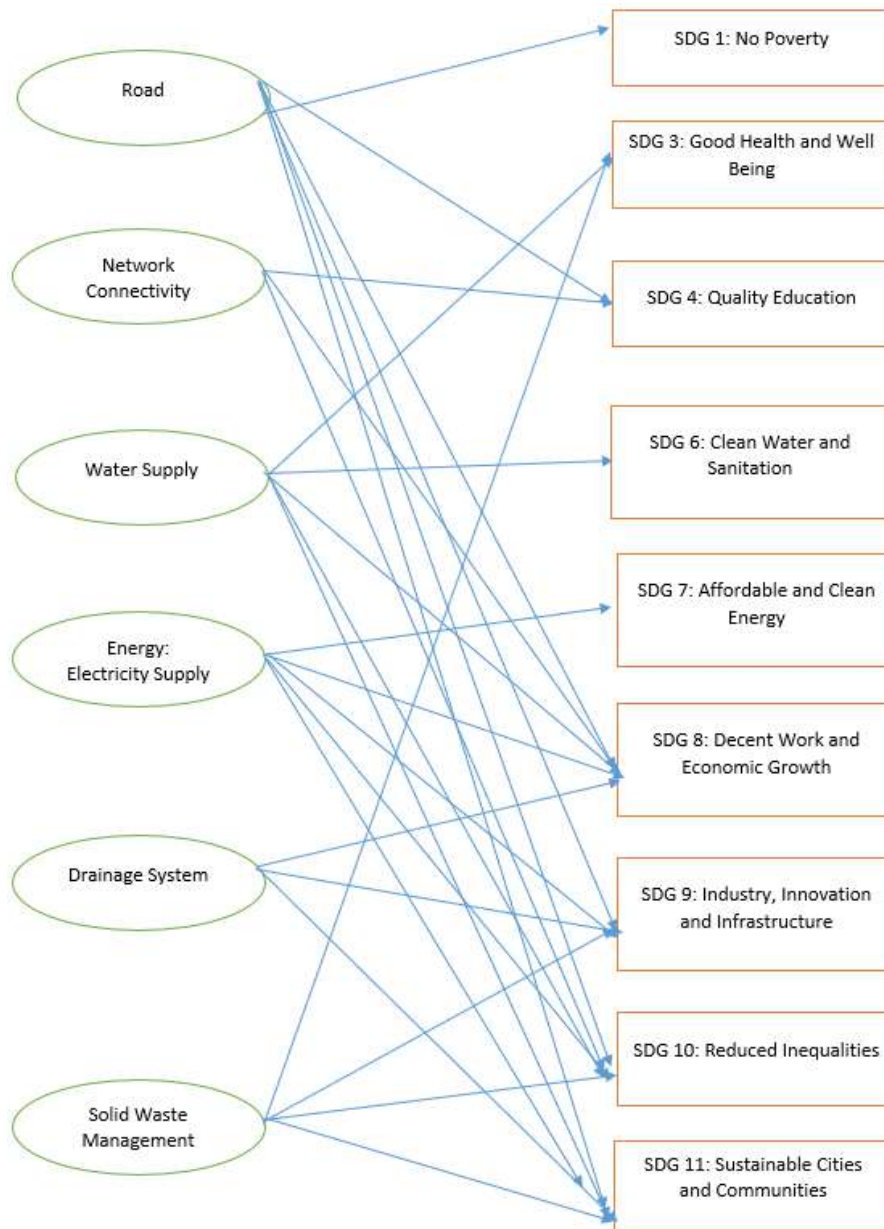
			<p>Widening gap of inequalities. (SDG 10)</p> <p>The absence of sustainable and resilient infrastructure to support human well-being. (SDG 11)</p>
<b>5</b>	Drainage system	Poor drainage system leading to flash flood occurrence.	<p>Frequent flash flood occurrences affected economic productivity. (SDG 8)</p> <p>The absence of resilient infrastructure can promote inclusive industrialization. (SDG 9)</p> <p>The absence of sustainable and resilient infrastructure to support human well-being. (SDG 11)</p>
<b>6</b>	Waste disposal management	<p>Absence of proper waste management system due to cross-cutting issues.</p> <p>Water village settlements</p>	<p>Poor waste disposal management will affect the health and well-being of the residents. (SDG 3)</p> <p>The absence of resilient infrastructure can promote inclusive industrialization. (SDG 9)</p> <p>Widening gap of inequalities. (SDG 10)</p> <p>The absence of sustainable and resilient infrastructure to support human well-being. (SDG 11)</p>

In Sabah today, there are still significant problems with infrastructure and basic amenities like access to clean water, electricity, roads, mobile telecommunication network coverage, and solid waste. The development of the water supply system has been rather unequal. The availability of clean water for home and non-domestic use is a problem for rural communities, whereas urban and semi-urban areas have developed water delivery systems. Sabah is made up of a lot of rural communities that experience poor water quality, water

interruptions, and in certain cases, a lack of treated water. Some regions with access to potable water regularly endure interruptions and poor water quality as a result of ongoing operational and technical problems (Sarbatly et al.,2020). The electricity supply also a problem for rural communities, for instance, total of 66 villages in Nabawan had been identified as having no electricity supply involving 982 houses in recently obtained through the Village Profile System a project under The State Ministry of Rural Development (KPLB).

Rural roads frequently have uneven road surfaces, large potholes, and little street lighting, especially along Sabah's east coast. This is a long-standing problem for the locals, who are used to maneuvering the rough terrain, potholes, filthy sidewalks, puddles, and damaged roadways (Besar et al.,2020). According to Sabah Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Seri Bung Moktar Radin one of the primary causes of the state's high unemployment and poverty rates is the fact that Sabah's infrastructure is still in disrepair, making it difficult for the state government to draw in significant investors and expand employment prospects (The Straight Times,2022).Meanwhile, study by Fang et al.(2022) revealed that Sabah native community, which largely resides in rural regions, suffers from a high prevalence of the first level of the digital divide, physical access which could demotivate the community from adopting ICT. Veveonah Mosibin, a student at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), from Kampung Sapatalang, Pitas, had to climb a tree to acquire internet connectivity so she could take her online exam, which illustrates how subpar the internet services are in Sabah.

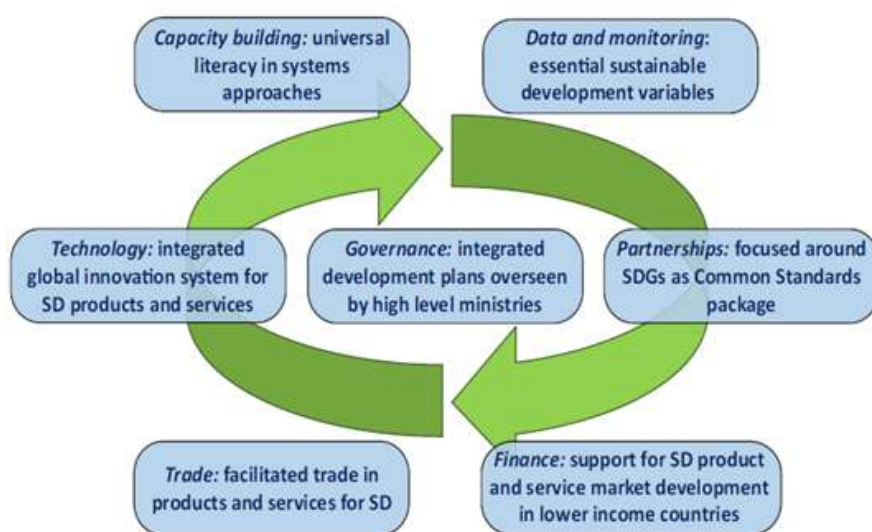
Next, the current solid waste management policy is still regarded as inadequate, particularly in terms of proper waste disposal in Sabah. For instance, There is still no comprehensive waste minimization policy in place in Kota Kinabalu, therefore garbage produced there might not be effectively collected (via trash recycling, waste separation, and waste composting), or treated, before being disposed of in a landfill (Dusim,2021). Furthermore, Sabah's local government must handle both stranded and floating waste along its coastline in addition to managing waste generated on land. This is a result of the water village settlements that have been constructed along the shore and are the cause of numerous solid waste management issues. The clogged drains due to waste management issues are one of the main causes of floods in Sabah.



### Strategies Recommendations and Conclusion

According to Smith *et al.* (2017), the key to implementing sustainable development goals (SDGs) lies in integration undertaking. For in the absence of guidance on the integration framework, there is a high risk that only certain goals are to be picked aligning with the government’s priorities. This resulting some of the assumed to be ‘less important goals being largely ignored. This insight was in line with the literature that visualizes SDGs as an interlinked set of policies with trade-offs and synergies (Spaiser et al, 2017; Bali Swain and Ranganathan, 2018). As such, Smith *et al.* (2017) advocated the following actions as in Figure 5 that can stimulate the integrated approach as required by the achievement of

sustainable development goals (SDGs). Based on the framework discussed, an integrated undertaking of the goals would involve effective linkage across sectors, societal actors, countries, and time frames. The key ‘means of implementation’ includes finance, technology, capacity building, trade, policy, institutional coherence, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and data monitoring and accountability. Resources are limited, and the pursuit of SDGs is fraught with trade-offs and inconsistencies. Therefore, strategic policies are suggested to focus on socio-economic development as a short-run policy to achieve sustainable development (Bali Swain and Yang-Walentin, 2020).

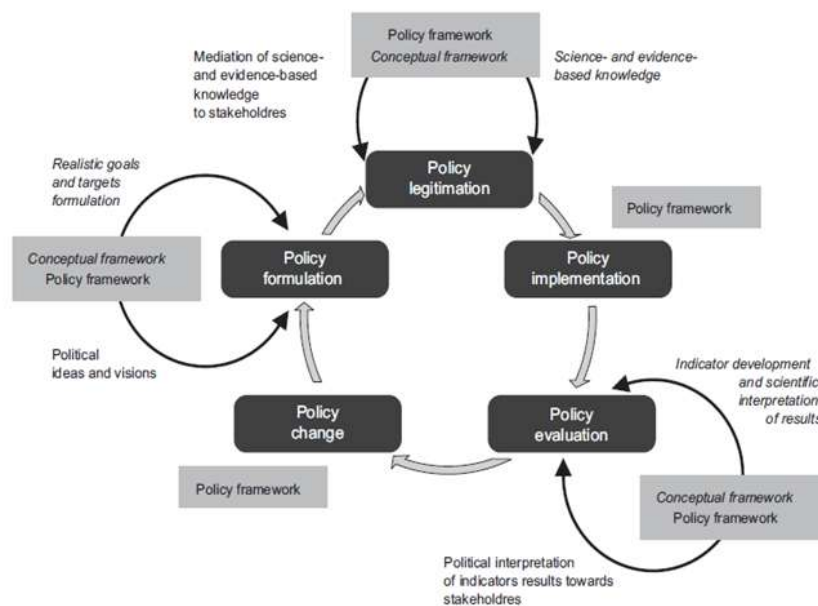


**Figure 5. Means of Integration**

**Source: Smith *et al.* (2017)**

A review of emerging expert literature on the SDGs highlights that an effective science-based approach to implementing the SDGs is likely to require the prioritization of goals and targets to focus on a reduced set of highly interrelated priority targets (Allen *et al.*, 2018). According to Glaser (2012), experts including academia, indicators providers, and statisticians need to be fully engaged in the policy formulation phase, i.e. in the target formulations, and thus contribute to their capacity to be operated. Hák *et al.* (2016) suggested a policy cycle as illustrated in Figure 6 that supported the different stages from policy formulation (identifying issues, setting goals and objectives that reflect ideas, visions and formulating issues in such a way as to facilitate succeeding operationalization), policy legitimization, policy implementation, policy evaluation, and policy change. The approach suggested complies with

the combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches, in which the indicators are formalized by measurement experts (Pissourios, 2013). Ultimately, national governments played an important role to prioritise and adapt the SDGs to national circumstances, enabling policy coherence and linkages across different sectors, and putting in place integrated action plans (Allen *et al.*, 2018). New mechanisms involved in the SDGs that directly link the desirable SDG outcomes with the necessary systematic organizational changes are still a much-needed area of further research (Fleming *et al.*, 2017).



**Figure 6. Policy Cycle Linked to Policy and Conceptual Frameworks**

**Source: Hák *et al.* (2016)**

Statistically shown that, Sabah consistently receives the one of the largest amounts of funding from the federal budget. Sadly, Sabah continues to be ranked as the least developed and poorest state. Hence, the money granted to Sabah does not correspond to where it is in terms of development. In the spirit to reduce the gap of development in Sabah, emphasis should be placed on strengthening infrastructure provision, maximising economic potential, and enhancing access to social services. First, study needs to be conducted to examine the growth of Sabah's infrastructure development and construction, particularly its roads. The same is true for infrastructure in the fields of health, education, and digital technology. Periodic evaluations must be conducted on a regular basis by the federal and state governments. To enhance dependability and transparency, independent outside reviewers can be hired. The



state government must be mindful of both the quality and expense of infrastructure projects, particularly when building the Pan Borneo Highway. A larger annual budget without taking into account any external factors that could affect Sabah's infrastructure would be inefficient and costly. For instance, the political intervention or instability may cause a downturn in the Sabah economy and delayed and rising cost of Sabah's infrastructure development. It is challenging for the state government to entice major investors and therefore increase the number of job opportunities without adequate infrastructure.

Secondly, the Sabah Maju Jaya (SMJ) plan is a development strategy for the years 2021–2025 that covers all aspects of Sabah's growth, including agriculture, industry, and tourism. The plan also places a focus on the human modal, the welfare of the populace, the infrastructural network, and environmental sustainability. It is a long-term strategy to boost Sabah's development. However, with only 5 years of plan, people want to see concrete results, and not merely pay lip service at the end of the day. Therefore, it is crucial to plan multifaceted development that should consider economic success, environmental protection, and social equality, as well as the practicality with which growth takes into account the poor, vulnerable, and those who run the risk of falling behind.

Nevertheless, a sensible and effective development plan should be formulated based on accurate facts from the ground. To offer a thorough picture of socioeconomic issues affecting individuals, households, or even geographical areas like remote communities, more microdata is required. To be used for more research and to promote greater transparency, this data should be made available to the public. The formulation and execution of policy also will benefit from accurate and complete data. One of the greatest challenges in tackling the state of income disparity in Sabah is the lack of data due to Sabah's unique geographical location and landscape, such as steep hills. To get compressive data, nevertheless, investments must be made without exception.

Thirdly, there is a need for differentiated policies, to differentiated needs which highlighting the district and state level. Factor such as socioeconomics, geographical and populated areas need to be considered in budget allocations and policies formulation. The "bottom-up" strategy by empowering local citizens and community organizations in decision-making processes will result in the development of policies that are more "human-centric" and

relevant to local communities. These are crucial, especially in Sabah, which has more than 30 different ethnic races and is varied and culturally diverse.

Fourthly, Sabah is the state that is most geographically adjacent to its neighbours, particularly Indonesia. Due to uncontrolled urbanisation, Indonesia concurrently wants to transfer the capital from Jakarta to Kalimantan. The social and economic state of Sabah may be directly impacted by this action. Therefore, the state government must make thorough preparations to deal with any effects of this decision, whether they be economic or social, and to create more positive spill-over effects.

Lastly, it is necessary to take action to create an environment that supports economic progress. Strong international collaboration and partnerships are required to achieve the SDGs (SDG 17). The state government must work closely with the local and global private sector to help attract higher-value investments, promote agrotourism and rural tourism, and enhance employment opportunities in rural areas through education and training.

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# **Risk Management System for Food Security is Crucial**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

The paper discusses some facts and emerging issues related in food securities. The pandemic-caused crisis has highlighted the global importance of food security. Lockdowns and trade restrictions have disrupted the food production supply chain, raising concerns about food supply accessibility. The threats to food security are policymakers focusing less on the importance of the food sector and more on the lucrative industrial crop sectors. Worse, the industrial crops sector focuses solely on extractive activities, with little downstream support for local agro-food and sub-sectors.

**Keywords: Food Securities, Food Policy, Risk Management**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The world faces a dynamic challenge in reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development. Food and nutrition sustainability, combined with Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, bio-energy demand, and increasingly rising food and energy prices, has put sustainable development on hold. The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to which world leaders and development partners have collectively signed on, is at stake.

## **Malaysia Food Policy**

The development of the agricultural industry in the country was greatly influenced by the British colonial era. During pre-independence, the British main focus was venture into commodity crops with export commodity values, specifically rubber, oil palm and cocoa. After independence, the government continued to give emphasis on the relevance of Malaysia agriculture industry. The sector generates one-third of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), provided employment for approximately 50 percent of the total labor force and 50 percent of country's foreign exchange earnings (Malaysia, 1971). The development of the sector is fundamental to achieve overall economic growth. Malaysia has developed five agricultural policies to date, which are briefly reviewed in the following paragraphs.

### **First National Agricultural Policy (NAPI) (1984-1991)**

The agriculture sector in the Malaysian economy has been declining over the years, falling from 59 per cent of total production in 1950 to around 24 per cent in 1980 (Gin Bee, 2019). Even so, Malaysia continues to emphasize the importance of the agriculture sector towards the country's economic development. Thus, NAPI was established with the goal of increasing revenue by minimizing the agriculture sector's declining contribution to national economic development (Malaysia, 1986). NAPI will continue to meet the objectives of the New Economic Policy (NEP) as the incidence of poverty in the agricultural sector was still high (Malaysia, 1986). The NAPI was expected to boost farmer incomes by increasing productivity and efficiency.

However this goal was not met since the high rate of poverty in the agriculture sector persisted (Indrani, 2000). Between the periods of 1985 and 1995, Malaysia's economy started to expand its manufacturing sector towards an industrialized economy. Thus, the agriculture sector faced challenges such as policy prioritization towards manufacturing, lack of labor force in agriculture, the cost of production increasing, and competing for land with other sectors of the economy (Malaysia, 1986). As stated in the policy, apart from rice, all agricultural commodities would be produced on the basis of economic remuneration (Indrani, 2000). As a result, export commodities like oil palm and rubber were prioritized over food crops because the return provided higher economic benefits. As a consequence of high production costs and low returns, the agro food sector has been marginalized (Indrani, 2000).

Food production decreased and food imports continued to rise, from RM3.1 billion in 1985 to RM5.1 billion in 1991 (Gin Bee, 2019).

### **Second National Agricultural Policy (1992-1997) (NAPII)**

NAPII was an extension of NAPI to overcome the weaknesses of the earlier NAPI. The policy aimed to put greater emphasis on productivity and efficiency in agro-food production to enable this sector to contribute to economic growth. A more detailed food policy strategy was provided in NAPII, which was not provided in NAPI (Fatimah, 2017). The objectives were to achieve a balance between agricultural and manufacturing development, as well as a greater level of food industry development. The strategies outlined in the policy include optimizing resource utilization, accelerating agro-based industrial development, enhancing R & D, human capital development, enhancing private sector involvement, labour shortages, and other constraints in the agricultural sector (Dardak, 2015).

During the period, the government's focus switched from an agricultural to an industrial economy with greater emphasis on commodities, which were important for the manufacturing sector and had higher export value, as the food agriculture sector was seen to be non-productive and labor and capital intensive (Indrani, 2000). As a result, the cultivation of commodity crops expanded, while the food sector was side-lined. The increase in food import bills showed the unimpressive performance of the food sector. Given Malaysia's economic transition to an industrialized economy and the sector's structural weaknesses, a more strategic approach will be required to sustain its growth (Malaysia, 1996).

### **Third National Agricultural Policy (1998-2010) (NAPIII)**

NAPIII was introduced following the impact of the Asian Financial Crisis 1997-1998 and financial market liberalization on Malaysia's economy (Ministry of Agriculture Malaysia, 1999). The policy was formed to address issues of change in the economic structure due to a lack of arable land, labour shortages due to inter-sector competition, and resource efficiency and utilization to boost competitiveness (Dardak, 2015). It was intended to ensure food security for the country, with an emphasis on food production to meet increasing demand and reduce import costs (Ministry of Agriculture Malaysia, 1999). The cost of food imports rose since the implementation of NAPI, from RM3 billion in 1985 to RM7.9 billion in 1995 and RM 10 billion in 1997. NAPIII was intended to address these difficulties while retaining

NAPII's primary goal of maximizing income through optimal resource utilization in the sector. The objectives of NAPIII were to enhance food security, to increase the sector's productivity and competitiveness, to deepen linkages with other sectors, to create the sector's new sources of growth, and to ensure the sector's conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. It is also concerned with creating a global competitive agriculture and forestry sector. Generally, this meant a greater focus on the development of higher-value export products rather than food crops for domestic consumption. Despite the initiatives and strategies implemented in NAPIII the food sector has generally remained unchanged, and growth has been slow.

### **National Agrofood Policy (2011-2020) (NAFP)**

The NAFP was introduced following the food crisis in 2008. The policy aimed to provide attention to the development of food commodities towards achieving a high level of food security with the aim of increasing food production. The strategy is to transform agriculture into a more dynamic, progressive, and sustainable industry (Dardak, 2019). The objectives of NAFP were to ensure an adequate supply of food and food safety, to develop agro-food into a competitive and sustainable industry, and to increase the income level of agriculture entrepreneurs. The NAFP was formulated to further enhance the level of self-sufficiency (SSL) and reduce food importation.

Throughout the policy's implementation period, agro-food imports recorded higher average growth rate than agro-food export, which is of 6.69 percent per annum (Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries, 2021). Thus, the agro-food trade balance deficit increased from RM12.1 billion in 2010 to RM21.7 billion in 2020 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021). The unimpressive performance of the agro-food trade showed Malaysia's continuous reliance on the global food chain to support the country's agro-food sector. SSL during the policy implementation showed that selected major food items were below the country's requirement. For instance, rice, vegetables, fruits, beef, mutton, and milk showed little progress towards achieving a higher-level SSL, except for poultry, eggs, pork, and fish. The NAFP expired in 2020 and was replaced by the current National Agrofood Policy 2.0 (2021-2030) (NAFP2.0).



## **National Agrofood Policy 2.0 (2021-2030) (NAFP2.0)**

NAP 2.0 was developed in alignment and support of other national development agenda policies including Vision for Shared Prosperity 2030 (WKB 2030) and Malaysia's Five Year Plan. A component that stands out compared to its predecessor policy (NAP 1.0) is the recognition and integration with components of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) through aligning with related sectoral policies such as the National Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Policy and the Malaysian Digital Economy Blueprint.

NAP 2.0 policy paper recognises demographic changes and the shifting of public preferences shaping nutrition trends, and environmental such as issues climate change which will require technology-enabled controlled-environment methods in agronomy and plantation.

NAP 2.0 outlined policy thrusts such as empowering modernisation through smart agriculture and increased research activities, development, commercialisation and innovation, strengthening the agrofood product value chain for domestic and international markets, talent and skilled workforce development, emphasis on sustainable agricultural practices and business ecosystem facilitation including land use, finance, infrastructure, investment and governance.

NAP 2.0 targets of increasing SSL and nutrition levels through the use of technology and practices enable the agrofood sector to remain competitive, contributing to the country's growth and economic development. Innovative business and economic models can also improve the well-being of the people as well as ensuring environmental sustainability, aligning the policy with the principles of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 (SDG 2030).

The current notion of food security (achieved via imports supplementation) to actual self-sufficiency (at least for staple foods, major livestock and aquaculture; for obvious national security reasons). On this note, NAP 2.0 aligns exactly to this notion as it focuses specifically on four sub-sectors namely paddy and rice, fruits and vegetables, livestock as well as fisheries and aquaculture. The success of the policy will be dependent on the successful implementation of its 21 strategies and 77 action plans, putting heavy responsibilities onto the shoulders of various departments and agencies until 2030.

Supporting the implementation of nationally owned policies and strategies is essential to overcome food and nutrition insecurity and thus lead to the achievement of the SDGs. Such methods must be backed up by the right analytical instruments and organisational techniques, which take into account recent technical advancements.

### **Food insecurity**

Large-scale food crises that exceed national response capacities and necessitate humanitarian intervention from outside sources often arise in developing countries with limited financial and technical resources.

The lack of credible information on food security causes, inadequate infrastructure, and weak government agencies, exacerbated by the lack of consistent policies and strategies to resolve food insecurity and risk management, all hinder decision-making and strategic planning.

Vulnerability and risk analysis, agricultural surveillance, food security early warning, environmental assessments, and resource mobilisation activities are all resources that must be integrated into current developmental and humanitarian interventions.

In this case, national governments, development partners, and the humanitarian community must address food insecurity with appropriate programmes that:

- (a) respond to the immediate humanitarian needs of communities affected by natural and man-made shocks;
- (b) build poor communities' resilience and adaptation capacity, including institutional support in building subnational, national, and regional strategies to deal with the growing frequency of emergencies.

### **Food security information system**

The provision of timely and accurate information is a critical component of a successful food security risk management system. Therefore, investment in a food security information system is essential to improve decision-making and increase national emergency preparedness and response capacity.

Setting up an efficient food security risk management capability necessitates a thorough understanding of the various risk factors that affect food security. Risks must be defined, evaluated, and tracked. A robust food security risk analysis and monitoring system should provide data that helps us to address questions like who is food insecure and vulnerable, where they live, why they are food insecure and vulnerable, and what intervention options are best for them.

It is crucial to recognise and understand the numerous food security hazards and vulnerabilities at the subnational level; to identify information gaps and national capacities; to identify the temporal and spatial distribution of historical, present, and anticipated hazards; to determine the severity, frequency, and length of the hazards; and to determine which of the hazards can be accurately predicted.

Using appropriate risk assessment methods that must be established, the various aspects of risk management must be incorporated. The tools should make it possible to combine the potential effects of different natural disasters, such as floods, droughts, and landslides, with socioeconomic and vulnerability factors. The key elements of risk assessment and monitoring are risk knowledge, hazard monitoring and early warning, needs assessment, and communication.

### **Food security risk management**

Risk assessments necessitate the systematic compilation and review of a variety of data sets, as well as the dynamics and heterogeneity of hazards and vulnerabilities resulting from processes such as urbanisation, rural land-use change, environmental deterioration, and climate variability and change.

As such, the main components of developing a comprehensive risk analysis should include:

- Risk identification and development of risk, hazard, and vulnerability maps through a comprehensive food insecurity risk and vulnerability analysis;
- Food Security Risk Monitoring systems based on the key indicators identified above to provide early warning;
- Needs assessments during emergencies; and
- A food security risk and vulnerability analysis.

A food security risk management information system should essentially consist of the following:

- Indicators that depict the three broadly agreed dimensions of food security (availability, access, and utilisation) as well as the risks associated with them;
- Identified geographical areas and communities that may be experiencing or may experience acute food insecurity;
- Details on the key causes of food insecurity and threats to livelihoods, as well as the scale (or magnitude) of the effects on households;
- Data on the different risk management strategies used by governments, societies, and households to prevent or reduce food insecurity;
- Resources for early identification of threats and knowledge on available steps to counter possible adverse effects; and
- A robust contingency plan to help advocacy and resource mobilisation activities, as well as market strategies, such as food stamps, to prevent or reduce food insecurity situations.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, food insecurity endangers lives and livelihoods, disrupts long-term growth, and puts populations at risk of future disasters. It is important to implement a holistic approach that meets households' immediate food needs while still supporting long-term sustainable growth. Development partners and the humanitarian community must work together to provide the Government with coordinated support for the implementation of effective strategies.

**SDG 5 and SDG 16 in Review: Relating the Convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and VNR 2021 through Feminist Governance**

by

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**ABSTRACT**

International Convention such as the Convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is a global framework that has allowed stakeholders such as academics and CSOs to hold governments accountable to commitments towards achieving Gender Equality. This is strengthened by SDG 5 Target 5.5a. and SDG 16 Target 6. 10b. The first review of SDG5 was in VNR 2017 while SDG 16 was reviewed in VNR 2021. This paper argues that SDG5, SDG16 and CEDAW are the main global governance mechanisms that promote feminist values i.e. substantive equality, inclusiveness, empowerment and inter-sectionality. By applying the tenets of feminist governance which refers to values, mechanisms and networks that advocate and monitor gender equality, this article intends to evaluate the implementation of gender equality in Malaysia by analyzing the Malaysian VNR, and CEDAW reports. What are the best practices and challenges faced by the state and other actors in promoting Gender equality? This paper will cross-check indicators of SDG5 and SDG 16 with the latest Malaysian Government CEDAW Report (2022). Preliminary review indicates that SDGs implementation has directly advocated and supported CEDAW. The best practice is the cooperation between CSOs such as NCWO, JAG and academics through the writings of Country Shadow Report. The major challenge is the need to continuously engage with different government mechanisms.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Women's rights were globally recognized after the adoption of CEDAW by the United Nations in 1979. It is briefly mentioned earlier in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Yet, it was a marginalized right due to the patriarchal structure, system and practices. Therefore after 31 years of human rights declaration, CEDAW has been adopted to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. To date (year 2022), there are 180 countries have ratified CEDAW, and it has developed into a form of feminist governance mechanism and supported by myriad international-regional initiatives particularly the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) then Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in SDG5 Gender Equality and SDG 15.

### **Feminist Governance**

Feminist values, mechanisms and networks, which are indicators of feminist governance (see Table 1), illuminate how regional governance and feminism influence the Asia region. Feminist values refer to gender equality, inclusiveness, empowerment, substantive equality, philosophy, and principles. Mechanisms refer to organisational structures, platforms, protocols, and law, while networks refer to the collaborative endeavours and the discursive relationships that exist among CSOs, IGOs, state governments, and business organisations to foster feminist values. This chapter contextualises the relationship between CEDAW and SDGs framework in comparing the indicators as reported in Malaysia CEDAW Reports and Voluntary National Review Reports. To enrich the above conceptualisation, the element of culture must be considered since the sites of governance are enveloped by cultural contexts. Culture in this context refers to human and organisational attitudes towards feminist beliefs, rights, justice, and expectations. This approach is also known as the Substance-Structure-Culture approach, which provides a framework to scrutinise both existing laws that directly or indirectly enable or oppress women and methods to reform the law to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women (APWLD, 2014a).

**Table 1: Feminist governance elements**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Feminist Governance</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1.</b>	Values	State obligation, substantive equality, and non-discrimination.
<b>2.</b>	Mechanism	Government and regional IGO policies, laws, administrations
<b>3.</b>	Network	Local, regional, and global organisations, specific government and IGOs agencies.

**Source: Sharifah Syahirah (2015)**

Many feminist governance values are derived from CEDAW and SDGs. These international agreements construct and pressure the Malaysian government to revisit and amend different laws, policies, and practices related to women's rights.

### **CEDAW and VNR Reports**

The Malaysian government has successfully submitted and presented three periodic CEDAW reports and two VNR reports. The latest CEDAW report was submitted in February 2021 and covered 16 main provisions of women's rights in Malaysia. Meanwhile, the first review of SDG5 was in VNR 2017 while SDG 16 was reviewed in VNR 2021. Therefore, it is timely to compare the indicators in these two reports to identify the strength of feminist governance that has been constructed.

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# **Charting Orang Asli's Progress and Sustainable Development Goals through the Lens of Land Rights Recognition (2015-2022)**

**By**

**Kon Onn Sein (YKPM)**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Undoubtedly, the root singular cause of poverty for the Orang Asli (OA) is non-recognition of their ancestral lands and economic development divorced from the environment. With deforestation and destruction of their natural resources, the OA face multi-dimensional poverty. With depleting natural resources and a rapid penetrating market economy, the OA cannot compete. The majority do not have access to fair markets and can't access loans or attract investors to develop their lands as they have no rights over their land. Poverty rate stands at 89% in 2020 compared with 76.9% in 2003<sup>1</sup>.

Education, often seen as the most effective route out of poverty is not working out well for the OA. This is simply because education is tied to a web of interconnected social, cultural and institutional ecosystem. Further, this whole ecosystem is deeply disadvantaged, and education itself cannot be the silver bullet to solve the OA's challenges. Even with strong government support, only about 70% of OA students complete SPM, compared with a high 90% at the national average level. A total of 845 OA is said to be studying in universities in 2018. This is a big leap from 2004 whereby OA tertiary enrolment was almost 4%<sup>2</sup>. Nonetheless, this represents about 10% enrolment of the OA student population, compared with the national average of 35%.

As a result of non-recognition of OA's ancestral land rights and the destruction of their forest, the OA are also falling behind other communities in these inter-connected indicators: malnutrition, health, mortality, infant deaths and access to sanitation and clean water.

This paper examines the changes in recognition of OA land rights that occurred from 2015 to 2022 with regard to the SDGs implementation in Malaysia towards OA development. The first part of the paper discusses the following:

1. changes in recognition of OA land rights and consequential impact on 8 SDG goals arising from the impetus of the federal government
2. resistance of the State to recognise OA land and the impasse in which the State is dependent on logging concessions needed to fund their operations
3. new evidence and recent studies give hope and new pathways out of this impasse
4. recent studies demonstrating financial and avoided cost or losses arising from protecting the forest that bring benefits which outweigh the revenue arising from logging concessions
5. intertwining of nature conservation with economic growth
6. State conundrum and pathway to compensate States to protect the forest
7. projected losses in terms of GDP losses and also actual mitigation cost spent in 2022
8. ecological fiscal transfer and investment in avoided cost

The second part of the paper (1) proposes that greater benefits can be gained by partnering with the OA to co-manage the forest to enhance even greater benefits, and (2) demonstrates the OA as the best people to sustain the forest. The paper concludes that partnering the OA (SDG17) is the way forward as evidence-based studies show community managed forestry results in more sustainable economic growth, combats climate change, and uplift OA poverty.

## PART 1

### 1.0 Changes in Recognition of Orang Asli Land Rights and SDGs

#### Orang Asli land status<sup>3</sup>, 1990-2003 (hectares)

Land status	1990	1999	2003	Change/Loss (1990-2003)
<b>Gazetted Orang Asli Reserves</b>	20,666.96	19,507.4	19,222.15	-1,444.81
<b>Approved for gazetting, but not gazetted as yet</b>	36,076.33	28,932.2	28,760.86	-7,315.47
<b>Total Orang Asli land with some legal status</b>	56,743.29	48,439.6	47,983.01	-8,760.28
<b>Applied for gazetting, but not approved yet</b>	67,019.46	78,975.0	79,715.53	12,696.07
<b>Total</b>	123,762.75	127,414.6	127,698.54	3,935.79

On 28 November 2017, Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob (then the Minister for Rural Development Ministry) announced that 132,631 hectares were identified as OA land; of this, 32,779 hectares had been gazetted as OA reserve and 19,870 hectares approved but awaiting gazettement. Another 74,838 hectares had been submitted to the state government for approval, with 5,142 hectares in the land surveying stage. He also said that it was projected that all the OA land would be completely surveyed by the end of 2017 and submitted to the state governments for gazettement<sup>4</sup>.

On 3 October 2022, the Majlis Perundingan Orang Asli announced that 40,600 hectares have been gazetted. This is a commendable; gazetted reserve areas since 2003 have doubled<sup>5</sup>. Whilst the remaining 92,031 hectares of the 132,631 have yet to be gazetted as OA reserve, there has been some improvement in that at least 7,821 hectares have been gazetted from 2017 to 2022.

This addition of 7,821 hectares towards the gazetted OA land over the last seven years (2017-2022) compared with the earlier years of an addition of 12,113 hectares between 1990 and 2016 is very positive. This is a significant improvement rate in recognition of OA land rights over the last seven years. This jump in OA land recognition will in turn lead to significant improvements in eight interconnected SDG goals, namely, SDGs 1, 2, 3 (poverty, zero hunger and well-being) and SDGs 6, 10, 11, 13 and 15 (clean water, inequality, sustainable communities and flooding, climate action, forest and soil).

However, it needs to be noted that there still remain numerous encroachment and contestations for OA lands over this same period reported in the media, and a large 92,031 hectares have yet to be protected.

Despite Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri calling on the states to hasten gazetting all the 132,631 hectares to protect the OA and their land from being logged, the states are relatively slow to fully collaborate<sup>6</sup>.

### ***Impasse: Resistance by State and Need for Revenue from Logging Concessions***

One major reason for the slow rate of OA land gazette is the state's huge dependent on land-based revenues for their operational cost. As logging concessions remain one of their significant revenue sources, they are reluctant to gazette land with forest. For example, in Pahang, the 2019 logging royalty and premiums contributed about 10% of the state operational cost. Notably, the total 2019 revenues generated in the Peninsular Malaysia sourced from forest royalty and premium amounted to RM406,927,463 (see table below<sup>7</sup>).

The loss of revenue to states is pretty significant if they were to gazette OA land. Since member states hold jurisdiction over land under the federal constitutional separation of powers, the state has the autonomy to decide on areas designated for forest protection and the issuance of logging permits. As such, it is understandable that the states have not been fully collaborative with Ismail Sabri (even when he became Prime Minister in 2022) in gazetting the 132,631 hectares of OA reserve. Without revenue from these OA forest areas, the state would have difficulty to collect enough revenues to fund their state operations.

At the same time, the federal government's inability to compensate state forest revenue has serious consequences on our planetary health. The State as key landowners traditionally

depend on revenue from the extraction of natural resources such as logging, mining and development of large plantations, which are detrimental to the environment. This is the long-standing impasse.

## **2.0 New Pathways out of Impasse: New evidence Showing Conservation Targets Outweigh Revenues from Deforestation**

However, there is now hope out of this impasse. In the recent years, there is overwhelming evidence showing that conserving nature brings greater benefits than deforestation in both the long and short term. Moreover, the policy of Malaysia to maintain 50% forest cover is both commendable and desired<sup>8</sup>.

Waldron's comprehensive study shows that the global economy is better off with more nature protected. Also, cost benefit analysis across multiple economic sectors in addition to nature conservation outweighs the cost to at least 5- to-1 than logging.

*“In the most comprehensive report to date on the economic implications of protecting nature, over 100 economists and scientists find that the global economy would benefit from the establishment of far more protected areas on land and at sea than exist today. The report considers various scenarios of protecting at least 30% of the world's land and ocean to find that the benefits outweigh the costs by a ratio of at least 5-to-1.”<sup>9</sup>*

Waldron's report has also offered new evidence that the nature conservation sector drives economic growth, delivers key non-monetary benefits and is a net contributor to a resilient global economy. The experts find that “the benefits are greater when more nature is protected as opposed to maintaining the status quo”.

Overall, the report summarised that the net output is greater even after taking into account the amount needed to invest in avoided cost to protect 30% of the world's land and ocean.

*“In the multi-sector analysis of financial outcomes, we found that total economic output is greater if the 30% target is implemented, than if it is not implemented. The projected increase in global output depends on the implementation approach taken, ranging from \$64-\$454 billion per year by 2050 in our illustrative scenarios. These figures only represent the increase in direct expenditures (revenues) and do not include multiplier effects ... and so the final boost to global economic output may be*

*over one trillion US dollars per year. This figure does not include novel revenue sources, such as green investments, biodiversity and climate bonds, and increased payments for ecosystem services.”<sup>10</sup>*

### ***Financial Benefits, Avoided Cost and Non-Monetary Benefit***

Waldron’s report, among others, examined two aspects: (1) financial benefits and avoided cost such as mitigation activity against floods, storms and carbon emission reduction expenses, and (2) non-monetary benefits.

#### **Financial Benefits**

In the financial component alone, the report projected a 20% financial benefit increase:

*“For the forestry sector, implementing the 30% PA (protected area) target again increased output values (revenues), driven by increases in efficiency and the price paid to producers when the availability of exploitable tree-covered land was reduced. Total roundwood output value reached \$428 billion in 2050 under the no-PA - expansion baseline, \$450 billion in the production-focused Three Conditions scenario, and over \$500 billion (~20% higher than the baseline) for the three more biodiversity-focused scenarios (Save Species from Extinction, Biodiversity/Wilderness Consensus, and Global Deal for Nature).”*

#### **Avoided Cost**

The report referred to avoided cost as “broad sense economic analysis” benefit which is over and above the financial benefit. This avoided cost is defined as the likely future cost of ignoring a major risk. The investment in preventing a potentially catastrophic risk is sound economic policy strategy, even if risk avoidance itself does not generate revenues. Nature supplies many defences against risks that would otherwise be catastrophic; forest can prevent storm surges or flooding and landslides from causing millions worth of damage and even loss of lives (although often, this value is only discovered after the trees have been cut down).

*“In our broad-sense (non-financial) economic analysis (limited to two biomes in tropical countries only), we found that implementing the proposed 30% (planet conservation) target would generate an additional economic benefit of \$170–\$534*

*billion per year by 2050, over and above the financial benefit. These values reflect the way that PAs (protected areas) prevent the conversion of natural structures that are critical for defence against floods and storm surges, reduction in carbon emissions that lead to climate change, and (an incomplete list of) other services.*

*Beyond avoided costs, some of the values of nature are fully non-monetary, either because the value of protecting them is not yet financially recognised (e.g. many administrative areas have not yet given economic recognition to the water purification services provided by protected forests), or because a market value would be completely inappropriate (e.g. the cultural and spiritual value of preserving a tiger or a sacred forest). To avoid confusion in this report, we refer to the impact of the 30% target on avoided-cost and non-monetary values as the broad-sense economic outcomes, to distinguish them from the financial outcomes.’<sup>11</sup>*

### Non-Monetary Cost

In a sense, the hidden cost of nature in our economic growth has not been taken up in the books and there are victims to such missing accounts. Malaysia has experienced high levels of economic growth in the last two decades; yet this economic growth has come at the cost of a significant loss of biodiversity and natural capital in the country. This has immediate impact on our present generation and no doubt on our future generations; probably the most vulnerable victims are the OA who have to bear this cost when their forest is damaged.

To be fair, investment in such avoided cost should be factored as necessary to reflect the cost of true economic growth and to safeguard the vulnerable parties. If not, our natural wealth capital will continue to be depleted, giving us a false sense of actual growth and depriving the future generations and the OA of a healthy planet<sup>12</sup>.

### **3.0 Nature Conservation Intertwines with Economic Growth and Contributes 55% towards Global GDP**

In another recent study by Re Swiss Institute (2020), it is reported that nature conservation is intertwined with economic growth and that nature contributes as much as 55% towards global Gross Domestic Product. The huge direct link between economic growth and environment is inextricably interconnected; to sustain economic growth, it is imperative to protect our forest and environment.

*“Countries across the world are reliant on a range of services that are based around their natural ecosystems. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (BES) include such necessities as food provision, water security and regulation of air quality that are vital to maintaining the health and stability of communities and economies.*

*Over half (55%) of global GDP, equal to USD 41.7 trillion, is dependent on high-functioning biodiversity and ecosystem services. However, a staggering fifth of countries globally (20%) are at risk of their ecosystems collapsing due to a decline in biodiversity and related beneficial services, reveals a new study by Swiss Re Institute.”<sup>13</sup>*

Traditional market mechanisms typically fail to reflect in their accounting books the alarming erosion of the natural capital which sustains economic growth, such as the loss of forest watershed areas and wetlands, or the pollution of the atmosphere. This conceals the disappearing reserves of national assets and natural capital as a trade-off to seemingly rising GDP. In response, economists are developing new ways to measure wealth and well-being that better reflect the health of the planet as well as of people and economic systems. More governments have begun to use these metrics to guide their development strategies and economic policies.



#### **4.0 State Conundrum and Pathway to Compensate States to Protect Forest**

The conundrum is that the State needs revenue from land transaction, and cannot rely on just non-monetary eco benefits to fund their expenses. This challenge, thus, merits innovative solutions. Federal government enjoys taxes and economic growth that flows directly from an enabling green environment. Studies show nature conservation contributes very substantially to both sustain and grow the economy. It is only right that the federal government uses the taxes that it enjoys from this economic growth to invest in protecting the forest. This necessarily means providing funding to compensate the state to protect the forest.

This gap of RM406,927,463 based on 2019 sums to compensate the States in Peninsular is not as large as it appears (more will be needed to factor in East Malaysia states). Firstly, we have already noted the immediate cost benefit analysis of 5 to 1 in all the measures and increased financial benefits of 20% in the forestry economic sector. Secondly, Avoided Cost Investment will prevent natural disasters like flooding and haze, whereby the focus is on mitigating the risk of catastrophic economic and social outcomes. This avoided cost will also enable the economic sectors of agriculture, fisheries and forestry to generate more sustainable revenues.

*“Deforestation or the damage to nature will result in top soil erosion, flooding, scarcity of water, climate change and will have direct adverse financial impacts on economic sectors like agriculture, fisheries and forestry. The experts in the Waldron report found that across all multiple economic sectors, the benefits are greater when more nature is protected as opposed to maintaining the status quo.”<sup>14</sup>*

#### ***Projected Losses***

The need to invest in avoided cost is all the more compelling when we look at our local projected losses arising from development divorced from nature. In a study jointly conducted in March 2022 by the World Bank and Bank Negara, it is reported that Malaysia could face a 6% GDP loss by 2030. Even if we were to use 2021 GDP of RM1.514 trillion, that 6% loss of RM90.84 billion would far exceed 200 over times the compensation of RM406,927,463 computed in 2019 for the States.

*“A recent World Bank (WB) together BNM study found that, in a worst-case scenario of partial ecosystem collapse, Malaysia could experience a 6 percent gross domestic product (GDP) annual loss by 2030 compared to a baseline scenario (Johnson et al. 2021). In Malaysia, the losses would be driven by a decline in export demand and adverse impacts of the partial collapse of forestry and fishery ecosystem services.”<sup>15</sup>*

#### ***Actual Losses in Mitigation Cost***

In Malaysia, RM6.1 billion was spent on flood mitigation in 2022 with 500,000 people displaced and 55 lives lost. It is thought that over-development and deforestation have exacerbated the huge impact of the torrential rains and flooding.

*“Deputy Environment and Water (KASA) Minister Datuk Dr Mansor Othman reported in the Dewan Rakyat on 17 March 2022: ‘... the total amount of losses caused by the floods that took place in several states in the country from end-2021 until early-2022 amounted to RM6.1 billion... . These include losses of properties, vehicles, manufacturing sector, businesses and agricultural sector,’ he said in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.”<sup>16</sup>*

This cost in itself already justifies and far supersedes the total sums needed to compensate all the states for their logging concessions.

#### **5.0 Ecological Fiscal Transfer and Investment in Avoided Cost**

The case for setting up avoided cost fund is clearly the smart way to go as it will more than make up for this pay-out from the bigger losses it will otherwise incur from natural disasters. It will also yield greater financial gains from across all the economic sectors of agriculture, fisheries and forestry. Credit has to be given to the federal government that this avoided cost is already being implemented. In Budget 2021, the federal government allocated RM70 million to state governments to protect their forest through a mechanism called ecological fiscal transfer (EFT).

On 26 April 2022, the government announced an increase in incentive for states to preserve forest and marine areas from RM70 million to RM100 million, and the Tahap Payout Plan of RM330 million.

**“Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob said under the ecological fiscal transfer (EFT) plan, the government would fund states that gazette new protected areas from development ... . Ismail also announced funding of RM330 million to all state reserves under the Tahap payout plan, with plans to be revealed by the Treasury later.”<sup>17</sup>**

### *Carbon Credits*

On top of the GDP growth, Malaysia is also able to take advantage of its favoured position to obtain Carbon Credits or payment for ecosystem services. Malaysia has a 50% forest cover policy and has arguably the 5<sup>th</sup> largest area of protected forest in the Asia-Pacific region. So, we should innovate to get the best out of this competitive advantage and capitalise on the carbon credits and eco-tourism haven that can be created from this vantage point.<sup>18</sup>

There are huge opportunities to tap on a fast-growing eco-tourism market and the increasing availability of global funding for conservation and carbon credits. A renewed and strong push in this direction alone could help us raise or grow the economy by another RM406,927,463. Banks and large corporations that depend on highly functioning ecosystems should also be contributing towards this cost. Creative financial instruments can be created to raise this shortfall needed by the states to protect the forest.

## **PART II**

### **6.0 Enhancing Benefits: OA Best Partners to Slow Down Deforestation**

In addition to the benefits of financial and gains from avoided cost, the financial returns and social impact can be further enhanced. This can be actualised through forming partnerships with the OA to co-manage the forest.

A strong body of growing international studies show the indigenous people are the best people to protect the forest more than any other group. In other words, the indigenous communities living and working within the forest are proving to be the best line of defence against deforestation.

*“Deforestation has been found to be five times higher outside of indigenous territories and conservation units, according to a recent study by RAISG (The Amazon Network of Georeferenced Socioenvironmental Information)”<sup>19</sup>*

*“And no one stewards the land better: Research shows that Indigenous peoples achieve conservation results at least equal to those of government-run protected areas - with a fraction of the budget.”<sup>20</sup>*

*“Another study shows that from 2000 to 2012, the annual deforestation rates inside tenured Indigenous forestlands across the Amazon were 2-3 times lower than outside of them.”<sup>21</sup>*

The message is clear: the Indigenous peoples know best how to protect the forests.

## **7.0 OA Way of Life Sustains the Forest**

By examining the OA way of life, we can better appreciate why the OA do indeed take care of the forest better than anyone. Let me share a story of how the Jakuns near Tasik Chini have actually conserved their forest and how important the forest is for them.

Lost beauty and richness of their forest and clean rivers. They were able to drink from the river, bath in it and catch fishes. It was a favourite place for families and the community to assemble, have fun together and strengthen bonding. The OA collectively going into the forest to gather fruits, picnic, hunt or fish and enjoy themselves. Today, the hills of the watershed areas have been logged and replanted with oil palm or are mined. The neighbouring large scale commercial project has encroached into their water shed areas, dwindled and contaminated their water source. Today, The children have lost the opportunity to experience the richness of their environment and suffer from health issues related to lack of safe water and lack of food.

Their way of living is based on an indigenous worldview of respect for nature and taking only what is needed. Their culture sustains nature and for hundreds of years, they have lived without damaging nature. For example, they are only allowed to cut appropriate sized trees and not allowed indiscriminate felling of trees. They are to take only enough for building their houses and not for commercial purposes. Their customs forbid them to fish during the breeding season. They can't hunt young or pregnant wild life. They don't cut down trees next

to the river as it will hurt the river and fishes. Burn and slash farming is limited to very small areas. This is not significant to carbon emissions as this method mimics the way old trees fall during storms and forest is regenerated when their trees are old. These are their customs embodied in their oral traditions and protocols. The OA think in terms of seven generations such that the environment can continue to provide for their future generations. There is also a spiritual connection to nature and the destruction of nature, amounts to a desecration of their sacred connectedness.

This understanding of how the OA view and treat the forest with respect supports the studies that infer the OA know best how to protect the forest.

## **Conclusion**

### **Partnering with the OA, the Way Forward**

Since, OA tenured lands often have lower rates of deforestation, making investment and partnering with the OA in developing local green economies is a smart thing to do. We all need the forest to slow down climate change and who else better to partner than the OA who are the leaders in nature economics. Partnering with the OA to co-manage the forest is one of the most cost-effective solutions to conserve forests, protect biodiversity, mitigate climate change, build food security, uplift poverty, create jobs and grow the economy. Eight of the SDG goals are achieved in this partnership paradigm.

In the largest study of its kind, a research team comprising the collaboration of various countries found that community-forest management in Nepal has led to a 37% relative reduction in deforestation and a 4.3% relative reduction in poverty. The research, authored by an interdisciplinary team of ecologists, economists and political scientists, overcomes previous data limitations by using rigorous techniques to analyse publicly available data on the forests, people and institutions. The team combined satellite image-based estimates of deforestation with data from Nepal's national census of 1.36 million households and information on more than 18,000 community forests.

*“Our study demonstrates that community forest management has achieved a clear win-win for people and the environment across an entire country. Nepal proves that with secure rights to land, local communities can conserve resources and prevent*

*environmental degradation ... . Reductions in deforestation did not occur at a cost to local well-being. The study found that areas with community forest management were 51% more likely to witness simultaneous reductions in deforestation and poverty.’’<sup>22</sup>*

This is where there is a huge potential to achieve all three targets of sustaining the economy, combating climate change, and uplifting OA poverty, simultaneously.

By partnering with the OA to sustain the forest, the watershed areas will be protected to ensure ample supply of water for irrigation and microclimates reduction, making it easier for local communities like FELDA to grow their crops. Secondly, by promoting OA green livelihood activities, growth is spurred and revenues generated for the state. By this very nature, the forest and biodiversity are conserved, and carbon credit payments can be tapped onto. Another bonus is that the OA could conserve their culture and identity as people of the forest, in line with the SDGs.

All it takes is for the federal government to, firstly, find innovative ways to increase the ETF from RM100 million to RM406,927,463, and make it conditional for the states to use this fund for gazetting the OA reserves. Also, it would be good if the federal government supports the OA to develop legally enforceable protocols to ensure that their forest is sustained in line with their culture and values. Secondly, the government can invest in green infrastructure to promote added-value eco-tourism and green agriculture. The return of investment in these sectors will be high and the sharing of 50% revenue from this tax with the state is a good move. Poverty is uplifted, jobs and food security for more are provided, the environment is protected, local economy is sustained and grown, and climate risk reduced. Moreover, the government saves from needing to spend on welfare support for diminishing poor, and on costly natural disasters.

A win for the OA is a win for everyone and for the world.

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## Chapter 4: SDG & PEOPLE (EDUCATION)



1. Leave No One Behind: SDG 4 for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Malaysia - **Norani Abu Bakar** (UM & UCSI) & Assoc. Prof. Dr. Thirunaukarasu Subramaniam (UM)

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2. The Model of 'Self-Sustainable' Community - Journey to Reduce Education Debt Among Malaysian Indian Community - **Thanasegar Ramasamy** (Concerned UM Indian Graduates - CUMIG)

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3. The Learning Experiences through Engagement Activities of Environmental Awareness - **Ahmeema Luthfee** (School of Education and Sosial Sciences) & Ooi Boon Keat (Management and Science University)

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4. Using Digital Toolkits for Effective Learning in A Rural Primary School - **Asshadwi Paneerselvam** (Inspiring Bharathiyar Association - INBHA)

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5. Relationship between Parenting Style and the Discipline Problem among Students in School - **Cecilia Susai** (Inspiring Bharathiyar Association - INBHA & UUM)

# **Leave No One Behind: SDG 4 for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Malaysia**

by

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## **Acronym**

ALCs	Alternative Learning Centres
APPGM	All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia
BAC	Brickfields Asia College
CLC	Community Learning Centres
DOSM	Department of Statistics of Malaysia
IDEAS	The Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs
GED	General Education Development
GEM	Global Education Monitoring
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
KII	Key Informant Interview
LO	Learning Objectives
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
NST	New Straits Time
OOS	Out-Of-School
RE	Refugee Education
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGA	School-Going-Aged
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
VNR	Voluntary National Review

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Department of Statistics of Malaysia estimated that 10% or 3.2 million of Malaysia's residents are non-citizens (DOSM, 2020), and among the undocumented migrants, around 40,000 to 100,000 are unregistered refugees (Sayed and Choi, 2018). Amid the forced migrants, UNHCR acknowledges the status of around 18,960 refugees and asylum seekers, with 85% of them from Myanmar and the rest from another 50 countries (UNHCR Malaysia, 2022a). Among them, 41,127 are School-Going-Aged (SGA) refugees: 21,885 (53%) are primary SGA (6 to 13 years old) and 6,246 (15%) are secondary SGA (14 to 17 years old) (UN Partner Portal, 2022). Around 30% of these SGA children are currently attending 145 Alternative Learning Centres (ALCs) in East Malaysia (UNHCR Malaysia, 2022c). In July 2022, UNHCR reported that only 36 ALCs offer secondary education and 48 young adult refugees are attending high learning institutions (UNHCR Malaysia, 2022c).

Being a non-signatory to UNHCR 1951 convention and its 1967 protocol and having an immigration law that outlaw forced migrants' status, refugees and asylum seekers face challenges in accessing basic services including formal education. The challenge of having inclusive and quality education is also faced by almost 300,000 stateless children under 18 years old in Malaysia (Nortajuddin, 2020). However, as a signatory to the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and a supporter of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 4 "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all", the country does not hinder collaborations for providing education for refugees and asylum seekers. This paper presents a desk review on the progress of refugee education from 2015 to 2022 and recommendations for improvement based the UN SDG 4 targets and Malaysia's local contexts.

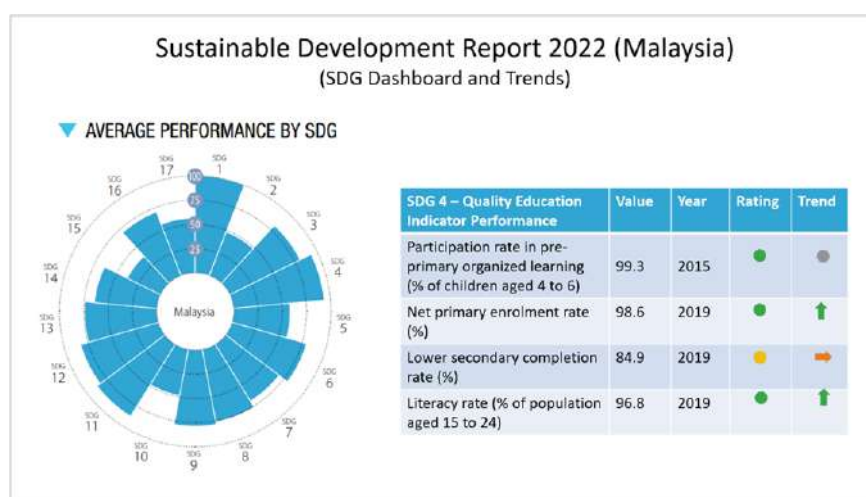
### **A Brief Overview on Global and Malaysia's SDG 4 Progress**

From 2015 to 2019, the average SDG Index Score reported global SDG progress of 0.5 points per year (APPENDIX). This slow progress and the declined in SDG progress from 2020 to 2022 consequent to COVID 19 pandemic and multiple security crisis means greater challenge in meeting Agenda 2030 deadline (Sustainable Development Report, 2022a). To date, National SDG Council of Malaysia had submitted two SDG Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) to the UN via High-level Political Forum (HLPF), i.e., in 2017 and 2021.

Malaysia's 2022 SDG Score Card point is 70.4 and is ranked 72 out of the 163 participating countries (Sustainable Development Report, 2022b). The yearly survey by Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) on 'Governments' Commitment and Efforts for the SDGs' showed the country's SDG nominal performance score of around 54 (APPENDIX). Malaysia has 146 available national indicators and from that 12 are related to SDG 4 (DOSM, 2022a). The 2022 SDG Index reported its SDG 4 progress as moderate and insufficient in meeting this goal (Figure 1) outlined four SDG 4 indicators' results only. More data for the country's SDG 4 Indicators, however, are available at DOSM SDG website and Global Change Data Lab's SDG-Tracker website. For the latter, Malaysia had submitted 14 out of 36 statistical data related to the UN SDG 4 eleven Indicators (SDG Tracker, 2022).

Table 1A (Appendix) listed Malaysia's SDG 4 indicators' data sources, namely the Ministry of Education (MOE) - 9 Indicators, Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) - 1 indicator, DOSM - 2 Indicators, and Public Service Department Malaysia - 1 Indicator (DOSM, 2022b). SDG data collection meetings had been taking place since April 2015 under the supervision of DOSM, including six SDG 4 meetings with SDG 4 key enablers such as MOE, MOHE and INTAN (DOSM, 2022c). These details demonstrated Malaysia's continuous effort to progress SDGs nationally and locally, and the complexity and challenges in operationalizing and evaluating SDG progress. This SDG framework and experiences can form a basic of reference for progressing SDG 4 among those that have not been included in the mainstream education system.

**Figure 1: Sustainable Development Report 2022**



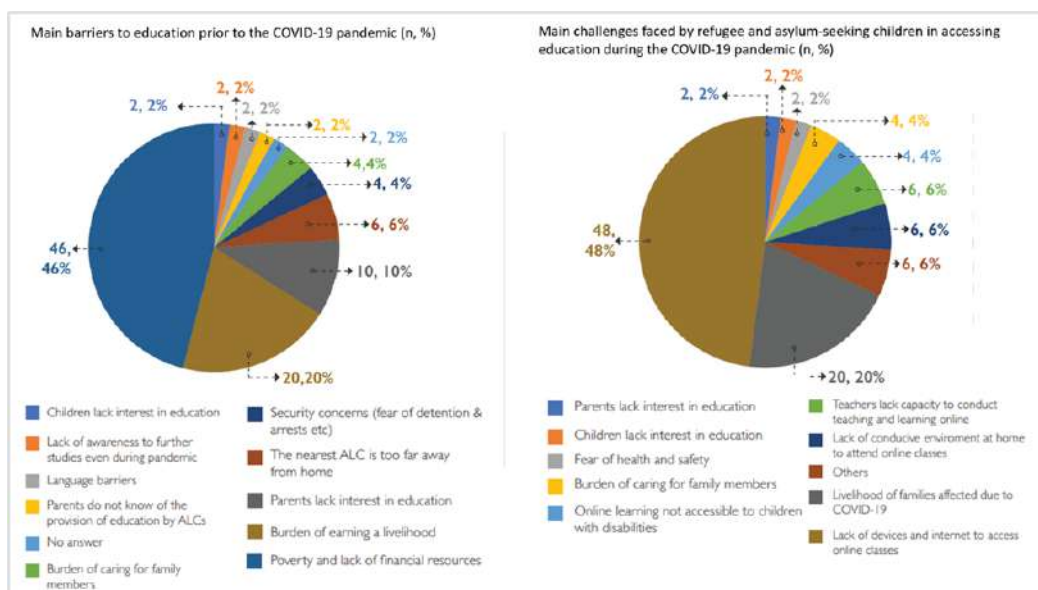
Source: <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/profiles/malaysia>

## Framework for Monitoring Progress on Refugee Education in Malaysia

Greater challenges are anticipated in implementing and monitoring SDG 4 progress for forced migrants due to the multilayer barriers: personal, communal, and national’s legal and policy barriers, and public perceptions on refugees and asylum seekers. Figure 2 presents barriers to education from refugee communities’ perspectives prior to and during COVID 19 pandemic (Diode Consultancy & Wan.Y.S., 2022). Despite these difficulties, humanitarian actors, education networks and multilateral collaborators for Refugee Education (RE) have been actively partnering in progressing SDG 4 agenda, consistent to SDG ethos, ‘Leaving No One Behind’. Retrospectively, moral imperative and religious convictions are among the factors that drive RE efforts when Vietnam refugees first arrived in Malaysia in 1970s, long before SDGs were incepted. Agenda 2030, however, paves a thrust towards strategic partnerships and synchronized work, globally and locally, on the most pressing needs related to the 17 goals instead of work in silo.

With this alliance, enabling actors can strategically co-develop a national roadmap and framework with National SDG Council, and strategize and implement local solutions for RE-SDG4. Progress report on collaborative outcomes becomes a form of accountability, evidence on work done, and a performance evaluation tools.

**Figure 2: Main barriers to education prior and during the COVID-19 pandemic**

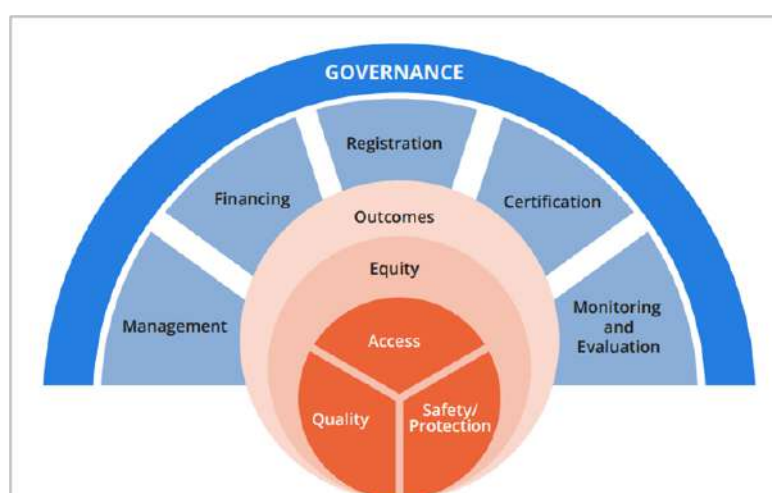


Source: IDEAS (2022)

At the macro level, the RE progress can be evaluated by mapping results to Malaysia’s National SDG Implementation by Economic Planning Unit enabler initiatives, namely: institutional framework; policy framework; monitoring and evaluation; financing mechanisms; training and advocacy; and reporting. At the policy level, All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia (APPGM) – Policy on Refugees has proposed a policy to regulate employment for refugees in formal sectors (BERNAMA, 2022). However, up to this date, no national strategic roadmap and formation of RE-SDG4 steering committee has been reported.

At the micro level, education indicators relevant to the refugee contexts as proposed by UNESCO Institute of Statistic (UIS) and UNHCR in “Refugee Education Statistics: Status, Challenge and Limitations” can be considered for Malaysia’s RE context (Table A2 – APPENDIX). The five areas of progress and monitoring for these indicators are: (1) attainment (2) literacy and numeracy (3) access and enrolment (4) quality and learning, and (5) safety and protection. The document highlighted that one of the key challenges for RE data collection is the poor integration of RE data into national statistical frameworks (UIS & UNHCR, 2021). Therefore, close partnerships among RE steering committee and the National SDG Steering Committee is fundamental for SDG 4 progress. This document also presents a conceptual framework and a few solutions for improving data collection, and coordination between these agencies will enhance efficiency in setting standards for RE and avoid duplication.

**Figure 3: An Overview of Conceptual Framework for Refugee Education**



Source: Authors’ elaboration (UIS & UNHCR, 2021)

For review of RE status in Malaysia prior to SDGs' inception, this paper refers primarily to report on "Mapping Alternative Learning Approaches, Programmes and Stakeholders in Malaysia" that was commissioned between May to September 2015 (UNICEF, 2015). Then onwards, some of the country's RE-SDG4 key progress was presented briefly in "Refugee Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Inclusion" (UNHCR, 2019). This document as well as Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report, "Migration, Displacement & Education: Building Bridges not Wall" by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019) are two key references for sound frameworks and guidelines for progressing RE-SDG4. Nationally, besides UNHCR Malaysia, sound recommendations and evidence-based local solutions for advancing RE can be learned from a 2022 Refugee Report by The Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) Malaysia and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

### **2015-2022 Progress of Refugee Education in Malaysia**

Evaluating RE-SDG4 progress in Malaysia is challenging due to the unavailability an overarching framework, lack of comprehensive and sound data and the continuously changing forced migrant demography. This paper review paper draws insights and analyses data from published scholarly writings and reports, and Key Informant Interviews (KII). The latter was conducted with 32 interviewees consisting of founders and academic director of ALCs and Community Learning Centres (CLCs), high school teachers, NGO staff and volunteers, refugee parents and young adult refugees that did their high school education in Malaysia. The interviews were conducted between August 2020 to October 2022.

According to GEM Report, the right for migrant and refugee education in Malaysia was increasingly recognized on paper, however, the progress was much slower compared to other refugee host countries like Chad, Uganda, Turkey and Lebanon (UNESCO, 2019). Lebanon and Nepal, like Malaysia are non-signatories to 1951 Refugee Convention, however, their public education is accessible to refugee SGA. Lebanon has 1.5 million Syria refugees while the latter has almost 6500 Bhutan refugees with around 110,000 resettled since 2007 (Damak, 2018).

A review on various literatures related to RE in Malaysia reveals discontinuity or unclear strategic directions of some key services and programs ran in pursuit of closing the RE gap with the formal education system. Some of them were:

- Prior to 1995 - Free access to state schools
- 1995 – Access to state schools with RM120 and RM240 annual fees for primary and secondary school students respectively for refugee and asylum seeker children
- 2002 – Enrolment to public education for children that presented their birth certificate only
- Prior to 2012 – English textbooks of national education were used widely in RE
- 2014 – MOUs between UNHCR and a few high learning institutions for refugee enrolment
- 2017 – National Education Policy states compulsory primary education (6 to 12 years) including non-citizens & visit of MOE to all CLCs leading to operating licenses for 25 Rohingya centres in 2018
- 2018 – Launching of Zero Reject Policy to ensure that all children in the country, including undocumented children, have access to education
- Prior to 2019 – UNHCR encouraged ALCs and CLCs to adopt national curriculum, provide classes in Bahasa Malaysia and administer end of primary school achievement tests using the Malaysian Primary School Evaluation Test template.

For this paper, the terms ALCs and CLCs are applied according to what the communities identify the centres as. UNHCR Guidelines for Refugees, available online since July 2022, is a positive development in coordinating and setting standards for RE despite variability in the ALCs' curriculum, i.e., national curriculum, IGCSE and GED, and the medium of instructions, Malay Language for the national curriculum, and English for IGCSE and GED curriculums.

For tertiary education, refugee students are enrolled at high learning institutions located in Malaysia and abroad. The latter is access virtually.



## Primary and Secondary Education Levels

At a glimpse, 14% (1,234) refugee children aged 3-5 are enrolled in pre-school education; 44% (5,046) in primary education and 16% (874) in secondary education (UNHCR, 2022a). The comparison between the number of students attending the primary and secondary levels in 2022 and 2015 indicated a very minimal growth in their enrolment rate (Table 1). This performance is also far below 2018 to 2021 RE average enrolment rates of 40 countries (Table 2).

**Table 1: Comparison on Enrolment Rate for Refugee Children in Malaysia**

Year	No. UNHCR registered Refugees & Asylum Seekers	Total no. of school-aged children (primary & secondary)	No. of ALCs	% Of enrolment rate	No. of students enrolled at ALCs	No. of school-aged children out of school
2022	182,960	28,131	145	30	5,910	17,913
2015	152,830	21,555	126	27	5,755	15,800

Sources: Data for 2015 from UNICEF (2015) & data for 2022 from UNHCR (2022)

**Table 2: Refugee Education Percentage of Enrolment versus Malaysia's Enrolment**

Year	Pre-primary %	Primary %	Secondary %	Tertiary
Malaysia 2022	14	44	16	48 students
2020/21	42	68	37	6 %
2019/20	34	68	34	5 %
2018/19	-	77	31	3 %

**Sources: Malaysia 2022 – UNHCR Malaysia (2022) & 2018 to 2021 - All Inclusive The Campaign for Refugee Education (UNHCR, 2022b)**

**Table 3: Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education Enrolment Rates 2020/21**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Primary %</b>	<b>Upper Secondary %</b>	<b>Tertiary % or persons</b>
1. Global	2020	102	77	40
2. Global Refugee	2021	68	37	6
3. Malaysia (National)	2020	104	82	43
4. Malaysia (Refugee)	2021	44	16	48 persons

Sources: (1) UNESCO Institute of Statistic (2022) & The World Bank

(<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.ENRR>);

(2) All Inclusive – The Campaign for Refugee Education (UNHCR, 2022);

(3) Education in Malaysia (UNHCR, 2022 <https://www.unhcr.org/en-my/education.html>);

(4) UNESCO Institute for Statistic (Malaysia) <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/my>

SDG 4.1 target thrives not only for the completion of primary and secondary education (Table 1, 2, and 3) but also for the minimum proficiency level in literacy and mathematics (4.1.1 Indicator). Therefore, some pertinent questions are the relevant targets and indicators according to local context; data collection instruments and format; formation of a working committee and its roles; the designated National SDG Council unit or non-governmental agencies that will undertake this coordination responsibility; reviewing, tracking and reporting format; the integration of RE-SDG4 results to the national reporting and SDG Roadmap.

SDG 4 performance must go beyond indicators’ numerical figures as the outcomes from Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) should transform learners’ cognitive/head, socio-emotional/heart and behaviours/hands towards competencies and values for living out and leading the 17 SDGs. Fifteen Learning Objectives (LO) for each SDG have been

developed by UNESCO's ESD (APPENDIX) (UNESCO, 2017), and some of the key competencies for 'sustainable citizens' (Wals, 2016) are: self-awareness competency; systems thinking competency and anticipatory competency. Integration of these ESD-LOs requires curating of teaching-learning content, teachers' training, and development of learning assessments. To date, awareness, and integration of ESD-LOs lags in RE as well as the mainstream and formal education systems. The decentralized curriculum management from MOE's governance for ALCs, however, can create room for faster response and implementation for SDGs.

### **Case Study - El-Shaddai Refugee Learning Centre (ERLC) and its SDG 4 Partners**

Established in 2022, ERLC is currently working with 18 refugee education centres in Klang Valley for RE of 1800 SGA refugees. The centre has been running Peace and Unity in Diversity Education (PUDE) that integrates fifteen ESD-LOs of SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institution as a subject to its secondary education curriculum. The module curator, The Blue Ribbon (TBR) Global, has also integrated SDG 13 Climate Action ESD-LOs to its Education for Climate Action for Peace (E4CAP) program. PUDE and CAIP have been attended by around 300 secondary refugee learners various ALCs/CLCs, as well as private and public university students since 2017 and 2020 respectively. Around 20 students from ERLC and E4CAP programs have had internship opportunities with TBR and various departments of UCSI University, its key tertiary education partner for SDGs. Through PUDE program, ERLC became more aware on SDG reporting and was recognized as 'The Best of the Best' of JCIM Sustainable Development Award (National) 2022. Today, ERLC continues to create SDG awareness through promoting PUDE module to other ALCs and CLCs.

### **Tertiary Education Level**

Between 2011 to 2015, Malaysia witnessed a promising progress RE at the tertiary level. Anticipating 100 refugee secondary education graduates each year, UNHCR and HELP College of Arts and Technology (HELP CAT) ventured into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in September 2011 to educate and provide apprentices' skills to 28,000 refugee youths on automotive, hospitality, animation and multimedia, construction and culinary. RM2 Million was raised to finance this project (The Edge, 2011). By 2015, 630 refugee youths graduated (UNICEF, 2015) and received certificate of completion. This

progress took another leap when UNHCR successfully signed MOUs with another six High Learning Institutions (HLI) in Malaysia: Lim Kok Wing University; International University of Malaya-Wales; Brickfields Asia College (BAC); University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus; International Innovative College; and HELP University. The programs offered included short-courses certificate programs, foundation program, bachelor's degree, and master's degree. Scholarships, waive of tuition fees and living support were also offered.

Difficulties were later experienced in meeting MOE's requirement for study visa. Consequently, the focus was shifted to primarily short courses. A white paper, "Towards Inclusion of Refugees in Higher Education in Malaysia" was submitted to the Education and Foreign Ministries, and the Prime Minister's Office in December 2020 to propose recognition of the UNHCR Refugee Card as an identity document for enrolment in private learning institutions. No further action from the government side has taken place since the submission.

In preparing refugees to local and global tertiary education, CERTE (Connecting and Equipping Refugees for Tertiary Education) Bridge Course was established by Open Universities for Refugees, UNHCR Malaysia, and Fugee in 2016 (NST, 2020). This course supports refugees in application to universities, basic research skills, writing and presentations training, exposure to university life, and mentorship. In 2019, 19 of its 93 participants were accepted to private institutions in Malaysia. In 2021, CERTE went online due to the pandemic (Sharma, 2021).

Officially, 48 students are reported enrolled to high learning institutions (UNHCR, 2022a). The actual number is higher as more refugees are aware on online tertiary education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, In June 2022, 35 refugees graduated from ERLC E-Graduate courses for various programs including Diploma in Health and Social Care and Diploma in Computing (Soo, 2022). Other education providers attended by refugees in Malaysia are University of People, University Corridors for Refugees and Coursera for Refugees. This progress is also catalyst by 15by30 target that by 2030, 15% of young refugee women and men are enrolled in higher education, including technical and vocational education, and provisions of scholarships for those needed. With this, the current enrolment of 90,000 is expected to reach half a million.

## **Case Study - Brickfields Asia College (BAC) and its SDG Flagship Programs**

BAC Education Group has been providing tertiary level courses to refugees since its MOU with UNHCR in 2015. Recently, BAC launched UPLIFT to provide equitable access to education to all children regardless of their backgrounds. In bridging the digital divide, the program thrives to increase access to digital devices and specialized and free online tuition platforms. Its flagship program, BACFlix, launched in 2017, provide six online learning portals which include tuitions for UPSR, SPM and IGCSE, access to education content on the national school syllabus in Malay and English. Its second flagship program, 'Back To School', is targeted for refugee, stateless and children from disadvantaged communities. The programs will be supported by a structured Learning Management System (LMS). A member of the BAC Education Group, Veritas University College, will be running a comprehensive Train the Teacher (TTT) Programme for free for teacher volunteers (BAC, 2022).

### **Discussions**

Enhancing inclusive and equitable education for refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia requires strategic national action and financial support. The costs for free health care and education to refugees which may run up to RM150 million per year (IDEAS, 2019) may lead to economic burden and public anxiety. However, their concerns can be eased through greater awareness on refugees' talents and potential contributions. For example, refugees could contribute RM3 billion to Malaysia's gross domestic product by 2024 and increase tax revenues by RM5 million each year if given the right to work (IDEAS, 2019). Providing quality education will benefit their well-being and build their capacity, and hence, support national's aspiration in advancing human capital and future ready talent in line with National SDG Roadmap Phase II – 12th Malaysia Plan (2020-2025) and Phase III – 13th Malaysia Plan (2025-2030); social and economic regeneration; and strengthening of security.

For upscaling RE-SDG4, some lessons can be learned on how Turkey, the largest refugee hosting country that hosts 3.5 million Syrian refugees, structured its wide-scale implementation in providing access to public education to its 1 million SGA refugee children with the financial support of EU-Funded Facility for Refugees in Turkey. The task force programs, led by its Ministry of Education, included Turkish language classes, subsidized

transportation and education materials, and additional training for teachers. By 2017/2018, 63% of Syrian children attended Turkish public schools (UNHCR, 2019).

Some of the participants of KIIs expressed concerns on such nationwide effort for the following reasons: the continuity or sustainability of the initiatives, preparedness of the existing system in managing administration work, facilitating societal readiness for integration between Malaysians and refugees and asylum seekers, and the life priorities of refugee families, i.e., earning a living versus learning. The latter is reflected by the online survey on two main barriers to RE (Figure 2) are children's lack of interest in education and financial constraint. Both are interrelated as lack on interest in education is resulted from the norm to prioritize family's need, typically, earning income for the boys and for the girls, helping with house chore. Similarly, the gross enrolment rate for primary school in Malaysia increased gradually from 88% in 1970 (The World Bank, 2022) to what it is today with increasing awareness on the importance of education among all families. Therefore, it may be misleading to presume an abrupt enrolment among the 21,885 refugee children (6 to 13 years) if National Education Policy on compulsory primary education is enforced among the refugees and stateless children.

## **Conclusions**

Since 2015 to 2022, there has been a slow progress as well as regression in different areas of RE implementation and refugee learners' development in Malaysia. There have also been many documents published on general guidelines, recommendations, and indicators for advancing RE for 2030 Agenda, and localizing a framework for a comprehensive data collection and reporting is timely and needed as reference for policy advocacy and advancement of RE-SDG4 in this country. This task must be integrated with National SDG Plan to leverage and complement the capacities and experiences of all SDG players. The formation of a steering committee is needed for a systematic approach and efficient progress. Regional collaboration and support must also be raised to resolve regional forced migrant issues, while active engagement from the refugee communities who are part of RE stakeholders and Malaysia's society is fundamental for the country's sustainable development. Their insights on the transformed life, well-being, inclusivity, and development of refugee learners are key in assessing SDG 4 progress for forced migrants. This top-down

and bottom-up governance and multilateral partnerships will be challenging. Nevertheless, with such strategic partnership, the future is brighter.

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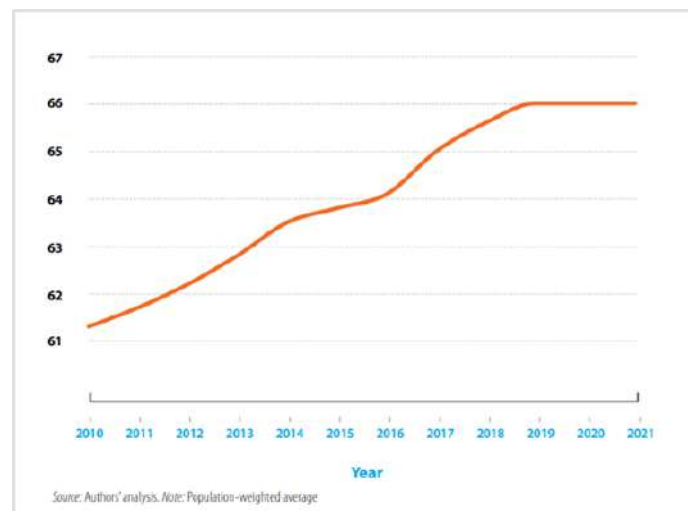
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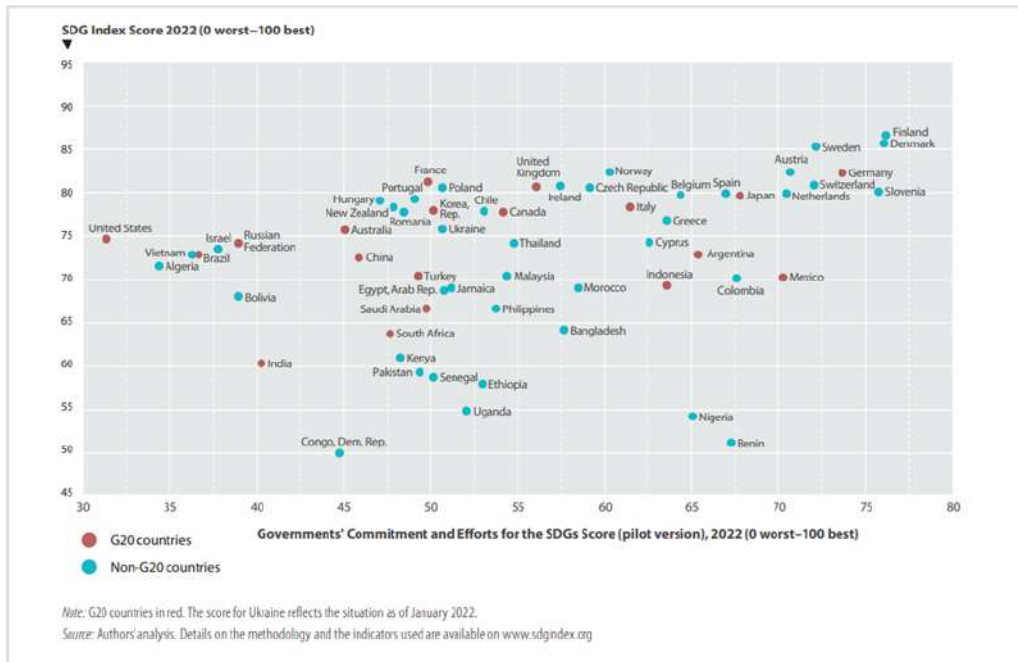
## APPENDIX

**Figure A1: SDG Index Score overtime, world average (2010-2021)**



Source: <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/chapters>

**Figure A2: Governments' Commitment and Efforts for SDGs Score (pilot version) versus SDG Index Score**



Source: <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/chapters>

**Table A1: Target and Indicators by the United Nations and Malaysia's source of SDG related indicators and their availability, and data from SDG Tracker**

SDG 4 Targets	SDG 4 – 11 Indicators by the United Nations & 1 additional indicator by Malaysia	Malaysia - Source of Indicators mapped to UN Indicators & their Availability
4.1 Free primary and secondary education	4.1.1 The proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex. 4.1.2 (Malaysia) Completion rate (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education)	4.1.1 Ministry of Education Malaysia <i>Available</i> 4.1.2 Ministry of Education Malaysia <i>Partially Available, Need Further Development</i>

4.2 Equal access to quality pre-primary education	4.2.1 is the proportion of children under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex. 4.2.2 is the participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex.	4.2.1 Ministry of Health Malaysia <i>Available (partially)</i> 4.2.2 Ministry of Education Malaysia <i>Available</i>
4.3 Equal access to affordable technical, vocational and higher education	4.3.1 The participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex.	Ministry of Education Malaysia <i>Available (partially)</i>
4.4 Increase the number of people with relevant skills for financial success	4.4.1 The Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill.	ICT Use and Access by Individuals and Households Survey, DOSM <i>Available</i>
4.5 Eliminate all discrimination in education	4.5.1 Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators.	i. Ministry of Education Malaysia ii. Labour Force Survey, DOSM <i>Available (partially)</i>
4.6 Universal literacy and numeracy	4.6.1 The proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex.	Labour Force Survey, DOSM <i>Available (proxy)</i>
	4.7.1 The extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in (a) national	i. Ministry of Education, Malaysia ii. Ministry of Higher Education <i>Available</i>

	education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment.	
	4.A.1 The proportion of schools with access to (a) electricity; (b) the Internet for pedagogical purposes; (c) computers for pedagogical purposes; (d) adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities; (e) basic drinking water; (f) single-sex basic sanitation facilities; and (g) basic handwashing facilities (as per the WASH indicator definitions).	Ministry of Education <i>Available</i>
	4.B.1 The volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships.	Public Service Department Malaysia <i>Available (proxy)</i>
	4.C.1 The proportion of teachers in (a) pre-primary; (b) primary; (c) lower secondary; and (d) upper secondary education who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training (e.g., pedagogical training) pre-service or in-service required for teaching at the relevant level in a given country.	Ministry of Education <i>Available</i>

Sources: (1) Quotations for Targets and Indicators by UN: <https://sdg-tracker.org/quality-education> &

(2) Malaysia's source of indicators and availability

**Table A2: Overview of Education Indicators on Education in Refugee Contexts**

Area	Focus	Indicator
Attainment	Prior educational completion	Self-reported highest level of educational completion
Literacy and Numeracy	Self-reported literacy and numeracy	Self-reported literacy and numeracy
Access and Enrolment	Participation and inclusion in education	Enrolment, Attendance, Participation in Host Country Language Classes, Access to non-formal programmes, School Type, Inclusion Type (see Box 1), Infrastructure for access (e.g. ramps)
Quality and Learning	Learning	Foundational Skills (reading, basic math), Higher Level Learning
	Inputs and Infrastructure	ICT Infrastructure, number of textbooks per pupil, curriculum, number of pupils per classroom
	Teachers	Number of trained teachers, number of teachers trained in psychosocial support, female teacher ratio, pupil-teacher ratio, number of headteachers trained, presence of multi-grade teaching, number of teachers trained for multi-grade teaching, refugee teacher integration
Safety and Protection	Safety of school Infrastructure	Condition of schools, presence of WASH infrastructure (e.g. handwashing, waste disposal), attack on schools (e.g. schools experiencing damage or takeover from armed groups), transportation safety
	Protection	Number of students experiencing peer violence, number of students experiencing corporal punishment, number of students experiencing abuse
	Well-being & Social-Emotional Learning	Psychosocial well-being, access to counselling, social and emotional learning,

Source: Authors' own elaboration, UNESCO UIS and UNHCR (2021)

**Table A3. Learning Objectives for SDG 4 Quality Education**

“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”

Table 1.2.4. Learning objectives for SDG 4 “Quality Education”	
<b>Cognitive learning objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The learner understands the important role of education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (formal, non-formal and informal learning) as main drivers of sustainable development, for improving people’s lives and in achieving the SDGs.</li> <li>2. The learner understands education as a public good, a global common good, a fundamental human right and a basis for guaranteeing the realization of other rights.</li> <li>3. The learner knows about inequality in access to and attainment of education, particularly between girls and boys and in rural areas, and about reasons for a lack of equitable access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities.</li> <li>4. The learner understands the important role of culture in achieving sustainability.</li> <li>5. The learner understands that education can help create a more sustainable, equitable and peaceful world.</li> </ol>
<b>Socio-emotional learning objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The learner is able to raise awareness of the importance of quality education for all, a humanistic and holistic approach to education, ESD and related approaches.</li> <li>2. The learner is able through participatory methods to motivate and empower others to demand and use educational opportunities.</li> <li>3. The learner is able to recognize the intrinsic value of education and to analyse and identify their own learning needs in their personal development.</li> <li>4. The learner is able to recognize the importance of their own skills for improving their life, in particular for employment and entrepreneurship.</li> <li>5. The learner is able to engage personally with ESD.</li> </ol>
<b>Behavioural learning objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The learner is able to contribute to facilitating and implementing quality education for all, ESD and related approaches at different levels.</li> <li>2. The learner is able to promote gender equality in education.</li> <li>3. The learner is able to publicly demand and support the development of policies promoting free, equitable and quality education for all, ESD and related approaches as well as aiming at safe, accessible and inclusive educational facilities.</li> <li>4. The learner is able to promote the empowerment of young people.</li> <li>5. The learner is able to use all opportunities for their own education throughout their life, and to apply the acquired knowledge in everyday situations to promote sustainable development.</li> </ol>



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*The Model of 'Self-Sustainable' Community  
Journey to Reduce Education Debt Among Malaysian  
Indian Community*

*By Concerned UM Indian Graduates (CUMIG)*

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Our Commitment to SDGs:



**#iptamy1stchoice**

**#FROMCOMMUNITYFORCOMMUNITY**

**Thanasegar Ramasamy**



## **ABSTRACT**

Concerned UM Indian Graduates (CUMIG) through its IPTA My 1st Choice flagship program, champions Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4 particularly target 4.4 promoting affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education in various institutions since 2010. This is in line with the United Nations aspiration to leave no one behind.

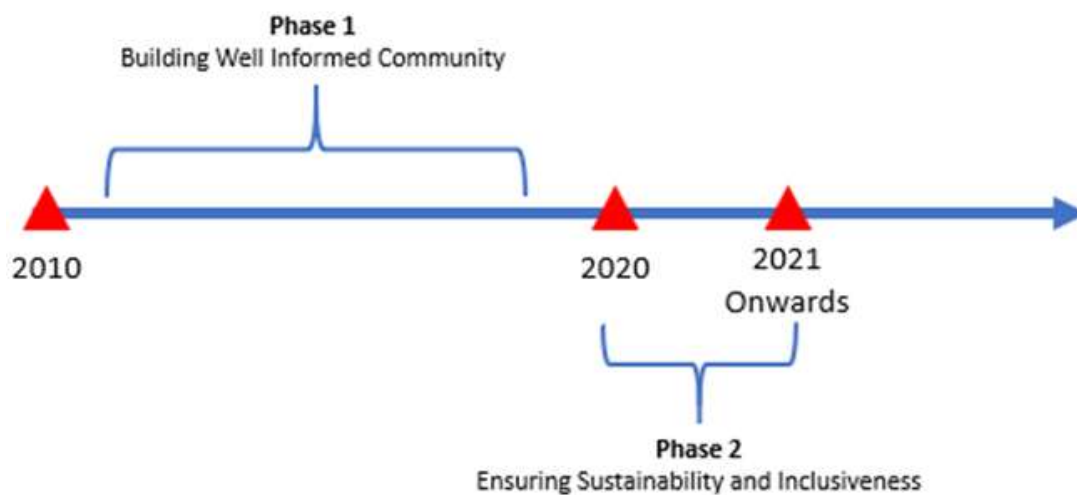
Our major findings back in 2009 revealed that marginalized Malaysian Indian community from B40 and M40 category were plagued by education debt with a staggering 80% of the students enrolled in low ranked tertiary institutions of tier 1, 2 and 3. Situation exacerbated as the unemployment rate among Indians were alarmingly high with low participation in public service sector. This is because most students fail to graduate from JPA recognized institutions.

Following successful implementation of phase 1 of IPTA My 1st Choice which comprises of initial 10-years-plan (2010-2020), we have now transpired into our second phase clocking a total of 12 years with nationwide reach in the Malaysian Indian community. Over the past 12 years we have reached out to atleast 10% of Malaysian Indian Community (over 250,000 people). This is not inclusive of the reach our other programs conducted for undergraduates, graduates, industry experts and NGOs. The campaign marks significant milestones such as increase in enrollments of Indian students in public institutions, matriculation, Technical Vocational Educational Education and Training (TVET), polytechnics, critical and Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) courses.

We work in a self-sustainable, strategic collaborative framework to propagate our core objectives. Our stakeholders include educators, network of 150 local Indian NGOs, media partners, policymakers, student leaders, undergraduates, and graduates. We have played a pivotal role in overall upliftment of the community by being the catalyst in increasing the number of graduates from public institutions, which has in turn significantly reduced education debt.

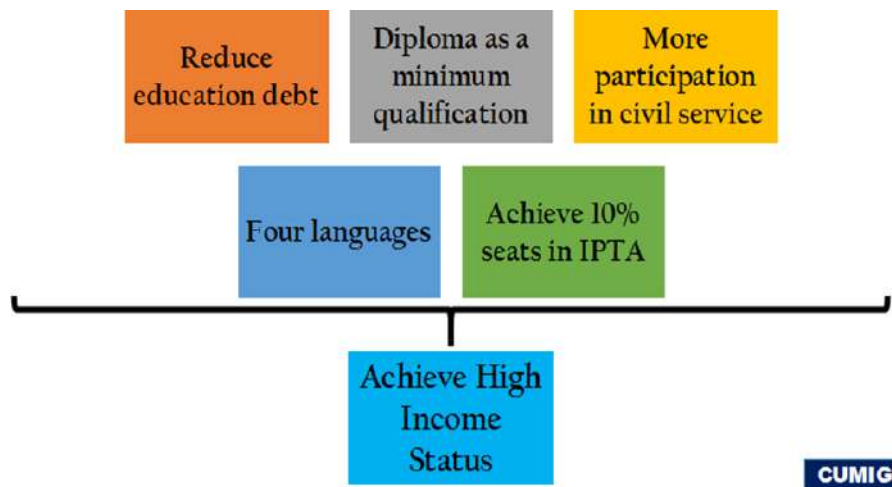
## INTRODUCTION

Concerned UM Indian Graduates conducted a study in 2009 on Malaysian Indian's socio-economic status against nation's growth. Our findings revealed that Indian community is plagued by huge amount of education debt primarily due to lack of awareness on available opportunity within public institutions and poor foresight on impact of education debt driven by huge enrolment into private colleges. As a mitigative measure, Concerned UM Indian Graduates (CUMIG) drafted a 10-year plan to provide exposure to the community on the readily available opportunities in public institutions whilst highlighting the importance of reducing education debt. Currently, our journey has continued to the next phase in driving towards sustainability and inclusiveness.



### *Phase 1 and Phase 2 of IPTA My 1st Choice*

IPTA My 1st Choice campaign was formulated and rolled out to reach grassroots of the Indian community. We aim to increase exposure and courage and educate community on advantages of enrolling in the government institutions. IPTA My 1st Choice propagates the following five objectives below to the community.

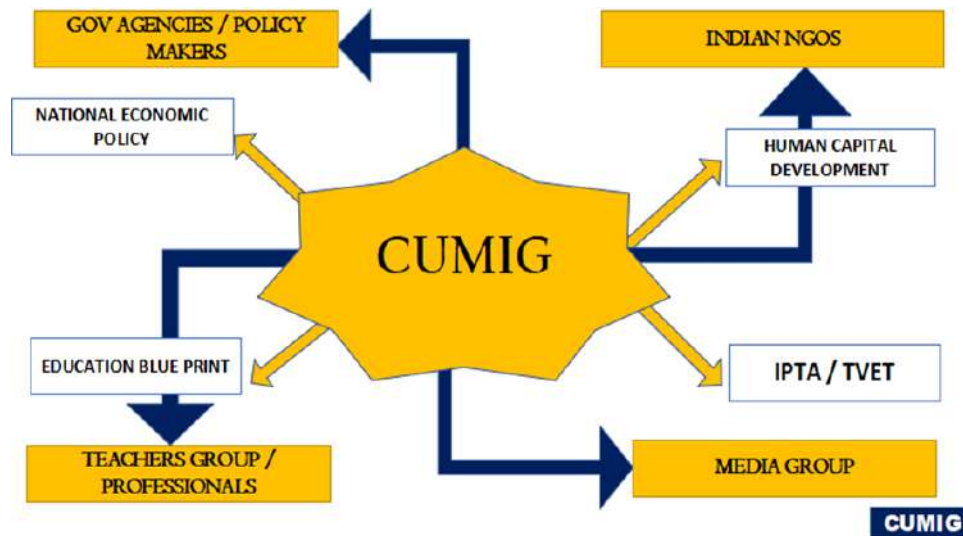


*The 5 objectives of IPTA My 1st Choice Campaign.*

The journey begun in various locations at Klang Valley and progressed nationwide as years passed. After 12 years of its execution, we have extended our scopes of outreach nationwide. This is only possible due to the collaboration with our strategic partners, MyNadi, Tamil Language Society of University Malaya alongside with various other NGOs in the country. The value creation has brought forward joint synergy of more partners reaching almost 150 NGOs nationwide. The model emphasizes on harnessing the power of community in a joint collaborative mode.

**The Model of Self-Sustainable Community**

We strongly believe that everyone has equal share when it comes to spearheading community transformational initiatives. We focus more on building our brand ambassadors to promote the objectives of our campaign as to assure the continuity of the campaign and reach. Our continuous engagements, brainstorming sessions, intellectual discourse with stakeholders, teachers, various NGO’s, media partners, policy makers and student leaders have brought forward huge progress to our mission.



*CUMIG's methodology of engagements.*

We stand firm to be apolitical ever since the formation of IPTA My 1st Choice Campaign in 2010 to gain community's trust and credibility without accepting any government-based funding. The process includes empowering the graduates (including the current undergraduates in public institution) as they are the closest to the application system. By system we remain untied with any parties and all the other logistical and food-based costings are usually directly absorbed by the collaborating NGOs or partners supporting the aspirations of graduates. We focus on delivering the knowledge, information, and opportunity for students who attend our roadshows. All ambassadors and professionals completely dedicate their time and commitment in voluntary basis solely to contribute their energy for the upliftment of community. Regardless, there is also needed to continuously upskill our facilitators and ambassadors with various trainings and program.

### **Stakeholders Engagement**

- **NGOs**

Concerned UM Indian Graduates (CUMIG) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with 75 NGOs in 2017, 115 NGO in the consecutive year and at present working we have established our network with over 150 NGOs nationwide promoting IPTA My 1st Choice Campaign. This is done to further facilitate the outreach of the campaign which will be carried out throughout the year, in more than 100 locations nationwide focusing on area with high population of Indian community. Since our partnering NGOs support us in terms of

logistics absorbing the costing associated with the campaign from the organizing capacity, we assure the due diligence processes are handled in right manner to avoid any potential trust deficit issues arising through a non-legally binding proper MOU signing ceremony after a proper engagement and principal discussion.



*MOU Signing ceremony with 75 NGOs in 2017.*



*MOU Signing ceremony with 115 NGOs in the year 2018*

- **Policy Engagements**

In 2002, a taskforce comprising of graduates came forward submitting a memorandum to the officials in Education Ministry expressing our qualms in the shortcomings of meritocracy implementation towards our Indian community. Proving our facts right, our intakes have dropped drastically in local universities.

Major milestone is when CUMIG addressed the importance to allocate 1000 additional seats at matriculation colleges to government run matriculation colleges instead of a private college in 2012. CUMIG pioneered the movement to ensure the additional seats remain under government run matriculation colleges.

The journey continued with another major effort when we foresee the importance of polytechnics, as an untapped education pathway. We collaborated with Jabatan Politeknik Malaysia to to increase Indian students' intakes in polytechnic. Campaigns such as 'Mengubah Destini Anak India Malaysia' program for Indian students with 3 credits to pursue pre-diploma in polytechnic are part of effective proposal put forth by CUMIG. We had a privilege in 2018 to meet and extend our proposals to Bahagian Pembangunan Kemahiran Belia (BPKB) for Institusi Latihan Kemahiran Belia dan Sukan (ILKBS) and Jabatan Tenaga Manusia as well.



- **Nationwide Graduates**

Since 2012, with the collaboration of Tamil Language Society of University Malaya (TLSUM), the facilitating team further grew by joining hands with undergraduates from various other universities and polytechnics to propagate our aspirations. We have been continuously educating our undergraduates on viable opportunities available in education and economic sector focusing on competency enhancement.

We have been engaging with student leaders from various public institutions on annual basis for principal discussions and betterment needed in the execution of IPTA My 1st Choice roadshows. Starting our journey back in 2010, the team now has progressed to a large fraternity.



For the very first time, IPTA My 1st Choice 2017 edition organized a convention for more than 500 undergraduates from various public institutions across the nation. IPTA My 1st Choice Convention is a magnification of the yearly Training-of-Trainers (TOT) conducted in the previous years. While maintaining the content of TOT, this convention successfully added value to the attendees by propagating the message of self -development alongside with contributions to the community.



*Discussion with student leaders, year 2018.*

- **Teachers and Educators**

Effective teachers look at every aspect and encourage students to foresight future. They direct them to the righteous path garnering them strong hopes to strive for successful life. CUMIG has never failed to rectify the important role of teachers in uplifting the community.

Along this mile of journey, we have met many teachers through numerous engagements. They are our important team member in propagating our due to the exposure they have with students and parents.



- **Publics**

IPTA My 1st Choice believes strongly in empowering the community at all stage and through all possible means. We have taken initiatives to spread the message and to create awareness on various opportunities available in public funded institutions during Thaipusam festival in Batu Caves, Sungai Petani and Kapar. Leaflets will be distributed to students and parents attending the festival alongside a short introduction to our campaign will be briefed too.



- **Media Engagement**

Working with medias has been our huge information disseminating medium to inform and educate different target groups of people to inspire them on available opportunities at IPTA. To be effective it requires careful planning and consideration from all the parties. At such it requires extra efforts for us to educate publics on our basic concepts and ideologies.

Engaging with the media has benefited in many ways especially in propagating our objectives to the community. Various media partners have rendered their support to promote our



objectives in subsequent ways. Among others, we have been engaging with RTM, AstromViluthugal, Online TV show, MinnalFM, Bernama and many others.



- **Academicians and Industrial Experts**

Our community empowering process is also inclusive of integrated efforts of various academicians and industrial experts representing diversified fields of expertise. We serve to be the bridging medium to the students and graduates on essential information of the career field or studies they intend to pursue further. To date, we almost have access with over 50 academicians nationwide and hundreds of industrial experts dedicated to guide and assist students. Some of our unique guidance sessions include CUMIG Post-graduate Mentorship Programs, Employability Series, Career Guidance Series and HLP Guidance Series.

**Our Commitment to SDGs**

Since the very early formation of IPTA My 1st Choice, we were aspired to ensure inclusive, equitable and affordable access to quality education to provide opportunities for all. As to align with SDG 4, target 4.4 we have been pushing various initiatives to witness a substantial increment in enrollment numbers at public university, polytechnics, and skill-based government institutions. A strong fundamental of education is the only gateway to assure the growth of a community it serves to be base for employment to secure decent jobs. Our work for community prioritizes increasing tertiary enrollment rates while inculcating the essential mindset among the Malaysian Indian Community. To ensure community sustainability

overall, we also advocate for SDG 1, as to end all forms of poverty by changing the mindset of B40 Malaysian Indian Community to make the right investments and avoid educational debts. This indirectly reduces inequality among Malaysians in terms wealth accumulation. Above all, according to Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 26 we also strongly believe that as minority community at Malaysia we too share the right for a proper education and particularly higher education shall be equally accessible to all based on merits.

Aiming towards a much holistic approach we were aware that conventional methodologies to tackle current issues faced by our Malaysian Indian community, will not work much. At such, we assured that our contents delivered in roadshows are up to the par with high source of reliability. In relative, inclusion of industrial experts as part of the team our consultation on academic pathway is a timely relevance for students opting to pursue in some critical and unique field of interests. We intend to Focus on National Key Economic Areas (NKEA) which include industries such as oil and gas, financial services, and communication. We also raise awareness towards the directives of current country policies such as Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, National Policy on Industry 4.0 – Industry4WRD and 12th Malaysian Plan.



We acknowledge our participants on widespread job opportunities in demand to current market and thus we educate them on employability trends. In roadshows students will get exposure on all possible pathways under government institutions they'll get a privilege get to talk to undergraduates or graduates who've been doing their field of interest in one-to-one counseling session. This aptly provided information will clearly help the students to pre-plan their career in precise. They get to stay in touch with a facilitator as their contact number will be passed for a follow up session. This team even goes to the extent of guiding the students with their UPU application till they reach their destination 'safe'.



*IPTA My 1st Choice 2015 roadshow attended by more than 1500 participants in University Malaya.*



*Facilitators giving an online application guidance for student applicants.*



*IPTA My 1st Choice 2019, Melaka roadshow a facilitator explaining on university entry requirements.*



*IPTA My 1st Choice 2019, Telok Panglima Garang roadshow followed by UM roadshow.*



*IPTA My 1st Choice 2019 facilitators doing data key in and follow up session with students.*



*IPTA My 1st Choice 2019 facilitators are explained available paths after SPM.*



***IPTA My 1st Choice pre-programme slots done in school and public hall.***

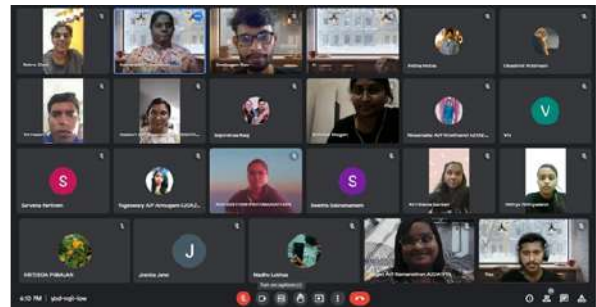
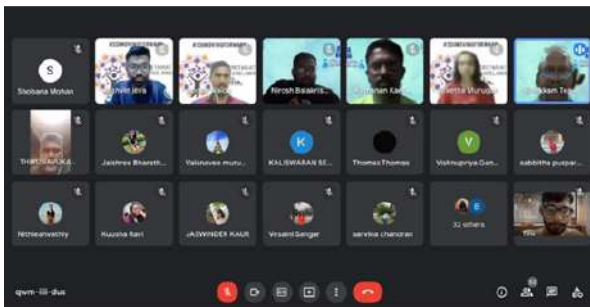


***IPTA My 1st Choice 2018 one-to-one counseling session followed by USM roadshow organized by USM graduates themselves.***

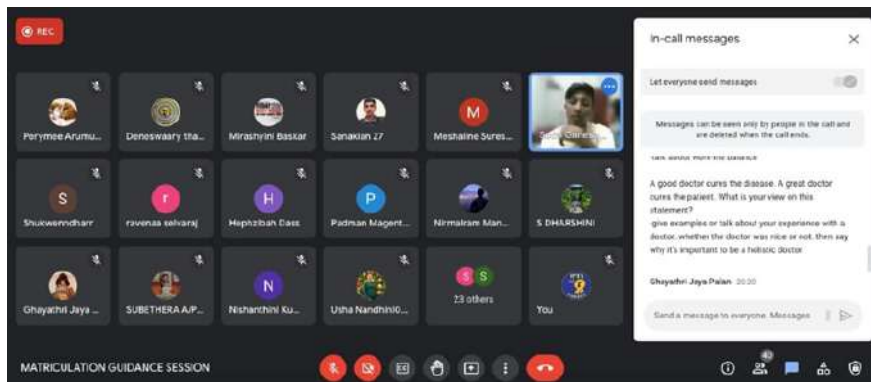
In time of pandemic, we had to re-strategize our approaches in virtual mode to reach students and parents. Penetrating available students virtually via online roadshows with platforms like Google Meet was a real challenge as many lacked basic accesses to good network and gadgets. We had to work out other alternatives such as through Instagram live updates, YouTube recorded session uploads, opening TikTok account to assure we reach more students nationwide.



*Training of Trainers (TOT) conducted for facilitators in 2022*



*Official Online Engagement with student representatives in 2021*



*Interview Coaching and tips for matriculation students shortlisted to attend Medicine programme in 2021*



*Physical roadshow conducted during fasa kemaskini UPU (June 2022) at Shah Alam and Universiti Malaya*



*Physical roadshow conducted during fasa kemaskini UPU (June 2022) at Klang and Sungai Siput*

Our significant findings show that financial burden suffered by larger portion of B40, and M40 Indians have been duly increasing due to education debt. Almost 80% of these students were studying in lower ranking institutions with tier 1,2 and 3. With alarming rate of unemployment, these graduates even struggle to penetrate public services because these institutions are not JPA accredited. Government then came with some progressive measures which includes increment in matriculation quotas up to 1500 seats. In April 2018, further addition of 700 seats increased this numeric into 2200 seats in a subtotal to achieve 7% student intake of Malaysian Indians in IPTA.

**Statistics of Indian Students Enrolling into Matriculation  
2012-2016**

Total	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Impact
Application	6,000	6,185	6,136	6,325	6,542	5739		High number of applications
Application (not successful)	4,500	4,335	4,280	4,404	4,267	-		Declining but not drastic
Offered	1,500	1,850	1,856	1,921	2,275	2050		Medium High
Accepted/Registered	1,170	1,142	1,394	1,408	1,389	1,479	<b>1,807</b>	Increasing
Offer declined	330	708	462	513	886	571		High number of offers turned down

Source: Ministry of Higher Education



***Statistics of Indian Students Enrolling into Matriculation***

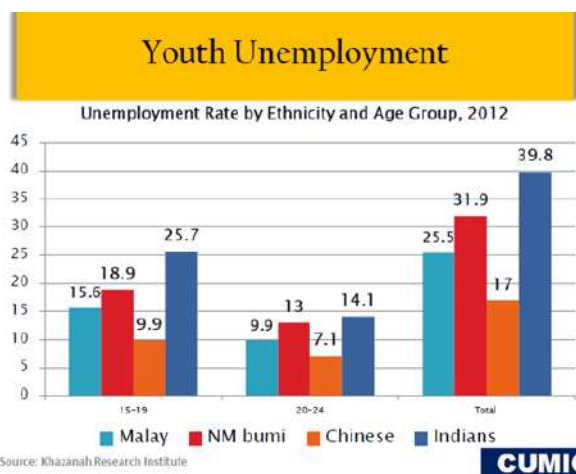
Matriculation program was first abandoned and neglected when it was newly introduced. Due to a continuous endorsement of our graduate’s effort, community has well utilized this opportunity. It is still the best doorway to critical and professional STEM courses such as law, medicine, pure sciences, pharmacy, and engineering.

Annually an average of 25,000 Indian students sits for SPM examination nationwide. From that amount only a net of 2773 (5.78%) of students gets to do degree program under public institutions in the year 2018. Only a total of 6926 students were offered to do STPM, Matriculation, Diploma and Asasi. Based on a report from the Khazanah Research Institute (2012) and Jabatan Perangkaan (2017), it is found that the unemployability rate among Malaysian Indian youths are 25.7% and 15.5% respectively. This includes our youths ranging from 15 to 29 years old who are supposed to be pursuing their secondary and tertiary educations. This indicates that almost 4000 Indian students do not finish their education up to SPM level ending up being labeled ‘drop-outs.

In our studies conducted in IPTA My 1st Choice roadshow which comprises of 5000 SPM leavers students nationwide, it is found that 30 -40% of students did not pass in important subjects (Bahasa Melayu, Sejarah, Mathematics). This means almost 10,000 students did not meet the minimum requirements of IPTA and UA intake. Meanwhile, only 7000 -8000 Indian students.



As fruit of sacrifices of selfless souls who have joint in our efforts, we are now enabled to foresee some changes. Back then in 2010, there were only 1300 Indian students studying in public institutions (UA) but now we've got about a net of 2500 students annually. Many weren't aware of existence of matriculation and foundation program in public universities (UA) before this but now we're conscious about these viable chances laid before us. This campaign has further outreached the advantages of skills related courses correlating government policies and current nation's need asserting importance of taking up TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) which potentially reduces wage gaps to achieve parity. Another obvious change achieved was polytechnic intake trend that has changed from 800 to 8000 over Indian students' intakes over the years. Now we can see many Indian students willingly preferring to study in polytechnics, IKBN, Adtec, JMTI and Kolej Komuniti.



*Youth's unemployment rates by ethnicity.*

### Total number of Indian students in Public Universities 2017/2018

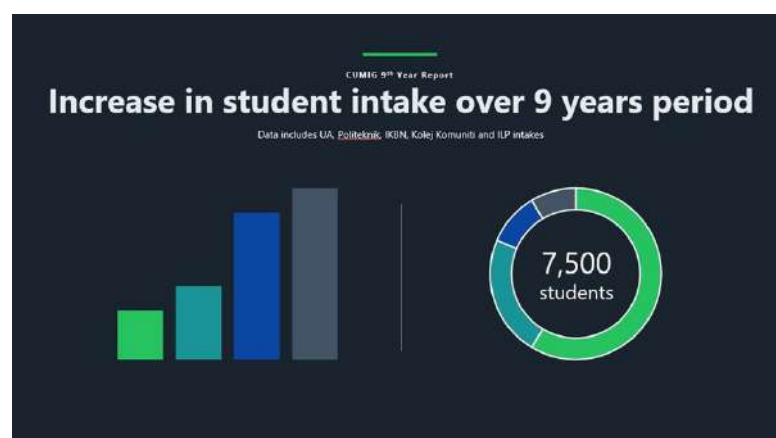
No	University	2016	2017	2018
1	Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia (UPNM)	31	43	35
2	Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UnisZA)	80	29	53
3	Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM)	90	215	168
4	Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM)	96	115	120
5	Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT)	105	100	138
6	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS)	119	110	108
7	Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)	124	150	198
8	Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP)	126	110	166
9	Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)	135	295	198
10	Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP)	136	280	230
11	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)	146	175	235
12	Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK)	161	90	142
13	Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS)	168	182	148
14	Universiti Malaya (UM)	202	259	262
15	Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)	368	248	249
16	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)	393	150	170
17	Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI)	-	-	153
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,480</b>	<b>2,551</b>	<b>2,773</b>

Source: CUMIG Survey

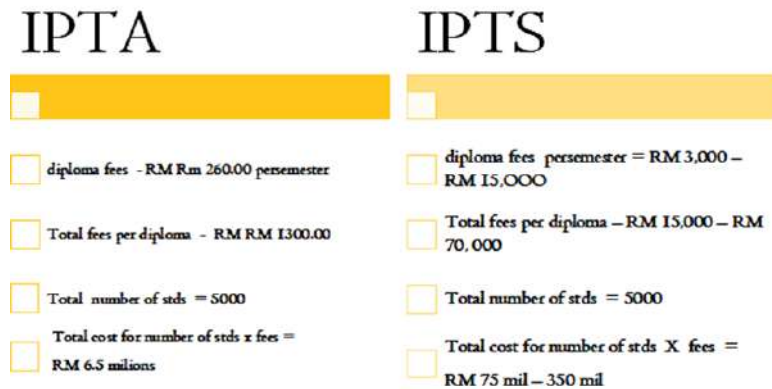
**CUMIG**

### *Indian students' intake into Public Universities 2017/2018.*

We are proud to have played a pivotal role in the upliftment of the community by being the catalyst to increase the number of graduates in public institutions by doing which have saved the community hundreds of millions of ringgits in education debt.



## Return on Investment ( ROI )



CUMIG

As part of Return of Investment (ROI) comparing the total expenses of studying diploma in IPTA and IPTS is shown in the above figure. Comparatively per student only pays RM 1300 in IPTA but total fees in IPTS is expected to cost an average of RM 20, 000. Generally, a student gets to save an average of minimum 18,000 as an asset. This can be invested to cover their property or further educational cost in future. This re-engineering process in mindsets of our members of community is very much vital to avoid unnecessary expenses and debts that leads to disastrous life and poverty

### **Sustainable Community: Aspirations & Expectations**

Being the largest apolitical synergy nationwide, CUMIG has been organizing IPTA My 1st Choice roadshows as an ancillary program for over a decade now. We require more support to increase our share of to attain our core objectives which are aligned towards the development of a ‘self-sustainable’ community. This should be done by increasing Indian students’ intake in IPTA (government institutions) which would simultaneously reduce the burden of education debt. Our grassroot engagement during our nationwide roadshows reveals that, 60% of Malaysian Indian households fall under the B40 category, earning an average of RM 4000. With such meagre earnings, it’s difficult to make the ends meet and renders it almost impossible for the household support their child by bearing the high cost of tertiary education in IPTS.

The idea of implementing a democratic policy in education is clearly a failure if eligible deserving students are neglected of the opportunity they truly deserve in the system.

We are now a registered society under Registry of Society (ROS) Malaysia. In the initial years, we focused solely on content and information disseminated in the IPTA My 1st Choice Roadshows. We ensured the entire working mechanism during engagement is sustainable . This is to enable us to retain our niche functions while all operational and logistics costings are directly absorbed by the beneficiaries and supporters (e.g., temples, NGOs, schools). With the accomplishment of the first phase of the 10-year plan, we found a need to officially register our graduate movement as a registered organization particularly to set up an education fund and ensure legal compliance. Our effort towards establishing education fund have been ongoing since 2020 and hence we do not require tax exemption status and audits yet. We look forward towards utilizing blue ocean strategy; synergizing resources to address the needs of deserving B40 and M40 Malaysian Indian students by advocating the affordable education.

In order to move forward towards the agenda for 2030, certain policy changes and actions should be spearheaded and accelerated in the next seven years to enable viable changes. First and foremost, the Malaysian government must implement a effective intake mechanism for tertiary education entry point as the current UPU (Bahagian Kemasukan Pelajar IPTA (BKPA JPT)) system differs every year in terms of layout, student merit calculation and many other features . Frequent changes that occur continuously every year renders the students unable to timely adapt. The system should practice transparency with a clear selection criteria for successful students. Certain exemptions of these criteria may be granted to students with lower academic achievements when they apply for TVET courses. These students need not wait until the SPM results as they could also be streamed based on their trial results. This would prevent students who aren't academically inclined opting to discontinue studies and work after SPM as they would to end up being a part of low-skilled worker pool. In addition to that, since large portion of the current students lack the basic knowledge and understanding on the different career options and the tertiary education opportunities available, all secondary school students could be given more exposure of career pathways, the required academic credentials, and prerequisites. These information can also be disseminated via workshops, exhibitions, and industrial visits. Secondary schools could

incorporate a mandatory session on tertiary education pathway update as part of school syllabus. This concerted effort should also be inclusive of educating and empowering teachers and parents as well with accurate information to prevent them from misleading the students.

Our data reveals that STPM and matriculation are two most preferred pre-university pathway among Malaysian students in general. The timeline for application has to be synchronised. The current system requires the STPM students to pre-register in the UPU portal as early as February/ March. At this stage, the portal compels the students to apply for courses based on their Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of Semester 2, ignoring the fact that STPM candidates can improve their CGPA throughout Semester 3 examinations and also re-sit papers.

The same scenario applies to matriculation students, as course selections to be based on the CGPA up to semester 1. UPU applicants aiming for critical courses are often impacted by this timeline because the shortlisting for interviews are done based on the the CGPA at the time of application (semester 1). This is a major drawback in the portal timeline and impacts applicants who have a improved final CGPA at the end of the term. By then, these applicants would not be able to re-apply for the critical courses require interviews. The portal should allow applications after students have obtained their overall results to ensure a fair merit is duly considered.

It was reported that 20,732 eligible STPM applicants did not secure a place in public institutions in recent UPU results announcement made this year. This seems to become an annual event with high number of students facing frustration and demotivation over course mismatch. There should be a transparency in terms of intake in public institutions which may include disclosure of number of seats allocated for high demand critical courses such as medicine, dentistry, and law. These statistics would allow the students to gain insights and choose their course wisely.

STPM is often the less popular option among the students. More students prefer not to choose STPM due to the level difficulty. Different set of weightages should be considered to assess CGPA of both STPM and Matriculation or at least the difficulty level of matriculation exams should be made equivalent to that of STPM standard. In one way or another this

would also align with our Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 (SPV2030), to create more skills and talents in research and development (R&D) as outlined. Single entry selection process for critical courses modelling selection process of Administration and Diplomatic Officer (PTD) could be another alternative approach. Holistic selection process encompassing IQ, EQ, physical and interview session with adjustment according to the respective field can be conducted by a committee of representatives from all Universities.

With above, we hope for provision of fair and equal educational opportunity for all students to ensure building a much well-informed community. Reaching 10% of Malaysian Indian Community nationwide we aspire the above policy changes and actions to envision more betterment towards our community.

# **The Learning Experiences Through Engagement Activities Of Environmental Awareness**

**by**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the establishment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in 2015 by the United Nation's General Assembly, the permeability of the ideas into various settings and levels of society has been noticeable. Even so, the effort is considered obvious after 2017, when many organisations and learning institutions have picked up the ideas of SDG and are partaking in the global initiative to achieve the 17 goals collectively. However, to support the promising start of the UN when different beginning points at different stages of change, it is important to ensure the right message and practices need to be inculcated into society. From the perspective of human psychology, changing people's behaviour requires giving the new behaviour a purpose. This indicates that new knowledge, such as SDG goals, should be established with specific reasoning and understanding to develop a new set of behaviours.

There is a lack of understanding on how to undertake education for environmental sustainability (EES). Local students are moving toward sustainability, but their approaches to the environment vary. It is critical to study in depth about what schools are doing to raise environmental consciousness and how they seek sustainability in the face of adversity. There is a growing body of work on environmental sustainability awareness that focuses specifically on students' attitudes, knowledge, and conduct in relation to environmental sustainability. To the best of my knowledge, no particular research on environmental sustainability awareness among the general people have been conducted, necessitating the need for this study. Kioupi and Voulvoulis (2022) suggested assessing the efficacy of implementing education for sustainability. As a result, more research is required to document the integration of environmental sustainability education. The lack of any assessment of environmental

sustainability awareness raises the question of whether the public are even aware of the importance of environmental sustainability.

According to the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), if we do not take immediate action, all natural resources, including marine and land animals, would decline by 67% by the end of 2020. The WWF argues that our activities will be held accountable for this (Iberdrola, 2020). According to the World Meteorological Organization, the average global temperature between 2013 and 2017 was the most significant statistic in the records. Globally, ozone-depleting chemical concentrations are increasing, as are life-threatening climate conditions and rising sea levels. This necessitates immediate and required action (United Nations, 2020). If emissions, global warming, and climate change are not successfully handled within the next ten years, life on Earth will begin to perish and people will slip into poverty (United Nations, 2020).

Because general education predominates over environmental education, environmental education is given less weight (Miklos, 2022). Teachers place little emphasis on integrating environmental sustainability education since there is no explicit regulation governing environmental sustainability integration. It is critical to examine the education system rather than executing various activities within the current educational frameworks, and to take the required steps to ensure that the objective of education is accomplished. Non-formal education has also been demonstrated to contribute to environmental sustainability awareness (UNICEF, 2021). The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of learning experiences and resources on environmental sustainability. Specifically the study aimed to analyze the effect of learning experiences on environmental sustainability awareness through engagement of activities among the lower secondary students. .

Environmental education must encourage students to become major players in the progress of environmental sustainability, strengthening their ability to make wise decisions that will have long-term consequences for their life (Suryani, et al.,2019). Students are not engaged in participatory activities or taken on field trips, demonstrating that environmental sustainability is not properly integrated in schools (Panula, et al., 2022). The academic course's practical experiences raise understanding of environmental sustainability (Eppinga, et al., 2019 & Melles, 2019). More research is needed to investigate the role of participation in environmental awareness programmes (Al-Nuaimi & Al-Ghamd, 2022). One of the most



significant problems in promoting environmental sustainability awareness, according to the Asian Development Bank, is a lack of instructors' knowledge and competence on the subject. Education must be reoriented toward environmental sustainability, which involves a pedagogical shift (Friedberg, et al, 2021).

The largest concern of the twenty-first century is environmental sustainability, because natural resources are rapidly decreasing (United Nations, 2022). The civilised community is concerned about environmental challenges like as climate change, natural resource depletion, ozone depletion, ecological devastation, and carbon emissions. To tackle these issues, global management and fundamental changes are required. The world's natural resources are under stress as a result of polluted air, damaged lands, contaminated oceans, and declining fish stocks (World Bank, 2020). Human activity is depleting natural resources, and if immediate action is not taken, the standard of living will begin to fall by 2030. 2020 (United Nations).

According to the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), if we do not take immediate action, all natural resources, including marine and land animals, would decline by 67% by the end of 2020. The WWF argues that our activities will be held accountable for this (Iberdrola, 2020). According to the World Meteorological Organization, the average global temperature between 2013 and 2017 was the most significant statistic in the records. Globally, ozone-depleting chemical concentrations are increasing, as are life-threatening climate conditions and rising sea levels. This necessitates immediate and required action (United Nations, 2020). If emissions, global warming, and climate change are not successfully handled within the next ten years, life on Earth will begin to perish and people will slip into poverty (United Nations, 2020).

For thousands of years, human activity has been damaging the ecosystem, resulting in resource depletion, species loss, and contamination (Fan, et al., 2021). People take for granted their environment, believing that nature would restore whatever damage they make. Every person on the planet has a responsibility to safeguard the environment and do all possible to improve world conditions (United nations, 2022). Governments, non-profit organisations, and educational institutions typically organise events to educate the public about environmental protection (Abiddin, 2022).

This, along with natural resource preservation and environmental conservation, is critical to meeting the needs of today's generation. Sustainability is the wise use of the resources available for development. Because there are limited resources, everyone must use them wisely and creatively in order to achieve long-term progress. In response to international statements on environmental sustainability in secondary education, many schools have included sustainability into their instructional programmes (Thani, et al., 2021). These remarks encouraged the schools to create a good example of sustainability for the community (Kohl, et al., 2022). Although few schools are pursuing environmental sustainability, it is widely agreed that successful integration of environmental sustainability into educational systems will undoubtedly result in major improvements in students' attitudes, knowledge, and behaviour. As a result, young people should be required to comprehend sustainable development (Chang et al., 2022).

According to Foley (2021), one of the difficulties is the difficulty in comprehending the concept of sustainability. Teachers that make an effort to teach environmental sustainability frequently fail to engage students in environmental activities (Fucsko & Sax, 2021). Many teachers have no desire to participate in environmental initiatives in their daily lives (Gamage, et al., 2022). Schools should take initiatives on creating awareness through environmental education activities on their own. European Commission (2022) encourages legislators, businesses, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), associations, the media, students, and other stakeholders to work together to help schools. They must increase awareness and adopt a shared sustainability strategy for that reason. Most importantly, schools are places where students are taught to be accountable for their actions in the sake of environmental sustainability (Dunlop & Rushton 2022).

## **Research Methods**

This research involves 455 secondary school students who were selected from the grade 9 and 10 secondary schools in 4 cities (Adu City, Male City, Kulhudhuffushi City and Fuvahmulah City) in Maldives. A questionnaire consists of 33 items with five points Likert-scale has been adapted and used as research instrument. Research instruments were tested before conducting with the value of Cronbach's alpha 0.87. The data and statistical analysis were analysed using SPSS. Pearson correlation was found in order to test the bivariate relationship of the variables. All the correlation matrices related to each variable

were explained before confirmatory factor analysis. The actual sample size of this study is 354 (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970 as cited in Sekaran and Bougie (see Appendix 1G). The expected response rate for this study was 80% (Ministry of Education, 2009) and for the purpose of data cleaning and missing data, additional 30 respondents were considered. The total number of students who study in grade 9 and 10 in the Maldives are 10904 and in the four cities of the Maldives, there are 4388 students (Ministry of Education, 2020). Out of 4388, 455 questionnaires were required but 466 questionnaires were received. It was more than expected. From Male city 333 questionnaires were required, but received 321 questionnaires. From Addu city 73 questionnaires were required, but received 81, from Fuvahmulah city 29 questionnaires were required and received 37, while from kulhudhuffushi city, 20 questionnaires were required and 27 were received. A total of 466 questionnaires were received. Therefore, the response rate for this study was 102.41% which was higher than the expected response rate.

## **Results**

This study aimed to find out the relationship between the learning experiences and the environmental sustainability awareness. However the results show that there are not statistically significant. But the learning experiences that are provided engage the students in activities related to nature. Tang (2018), students' learning experiences have a significant impact on environmental sustainability awareness. Some of the learning experiences that aid in increasing environmental sustainability awareness are inquiry-based learning and experiential learning (Schweizer, et al., 2018). However, non-formal education has also been demonstrated to contribute to environmental sustainability awareness (Kieu, 2016). The activities in the schools were not in line with environmental sustainability.

**Table 1: Regression Analysis of the Dependent and Independent Variables**

<b>Unstandardized</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>C.R.</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Standardized</b>
Engagement Activities vs Learning Experiences	0.744	0.101	7.376	***	0.544
Engagement Activities vs Learning Resources	0.737	0.150	4.909	***	0.551
Environmental Awareness vs Learning Experiences	0.047	0.084	0.556	0.578	0.050
Environmental Awareness vs Engagement Activities	-0.103	0.091	-1.125	0.260	-0.150
Environmental Awareness vs Learning Resources	0.438	0.141	3.111	0.002	0.480

**Table 2 : The Direct and Indirect Effect Among the Variables**

	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Learning Experiences</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Engagement Activities</b>
Engagement Activities	Direct	0.744	0.737	0
	Indirect	0	0	0
Environmental Sustainability Awareness	Direct	0.047	0.438	-0.103
	Indirect	-0.076	-0.076	0

Though Karaarslan & Teksöz (2016) agree that there are no best methodologies for teaching sustainability, Eppinga, et al., (2019) thinks that appropriate teaching and learning techniques should be utilized for environmental sustainability. Effective learning of environmental sustainability is firmly identified with strategies utilized by the teachers and the students (Melles, 2019). Hence, teachers must provide learning experiences that engage the students. As per Emblen-Perry, (2019) students need to get chances to connect school learning and everyday knowledge. Teachers should use approaches that make the undergraduates to rehearse what they have learned and should encourage students' dynamic involvement in decision-making process to empower them and to boost their confidence which would affect them in their future (Yoshiyuki, 2017).

According to the responses of the participants, students are not given group tasks or research projects related to the environmental sustainability and they do not practice recycling, waste reduction, and energy-saving activities at school. They do not even get opportunities in class to share their sustainability practices with their peers and at home, parents do not talk to their children about environmental issues. It seems students follow their own environmental interest related projects, and they decide on the topics on their own. Students participate actively in decision-making processes. They are given broad topics like planet earth, climate change etc. Therefore teachers and students share their knowledge and concerns on the topics that the students choose under the given broad topics.

Teachers must give projects related to environmental sustainability and get the students discuss and practice recycling, waste reduction, and energy-saving activities at school. Students must be occupied with active learning that enables them to connect with nature and improve critical thinking in the path of solving ecological and sustainability concerns. In this way students will explore nature's resources and will appreciate them and environmental sustainability will be promoted.

Teachers can instruct students to design instruments for environmental sustainability issues, find related arrangements and behave accordingly. Teachers can similarly empower students and make them more responsible in their learning through tasks. Particularly, science teachers should be more resourceful and creative to enhance students' understanding of environmental sustainability. This will ultimately assist the students get things completed on their own. If the students are engaged in participatory activities and are taken to fieldtrips, it

can be determined that the pupils will be aware of environmental sustainability (Sagdic & Sahin, 2016). The practical experiences in the academic course will enhance the environmental sustainability awareness (Eppinga, et al., 2019 & Melles, 2019).

## **Discussion**

According to this study, the relationship between the resources and the environmental sustainability awareness are statistically significant. Hence, the resources that are provided do aware the lower secondary students in the cities of the Maldives on environmental sustainability.

Concept of environmental sustainability is taught mainly through extra-curricular activities like planting trees and cleaning the beaches. Teachers use beaches and their surrounding as resources while educating about environmental sustainability. Students also learn to take care of the environment through television programs (reducing waste/ electricity and conserving water). Students also use the internet and social media to gather information on the nature and environment related issues. Hence, resources that were provided in the secondary schools do aware students on environmental sustainability.

According to various studies, institutes that dispense resources regarding environmental sustainability awareness, have impact on environmental sustainability awareness (Cogut,et al., 2019). As per Moura, et al., (2019), environment must be used as a source for knowledge. Tutoring through matters associated to the environment can be the most leading approach to find out the way how the natural world works. This could be the reason why reources promoted environmental sustainability awareness.

It is vital that the schools have the planning and the resources to manage students in the kind of multi-dimensional examination that education for environmental sustainability requires. Learning resources like libraries have a significant role in making the students aware of environmental sustainability (Meschede & Henkel, 2019) and these libraries must always be updated and academic management frameworks must be set up to confirm these educational goals (Meschede and Henkel, 2019). When students use the available resources like the environment and when they engage in the environment, they are likely to be more aware of the environmental sustainability and tend to behave responsibly. Environmental sustainability awareness need the students to become the essential operators of progress towards

environmental sustainability, they also need to grow their skills to make right decisions which could affect them for a long time (García et al., 2018).

According to this study, the relationship between the learning experiences and the engagement of activities are statistically significant. Hence, the learning experiences that are provided engage the lower secondary students in the nature related activities. There is a positive relationship between the learning experiences and the engagement of activities. Learning experiences like project-based (Schweizer, et al., 2018), conducting workshop style public events (Reeves, 2019), role playing and discussions (Frye, 2020), experimental activities (Wahyudiati et al., 2020) help to engage the students. It was also found that learning experiences like audit-based learning that were provided in the business sustainability segment that involved experiential real-world activities promoted environmental sustainability understanding, skills, and morals (Emblen -Perry, 2019). This indicates that if learning experiences occupy the students, then environmental sustainability awareness happens.

The learning experiences that are delivered must involve the students in the activities that support environmental sustainability awareness (Pretorius, et al., 2019). Students may be engaged in activities when learning about weather and climate change, but the teacher should focus the learning on environmental sustainability. According to this study, the relationship between the resources and the engagement of activities are statistically significant. Hence, the resources that are provided engage the lower secondary students in the cities of the Maldives.

According to many studies, the resources that offer environmental facts need students to contribute keenly (Matzembacher and Meira, 2019). The online resources are common now a days such as webinars, blogs, journals, open repositories, social media and e-learning platforms that students are more attracted and keep them busy at all times (Radu & Fogorasi, 2020). Students use these resources while they learn about environmental related topics and they are engaged well.

Curricula is the most common resource everywhere in the world and keep the students busy as well (NimotaJibolaKadir & AbiodunAkanbiGafar, 2018) and let the students get actively involved in these activities to boost their consciousness for environmental sustainability (Torrissi-Steele & Atkinson 2020). Some of the topics in their curriculum are related to

environmental sustainability. Hence they are engaged and aware of environmental sustainability.

If the school campus is more environmentally-friendly (transportation and energy efficiency) then the students are likely to engage in these activities (Soltani, et al., 2019). The school campus can have amenities like bikes for green transportation, empty area where students can plant trees, energy efficiency facilities. Therefore, the school setting must offer possessions for the students to be occupied in various tasks that would enhance environmental sustainability (Cogut, et al., 2019). Schools, beaches and other places where students are surrounded by offer resources to engage them actively.

### **Implication**

It is very important that right teaching and learning methods should be utilized for the effective implementation of sustainability (Eppinga, et al., (2019). If teachers are given an opportunity to explore the education system of other countries, they will get knowledge on the technique that would accomplish the environmental sustainability awareness (Corti et al., 2018). Teachers will get idea on the importance of connecting school learning and everyday knowledge (Emblen-Perry, (2019) and how to empower the students' learning through projects that would engage them to become more aware of environmental sustainability. Teachers need to focus on to carry out the activities that are related to environmental sustainability rather than nature related activities.

The findings makes a significant contribution to policy makers. As environmental sustainability awareness is fundamental, its implementation into the school educational modules is totally pivotal. To provide education on environmental sustainability, it is very important to inform the stakeholders the duties and responsibilities in detail. They can make policies to encourage engagement of activities to increase the awareness related to environmental sustainability.

Inquiry-based learning, experiential learning and project based learning should be compulsory in the schools to promote environmental sustainability awareness (Schweizer, et al., 2018). More often, non-formal education should be encouraged to enhance the environmental sustainability awareness (Kieu, 2016). All the academic course must have the



practical experiences to enhance the environmental sustainability awareness (Eppinga, et al., 2019 & Melles, 2019).

It is very important that right teaching and learning methods should be utilized for the effective implementation of sustainability (Eppinga, et al., (2019). If teachers are given an opportunity to explore the education system of other countries, they will get knowledge on the technique that would accomplish the environmental sustainability awareness (Corti et al., 2018). Teachers will get idea on the importance of connecting school learning and everyday knowledge (Emblen-Perry, (2019) and how to empower the students' learning through projects that would engage them to become more aware of environmental sustainability. Teachers need to focus on to carry out the activities that are related to environmental sustainability rather than nature related activities.

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## **Summary**

The SDGs must be capable of instilling educational values and significance both through its activities and programmes. Modular programmes will be a good option to introduce SDG goals with underlying values for various settings and levels. The process of internalising SDG initiatives moves from being conscious to ingraining values and attitudes into a way of life. In addition, the stage of the change plays a significant role in determining how effectively a community will participate in the effort. As a result, there needs to be an evaluation method that can be used to assess a community's readiness for and level of SDG implementation. This will strengthen the sustainability of community efforts and the meaningful transformation of individual experiences. Change will also be particularly impactful when it is spearheaded by the organization's or community's leader. The projects must have the backing and motivation of the local leaders if they are to be long-lasting and beneficial to the targeted populations. As a result, both top-down motivation and bottom-up consideration have an equal impact on how people perceive the SDG activities.

## **Using Digital Toolkits for Effective Learning in A Rural Primary School**

**by**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Pandemic is truly a blessing in disguise for the pupils from SK Selat Bagan Nyior. Living in a remote village in Dayang Bunting Island with very less exposure to English language and technology, these pupils had the opportunity to learn virtually. This article covers two main applications which was widely used by the teacher; Padlet and Canva and some other online engagements done throughout the virtual teaching and learning. The upper primary pupils' English literacy has improved especially in writing and speaking skills. Meanwhile, the online engagements enhanced pupils' motivation in learning and promoted fun learning in the classroom. The materials used for the teaching and learning were also shared to the teachers throughout the nation and received positive responses as they are practical and interactive in their respective schools. This aligns concurrently on providing quality education to the pupils. According to Hattie, J. (2008), visible learning happens when the children are equipped with quality curriculum, teachers and materials. The digital toolkits which were mentioned in earlier sections were the support structure for the home-based learning. In this section I would like to share the ways of implementation of all the digital toolkits. Based on SDG goal 4 targets, the quality primary education is covered in this.

**Keywords:** remote learning, creative materials, digital tools, upper primary pupils

## **Introduction**

The pandemic has changed the education world forever. It has paved a way for all the teachers to adapt to the changes of home-based virtual learning. Similarly, I had an opportunity for the pupils from my school to get the exposure to explore more digital learning platforms. Without this it would not be possible. The virtual learning was a catalyst for myself as a teacher to devise and design effective ways to deliver the lesson and engage the pupils as much as I can. Meanwhile, virtual learning and application of existing digital learning platforms were underutilised previously. The necessity for education upgrading was required to cater technological advancement (Mahyoob, M. 2020). There is slighter difficulty to access online learning because both learners and teachers have been experiencing excellent opportunity of knowing and interacting with educational technology tools such as mobile-based learning, computer-based learning, and web- based learning (Pellegrini, Mirella, Vladimir Uskov, & Casalino, 2020; Byun, Sooyeon, & Slavin,2020). The sustainable developmet goals (SDG) framework has six goals; Goal 4 calls for: ‘Improving every aspect of the quality of education, and ensuring...excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills’ (UNESCO, 2000, p. 17). As the field of education has the necessity to go through constant evolvment virtual learning was in favour to all the educators around the world.

## **Digital Toolkits and Pandemic**

Zhao (2020) has argued that COVID-19 is a catalyst for educational change. Due to COVID-19, many educational activities, including school inspections and testing, have been paused. The pauses “give governments and education leaders the very rare opportunity to rethink education.” (Zhao, 2020, p. 30). The digital toolkits play an important role in virtual learning. They are boosters and energisers to keep the momentum and engage the pupils throughout the lesson. Nikel and Lowe (2010) proposed a framework comprising seven dimensions for quality education namely; effectiveness, efficiency,

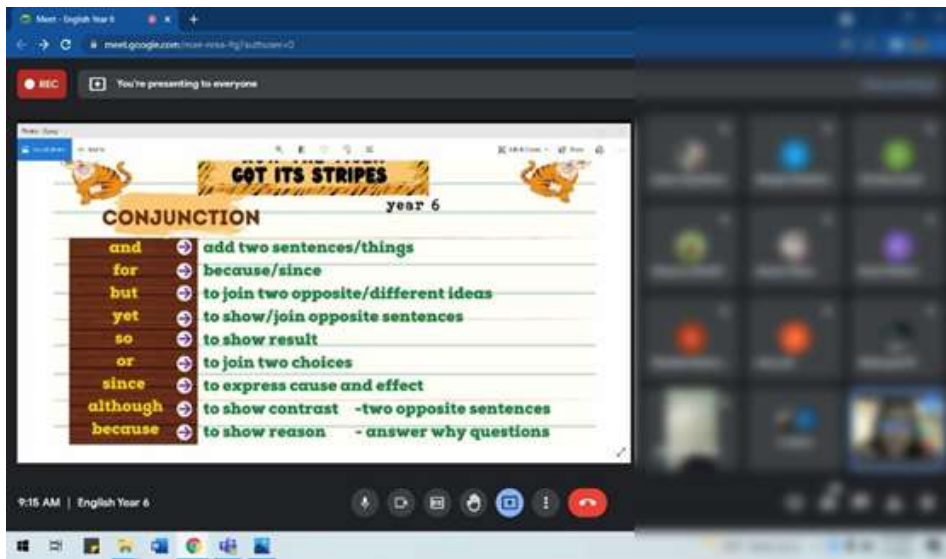
equity, responsiveness, relevance, reflexivity and sustainability. Hence, the inclusion of digital toolkits aided virtual learning and created a platform for the pupils to be more interactive. There are various types of digital toolkits for education like Padlet, Canva, Quizizz, Kahoot, Teachermade, Liveworksheets, Nearpod and many more. Now, if we can

ponder and rewind back all these were available prior to pandemic. However, the awareness and application in teaching and learning is to a smaller extent. We all know the answer. But thanks to the home-based learning, all of us had the opportunity to browse, to use, to apply these platforms in teaching and learning. The teachers want to try which method works the best for their students. They want their pupils to have fun and learn. That applies to me as well. My pupils, being in a rural village with very minimal exposure to English had the chance to dwell in the digital world. The adaptation and critical thinking of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning require all the educators to integrate constructive ideas to present their lessons to be meaningful, fun and available to the pupils. There are alternative digital applications to cater according to the need and level of pupils. The teachers just need the time to explore and try to implement them in the digital classroom. After implementing, it is possible to identify suitable medium for the specific group of pupils and then continue the teaching and learning with them. The pandemic has given a chance to many teachers like me to explore and integrate teaching with these digital learning applications to make it interesting. Throughout the home-based learning, there were discussions about effective digital platforms among the teachers. This clearly showed the curiosity and the thirst of the educators' community to seek for knowledge and grasp the experience to deliver the best for their children.

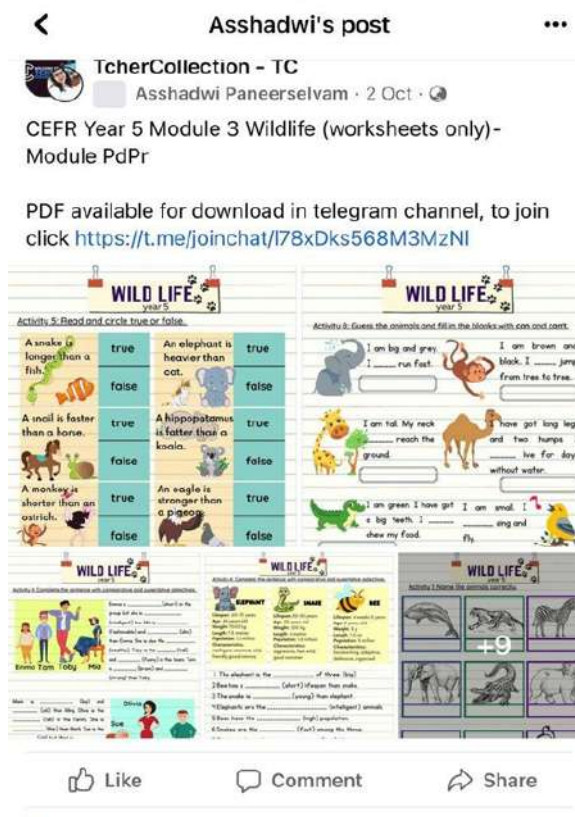
Frankly, the virtual learning was a real challenge. At the beginning, I did not even know how to get started. There were numerous questions running in my mind. "Can I conduct lessons without seeing my pupils?", "How am I going to make my class as lively as before?", "Will any of my pupils understand what am I teaching?". I am sure most of the teachers can relate to this. The new norm activated the creative side of me. I started with making colourful and creative materials for the lessons. Initially, I was only sending my materials and taught via WhatsApp. Thanks to Canva, one of the digital toolkits which I used in my teaching made my lessons interesting and comprehensive for my pupils. They began to show interest. I could see their participation showed a great progress. They liked the materials and responded well. This boosted me to do more, to come out with better materials for every class. The reason I present my experience here is to encourage the rest of the teachers to come forth and share their success stories. I am sure there will be many of them. This enabled me to embark on a new journey of sharing the materials and worksheets with the rest of the teachers and I

am proud that I have made it this far. Figure 1 and 2 show some sample materials produced on Canva and how I shared it with my pupils.

**Figure 1** Materials used to during online class



**Figure 2** The materials sharing in Facebook



## **What Digital Toolkits**

As mentioned previously, Canva was the main digital toolkit which I used on materials creation. This platform led to me to construct creative materials. The main concern while creating the materials is on ensuring the pupils' participation. I chose colourful pictures, attractive animations, engaging worksheets and simple text. I believe I know my pupils the best. Thus, the materials which I create should focus on easing their learning. Although, I was not physical present, the materials were representing my teaching style. So, I made sure I put all the graphics in a way which my pupils could understand and learn. My materials represent my teaching style. There are two types of materials, one is topic based and the other one is activity or worksheet. This helped me to teach the children on every topic and then to evaluate them accordingly. These materials follow the learning standard and objectives, yet accommodating the pupils' level and interest.

Next digital toolkit which promoted participation and communication in my ESL virtual classroom is Padlet. This platform was a game changer. The pupils were interactive and engaging in the lessons integrated with Padlet. They liked to take part in the discussion, brainstorming and writing actively. This was a platform for the pupils to be acknowledged and appreciated for their work. It has features on commenting, grading and liking which boost the interaction and participation of the pupils. It is a virtual platform to store all the works of the pupils throughout the virtual learning, like a digital workbook. Once again, the priority on adjusting the materials according to their level made the lessons to run smoother. Personalising the background and shelves for each pupils created learner autonomy. This eventually increased the participation. Besides, this platform helped to evaluate pupils' writing in various ways.

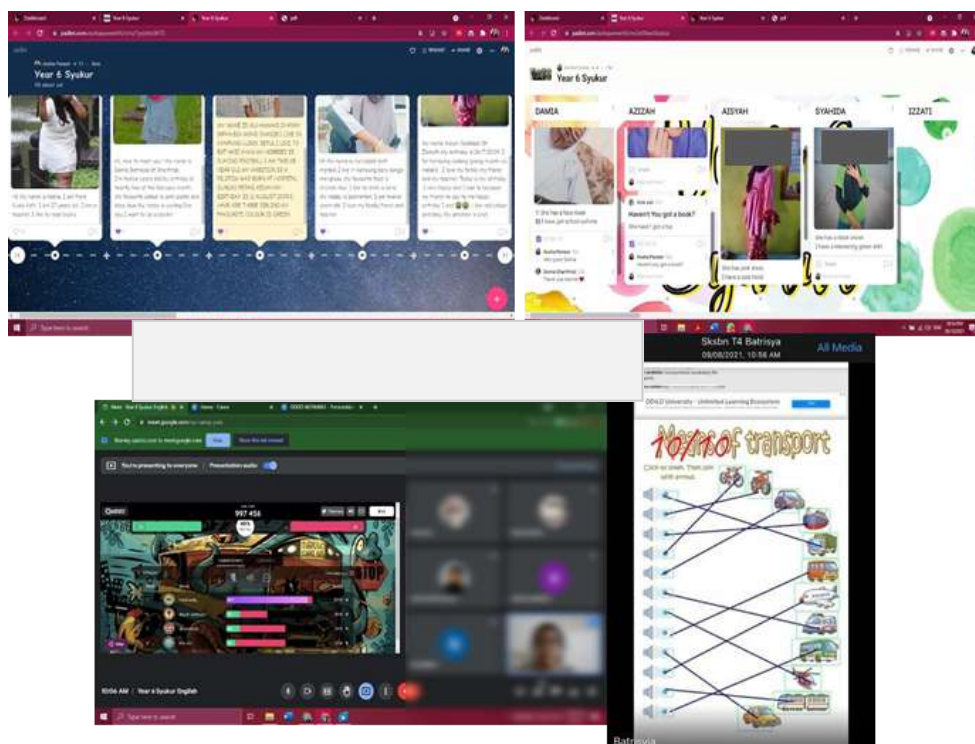
There were other learning applications which were included in the lessons like Google Jamboard, Quizizz, Teachermade and Liveworksheets. The Jamboard has similar features like Padlet which encourages the pupils to interact in a digital white board. It is an undeniable fact educational games always have the pupils' heart. They are attentive and keen on playing games. However, these games should be assigned carefully to ensure 'real' learning takes places. Sometimes, it may turn out to be merely playing the game without having the understanding of the content of the lessons. In order to make sure the pupils get the point of the lesson; I usually don't share the games first. The game links are only rewards, those

pupils who complete the assigned tasks will be given the access to play. This is just to maintain the efficacy and the purpose of educational games. Meanwhile, Teachermade and Liveworksheets will be used as digital worksheets. Figure 3 shows materials created using Canva. Figure 4 shows the interaction in Padlet. Figure 5 shows activities in Quizizz and Liveworksheet.

**Figure 3** *Materials using Canva*



**Figure 4** *Padlet Activities*





## **Why Digital Toolkits?**

Despite English language competency, these digital toolkits transformed the pupils to be tech savvies. I know my pupils the best. Their access to technology, gadgets and digital platforms is limited. Yet, home-based learning gave them a chance to type, browse, interact and create works in digital form. Personally, this is a milestone, for the whole community. These platforms made them to be more expressive. The participation is usually higher than the face-to-face lessons. This is because they are new to this and they like this. From as simple as attending video conferencing classes to submitting their tasks the pupils have evolved into ESL learning and technology awareness. As we are living in a globalised world, the pandemic made those rural kids to experience the digital atmosphere.

## **When, Where and Who?**

Meanwhile, Dhawan (2020) discusses several solutions to problems associated with online education. The solutions may include pre-recording video lessons or lectures; humanizing the learning process by making it more interesting, dynamic, and interactive; creating forums for communication using social media and other digital platforms; continuously improving the quality of the online courses; allowing students to ask questions and provide feedback; and promoting collaborative learning, project-based learning, and group-based learning. All the digital toolkits were used during the home-based learning due to school closure. The main issue was adapting to the new norm of having virtual classroom, then the challenge of shifting to digital lessons. The identification and experimenting using various methods and strategies to make the lessons interesting and comprehensive was time consuming but worthwhile towards the end.

How 'rural' is this rural school? SK Selat Bagan Nyior is located in the well-known pregnant maiden island from Langkawi Island. This is a small fishermen village which has only boat access from the mainland. This school has mostly students from the fishermen families. Figure 6 shows a snapshot during our virtual lesson.

**Figure 6** *My pupils during online lesson*



### **How Digital Toolkits?**

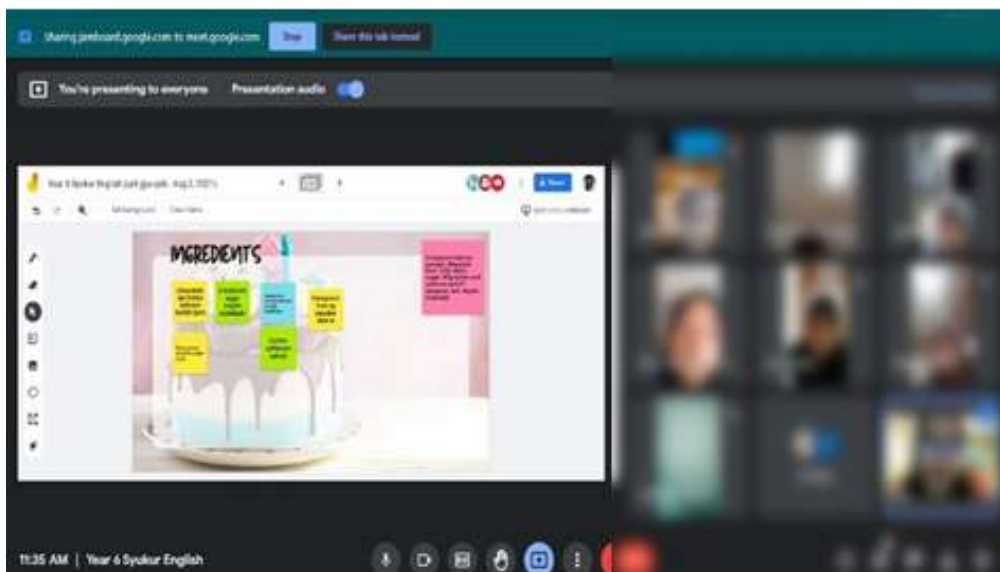
The digital toolkits which were mentioned in earlier sections were the support structure for the home-based learning for my teaching. In this section I would like to share the ways of implementation of all the digital toolkits. As for the materials creation, they are done based on the topics and learning standard. The materials were structured in a way that my pupils could grab the content in an easier way. For the worksheets and activities, I usually go for achievable evaluation. This gives a sense of accomplishment every time the pupils submit their work. It does not affect the quality of the materials and evaluation method. Most of the materials are structured to cater their level to ensure the pupils have the sense that they understood the lesson. It should not have to be too easy or too challenging for them. Next, the materials are thoroughly checked before I sent to the students and also shared to the rest of the teachers to minimise the grammatical and structural errors. The materials are created to ease the classroom-based assessment process. Besides, I always make sure I record a video of having my face in it to deliver the lesson. I strongly believe that when the pupils see their teacher's face, they connect to the lesson easily. It also shows individuality. The five key considerations include instruction (explicit, orderly, and well-organised); content (high-quality and appropriate to students' level); motivation (self-regulation, parents' involvement, and tasks that separate students from online environment); relationships (interpersonal relationships through various communication channels and sufficient face-to-face online instructions); and mental health (reaching out to students who may need

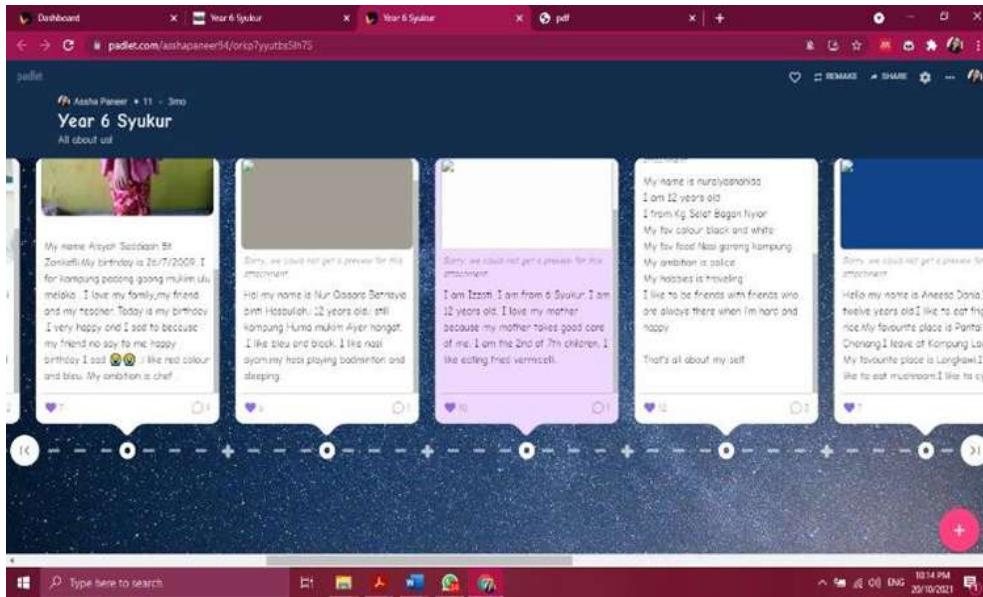
help and informing them about who to contact when they need mental health support) Martin (2020).

Meanwhile, the Padlet is the best way for the classroom-based assessment where all the pupils' works are saved automatically in cloud. The evidence and the progress are there. For the first few classes the pupils need to be guided throughout on using the platform, eventually they could access and use it for the lessons easily. Usually, this platform is used for writing and idea sharing sessions.

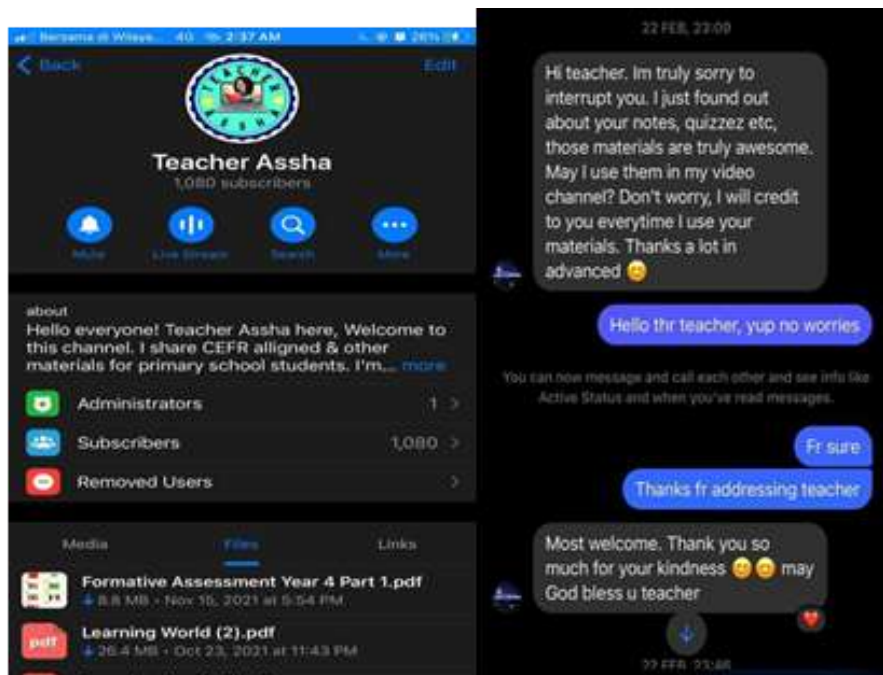
Furthermore, the materials sharing has been a great motivation for me. The response I got for the sharing made me to do more and be more creative. This also led me to start a telegram channel with 1000 subscribers in two months. This gives me confidence that the materials are suitable for the pupils. Figure 7 shows the digital toolkits used. Figure 8 shows the materials sharing in the telegram channel.

**Figure 7** *Digital toolkits used*





**Figure 8** *Sharing and feedback from telegram channel*



## Conclusion

Online learning during COVID-19 has obviously brought about many challenges for educators, students, school administrators, and parents, among other stakeholders. These digital toolkits made the home-based learning a different one for me. I am sure that there are teachers out there who have similar or better stories. Sharing them in platforms like this is equally important to having a successful lesson especially in this new norm. All the efforts should be continued and supported by the stakeholders as a post-pandemic effort. To conclude, these efforts should not be finishing. It should be a continuous effort to elevate the literacy of the pupils and to make a change.

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# **Relationship between Parenting Style and the Discipline Problem among Students in School**

**by**

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Annually we as a NGO (INBHA) will conduct students empowerment camp. There, we came through a lot of disciplinary issue students. There we realized that, there is a bridge between the students and the parents and it is one of the factor for student discipline problem. Through my journey as a Trainee Counselor and 6 years as social worker, I personally feel that Parents involvement in bringing up the kids is like cream of the cake. Moulding a teenager is a big project for the parents and the successful of the project we can see when the teenage stepping into a tertiary education.

Thus, I came up with the research as below :

The raising of a child by its parents and especially the way becoming talk of the town nowadays. Parenting has three essential components. Firstly, care protects children from harm. Care also encompasses promoting emotional as well as physical health. Secondly, control involves setting and enforcing boundaries to ensure children's and others' safety, in ever widening areas of activity. Parenting style is one of the factors which can influence the occurrence of student discipline problems in school. There are four types of parenting styles which are authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful. The discipline problem among students is becoming a common thing in the society. This problem is now becoming more common with as there is news broadcast on television and in local newspapers. However, this issue is becoming increasingly concerning with the involvement of the police. This paper will review the influenced of parenting style towards students' disciplinary problems. This study also examines the types of parenting styles that are often practiced by parents which their children involved with disciplinary problems in school. The parenting style practiced by parents can influence the child's personality and behavior, which is indirectly associated to the disciplinary problems.

**Research Question (RQ):** Is there any significant relationship between parenting style and the discipline problem among students in school?

Based on the findings about the most dominant parenting style, three types of parenting styles, namely authoritarian, authoritative and permissive, represent their own mean. The mean authoritarian parenting style represents a score of 3.08 which shows that this style is the lowest used by the parents of the students studied. Meanwhile, the authoritative parenting style represents a mean score of 3.16 which shows that this style is moderately used by parents. The permissive parenting style represents a mean score of 3.27 which shows that the parenting style is used at the highest level.

Based on the results of the study, it clearly shows that the most dominant parenting style is the permissive parenting style which is 3.27 where the parents do not care about the children's behavior and the children feel that the parents do not give them full love. Because of that, students think that if they do something wrong or behave negatively, their parents will definitely ignore it and not punish them.

This statement is supported by Rahimin (2006) in his study that family is one of the causes of juvenile crime among teenagers. Teenagers are now increasingly stuck with various problems of misbehavior such as juveniles, gangsters, prostitution and so on. According to him, family is actually a place to complain and family members are the closest people to teenagers. Parents should form morals and build a family with teenagers. Parents should form morals and build a good family for their children. A divided family will cause their children to rebel and commit crimes to release their anger. Therefore, the determination of the parenting style to be used is very important and parents need to reflect on themselves before putting one hundred percent of the blame on the child.

Ishak (2004) also supports the results of this study in that the results obtained show that parents are more permissive which means allowing freedom, less control, and no encouragement to ensure that their children comply with the actual standards of discipline. When practiced on teenagers who have a high or low self-concept, it can cause them to be careless, like to think about things that are very difficult to discuss, always change their minds and do things without thinking first. The teenager is also easily influenced by external

elements such as falling into drug use or joining social groups that are not recognized by society.

Authoritative parenting styles are moderate. Authoritative parenting style in this study means that parents still have rules and control over their children but at the same time they still give freedom to the children to communicate and give opinions.

Every study made will have implications for several parties. This implication is mainly for parents who are the most significant group with students and also teachers who are the second significant person in a student's life. From the findings of the study, it was found that parents need to find a way to strengthen their relationship with their children so that the children feel connected to the family. Parents also need to exchange opinions with their children and find out about the difficulties they face. Two-way communication between parents and children is very important to ensure family happiness. In addition, the family is the most perfect shelter, whether from internal or external problems. Family is a place to express feelings and get advice. No matter how old a family member is, they can definitely help other family members.

Beside this, In this study, female students gave responses in the distributed questionnaire, showing that some of them were involved in physical discipline problems such as fighting with friends, hurting others and breaking school rules. Also involved in anti-social and verbal discipline problems. Most of them have anti-social discipline problems such as skipping class, often not completing school work and some other behaviors. Meanwhile, male students are more involved in physical, verbal, anti-social discipline problems, while few are involved in sexual discipline problems. From the respondents obtained, this male student prefers to do something that can get attention from others whether it is friends, teachers or parents. For individuals who do not get love or attention, they behave in such a way to get attention from the people around them even if the reaction they get is negative. Therefore, we can see that nowadays, more men are involved in disciplinary problems than teenage girls. If anyone is involved it is due to the influence of their male friends.



The results of this study are supported by Badrulzaman (2006) in his study based on the t-test that was analyzed there is a significant difference between student discipline problems and gender. The findings of the study show that from the correlation, male students are more involved in delinquent behavior. This situation is relevant to previous studies. Male students are also more involved in serious disciplinary problems than females.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Every study made will have implications for several parties. This implication is mainly for parents who are the most significant group with students and also teachers who are the second significant person in a student's life. From the findings of the study, it was found that parents need to find a way to strengthen their relationship with their children so that the children feel connected to the family. Parents also need to exchange opinions with their children and find out about the difficulties they face. Two-way communication between parents and children is very important to ensure family happiness. In addition, the family is the most perfect shelter, whether from internal or external problems. Family is a place to express feelings and get advice. No matter how old a family member is, they can definitely help other family members.

### **Practical Implications**

The results of the research that has been carried out actually contribute a lot to recognizing student discipline problems and their relationship with the parenting style used by parents. Apart from that, the research carried out can also be used as a reference material for all parties as a guide in providing input or information related to the discipline that students need to have. This is because, the results obtained from this study can give an overview to the community about the influence of parenting styles on children to behave either positively or negatively. The researcher also found that the results obtained from this study can be used by counselors. It can help counselors to identify the level of student discipline problems and differences among students according to gender. Identifying the level of student discipline problems can help the counselors to ensure that these students can be controlled and change their behavior to become good individuals. Counselors can also assess the extent to which these students will behave and the effect it will have on them later and what actions need to be taken to overcome this problem so that it does not continue to spread. With this, the

students will not continue to behave as they want and counselors and teachers involve parents in this matter because the students' behavior has many causes and effects from the parenting style practiced on these teenage children.

Apart from that, the results of this study can also help parents to identify three appropriate parenting styles to use in educating and nurturing their children so that what they expect from their children becomes a reality. This is because, among the three parenting styles that are chosen, either authoritarian, authoritative or permissive, only one is compatible with the children's attitude. Parents also need to make sure that the change in parenting style that they want to do needs to be monitored on the children's attitude and acceptance of the matter because it is feared that they will become more aggressive if the parents choose the wrong parenting style and determine which parenting style should be used. With this, these students will be able to change their behavior brilliantly in terms of how they behave, in learning and in their life as a whole.

This study has successfully found answers related to the relationship between student discipline problems and parenting styles among problematic students in selected schools. The results of the study show that there is a significant relationship between discipline problems and the three parenting styles, namely authoritarian, authoritative and permissive. Apart from that, the results of the study also found that there is a difference between the disciplinary problems of students based on gender.

Therefore, as a result of the findings of this study, the researcher hopes that certain parties such as counselors, teachers, the Ministry and also the parents of the students themselves take appropriate steps in helping and educating the generation that will become leaders in the future so that the quality This teenager is always increasing from time to time.

In addition, school counselors and teachers can use the results of this study in planning, planning and implementing appropriate programs and interventions to increase and also maintain the level of positive behavior among students. Therefore, students actually need guidance and instruction from all parties. Parents who must play a very big role in ensuring that their teenage children are always educated with their correct parenting style. This is because by instilling proper love and attention in themselves and their lives, these teenagers

will always try to ensure that they are not influenced by negative things that will invite many problems in their lives.

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

The findings of this study confirm the findings of previous studies and some initial assumptions about parenting styles and their effects on discipline problems among school students. However, some recommendations should be made with the aim of further research in the future.

This study explores the effect and influence of parenting styles on the way children behave among students in the city of Semenyih. Further studies should be conducted on some schools considered to be at high risk with a larger population and sample.

In addition, future research will be more meaningful if it also involves parents or guardians of teenage students as respondents. The findings of the study can be used to compare and explore the perception of parents or guardians about discipline problems among teenage students. This will be able to provide a better understanding of how parents view their children's experiences of disciplinary problems at school or outside of school.

Furthermore, the study of students' and teachers' perceptions of discipline problems among teenage students who are in school uses quantitative methods. Future research will be more meaningful if it can combine qualitative methods to get more in-depth information about teachers' and students' perceptions of discipline problems among teenage students which could not be covered in previous studies.

It is suggested that further research be carried out in adolescent moral rehabilitation centers to produce more meaningful findings through interview, observation and other appropriate methods in addition to using the questionnaire method. The results of the study will be able to provide a more in-depth picture of the symptoms of more serious disciplinary problems among teenage students.

Overall, there are some results that are in line with the findings of previous studies and on the other hand there are also results that are different from previous studies. In general, this study was conducted to test whether parenting styles consisting of authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting styles play a role as variables in influencing delinquent behavior

displayed by students. The results of this study show that the three authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles of parents are found to have a high impact on the delinquent behavior of children. From the results obtained, one conclusion that can be made is that, in order to produce teenagers who have positive behavioral achievements, parents should adopt the correct parenting style - properly suited to the passage of time and the environment of today's teenagers so that there is no rebellion of attitude and negative reactions from teenagers. This study also put forward some suggestions for improvement that can be taken into account for further studies in the future. Overall, this study is expected to be able to help relevant parties in their efforts to deal with the symptoms of disciplinary problems among teenage students, so that the next generation will be free from the problem of moral decay.

## Chapter 5: SDG & PLANET (ENVIRONMENT)



1. Coral reefs: the Embodiment of the 5 P's of the SDGs: People, Planet, Profit, Peace and Prosperity- **Julian Hyde** (Reef Check Malaysia )

Community Level Capacity Building For Biomass-Based Product Development Towards Socio-Economic Empowerment And Sustainability -

2. **Palsan Sannasi Abdullah** (Universiti Malaysia Kelantan), Siti Nuurul Huda Mohammad Azmin, Ahmad Saufi Mohd Nawi, Ch'ng Huck Ywih, Mardawani Mohamad & Zul Ariff Abdul Latiff

3. Safeguard Our Survival, Shall We? "We are Not as Resilient as We Thought" - **Joyien Chiew Rou Yin** (AHA Moments), Ling Kim Lin & Low Zin Rui

# **Coral reefs: the Embodiment of the 5 P's of the SDGs: People, Planet, Profit, Peace and Prosperity**

**by**

**Julian Hyde (Reef Check Malaysia)**



**Coral reefs: the embodiment of the 5 P's of the SDGs:**

**people, planet, profit, peace and prosperity**

**What are marine ecosystems?**

## The Ecological and Economic Value of Marine Ecosystems

Coral reefs are sometimes described as “the rainforests of the sea”, a phrase used to capture the vast biodiversity that they harbour. Together with coastal mangroves and seagrass beds, to which they are closely associated biologically, these marine ecosystems provide a number of important ecosystem services – nature’s bounty that people benefit from. Protection against storms, habitat for juvenile marine species, jobs in tourism – not to mention as a source of food, these marine ecosystems are an intrinsic part of the lives of many people.

There are approximately 800 species of corals and it is estimated that 25% of all marine species are found in coral reefs – which cover just 1% of the ocean floor (UNEP.org). Coral reefs in Malaysia cover around 4,000 km<sup>2</sup> and have over 550 species of corals (1). Marine biological diversity in the South China Sea is immensely rich, with at least 3,365 species of marine fishes, more than one-third of these are coral reef fish (2).

Mangrove forests in Malaysia cover an area of 577,950 Ha and there are 70 species of mangroves (3). Mangroves offer a broad array of goods and services to the local community.

Among the important roles played are on- and offshore fishery, nursery habitats and shelter for juvenile fish, habitats and food resources for a host of fauna, nutrient influx, and a source of timber and fuel wood for some people. Besides that, mangrove forests have the capability to sequester a significant amount of carbon, and most importantly, protect the shoreline from soil erosion due to strong waves and currents, as well as tsunamis (4).

With 16 species, seagrass meadows in Malaysia play an important role in supporting coastal marine communities and in maintaining diverse flora and fauna. They are an important component of coastal fisheries productivity and they play an important role in maintaining coastal water quality and clarity (5).

Despite their ecological and economic value, marine ecosystems are often treated as “the invisible ecosystem” because, unlike actual rainforests, they are to all intents and purposes hidden. Few Malaysians visit marine ecosystems and few understand the benefits they provide to society.

### **Why are they important**

#### Ecosystem services

People rely on these marine ecosystems for food and jobs. The planet relies on these ecosystems because they filter water and keep it clean, they protect coastlines from storms and erosion and they absorb a large proportion of annual global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Businesses need these ecosystems for the seafood they produce and the jobs that creates. Peaceful, inclusive societies value them for their cultural importance.

Coastal waters account for just 7% of the total area of the ocean. However, the productivity of ecosystems such as coral reefs, and these blue carbon sinks mean that this small area forms the basis of the world’s primary fishing grounds, supplying an estimated 50% of the world’s fisheries. They provide vital nutrition for close to 3 billion people, as well as 50% of animal protein and minerals to 400 million people of the least developed countries in the world. The coastal zones, of which these blue carbon sinks are central for productivity, deliver a wide range of benefits to human society: filtering water, reducing effects of coastal pollution, nutrient loading, sedimentation, protecting the coast from erosion and buffering the effects of extreme weather events. Coastal ecosystem services have been estimated to be

worth over US\$25,000 billion annually, ranking among the most economically valuable of all ecosystems.

Globally, 90% of the world's fishers are employed in small-scale fisheries (6). In 2015, the fisheries sector in Malaysia provided employment for 175,980 people and its contribution to national GDP was at 1.1%. Food fish production is approximately 2.0 million MT/year valued at US\$ 3.3 billion. Fish trade is valued at US\$ 1.7 billion, and the estimated average consumption of fish is 56.8 kg/person/year. Marine capture fisheries was the main contributor to fish production and economy of Malaysia in 2016 at 1,574,447 MT valued at US\$ 2.5 million and providing work to 132,305 people. Aquaculture followed at 407,387.31 MT valued at US\$ 0.68 million providing livelihood to 21,790 people and inland capture fisheries at 5,847.97 MT valued at US\$ 0.02 million (7).

In Peninsular Malaysia, the 42 marine parks are managed by the Marine Park Department of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. These are mostly islands declared as marine parks and comprise both terrestrial and marine components. In Sabah, six Marine Parks are managed by Sabah Parks and in Sarawak three marine parks are gazetted (8). The Marine Parks of Peninsular Malaysia attract over 600,000 visitors per year (Department of Marine Parks Malaysia) and marine tourism contributed 26% to GDP in 2019 (9). The Total Economic Value of Marine Parks in Peninsular Malaysia for the period 2011-2015 was estimated at RM 8.7 billion (10).

Out of all the biological carbon (or green carbon) captured in the world, over half (55%) is captured by marine living organisms – not on land – hence it is called blue carbon. The Oceans play a significant role in the global carbon cycle. Not only do they represent the largest long-term sink for carbon but they also store and redistribute CO<sub>2</sub>. Some 93% of the earth's CO<sub>2</sub> (40 Tt) is stored and cycled through the oceans. The ocean's vegetated habitats, in particular mangroves, salt marshes and seagrasses, cover less than 0.5% of the sea bed. These form earth's blue carbon sinks and account for more than 50%, perhaps as much as 71%, of all carbon storage in ocean sediments. They comprise only 0.05% of the plant biomass on land, but store a comparable amount of carbon per year, and thus rank among the most intense carbon sinks on the planet. Blue carbon sinks and estuaries capture and store between 235–450 Tg C every year (11).



## **What's happening**

### Marine Ecosystem Management

Worldwide, coastal ecosystems are being lost due to coastal development, climate change and pollution, among other impacts:

- Mangrove habitat loss globally since the 1940s is estimated at 40% with approximately 3% loss rate per year in recent years (11)
- Seagrass habitat loss globally since the 1940s is estimated at 35% with approximately 7% loss rate in recent years (11)
- There has been approximately a 50% decline in coral reef cover globally from 1957–2007 (12).

Data from Reef Check Malaysia's annual coral reef survey programme show that "live coral cover", a key reef health indicator, declined by 10% from 2014 to 2020 (though there has been something of a recovery during the covid pandemic).

A 2020 report from FRIM estimates that the total area of mangrove forest in Malaysia fell from approximately 650,000 Ha in the 1990's to 580,000 Ha in the last decade, a reduction of 70,000 Ha, or 11% of the original area (13). Rates of loss of coral reefs and seagrass meadows are unknown but likely to be similar, particularly seagrass meadows which suffer greater damage from coastal development.

## **What the SDGs say**

SDG 14 calls on nations to "conserve and sustainably use the oceans, sea and marine resources for sustainable development. The key targets for SDG 14 are:

- By 2025 prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution
- By 2020 sustainably manage and protect coastal ecosystems
- Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification
- By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices
- By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas
- By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies.

Progress over the past 7 years (2015-2022) and the current situation with each of these goals is assessed briefly below, from a Malaysian perspective.

**Target 14.1: By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution**

In 2015, the Urban Well-being, Housing and Local Government Ministry began enforcing Act 672 of the Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management Act 2007. The Act makes it compulsory for residents to separate their solid wastes according to categories of paper, plastics and others or face fines between RM50 and RM500. The programme covers Putrajaya and Kuala Lumpur, Johor, Malacca, Negri Sembilan, Kedah, Perlis and Pahang. In 2018 RCM conducted a review of progress, including a trial in a housing area in KL and interviews with waste management contractors. The recycling rate remained low. Visual observations of waterways around Kuala Lumpur and Selangor reveal large amounts of trash polluting waterways – which eventually ends up in the sea. Observations in coastal areas reveal similar problems. However, there is a lack of readily available data on waste management effectiveness in Malaysia.

Reef Check Malaysia is the Malaysia coordinator for the annual International Coastal Clean-up Day (14). Data are collected from beach clean-ups around Malaysia. In 2022 the top 3 items found on beaches around Malaysia were cigarette filters, plastic bottles and small pieces of plastic. The data show no reduction in the amount of trash collected from Malaysia's beaches since RCM started conducting annual clean-ups in 2017.

RCM runs the waste management system on Mantanani Island, Sabah. Local villagers are paid to collect waste from households on a daily basis. Trash is separated from recyclables and food waste is composted in situ. Trash and recyclables are sent to the mainland once a month for disposal. In 2021, a total of 66 tonnes of waste was collected and sent for disposal. Had the system not been in place, the majority of it would have been thrown in the ocean – the only realistic disposal the islanders have. RCM is working with partners on Perhentian Island, Redang Island and Larapan Island in Sabah to implement similar systems.

A review of solid waste management and sewage treatment on small inhabited islands of Malaysia conducted by RCM shows that most small islands struggle with either solid waste management or sewage treatment – or both (15).

In 2009, RCM conducted a review of sewage treatment systems operated by resorts on Perhentian island. Most were found to be non-compliant with current regulations. Since that time, little has changed. Other islands face similar problems, for example Mantanani island has no integrated sewage treatment infrastructure, with households using either septic tanks or soak away pits, which leach pollutants into the sea nearby. Water quality data show that coastal waters around islands contain bacteria indicating sewage pollution. Reef Check surveys show the presence of algae on coral reefs – often a sign of pollution. A recent incident on Perhentian saw 40 tourists fall ill after swimming around the island and staff working in the diving industry regularly report ear infections; sewage pollution is a likely cause in both cases.

**Target 14.2 By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans**

During the 1990's, 42 islands around peninsular Malaysia were gazetted as Marine Parks. No additional marine protected areas have been established since then and the percentage of waters in managed areas remains at around 5%, well below the national target and the CBD Aichi Target of 10%. Furthermore, management plans are out of date and management has not kept pace with changes in understanding of how marine protected areas should be designed and managed (e.g. no mechanisms for participation by IPLCs). Sabah and Sarawak have both established greater areas of marine protection and are closer to having 10% of state waters protected.

In 2016, RCM worked with Department of Marine Parks Malaysia (DMPM) to identify local impacts to coral reefs, in order to develop strategies to address them, in accordance with Aichi Target 10. In most Marine Parks, little action has been taken to address local impacts.

Earlier, in 2013 RCM completed a project for DMPM to conduct resilience surveys at three island marine parks to identify resilient sites that might be the focus for strengthened protection. However, resilience principles are still not part of marine park management.

Mangrove conservation is the responsibility of state governments. Mangrove areas are still being degraded by coastal development, aquaculture and forest clearing.

Seagrass meadows in Malaysia have no specific protection unless they are inside Marine Parks in which case they have some protection against over-harvesting and physical destruction. However, most seagrass meadows fall outside Marine Parks and are highly vulnerable to damage by trawling, coastal development, sand mining and pollution.

**Target 14.3 Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels**

No data are readily available on this issue.

**Target 14.4. By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics**

Management of fisheries in Malaysia is the responsibility of the Department of Fisheries Malaysia. The Department prepares plans for managing fisheries. A number of policies and plans relate to the fishing industry in Malaysia. These include the National Agro-Food Policy. The policy outlines five policy thrusts and highlights four key sub-industries, one of which is the fisheries and aquaculture sector. The policy has the following objectives for fish stock management, by 2030:

- Protect a total of 10.00% of local maritime areas
- Set up Zone B towards trawl free zone
- Ratio of captured fisheries landing to aquaculture landing to achieve 60:40

The policy identifies several key issues including the depletion and increasing pressure on coastal resources, increasing production cost for marine and aquaculture fisheries, biosecurity and compliance issues relating to aquaculture farms, and the relatively low income level of fishermen.

The fisheries and aquaculture strategies looks into maintaining self-sufficiency levels, balancing fish landing ratios, enhancing monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) efforts surrounding the marine areas, encouraging use of safe and sustainable fish sources along the value chain, and improving the livelihood and income levels of the fishing communities for the next 10 years.

The following subsector strategies are specified:

- Ensure sufficient, affordable and safe fisheries produce by balancing fish sources in the market, with the aim to shift the fish consumption pattern from a majority of marine fisheries to a more balanced proportion of marine fisheries, inland fisheries and aquaculture
- Enhance fisheries resource sustainability in order to maintain and increase existing fish stock, and promote consumption of fish products that are safe and sustainable
- Increase national economic contribution of fisheries sector to improve the income of the food producer and overall economic contribution of the fisheries and aquaculture subsector by assisting the food producers in diversifying income sources and increasing the market accessibility of Malaysian fishery produce to the global market
- Prioritise good governance across the fisheries and aquaculture subsector to improve cooperation and communication with stakeholders such as state governments, enforcement agencies, fishermen and fish farmer communities and civil societies for positive outcomes

A recent situational analysis of fisheries in Malaysia, conducted by the APPGM, revealed that fishing communities around Malaysia have numerous complaints about how fisheries are managed, particularly surrounding licensing and enforcement activities, which need to be addressed by DoF.

Plans to address IUU fishing have been developed, but according to a recent article, although the existing framework is considered comprehensive, further stringent and fair law enforcement to combat IUU fishing in Malaysia's waters is required (16).

Fish bombing, though illegal, remains a problem in many parts of Sabah. Attempts to reduce fish bombing through installing fish bomb detectors and conducting community awareness

programmes are on-going in several areas. RCM installed detectors in Mantanani island and, following campaigns and an increased police presence on the island, the number of blasts declined by 99%.

**Target 14.5 By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information.**

As noted above, Marine Parks were gazetted in Peninsular Malaysia in the 1990's but no further parks have been gazetted. Currently some 5% of marine areas are protected. This is short of the 10% target set in the National Policy on Biological Diversity (NPBD), as well as Aichi Target 11. It is also well below the 30% target currently being negotiated by the Convention on Biological Diversity, which is calling for 30% of marine areas to be protected by 2030. Malaysia has not joined either of the two multinational coalitions that are supporting this target (High Ambition Coalition; Global Ocean Alliance); regional neighbours including Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand have joined or will soon join.

The on-going review of the NPBD will retain the 10% target for marine protected areas, but may include a provision to increase it to 15% by the end of the policy lifetime (2030).

**Target 14.6 By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organization fisheries subsidies negotiation.**

According to a review published in 2019, subsidies are a form of support provided to consumers and producers by government to enhance welfare. Fishers in Malaysia receive various type of subsidies. Fisheries subsidies however are a challenge because it can work against fishers' welfare if the fisheries subsidies lead to over fishing and resource depletion. The paper identifies several subsidies which are classified as "beneficial", "ambiguous" or "harmful".

Beneficial subsidies are subsidies that reduce capacity effort and help the artisanal fishers to increase landings and incomes and minimize by-catch. Examples of government expenditure that can be considered as beneficial subsidies are budgets allocated for research and development and fisheries management. Harmful subsidies are those that result in capacity-enhancement in the fisheries that lead to overfishing. Examples of harmful fisheries subsidies are financial support for boat construction and fleet modernization and fuel support that promotes overfishing. In 2017, subsidies totalled RM 524 million, 67% which (fuel and catch incentives) were considered to be harmful and have negative impacts on fisheries.

### **Cross cutting goals (14A, B, C)**

These targets are not addressed here as there is insufficient data on the situation with these targets.

### **Plan through to 2030**

The following focus areas are recommended:

Target 14.1: By 2025 prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution

- Improve sewage treatment, particularly on islands but also coastal areas. Existing systems are adequate and in compliance with building standards; but maintenance and de-sludging programmes are urgently required to ensure they are operating to specification.
- Enforce guidelines of effluent discharge limits through more enforcement by DoE.
- Implement waste management systems on all small, inhabited islands, along similar lines to what is being done on Mantanani, Tioman, Perhentian and Larapan. Economic losses from lack of waste treatment significantly outweigh the costs of improving waste management.

Target 14.2: By 2020 sustainably manage and protect coastal ecosystems

- Develop and implement new management plans for all Marine Parks.
- Establish participatory management arrangements for Marine Parks management.
- Introduce resilience principles into Marine Parks management.
- Address all local impacts to marine ecosystems (e.g. pollution, land-use change, physical impacts from tourism operations, poaching of reef fishes).

Target 14.4: By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices

- Improve enforcement of fisheries areas.
- Address licensing issues.
- Conduct public awareness campaigns to address destructive fishing.
- Establish alternative livelihood programmes to support fishermen in the transition to new livelihoods.

Target 14.5: By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas

- Conduct surveys to map all marine ecosystems.
- Identify important biodiversity areas.
- Establish managed areas to protect 30% of important biodiversity areas.

Target 14.6: By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies.

- Reform subsidies to remove harmful subsidies.
- Establish alternative livelihood programmes to support fishermen in the transition to new livelihoods.
- Implement fisheries management plans to protect fish stocks.



## Conclusion

Marine ecosystems (coral reefs, seagrass meadows and mangroves) are the embodiment of the 5 P's of the SDGs: people, planet, profit, peace and prosperity:

- For People, they provide food and livelihoods
- For the Planet, they absorb CO<sub>2</sub>, and provide flood defences for coastal communities
- For Profit, they support business in both the tourism and fisheries industries
- For Peace, they provide a balance between coastal communities and deep sea trawling; they also provide for sustainable livelihoods

Taken together, these provide for prosperity for society,

The Malaysian government is strongly encouraged to take action to address the concerns raised about SDG 14, and to improve protections for these essential coastal ecosystems.

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## **Community Level Capacity Building For Biomass-Based Product Development**

### **Towards Socio-Economic Empowerment And Sustainability**

by

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#### **ABSTRACT**

We share a program spearheaded by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) with Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) under the UMK-MoF Social Enterprise Project focusing on agrowaste utilization, capacity building for product development through rural community engagement in Jeli, Kelantan, towards socio-economic empowerment, and environmental sustainability. Agrobiomass residues are mostly dumped as trash. Cleaning up means carrying out open burning. This contributes to air pollution, adverse health effects, water pollution, blocked drainage, and deteriorates environmental and living quality. Biomass-based product development emphasizes on transforming low value agrobiomass into value-added product derivatives for commercialization. Biomass material conversion are to be done in an eco-friendly manner while optimizing productivity. The challenge is to bring awareness and know-how to the people. These would be key to addressing the sustainable development goals within the emerging circular economy landscape. The journey is of community level capacity building, knowledge and skill transfer initiatives beginning from material sourcing, biomass conversion and preparation, product formulation, development, processing, mixing, and production of agri-input products by the local community (<https://youtu.be/kE0owz0n8>). The outcome among others are; a new community agri-input processing and production facility and capability, new and additional income generation, knowledge and skills transfer in product development, subsequent value addition of recovered agrowaste, inception of community entrepreneur ('Team BioArang Jeli') where they have helped themselves and are now able to help fellow community members, prevention of open dumping and pollution, adoption of a cleaner biochar production, followed by biochar enriched soil media

application that resonates the climate change agenda through carbon sequestration. All in all, flexing and co-benefitting sustainable development goals along the people, prosperity, and planet themes. This exemplifies success of a dedicated government-academia collaborative engagement at the grassroots level in advocating sustainable development goals.

### **Introduction & Background**

This program is introduced by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) with Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) under the UMK-MoF Social Enterprise Project that focuses on agrowaste utilization, capacity building for product development through rural community engagement in Jeli, Kelantan, towards socio-economic empowerment, and environmental sustainability. Program implementation was in the form of knowledge transfer and capacity development for the local community in the field of biomass-based value-added product development. The program aimed to equip participants with the knowledge and skills, especially those from the B40 group. This effort is in line with the government's goal towards empowering the B40 group and the community as outlined in the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030. This has been translated through the objectives of the program that encapsulates the effort. The initiative is based on the four pillars of knowledge empowerment (including knowledge and skills), innovation development, technical and technology sharing, and the provision of advisory services from the university to the local community. This coincides with the purpose of university for society (U4S). The product development motive is a direct result of research, as well as innovation towards commercialization, and at the same time empowerment of the social entrepreneurship agenda. The participants will have the ability to produce and market their products. The impact of the program is expected to benefit the community, economic growth, and environmental sustainability.

### **Problem Statement**

Based on statistics, more than 168 million tons of biomass are produced annually in Malaysia, having increased from 70 million tons in 2009 (MIDA, 2021; Agamuthu, 2009). The main sources of biomass in Malaysia can be obtained from agricultural waste, palm oil waste, wood disposal waste, and municipal waste. In the agricultural sector, 30-50% of materials are abandoned and become discarded waste (Scott, 2015). This does not include agro-industrial waste from the processing of agricultural products. In Asia, it is estimated that

more than 15% of the total waste generated is agro-waste, with the generation of approximately 0.122 (kg/cap/day) of agrowaste in Malaysia in 2009 which is projected to reach 0.210 (kg/cap/day) by the year 2025 (Agamuthu, 2009). On average, over 1.2 million tonnes of agro-waste are dumped into landfills every year (Agamuthu, 2009). More than 70% of the waste is thrown away as garbage, left to rot, or disposed of by burning. Often, cleaning up areas and waste means gathering all the materials in one place and doing open burning. Open burning contributes to the haze problem and bring harm to the public. The issue of waste piles leads to air, soil, water pollution, adverse effects on health and further affects the quality of the environment and aesthetic value. The smoke from this open burning causes eye irritation, disturbs breathing and causes shortness of breath, especially for those with asthma. Continuous exposure to combustion smoke containing dangerous compounds such as hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, which can have negative effects on the lungs and health. The ban on open burning is outlined in the Environmental Quality Act 1974, under Sections 29A, 29AA, and 29B.

### Current Scenario And Opportunity

The sight of coconut shells being thrown away and burned openly is quite common (Figure 1). This is a large loss of raw material resources that actually can have economic value.



**Figure 1:** A typical view of a spread of discarded and openly burned coconut shells.

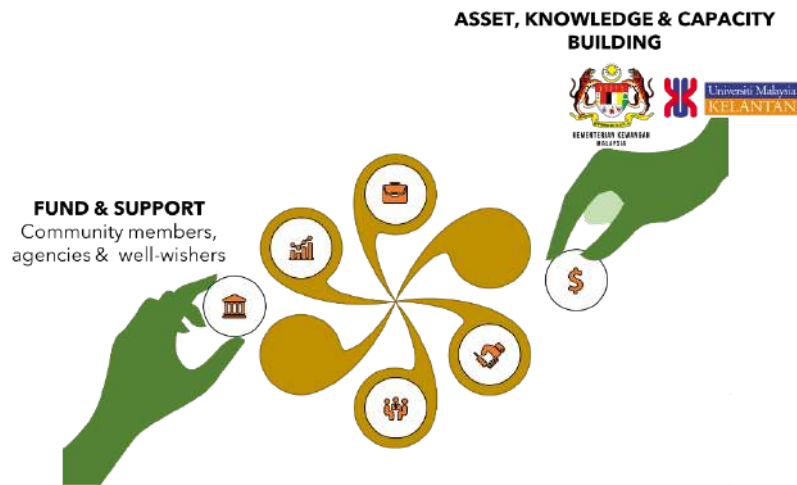
Although many awareness campaigns have been carried out, the outcome is yet to be comprehensive. The alternate approach is to look at the creation of value from the waste material ('waste to wealth'). Here the initiative requires community involvement in exploiting the waste whereby at the same time continuously benefiting the community, that would create a more meaningful awareness. This is explored through the use of agro waste in the development and production of biomass-based products, such as charcoal and biochar. Product development activities are able to open up economic opportunities through income generation and are expected to attract the interest and commitment of community members.

### **Program Objective**

- (a) To transfer biochar enriched organic planting mix production knowledge and skills set for capacity building (technical thrust).
- (b) To impart biochar enriched organic planting mix business model and value proposition to the participants (entrepreneurial thrust).
- (c) To prepare the participants as independent self-sustaining BioChar entrepreneurs (social enterprise thrust).

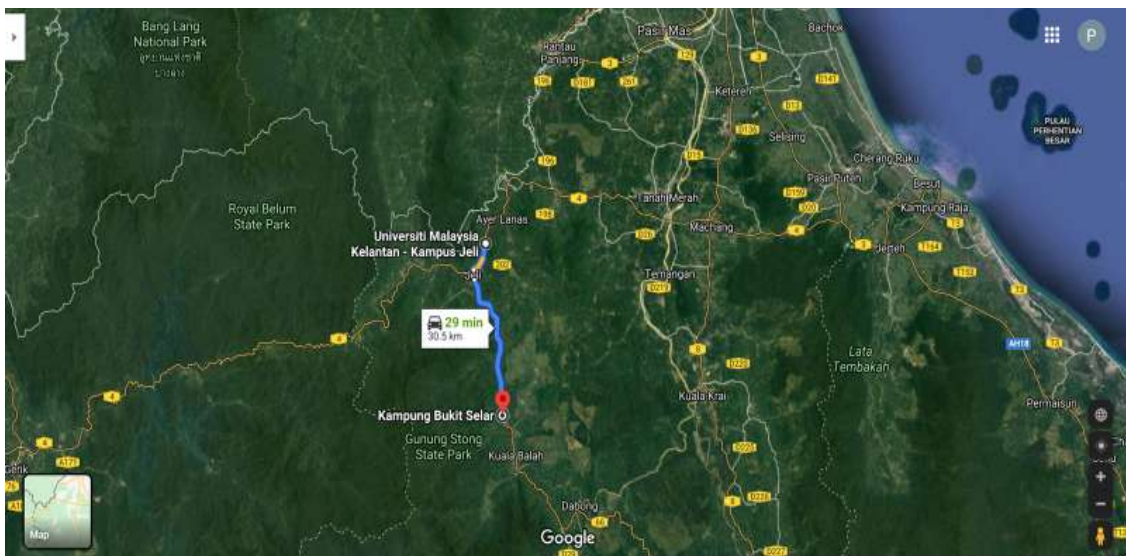
### **Program Scope, Approach, And Activity**

The scope of the program is divided into the production of biochar through biomass conversion, waste processing for product development, the development of efforts towards activating the community economy, and the application of a business model with a social enterprise concept. The initialization of the program was realized through a matching model with the involvement of all parties and stakeholders, namely the Ministry of Finance (MoF), UMK, as well as the community (Figure 2). MoF as the funder to UMK in coordinating the process of transferring knowledge, assets and capacity development, while community participants committed to searching worksite, raw materials, and building the workshop. The effort was towards creating a model community.



**Figure 2:** Matching model.

The program site is located in Kg. Bukit Selar, approximately 30 min drive from UMK Jeli Campus (Figure 3).

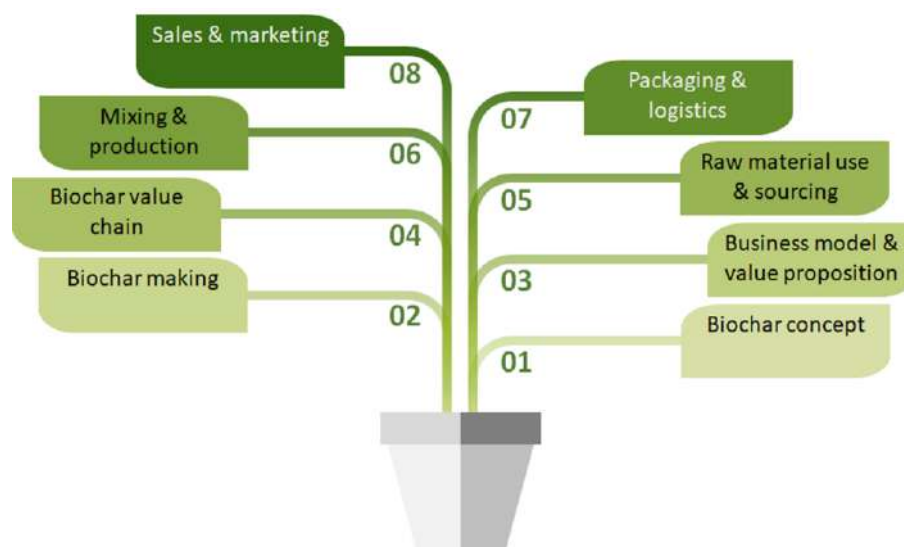


**Figure 3:** Program location.

A total of 13 participants were involved and gained exposure in this program. There are 10 active participants who are committed to making this program a success. The participants have not had any exposure on biomass, waste processing, product development, biochar, or the like before. The approaches taken to convey the program's intentions to community participants included meeting sessions, discussions, briefings, workshops and collaborative training (theory, demo, practical).

Participants were introduced to the concept of burning, followed by the knowledge and methods of controlled burning, and controlled burning through 'top lit up-draft' (TLUD) technique for the carbonization process of biomass material. Capacity building involved identification of work area sites and setting-up of the workshop was carried out with the direct involvement and collaboration of participants. The workshop site located in Kampung Bukit Selar, Jeli has been named as the 'Jeli Biochar Community Agricultural Input Workshop'. The product development aspects covering raw material needs and preparation, material conversion, formulation matters, work process and production flow, and related productization concerns were shared with the participants. This is from the prior and on-going research work performed at the university. Further, the process of procurement of materials and machine equipment, and a series of continuous training were carried out. The outcome from this effort is then expressed by program participants in product development, manufacturing, and production of products for sale.

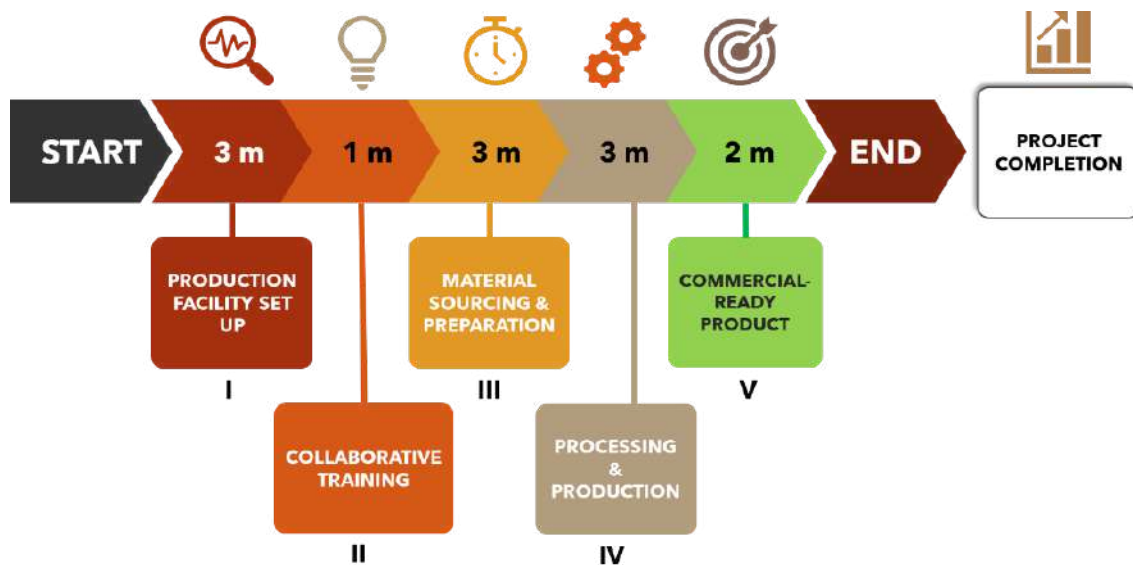
The sharing was done to the participants through collaborative training over a series of workshops. The scope of collaborative training covers 8 areas starting from the aspect of getting to know the concept of biochar, processes in biochar making, introduction to its business model and value proposition, identifying the biochar value chain, knowing the raw material use and its sourcing, exposure to mixing and production steps, preparing packaging and logistics to the aspect of sales and marketing (Figure 4).



**Figure 4:** Scope of training.



The program timeline is shown in Figure 5. The program is divided into five phases (I, II, III, IV and V) which can be adapted according to project progress. Phase I focuses on the setting-up and completion of production facilities, where the plot of the workshop site is identified, as well as the acquisition of material resources and equipment. Phase II involves collaborative training with the participants through a series of workshops (theoretical and practical) and discussion meetings. Phase III emphasizes on the acquisition of resources and the provision of raw materials. The availability of ingredients for the product mix is been determined at this time. Phase IV focuses on the main activities of the program which are processing & production. This phase involves a series of training in mixing the production of the plant media together with the operation of the production machine. All the main production parameters are examined and improved as necessary. Phase V leads to the production of finished products for the market according to the appropriate type, weight, and quantity.



**Figure 5:** Projection of program execution timeline by phase.

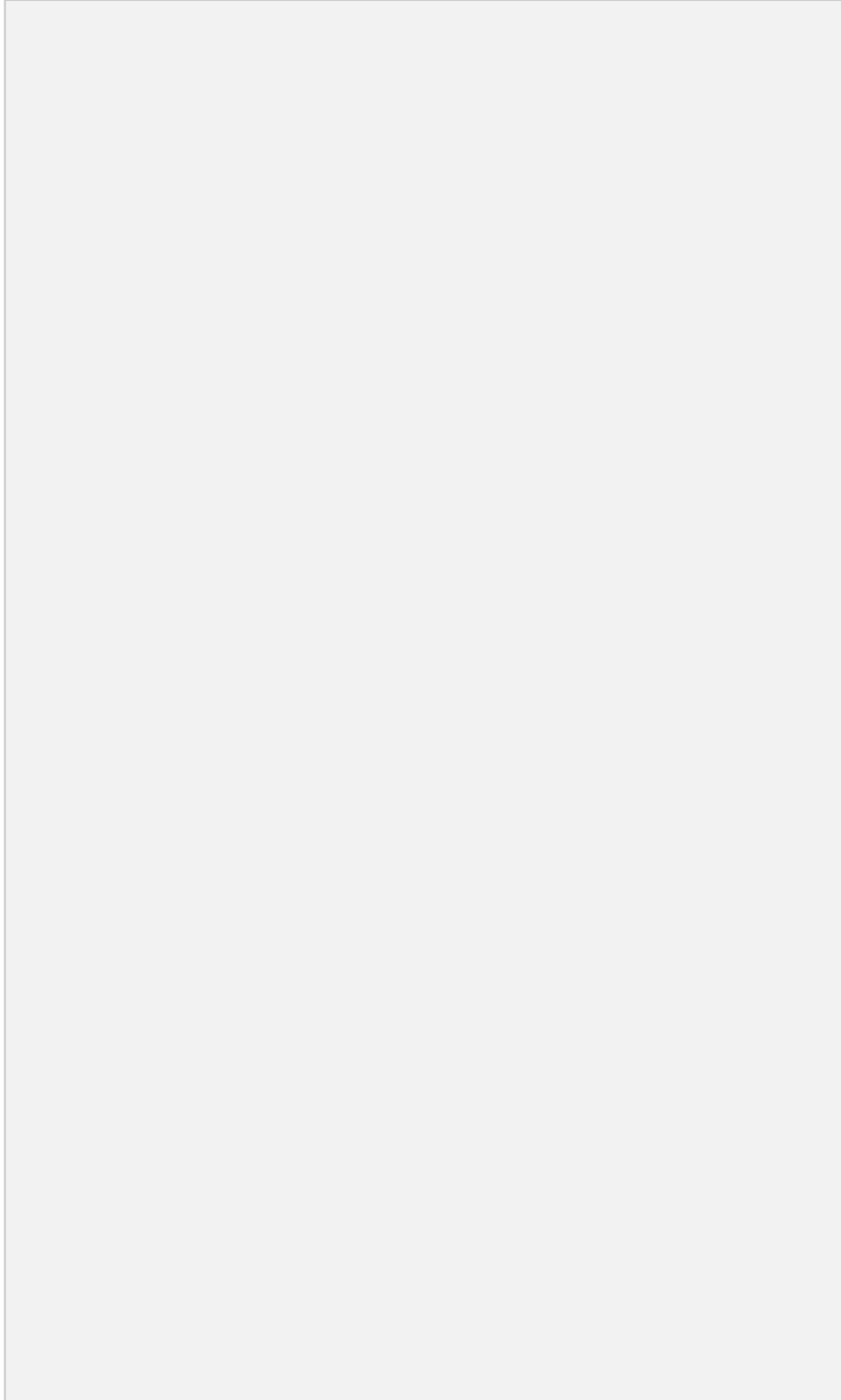
Some of the workshop sessions and program activities are as shared below (Figure 6-11).



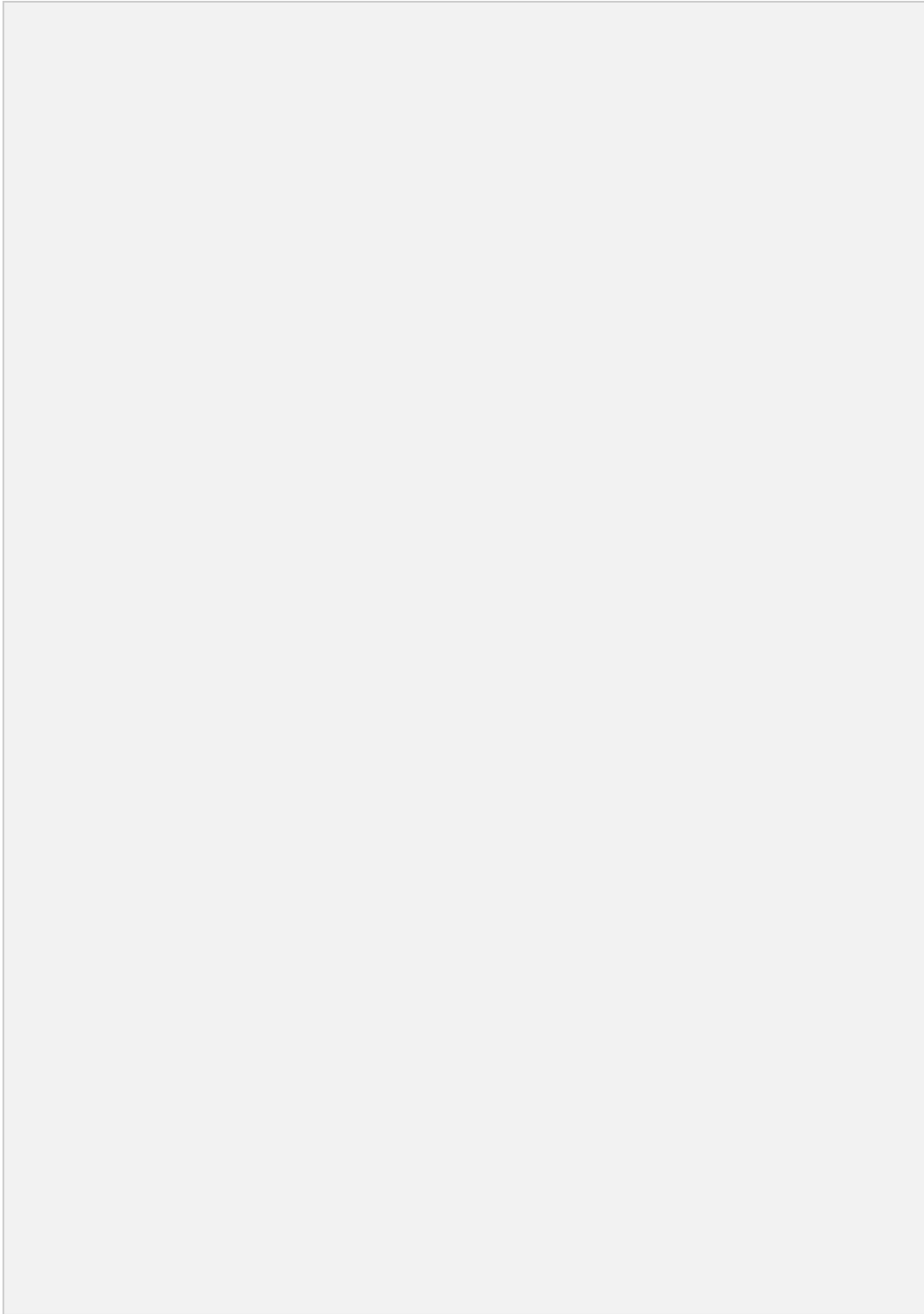
**Figure 6:** Pre-workshop session.



**Figure 7:** Machine receiving, commissioning, training, and trial runs in stages.



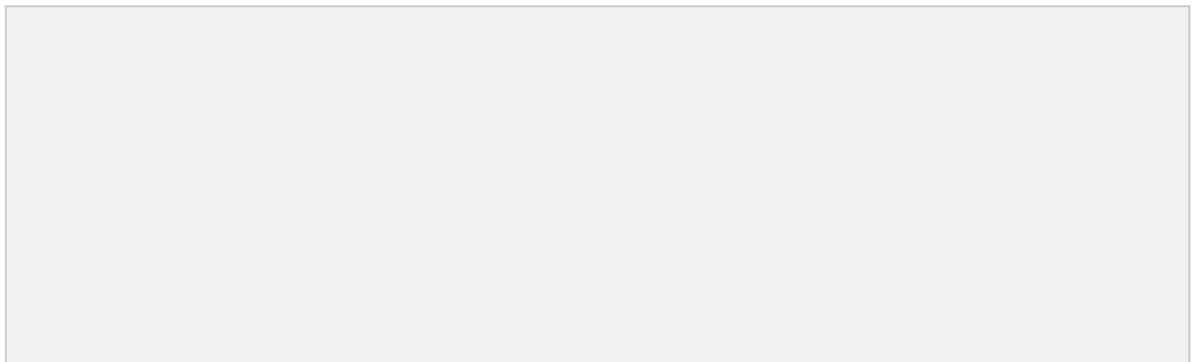
**Figure 8:** Briefing session and workshop series.



**Figure 9:** Continuation of workshop series.



**Figure 10:** Preparation, processing, and packaging of products for sale.



**Figure 11:** MoF delegation's visit to the program site.

## Program Outcome

All the objectives as outlined in the beginning of the program have been successfully attained. The continuity of the program has been able to support sustainable development aspirations that include the people, prosperity, and the planet. The formation of Team BioArang Jeli consisting of participants who have never been in or been exposed to the biochar industry, who on average work in villages become the epitome of the transfer of knowledge and skills, which can be seen through the manifestation of capacity development, mastery of the business model, towards becoming independent biochar entrepreneurs. New and additional revenue generation has been achieved through product sales. The products sold are developed and produced by the participants themselves. There is no need for comparison because this is a new economic activity for them. The main product of the program is biochar enriched planting media. Participants are able and successful in producing several biochar products and derivatives, and other agri-input cultivation-related products. These include coconut shell charcoal, biochar briquettes, biochar pellets, fertilizer pellets, biochar mixed fertilizer, effective microorganism (EM), photosynthetic bacteria (PSB) solution, and orchid media. (Figure 12 and 13). Participants have been able to increase their income through the sale of the produced products.



**Figure 12:** Production of various products.



Figure 13: Initial product labelling.

As the program activity picked up, it opened up the local supply chain, where more community members took part, be it in collecting the coconut shell, the rice husk, carbonizing, preparing, sourcing and supplying the top soil and sand. This somehow reflecting the crowd manufacturing concept. People were able to earn some additional income. Product queries are received from interested parties, slowly but surely, we hope to see the shift in the local market share. Program outcome observed from the socio-economic, and environmental point of view are coherent (Figure 14).

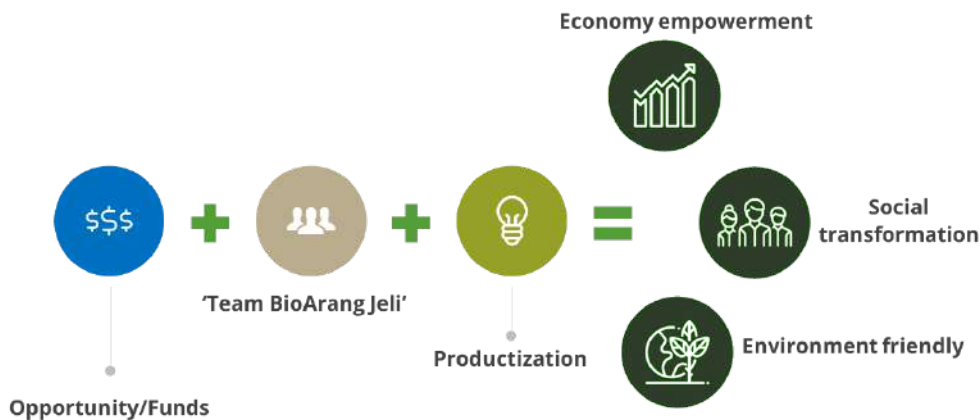
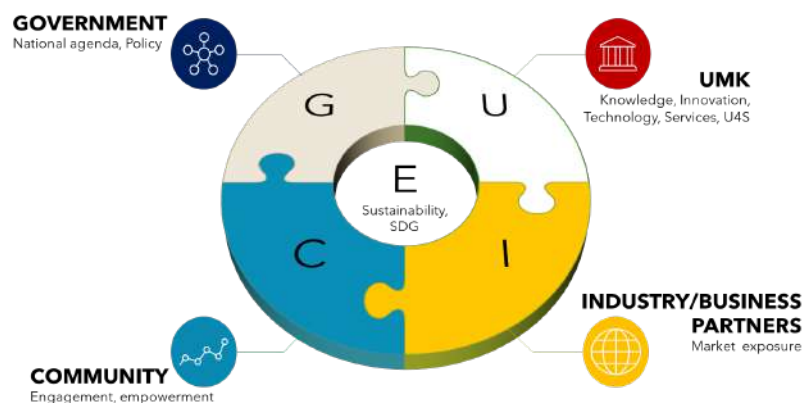


Figure 14: Outcome build up view.

The outcomes can be seen in the increased new knowledge in the preparation and production of biochar-enriched plant media and capacity development (technical skills), improvement of knowledge and machine operation skills in product production and manufacturing (technical skills), increased new knowledge regarding business model & media value proposition of biochar-enriched planting media (entrepreneurial approach), increased confidence and preparation of participants to become self-sufficient biochar entrepreneurs (social enterprise approach), inception of 'Team BioArang Jeli' as a pioneer of the biochar industry in Jeli with

the ability to develop biomass products and use the business model of biochar products. Workshop operation costs are fully borne by the participants, and so is the working capital. More income generation and new income opportunities for participants and local community members through the use and recovery of agro waste materials for product development. This in turn will create a new economic activity market related to the development of coal-based products. More active connections, networking, and partnerships will be sought with customers and buyers, as well as new business partners.

Clear and good communication between participants is very important in determining the effectiveness of the knowledge transfer process and the course of program operations. Regular monitoring visit to the program site, meetings, searching for resources and materials, formulation trials were done from time to time. Overall, we see this as the realization of the quintuple helix model through social enterprise initiative (Figure 15). We are happy, we have done our part in coordinating, helping the government, engaging with the community, and business partners, with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in mind. In essence, this is a project for the community, of the community, by the community, where they are now able to help themselves, and help others, themselves.

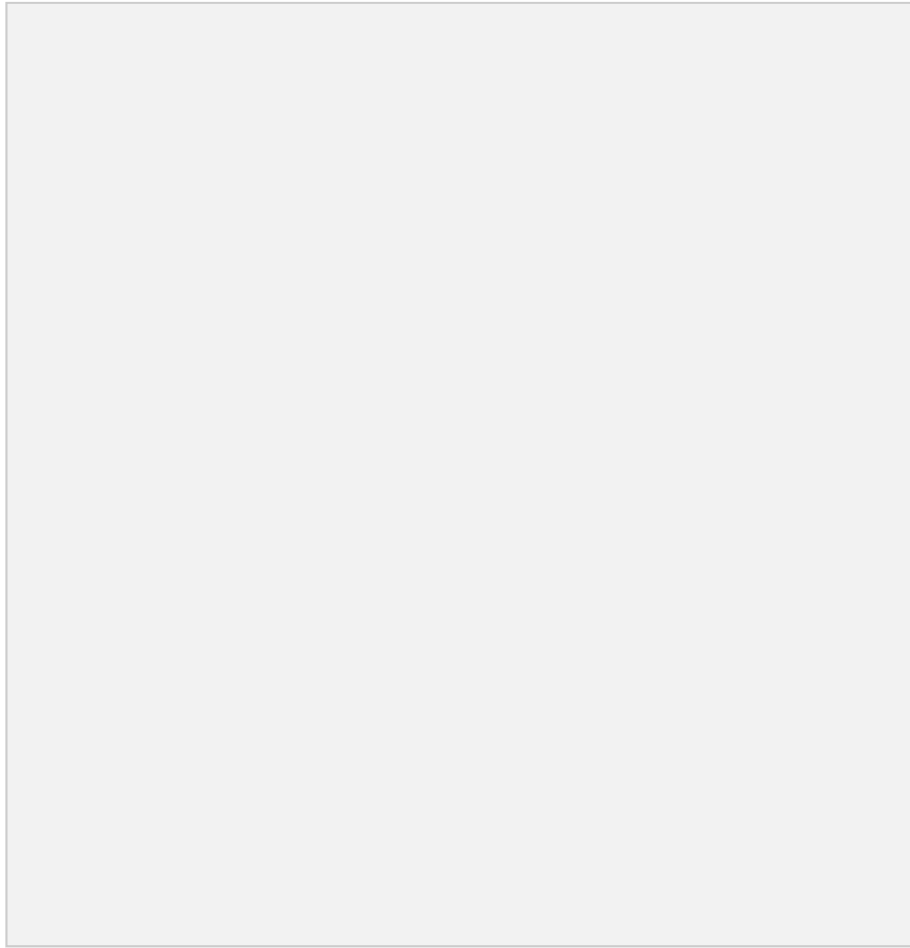


**Figure 15:** QH Model.

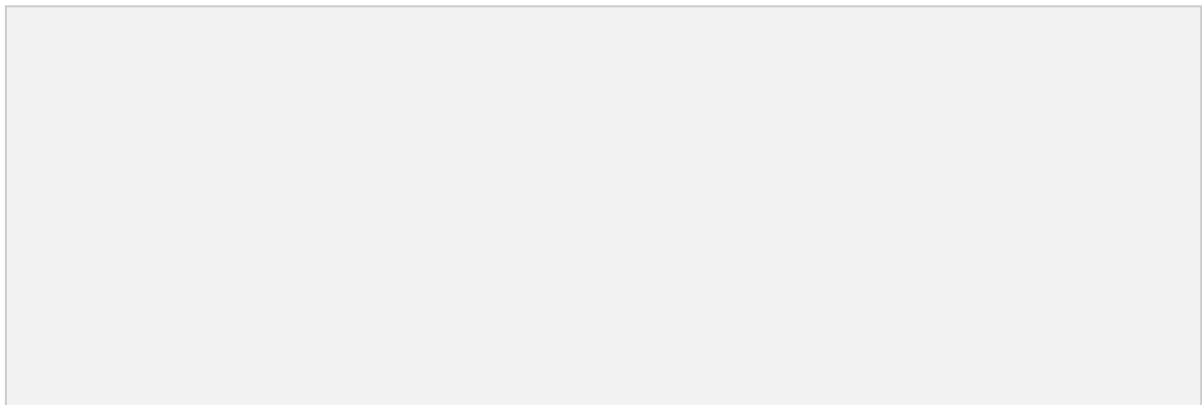


## **Program Output**

The journey is of community level capacity building, knowledge and skill transfer initiatives beginning from material sourcing, biomass conversion and preparation, product formulation, development, processing, mixing, and production of agri-input products by the local community (<https://youtu.be/kE0owz0n8>). The program output can be directly linked to the SDG focus area, namely SDG 1, 3 (people), SDG 8, 9, 11 (prosperity), and SDG 6, 12, 13 (planet). This aligns well along the socio-economic, and environmental area of interest. Some highlights are as follows; 10 active community participants follow and engage with this program, 1 community workshop (Figure 16 and 17) for production (registered and licensed for agricultural input workshop business with the Jeli District Council), production capacity (productivity) comes to 500-700 bags of biochar enriched planting media/month, average additional income around RM100-RM900/participant/month, periodic one-off additional income from the sale of coconut shell charcoal = RM3,000 to RM3,500/quarter. From July 2020 – May 2022, an estimated 12.9 tons of coconut shell charcoal has been produced, converted from the 47.8 tons of coconut shell waste collected and recovered, theoretically curbing the release of 87.7 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> and 51.6 tons of harmful compounds to the environment. In relating to carbon sink (C sink) factor, the inclusion of biochar in planting media returns approximately 0.6-0.7 kg C/kg biochar or about 2.2-2.6 kg CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent/kg biochar back to the soil. Returning organic C back to soil, while encouraging soil health and fertility are among key elements in promoting sustainable agriculture.



**Figure 16:** Community workshop.



**Figure 17:** Job opportunities to increase income for other community members.

The cross-cutting SDG areas are shown in Figure 18.



**Figure 18:** The cross-cutting co-benefits of SDG areas.

### Program Impact

This exemplifies success of a dedicated government-academia collaborative engagement at the grassroots level in advocating sustainable development goals (SDGs). The continuing positive long-term impact from the program is foreseen and highly favourable from the socio-economic and environment point of view underlying the SDGs. We have observed the initiation of a new economic activity and operations, and the creation of a local community biochar industry in Jeli. This includes the expansion of supply chains in tandem supporting capacity development and production of biochar-derived products to meet the demands of the local market and beyond Jeli. This has driven the move towards cleaner production and cleaner environment, reduction of open disposal and open burning of agro waste materials. We see more awareness relating to the potential development of products from agro waste as well as the importance of a cleaner and healthier environment.

## **The Way Forward**

Work in progress include the setting-up of a biochar community cooperative registered with the Malaysia Co-operative Societies Commission (Suruhanjaya Koperasi Malaysia, SKM). Extension of the program is planned to cater more poor members of the community. In terms of production, among the focus area are optimization of feedstock supply chains and resource utilization, overall continuous activity and process improvement, scaling up of production, market expansion, and to explore collaboration and potential industrial symbiosis. Further to this, product verification and certification efforts will be undertaken to ensure product resilience and wider market reach. The community members do look forward to further collaboration from interested parties. Long term vision include participation in the carbon offsets and carbon credit ventures for greater empowerment of the community in the circular economy landscape.

**Acknowledgement:** The program is funded through UMK-MoF Social Enterprise Project Grants (R/MOF/A07.00/01397A/007/2020/00721 and InsPeK-ARG-00). We also like to thank community group leader, Nik Mohamad Zaid Nik Hassan & team, and Wan Zuhairie Wan Usof.

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# **Safeguard Our Survival, Shall We?: “We Are Not As Resilient As We Thought.”**

**by**

**Chiew Rou Yin, Ling Kim Lin & Low Zin Rui**

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper discusses how Malaysia has done so far in protecting its biodiversity and examines how the ongoing relentless human activities in the country have caused the SDG 15 progress in Malaysia to be stagnant and even likely to go backwards, reversing every single effort that we have put in all these years due to reasons that will be further elaborated. This paper also presents case studies supported by various reliable resources and offers a number of sustainable biodiversity friendly solutions based on a few best practices from countries all around the world.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This year, the Klang Valley flood has caused fatalities and thousands to evacuate. The ultimate reason behind the disaster is deforestation. According to the Malaysia Red List, Malaysia has lost its biodiversity with 567 out of 1600 Peninsular Malaysia plant species classified as threatened (Wong, 2021). Tiger, our national animal, is estimated to be entirely extinct within five to ten years if no action is taken immediately (Barrett, 2022). Some suggest by 2040, potentially all of Malaysia’s mangrove zones could become submerged and by 2060, sea-level rise might impact the country’s industrial zones (Lum, 2022).

The loss of biodiversity results in Malaysia paying additional interest payment up to \$2.6 billion annually due to partial ecosystem collapse (Aldrick, 2022) and is forced to spend RM 392 billion in the next 78 years on flood mitigation measures (Malay Mail, 2022).

Google’s global forest map reveals that between 2000 and 2012, Malaysia had the world’s highest deforestation rate at 14.4% (Wong, 2021) and one of the main reasons that causes deforestation is the ridiculously high demand for residential units. However, study shows that a whopping 1.9 million out of 9.6 million residential units purchased in Malaysia are unoccupied (Jones, 2022) because they are largely used as temporary accommodation or homestay. Moreover, unoccupied bungalows happen due to families downsizing to smaller

homes. Our economic development has a detrimental impact on wildlife. But wildlife plays a huge role in maintaining the ecological balance of nature. Hence, we need to be the changemaker and choose a lifestyle that is more harmonious with nature (Campus-Arceiz, 2016).

Biodiversity is the only solution to safeguard our survival. Having said that, Malaysia needs to expand and enforce the protection of national parks with the purpose of restoring and preserving natural habitats and reducing the human-caused damages to the earth and its ecosystems (McNeill, 2022).

We are the first generation to feel the sting of climate change and we are also the last generation who can do something about it.

## Case Studies

### *SDG 15 Progress in Malaysia:*

#### *SDG Target 15.2:*

*“By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally.”*

Malaysia did not achieve Target 15.2 by 2020. According to Global Forest Watch, Malaysia lost 2.77 Mha of humid primary forest between 2002 to 2021 (Gaga & Cooper, 2022).



### **Primary Forest Loss in Malaysia (Global Forest Watch, 2022)**

Target 15.2 is not only about halting deforestation but also restoring degraded forests. However, the lack of knowledge on how forests are classified tricked the public into thinking

that we still have a huge size of forest in the country. According to Yew (2020), logging is legal in ‘permanent reserved forest’ in Malaysia and it is hard to restore the damage towards primary forest to its original biodiversity as shown below.



*View of a primary forest*



*View of a degraded forest*

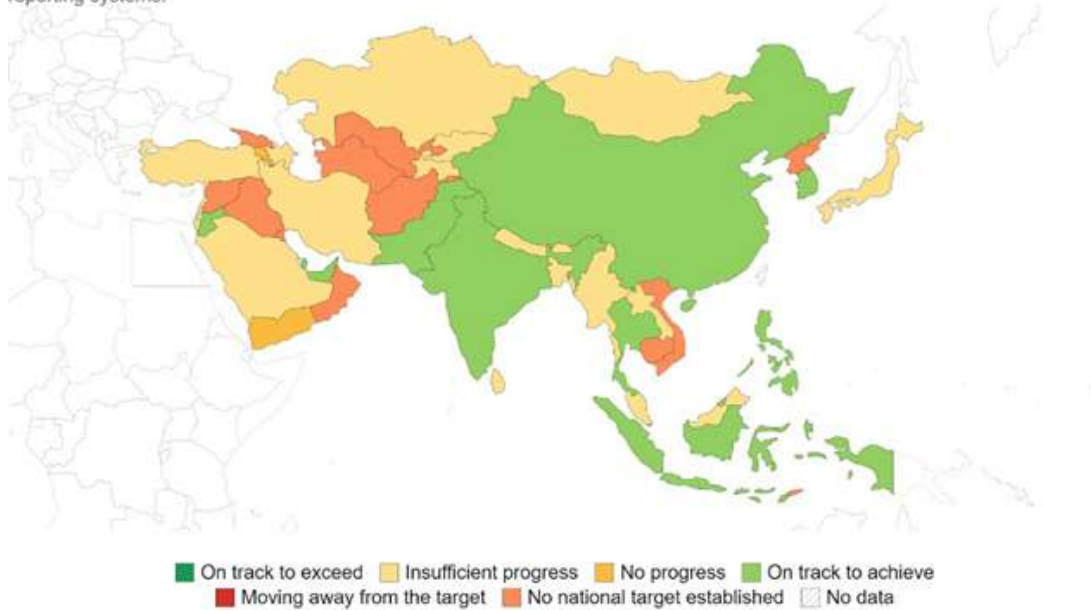
Although the forest is able to recover naturally or goes through a reforestation process, it has lost its structure, function, species composition or productivity. Still, it is misinterpreted as a forest area (Yew, 2020). 2021 national progress towards Aichi Biodiversity Target 2 shows that Malaysia has insufficient progress despite being ranked 12 globally in National Biodiversity Index as part of the Sundaland Biodiversity Hotspot (University of Nottingham, 2016). In 2018, it is appalling to know that Malaysia which may be one of the most biodiverse countries in Asia only spent about 2% out of \$250 million of what other Asean countries spent in the official development assistance for biodiversity.



## National progress towards Aichi Biodiversity Target 2, 2021

Our World in Data

Aichi Target 2: By 2020, at the latest, biodiversity values have been integrated into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies and planning processes and are being incorporated into national accounting and reporting systems.



Source: Convention on Biological Diversity and World Environment Situation Room

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## National Progress towards Aichi Biodiversity Target 2, 2021

## Total official development assistance for biodiversity, by recipient, 2020

Our World in Data

Total official development assistance (ODA) transferred for use in biodiversity conservation and protection efforts, by recipient. This data is adjusted for inflation (constant 2018 US\$).



Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

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## Total official development assistance for biodiversity, by recipient, 2020

### **SDG Target 15.1:**

*“By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements.”*

According to Wetlands International (2015), wetlands are crucial habitats for plants and animals ranging from estuarine crocodiles to dragonflies of peat swamps as they serve as their breeding grounds and nurseries. However, wetlands disappear three times faster than forests. Research shows that almost 90% of global wetlands have been lost since 1700 and the remaining ones are under threat due to water drainage, pollution, unsustainable use, invasive species, disrupted flows from dams and sediment dumping from deforestation and soil erosion upstream. This has caused an extinction threat to almost one in three freshwater species. Besides, more than one billion people depend on them for a living and they are among the most biodiverse ecosystems (United Nation Climate Change, 2018).

The Malaysian Wetland Directory lists 105 wetland sites including mangroves and mudflats, river systems and tropical peat swamp forests. However, Malaysia is facing loss of wetland together with deforestation which causes issues like water shortages, overfishing, biodiversity loss and flooding (Sheehan, 2015).

Even though there is no actual data showing how much Malaysia’s wetland had reduced between 2015 to 2021, the loss of wetland results in flood issues such as the Klang Valley flood. Moreover, 29% of Malaysia’s 4000 km coastline have been classified as facing serious erosion due to wetland disappearance. The coastline of Tanjung Piai in southern Malaysia, for example, is losing up to 9 m per year to erosion (Sheehan, 2015).

To conclude, the conservation and restoration of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems have remained stagnant in Malaysia all these years. Hence, we need to act fast in securing our freshwater ecosystem and restoring the wetlands biodiversity even after we fail to achieve Target 15.1 by 2020.

## **Discussion**

### Reducing deforestation by decreasing abandoned projects

The increase of human population results in the demand of more houses and this urbanisation reduces the wetlands and forest coverages, also known as deforestation. Deforestation leads to increasing human-wildlife conflict and severe environmental degradation. At this rate, Malaysia has one of the highest numbers of species at risk of extinction in the wild due to the exponential rise in the population (Gauchan, 2021).

“The ministry had identified 79 abandoned housing projects involving 17724 housing units in Peninsular Malaysia, currently affecting 11824 buyers,” Reezal Merican told the Dewan Rakyat. Of the total, 65 projects were halted due to the companies’ weak balance sheets, the minister said. Other causes included failure to comply with standards and weak project management, while some developers cannot be located (Aziz, 2021).

With this, one can see the weakness of the Sell-To-Build (STB) system in which Malaysia is one of the only two nations in the world that enforces this policy. Up till now, there are no reports that licensed Build-To-Sell (BTS) projects are delayed, sick or abandoned (Supramani, 2022). Thus, Malaysia is strongly urged to look into other countries' practices where they fully enforce the BTS system in ensuring responsible consumption and save more forests from being cut down for land to build new houses.

Undeniably, the challenge that Malaysia needs to overcome for the BTS system to be adopted is that developers will face high financing cost and low support from financial institutions (Tan & Phang, 2016). Consequently, Malaysia has to be open to the suggestion of changing the existing policy and providing more substantial incentives like tax reduction and abandoned projects adoption for developers in order to motivate them to adopt the BTS system.

## **Restoring wetlands by reducing Non-Revenue Water (NRW)**

The UN projects water scarcity by 2025 (Wai, 2015) and people depend more on wetlands for fresh water supply. The increase of population and urbanisation also give pressure to the remaining wetlands when it comes to the increase of need for water supply.

Non-Revenue Water (NRW) is water that is produced and treated but lost along the way to consumers' premises due to factors such as pipe bursts or leaks, water meters not working properly and water theft or illegal connections of water pipes.

The NRW in Malaysia is very high when compared to countries such as Singapore (5%) or Japan (7%). Our NRW is about 35% and mostly are caused by pipe leakages and breakage (Putri et al., 2021). The 2020 Malaysian Water Industry Status & Outlook Report shows that 5 states in Malaysia (Kedah, Selangor, Melaka, Penang and Perlis) have water deficit and 3 states (Perak, Kelantan and Negeri Sembilan) with high risk of water stress. The NRW rate recorded an average loss of 5929 million litres per day (MLD) of treated water, which was sufficient to meet the water demand in Selangor at 3316 MLD or Johor 1320 MLD (The Sun Daily, 2019). It is also noticeable that Kelantan does not have enough water supply but the NRW in Kelantan currently stands at 52% (Abdullah, 2022) which does not make sense.

When there is not enough water supply, we are compelled to search for more water resources and wetlands are one of the natural resources that will first be used. Hence, attending to NRW, the root cause of this issue is indeed a priority even if it is costly. If we could reduce the NRW by repairing our nation's underground infrastructure (the pipes), huge water waste could be prevented and therefore we are able to supply the water demand. In the long run, it does not only save money in operation and maintenance costs but also reduces the need for new water sources and treatment plants as well as diminishes impacts from drought and climate change.

A good example for us to learn from is our very own neighbouring country, Indonesia in Malang City. The city successfully reduced their NRW by 30% in 10 years via a combination of strategic thinking, committed investments and the use of digital solutions (Tien & Setiono, n.d.).

Malaysia needs to take prompt action towards the NRW issue to save more money by reducing the water waste and at the same time buying time for our wetlands to restore and secure the freshwater ecosystem. Wetlands, once gone, are gone forever.

### **Expanding and enforcing the protection of national parks**

Forests are continuously converted into agricultural lands, which not only impact human livelihood but also rob our wildlife of their homes and sources of food (Malay Mail, 2022). Droughts, floods, soil erosion, landslides and health crises such as dengue and malaria outbreaks will all cost the state and federal governments more in the long run (Wong, 2021).

Malaysia is one of the most biodiverse countries in Asia with over 2000 endemic (native) species but our iconic endemic wildlife – the Malayan tiger, the Bornean elephant and Bornean orangutans are losing their habitats at alarming rates (Malay Mail, 2022).

In the 1950s, Malaysia was estimated to have as many as 3000 tigers. However, it has declined drastically to fewer than 150 individuals as of 2022 due to loss of habitat from rapid development, agriculture expansion and widespread hunting (WWF Malaysia, n.d.). The data for endemic plant species shows that at least 63% of those assessed are threatened all due to heedless acts of converting forests under the camouflage of human advancement (Chua et al., 2022).

The best way to overcome the challenge is to stop biodiversity loss through biodiversity conservation. One extremely important biodiversity conservation activity is protecting habitats by identifying the habitats facing threats and eliminating these threats to maintain the natural area.

“Project Tiger” is one commendable project to be emulated. India believes that the growth of tiger population could help in protecting forests while also boosting economic gains from conservation. Every successfully protected tiger helps conserve around 25000 acres (10117 hectares) of forest, according to estimates from the World Wildlife Fund. For India, which is now home to about 2967 wild tigers, that means its forest cover has expanded from more than 10 million hectares to over 81 million hectares and more tiger reserves are added to its current total of 51 (Beniwal, 2021).

Apart from that, India also suggests that preserving tigers can also secure water because several sweet water streams originate in tiger reserves which are the factories of producing clean water and air for the country (Beniwal, 2021).

Hence, Malaysia can adopt the “Project Tiger” programme to conserve our iconic national wildlife, the Malayan Tiger by expanding and enforcing the protection of national parks through biodiversity laws. The government should strive to create an environment that welcomes all stakeholders, be it nationally or internationally to collaborate in regards to issues of biodiversity.

### **Education on biodiversity and climate change**

Awareness is the key to solving every biodiversity challenge. To create such awareness, education on the importance of biodiversity, climate change and even about ecosystems is vital to safeguard the future. Yet, this is critically lacking in Malaysia's current education on environment in which the public hardly knows how the loss of biodiversity can largely affect our life.

The local communities in the Mekong Delta in Cambodia and the Malagasy people living around Lake Sofia, for instance, are the ones empowered to understand the value of wetlands. This results in creating better long-term protection and positive relationships between the locals and the environment (WWT, 2019).

Vietnam, on the other hand, has a good example in the educational programme of “Save Vietnam’s Wildlife”. Mr. Tran Van Truong, 29, shared that many people still do not understand the importance of having healthy wildlife populations in the forest. “So bringing them to the forest and going to schools to teach them more about nature, about the animals, will be good,” he said.

Its rescue facility in Cuc Phuong National Park, for example, houses a visitor centre where people can learn about the various mammals in Vietnam’s forests and the threats that they face (Tan, 2022).

The United States has “The National Wildlife Federation's Green Hour” programme which connects 21 million American children, teens and young adults with the outdoors. “Adopt a

goal of an hour per day of time for children to play and learn outdoors in nature” is their goal. One way to work towards this goal is by connecting kids with nature and establishing healthy habits early (Esquina, 2018). Healthy habits like bringing your own bag to the supermarket and using a metal straw to drink are small conscious choices that an individual can make to be changemakers in reducing biodiversity loss.

In fact, we need to educate all stakeholders with information such as prioritising sustainable mobility and sustainable food, responsible consumption and recycling practices can protect biodiversity.

Some of Malaysia private sectors are doing extremely good jobs in promoting biodiversity education too, such as the Genting Group who offers ecotourism tour to promote nature education to tourists.



### **Genting’s Awana Hotel – Awana Trail Display at Reception Counter**

Hence, we shall unite all sectors in Malaysia into biodiversity education, as everyone from individuals to companies and the government has a role to play to protect the ecosystems in order to safeguard our future. A suitable and proper law enforcement would ensure our listed companies actively participate in environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices in promoting biodiversity education.

## **Conclusion**

We think we need a house to fulfil our safety needs but deforestation happens due to it. Man-made disasters such as floods and global warming have hit Malaysia because of deforestation and the country is forced to increase the budget to prepare to save more life from floods. We are paying the consequences of our choice and our life is no more secure without the help of the ecosystems.

The key solution is to secure biodiversity that allows ecosystems to function and we need to generate ownership of this issue and potential solutions through inclusiveness and multistakeholder participation in the identification of conservation priorities. 4 proposed ways to restore biodiversity in Malaysia are reducing deforestation by decreasing abandoned projects, restoring wetlands by reducing Non-Revenue Water (NRW), expanding and enforcing the protection of national parks and education on biodiversity and climate change.

As a whole, we need the Malaysian government to enforce strong regulations and at the same time we also need NGOs to create public awareness via education. Changing our lifestyle on responsible consumption especially on property, agriculture or even reducing food waste are what really matters to global biodiversity (McNeill, 2022).

We only have less than eight years and Malaysia is still far away from achieving the SDGs in biodiversity. We need immediate action because our future depends on reversing the loss of nature and we cannot solve one without having to solve the other.



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## Chapter 6: SDG & LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND



1. The Role of Fathering in Promoting Gender Equality - **Sabrina Aripin**  
(Society for Equality, Respect And Trust for All Sabah, SERATA)

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2. Personal and Organisational Journey in Localising SDGs -  
**Stephen Chow Chee Kheong** (Persatuan Perkhidmatan Komuniti Taiping - ESDA)

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3. Empowering the Community through Skills Training - **KS.Pakyalakshmi A/P Subramanian** (Pertubuhan Pembangunan Wanita Tamarai Pulau Pinang)

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4. Analysing the Intersection between SDG and SOGIESC - **Thilaga Sulathireh**  
(Justice for Sisters)

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5. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the Eyes of a  
Refugee in Malaysia - **Zahid Alam Dil Mohamad**  
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6. Realiti Kehidupan Kumpulan - Kumpulan di dalam Masyarakat yang Masih Tertinggal  
dan KMM Bersama Menjayakan Matlamat Pembangunan Mampan -  
**Faizzul Amri** (Pertubuhan Kebajikan Masyarakat Marhaen Taiping)

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7. SDG Straight from the Heart will go far - **Johnekk Henry**  
(Research and Development Movement of Singai - REDEEMS)

## **The Role of Fathering in Promoting Gender Equality**

**by**

**Sabrina Aripin (Society for Equality, Respect And Trust for All Sabah, SERATA) -**

**baso.iwang sabrina.aripen@serata.org**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Despite the increasing number of dual income families in Malaysia, there is still a widespread expectation that women are primarily, or sometimes solely, responsible for child caregiving tasks. This belief is reflected in Malaysian labour laws where there was no mention of paternity leave at all within the Malaysian Employment Act 1955 prior to the tabling of the Employment (Amendment) Act 2021 Bill that was tabled for its first reading on 25 October 2021, as reported by Adhikari et al (2022).

This new amendment which includes 7 days of paternity leave will only take effect on 1st January 2022. However, it is important to note that the Employment Act 1955 is only applicable in West Malaysia, while Sabah and Sarawak have their own laws that govern employment matters.

In a report on *Submission of Memorandum on Trade Union Bill, Sabah and Sarawak Labour Ordinances to MOHR – Malaysia Trades Union Database, 2022* on Malaysia Trades Union Database's website dated 15 July 2022, it was said that the Labour Law Reform Coalition (LLRC), a coalition of 58 trade unions and NGOs, submitted three memorandums to the Ministry of Human Resources in Putrajaya, demanding that suggested amendments of the labour ordinances of Sabah and Sarawak should be accelerated and tabled at the federal parliament for approval as soon as possible. The memorandums included suggestions of paternity leave to be inserted into the two labour ordinances.

The omission of a right for men to take paternity leave suggests that their expected role in childcare is non-existent. Therefore, it is not surprising then that the burden of raising children more often than not falls squarely on the shoulders of women, limiting their ability to be present at work.

## **Fathering within the SDGs**

The issue of fathers being involved in the raising of their children through paternity leave policies can be attributed to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on Gender Equality, specifically on Target 5.4, which aims to recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally accurate.

When fathers are actively involved in raising their children, they are effectively sharing the unpaid care work at home.

Unpaid care work remains a significant challenge for many Malaysian families, often preventing parents, particularly mothers, from participating in the labour force. Theng & Wai (2018), based on studies by Khazanah Research Institute, estimates that 2.9 million or 60.2% of women stayed out of the labour force due to housework/family responsibilities, compared with 81,000 or 3.6% of men in 2018. Several studies conducted around Malaysia also suggest that childcare issues are a major contributor for women opting out of the labour force. This is in line with findings from the 2014 Malaysian Population and Family Survey (MPFS-5), stating that 32.4% of married women between the ages of 15 and 59 who left the workforce cited childcare problems specifically as the main reason for quitting.

Target 5.4 is illustrated by indicator 5.4.1, which looks at the proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work by sex, age and location.

### **Patterns of Domestic and Care Work in Malaysia**

On average, women in Malaysia spend more hours than men on unpaid care and domestic work

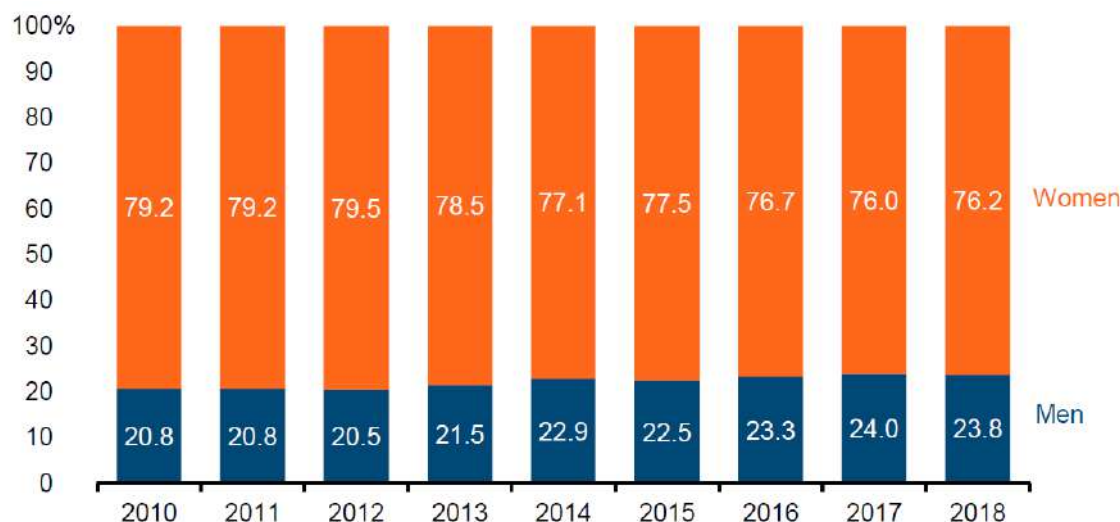
According to UN Women's website (*Country Fact Sheet*, n.d.), the proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic chores and care work is 19.1% for women compared to 6% for men as of February 2021

The caregiving population outside the labour force was still predominantly women. Based on calculations done in Khazanah Research Institute's report *Time to Care: Gender Inequality*,



*Unpaid Care Work and Time Use Survey (2019)* it was 76.2% women and 23.8% men in 2018. Although the proportion of men increased (14.4%) and the proportion of women decreased (-2.1%) between 2010 and 2018, care burden on those outside the labour force still fell disproportionately on women.

**Chart 1: Caregiving population outside the labour force in Malaysia, by gender, 2010-2018**



Source: DOS (Various years-a), DOS (Various years-b) and authors' calculations

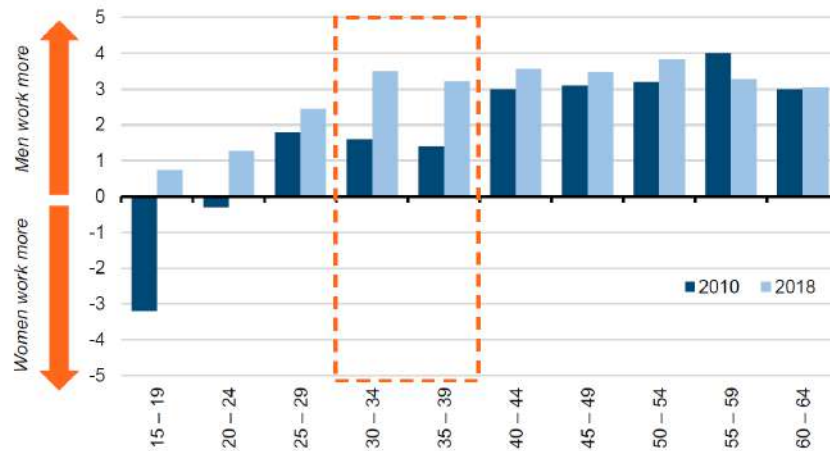
Based on research by Khazanah Research Institute (KRI), women spend over an hour (72.9 minutes) per day more than men on unpaid domestic services for household and family members.

**Table 1: Time Use Survey 2019 by Khazanah Research Institute**

	Primary activities			Secondary activities		
	Men	Women	Overall	Men	Women	Overall
	(minutes per day)					
1 Employment & related activities	415.0	398.7	406.9	43.8	59.2	51.5
2 Production of goods for own final use	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
3 Unpaid domestic services for household and family members	64.7	137.6	100.9	4.0	17.6	10.8
4 Unpaid caregiving services for household and family members	68.9	78.5	73.7	32.1	58.5	45.2
5 Unpaid volunteer, trainee and other unpaid work	6.3	12.7	9.5	0.1	1.5	0.8
6 Learning	8.2	0.0	4.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
7 Socializing and communication, community participation and religious practice	152.6	120.9	136.9	205.9	182.9	194.5
8 Culture, leisure, mass media and sports practices	184.9	144.0	164.6	191.5	192.7	192.1
9 Self care and maintenance	539.4	547.5	543.4	24.4	26.1	25.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1440.0</b>	<b>1440.0</b>	<b>1440.0</b>	<b>501.9</b>	<b>538.5</b>	<b>520.1</b>
	(%)					
1 Employment & related activities	28.8	27.7	28.3	8.7	11.0	9.9
2 Production of goods for own final use	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
3 Unpaid domestic services for household and family members	4.5	9.6	7.0	0.8	3.3	2.1
4 Unpaid caregiving services for household and family members	4.8	5.5	5.1	6.4	10.9	8.7
5 Unpaid volunteer, trainee and other unpaid work	0.4	0.9	0.7	0.0	0.3	0.1
6 Learning	0.6	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
7 Socializing and communication, community participation and religious practice	10.6	8.4	9.5	41.0	34.0	37.4
8 Culture, leisure, mass media and sports practices	12.8	10.0	11.4	38.2	35.8	36.9
9 Self care and maintenance	37.5	38.0	37.7	4.9	4.8	4.9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Statistics show that women on average worked fewer hours per week than men, and this gap also increased with age. The gender gap in hours worked was largest for those aged 50 – 54 in 2018, with women working on average 3.8 hours less than men.

**Chart 2: Gender gap in mean hours worked, 2010 and 2018**



Source: DOS (2011), DOS (2019)

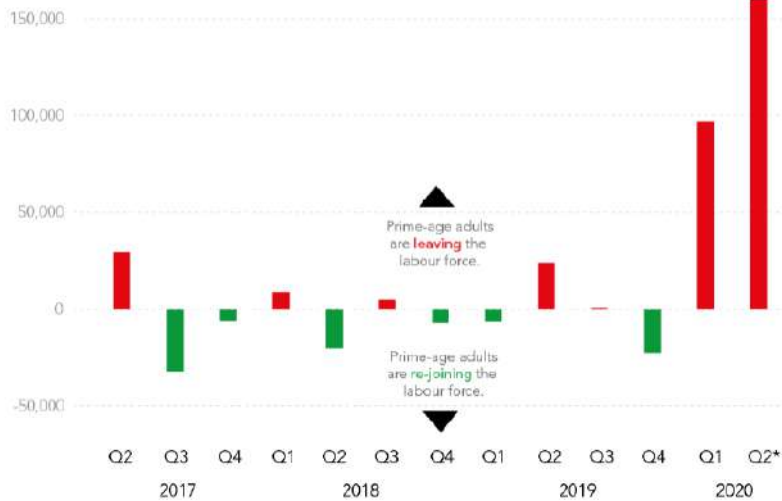
Those aged 30 – 34 and 35 – 39 experienced the largest increase in the gender gap of hours worked between 2010 and 2018. This spike coincides with the increasing LFPR gap after the ages of 25 – 29.

### Caregiving and Impact During The COVID-19 Pandemic

Mukundan (2020) cited in UNDP Malaysia COVID-19 Work From Home Survey’s preliminary report that, overall, Work From Home (WFH) options made caregiving easier. However, Mukundan highlighted that women were more likely than men to report increased difficulty of caregiving (32% vs. 20%) due to working from home, and this was still higher among women of age group 35-44.

The number of prime-age workers who have given up employment has spiked, the majority of whom cite caregiving and family obligations for quitting the labour force.

Figure: Net quarterly changes in working age population outside the labour force



Source: Author's own calculation with DOSM Labour Force Surveys (2020)  
 \*Data includes only figure for only April 2020, actual statistic for full quarter may be higher.

## SDG 5 progress in Malaysia

The Global Gender Gap Index report for 2022 shows Malaysia ranks 104th out of 153 countries, lagging behind its regional neighbours namely the Philippines (19th), Singapore (49th), Thailand (79th), Vietnam (83rd), Indonesia (92nd) and Cambodia (98th).

Malaysia places 88th in Economic Participation and Opportunity, a slight improvement as a result of a marginal gain of 1.8 percentage points from the last report. While with regard to women's political empowerment, Malaysia ranks very poorly at 123rd, and has made the least amount of progress with regard to global standard, as pointed out by Hashim (2022).

While it is promising to observe that Malaysia has closed the gender gap when it comes to the enrolment of girls in primary, secondary and tertiary education, Hashim (2022) says that the Global Gender Gap Index report shows that post-education opportunities offered to women have not progressed in parallel with this development.

Although women in Malaysia have always been active economic participants to some degree, the dominant form of work-care arrangement in Malaysia has traditionally been that of a male breadwinner, female homemaker. Government initiatives such as the 11<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan (2016 – 2020), focuses on promoting women's role in the country's development, with a target to achieve 59% women's participation in the labour force by 2020.

The 12th Malaysia Plan (2021-2025) focuses more on reviewing laws that protect women, while introducing a gender mainstreaming framework to incorporate the gender perspective in formulating policies. There was also mention of promoting flexible working hours and adaptable working arrangements to enhance work-life balance, while the private sector will be encouraged to provide paternity leave and better care centres.

As such, it can be seen that the government is acting in accordance with the plan, through the passing of (1) amendments to the Malaysian Employment Act to include paternity leave; (2) the passing of Anti-Sexual Harassment Bill 2021 in August 2022; and the ongoing amendment to the Penal Code and Criminal Procedure to make stalking, whether virtually or otherwise, a criminal offence.

The Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act 2017 was passed in 2017, significantly improving protection for survivors of abuse, through the expansion of the definition of domestic violence, and improved provisions on counselling.

In Malaysia, Article 8(2) of the Constitution was adjusted to contain gender as one of the forbidden of discrimination in 2001. This was addressed as an advanced move and hailed by women's groups, because it was as an obligation by the state to achieve its commitments under the CEDAW Convention, as pointed out by Sexual Violence Research Initiative (2016). However, Malaysia remains one of the few countries left in the world that does not allow women to pass on their citizenship to their children. In August 2022, Malaysia's Court of Appeal overturned a landmark 2021 High Court ruling which would have allowed Malaysian mothers married to foreign spouses the right to pass down citizenship to children born abroad<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/malaysia-un-experts-denounce-gender-discriminatory-citizenship-law#:~:text=In%20August%202022%2C%20Malaysia's%20Court,citizenship%20to%20children%20born%20abroad.>

## **Policy Implications**

In Malaysia, there is a lot of engagement with regards to women empowerment and getting women into male-dominated fields of work. There was also a lot of attention on expanding maternity leave. However, the same amount of energy was not spent on men who are interested in joining female-dominated fields of work, or men who may wish to have more time to spend on their children's upbringing.

Nevertheless, when women are given plenty of maternity leave but men are given little or no paternity leave, it encourages discrimination in the hiring process.

This was reported by Izhar (2019) that more than 40 per cent of women in the workforce experienced pregnancy discrimination, which appears in the form of denial of promotion, prolonged probation period, and higher likelihood of job loss due to the perceived extra cost of employing female employees. It was also revealed that 40 percent of women had been asked about their personal life on whether they plan to become pregnant or if they were pregnant further driving the point that women are seen to be more expensive to hire compared to men due to statutory requirements on maternity leave.

## **Policy Recommendations**

According to Choong (2021), Malaysia's policy approach in addressing unpaid care and gender inequality can be described as a "dual-earner family model", where there is a "strong focus on the productive sphere by getting both women and men to work and become income earners", while unpaid care is constructed as a constraint, pulling women back from more "productive" work, hence policies are needed to overcome this constraint.

Here are a few recommendations:

### **Recommendation 1: State-funded care centres**

Wong et al (2021) suggests that care work needs to be redistributed and shared with the three institutional care providers: the state, the private sector and families, through state-funded childcare centres that are accompanied with tax incentives.

This is similar to suggestions by Khazanah Research Institute (KRI)'s *Time to Care: Gender Inequality, Unpaid Care Work and Time Use Survey*, (2019), that government subsidies and

cash transfer programmes can be introduced to stimulate demand for formal childcare as well as enacting labour policies that encourage mothers and fathers to share care responsibilities.

It is also important to emphasize that Malaysian workplaces need to acknowledge that men too need childcare, not just women, which is often overlooked. According to MenEngage's Report *7 Ways Employers Can Support Men to Be More Engaged Fathers* (2020) "supporting fathers, either financially or by setting up workplace childcare facilities, allows men to take on an equal share of caregiving and family responsibilities, especially when childcare hours coincide with work hours."

### **Recommendation 2: Formalization of longer paternity leave throughout Malaysia**

Paternity leave of at least 30 days should be legally applicable to all parts of the country, including Sabah and Sarawak.

The provision of maternity leave, but with the absence or low amount of mandatory paternity leaves in local employment laws, sends the message that men have very small parts to play in the birth of his child, the raising of his children, or on family matters such as household tasks, all of which are unpaid care and domestic work.

Georgieva et al (2019) stated that greater parity in maternal and parental leave policies can raise female labor force participation by smoothing women's return to work and engaging fathers in care activities early on. When a father is available in the first few weeks of a baby's birth, it sets a family expectation which creates a pattern for a more equitable division of child care if both parents return to full time work (Hedreen, 2019).

This is further evidenced by a study of fathers in four rich countries – America, Australia, Britain and Denmark. It was found that fathers who had taken paternity leave were more likely to feed, dress, bathe and play with their child long after the period of leave had ended (Huerta, 2013).

Aside from that, the absence of paid paternity leave means that men are also left with no choice should he decide he wanted to play a more engaging role as a father if he wanted to. Until men have equal opportunities to be caregivers, and until companies regard men as equally responsible for caregiving, most families will be left with no choice: The bulk of caregiving responsibilities will fall to women (Levs, 2019).

In a nutshell, paternity leave benefits not just women in childbirth, but also women's careers as a whole. When men shoulder more of the childcare burden, the effect of depriving women of experience and promotions due to time out of the labour force, is lessened (Poduval & Poduval, 2009) thus enhancing gender equality overall.

### **Recommendation 3: Incentives for Flexible Work Arrangements**

Flexible work arrangements are beneficial to all, especially not just mothers, but for fathers as well. According to MenEngage, such arrangements support men's caregiving role by giving them greater freedom to determine when and where to fulfil their job responsibilities, and thus allowing them to "respond to the needs of their family and do their fair share of unpaid care work while still meeting their workplace commitments". (*7 Ways Employers Can Support Men to Be More Engaged Fathers*, 2020)

### **Recommendation 4: Socialization Programs to Include Fathers Roles And Available Family Policies**

Ensure men know about available family policies and how to use them. As pointed out by MenEngage's report, men are not always willing to ask about available family policies and parental benefits due to social norms that don't envision them within a caregiving role.

In Malaysia, the idea of fathers playing more involved roles in raising children is something that is not discussed often, thus the need for such socialization programs.

Ensuring that fathers know what supportive arrangements are available and how they can utilize them will help encourage more men – and thus, their entire families – to receive the benefits of such policies.

The socialization program should also be targeted at employers to create workplace cultures that value men as fathers and caregivers

As highlighted by MenEngage, social norms, roles and stereotypes that place men in the breadwinner role and do not value their contributions as caregivers can limit men's confidence and capacity to be engaged fathers and partners. Workplaces can help address that by ensuring zero tolerance for discrimination against fathers, and by taking measures such as creating a peer-support network for working fathers

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## **SDG Paper Presentation**

**Topic: Personal and organizational journey in localizing SDG**

**by**

**Stephen Chow Chee Kheong (Persatuan Perkhidmatan Komuniti Taiping, ESDA) -**

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Sustainability and developmental was my goals when I was very young time during at Penang spastic children association because I was born with cerebral palsy (brain damaged effected slur in speech and disability in physical movements).

My teachers always emphasis sustainability was very important for every child with Cerebral Palsied. .When I was young I learned a lot about the economy sustainability. Economy sustainability included farming and handicraft. Our teachers make sure when we grow up our daily living can be sustain . Development from severe disability to independent live was my striking goal. Developmental (improve) is crucial from my very young age until now. Always looking for rooms and opportunities to develop myself .

The word of “sustainability” came from root word of “sustain”. As a person with disability, our goal is learning “survival skills” to maintain our lives when we are grow up. We can’t to depend to our families or agencies or hangouts. For those with disability who have high IQ and EQ in education, that’s will be fine. They can go to higher education and ultimately will get better jobs and salaries. How about those with disability who can’t study like me?? We need to think another options to learn “survival skills” like farming, carpentry, cook, and even small businesses. Finding sustainability skills is very important in every lives so that we will not depend on anyone or government welfare.

Development is very important word for me. As a person with Cerebral Palsied, I was over protected by my mother when I was very young. On top of that, I was a unhealthy child. Always and easy to get sick. I can’t get much exposure to “normal world”. Most of my young time either at home and at Spastic Centre. But when I was 13 years old, I came to know a group of Boys’ Brigade (non-disabled uniform activities) at a function and my mind started to think “ I want to like them”. I want to join their activities although my physical was not

strong and intelligence wise are not got. I told my mum, although I am a person with Cerebral Palsy I want to develop myself into fullest potential in the society. From age 15, I fought myself to non disabled school. I joined every activities in Boys' Brigade. There were failures and discouragements in order to developing myself. Although I was not good in education, I able to work in welfare organization. I was given an opportunity to work back at my former school, Spastic Centre as a Physiotherapy aid. I was given an opportunity to Japan for Social Work Exposure Course for a year. It's another opportunity to develop myself. It's aim was "human help human industry". It's mean another word, create an opportunity to help other human beings in "sustainability development in specific goals".

But the Japanese look into the other area which can humans develop other humans in sustainability development goals".

I was exposed to many welfare industries in Japan. The NGOs in Japan are very specific on individual program for individual client. It's opened my mind. Sustainability does not only mean industries or produce crops in order able to sell. But the Japanese look into the other area which can humans develop other humans in sustainability development goals.

Back in January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1999, when I started **Sustainability and** Persatuan Perkhidmatan Komuniti Taiping, known as ESDA, mean mercy in Greek word, the 2 goals always in my mind, sustainability and development. In the same our Vision is "Empowerment towards Dignity and justice. In the other hand our concept of sustainability for our Work Centre for people with disability are very crucial. Therefore, we started Recycle unit 15 years ago. It is income generation project for our centre. At the same time we were developing our handicrafts section, like recycle paper bookmarks and bags with recycle drinks wrappers. In the year of 2009, October we got a grant from Hong Leong Foundation to initiate Laundry Section. At the same we have a contract from Flemington Hotel, to washed towels. All by all, incomes are not enough but at least we are able to generate incomes. Lately 2 years ago, I converted ESDA into our new mission statement:-

E = Empowerment

S = Sustainability

D = Development

A = Actions

Empowerment=Every individual have a rights for themselves. They have power to determine their lives. Empowerment basically to train our disabled friends or community to determine and as well as develop their lives. Powering people is very crucial. Powering people means lead them out from poverty, depression and oppression.

Whenever I goes to Orang Asli kampongs I will speaks various topics link to empowerment.

Sustainability = whenever the people under poverty, the most important task is to listen to them. Give them rights to choose what they want. But I told them our concept is make sure their lives are sustain in economical. Employments or jobs opportunities are created. I always told the clients rely on people are not long term. We need look into sustainability solutions for our lives. There are no monies falls from sky. We need work hard and work smarts for ourselves and our families. That's what my challenge to them as disabled own self.

Development = In our lives need to keep on developing whether our community work or individual lives.Our lives either stagnant or move forward (develop) or move backward. Development through our creativity and innovative. Development basically means expanding what we are doing.

Actions= Think fast act fact is my own principle. Whenever new ideas came to our mind, we need plan with strategy. Implementation (actions) in right time according to our plans.

Actions always have risks to fail or succeed. The most important actions in right time and right place.

As for our goal for Learning Centre for marginalized children is to develop every child to fullest potential. Our slogan for Learning Centre is "We are the children with Love and Hope.At moment we have 39 children around Kamunting community. The children come to our centre after school. We provide tuition, library, computer class, Ukelele class and outdoor

activities. From these children we are hoping able to help their parents in incomes generations projects by setting up small business entrepreneur.

I knew SDG few years ago through Dr. Denison and Mr. James Raj. Two years ago James sent my staff to Sri Lanka for SDG conference. Unfortunately, he was not practiced after he came back from Sri Lanka. Early this year 2022, I had a meeting with Mr. James Raj at KL. We discussed about SDG concepts. It's made me interested to learn more especially 17 goals.

On 28 May 2022, we were honored and successfully organized SDG Workshop together with team of APPGM – SDG at Taiping Perdana Hotel. We invited NGOs and as well as Government Agencies and total was 37 participants. My knowledge on SDG became wider. Mr. James, Mr. Anthony and Mr. Paniir gave a constructive knowledge on 17 goals of SDG. And I realized SDG was part of puzzle in our community work in all these years.

The 17 goals of SDG is very crucial for our community and nation. It's my hope every citizens are educated in SDG goals, we will be achieved it.

In the future goal, next year we hope can move another higher step as below:-

- 1, Form Alliance SDG-CSO amongst NGOs and Government Agencies in Taiping
2. Through this alliance we can be voice and advocate for our community.
3. Organize more SDG workshops
4. Be a part of solutions team by organize income generations projects in Taiping and as well as Orang Asli Kampongs.

Thank you !

## **Empowering the Community thru Skills Training**

**by**

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Based on my opinion and 10 years' experience, Malaysia is an average in developing the country, whereby we still have high rate of poverty and crime and I believe we are in the line of developing country across ASEAN countries. We have a lot expertise but we don't have proper management and monitoring system. All are good in paper but not the implantation side. Respective Government officer should do more ground work rather than receiving orders from political parties. Corruption should be demolished completely. Education institution must to more research and try to coop the needs. Monitoring should start the moment the project is begin. A journey towards better Malaysia should begin now. A proper problem management system must create rather than waiting the problem to viral in social media. Yes, we have progressed a lot since our independence, 1957 but there a lot room of improvement. We can adapt a lot of new methodology from other countries example like India- farming, America – Technology, China – fight against corruption and Japan – displicine. We need more skilled worker.

**We need to new objective such as**

- ✓ To create a better community**
- ✓ Economically Empowering**
- ✓ To improvise quality for the community – FREE CRIME**
- ✓ Upgrading Educational Status**
- ✓ Building Entrepreneurial Capability**
- ✓ Strengthening Economy to vulnerable society**
- ✓ Securing Business / Job Opportunities**
- ✓ Improving and Facilities Access to Financial Freedom**
- ✓ Establishing Mutual Support Networks**

Based on my experience and research on how to uplift a community and ideas from grassroots people. Pertubuhan Pembangunan Wanita Tamarai Pulau Pinang was founded and registered as NGO on 25 January 2013. Since 2013, TAMARAI have been creating a platform to our community for education and skills training. We believe on ‘ TEACH THEM TO FISH, NOT GIVING THEM FISH’ ’Till 2022, TAMARAI had educated approximate of 1,000 people in various skills and courses. TAMARAI had done 200 programme around Penang, Kedah and Perak. You can visit our Facebook at Pertubuhan Pembangunan Wanita Tamarai Pulau Pinang and Facebook page Tamarai Ngo. We uplift them thru giving them skills to live. Yes, we have changed a part of the community and now in the process of balance of the huge community. We help people from poverty background, high –risked (crime), uneducated family and ex- prisoners from Pulau Pinang, Kedah and Perak. We do accept them without seeing their race or from where. We are giving them free Life Surviving Skills for them to survive in future by their own.

We are focusing and referring to

- **SDG 1**
- **SDG 4**
- **SDG 8,**
- **SDG 10**
- **SDG 17**

Tamarai focuses on empowering lower income community especially underprivileged individuals – B40 families, high risk youth, ex-prisoners and prisoner’s family from Penang, Kedah, and Perak. We provide income generating skill course to change and improve their living standard in the community to achieve sustainable economic growth, equal job opportunities and an enhanced awareness to the importance of a healthy environment.



## Impact Stories

### Young Entrepreneurs Programme 1.0

On 03th October 2021, we started Project Young Entrepreneur sponsored by APPGM thru online classes. We received 100 applications throughout Malaysia but we selected only 30 students from Penang. Our online class was conducted on weekend only at 10am to 12pm. Our youngest student was 9 years old girl without business background and the oldest was 17 years old boy. We begin our class with Ice Breaking sessions, continues with Intellectual training by Master Paneer Selvam and the whole module was conducted by him which include marketing strategy, promotion, market demand, problem surviving how handle problematic customer, customer service and grants. We plan the class in fun activities such as quizzes, games, competition, group presentation, solo presentation and all activities are counted in marks – reward points. We invited a successful Agroprenuer – Mr. Cilikuna for sharing which took 2 hours, well its was interesting sharing since he was willing to share the success and failure stories to us. We share videos and we let the students to speak –Public Speaking and Stage Panic Management module was a bonus. Our students turn into champion where some of them started to do small scale business such as dropship. We organize an Award Ceremony – Certificate Presentation to our young entrepreneur at The Light Hotel on 27 November 2021. We would like share a proudest moment story – **Shakti Balamurugan – 13 years old is one our student and while the class he started to do cupcake business – he bought it from an aunty near his house and he decorate it with carton theme – Donald Duck, Superman, Avengers’, Spiderman, Hello Kitty etc – was helped by his parents and pre-packed in different box and sell it and he manage to sell 100 cupcakes in 2 weeks – Deepavali week. Each box costs RM 8.00 with 5pcs theme cupcake. We were so impressed with dedicate and brilliant way of business and we awarded him as Most Outstanding Student 2021 – Tamarai Young Entrepreneurs 2021.**

**Our favorite quotes by students and parents:**

**Shakti** – *Thank you for the chance given, I might not be entrepreneur now but the knowledge makes me understand the struggle in life and how to overcome it. An expensive knowledge with zero charges....*

**Kausal** – *You changed my life....*

**Clara's mother** – *Please continue with this programme as I can see the change and hope to see in others.*

**Raj's mother** – *My son was addicted to online games until he joined this program me. The assignment given was a good challenge whereby he does a lot of homework, research to finish the task and I saw him doing presentation in English by his own.*

## **Analyzing the intersection between SDG and SOGIESC**

**by**

**Thilaga Sulathireh** (Justice for Sisters)

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper analyzes the challenges faced by LGBTIQ persons and groups in engaging with the SDG framework in the context of criminalization. It also explores the intersection between SDG & SOGIESC based on Justice for Sisters' monitoring of LGBTIQ related CEDAW concluding observations and UPR recommendations.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) persons in Malaysia face multiple forms of discrimination from state, private sector and society, resulting in their marginalization. LGBTQ persons in Malaysia face criminalization under the Federal and state laws. In total, there are at least 50 state syariah laws that criminalize persons on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and consensual sexual relations by persons of the same gender. As of 2018, at least 5 new anti-LGBT laws and two amendments to existing anti-trans laws have been made in Negeri Sembilan and Kelantan.

In addition, since 2011, Malaysia has also invested, initiated and supported a range of activities to 'rehabilitate LGBT persons or return LGBT persons to the right path' (read conversion practices or SOGIE change efforts). Regardless of its name, rehabilitation, SOGIE change efforts or conversion practices, these efforts aim to change LGBTQ persons' sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. They are widely discredited due to its lack of scientific and medical validity<sup>2</sup> and its harmful effects.

The state programmes target both LGBTQ persons and non-LGBTIQ persons. Programmes targeting LGBTQ persons include camps, treatment, publications, among others. According to JAKIM, over 1,700 LGBT people have been reached through its camps.

Meanwhile, according to a paper presented at the 2022's Asia-Oceania Federation for Sexology (AOFS) Congress, at least 40 transgender persons have 'changed' or suppressed

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<sup>2</sup>[https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/SexualOrientation/IESOGI/CSOsAJ/IFEG\\_Statement\\_on\\_C.T.\\_for\\_publication.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/SexualOrientation/IESOGI/CSOsAJ/IFEG_Statement_on_C.T._for_publication.pdf)

their gender expression or gender identity and a few have gotten married since 2012. Additionally, about 20 trans people have reportedly undergone surgeries to de-transition or to undo medical interventions sponsored by Sultan Ahmad Shah Medical Centre Pahang. They are also provided financial aid to ensure that they do not “relapse” and revert back to their gender identity. Similarly, financial aid is provided in Selangor through the zakat programme to support LGBT people to change or suppress their sexual orientation and gender identity.

The state and supporters of LGBT rehabilitation or SOGIE change efforts continue to rely on the continuous participation of some LGBT people to justify the continuation of the programmes. It is important to note that in the context of criminalization, exclusion and pervasive pressure to ‘change’, it is not surprising, and to a large extent self-explanatory, why some LGBTQ people engage in these activities. Justice for Sisters’ documentation shows various factors that compel or motivate LGBTQ people to participate

- To learn about Islam and practice their religion in communal settings. LGBTQ, especially trans and gender diverse people are excluded from religious places and participating in communal religious practices
- Access micro-credit or financial support for their businesses to overcome employment discrimination and poverty
- Maintain cordial relationships with the Islamic state departments to avoid arbitrary arrests, hostility and violence against them. This has to be contextualized within the historically hostile relationship and exclusion faced by LGBTIQ person by the Islamic departments, which have resulted in traumatizing arrests, violence and degrading treatment during arrest and detention.

However, it is critical for us to note that these programmes, regardless of its branding and packaging, are inherently not evidence and rights based, as they impose conditions in order to be ‘accepted’ or ‘included’. For example, LGBTQ persons participating in these programmes are expected to ‘abandon’ our identities in order to be able to practice our freedom of religion and belief. As such, they do not respect the right to self-determination, equality and non-discrimination.

Justice for Sisters' unpublished study shows 103 out of 156 (66%) LGBTQ and gender diverse respondents have faced pressure to change their SOGIE in their lifetime. While 16 of 156 respondents (10.3%) or 1 out of 10 LGBT people have reportedly been forcibly sent to medical, religious and other actors to be 'changed'. Other documentation also show increased vulnerability faced by LGBTIQ and gender diverse persons to violence by family members because of their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression (SOGIE). This includes, physical, verbal and sexual violence, withdrawal of emotional and financial support, surveillance, forced marriages, among others.

Further, LGBTIQ persons have also reported among others, discrimination in the employment, healthcare, education sectors both in the government and private sectors. The Suhakam report with transgender and intersex persons in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor shows 58 of the 100 respondents were denied employment opportunity based on their gender identity. Meanwhile, 57 shared that prospective employers imposed conditions in relation to their gender expression and asked intrusive and degrading questions during the job interviews. Some conditions imposed include being asked to cut their hair, among others.

The discrimination and violence faced by LGBTIQ persons in Malaysia are structural, systemic, and intersectional. A CERiA (Centre of Excellence for Research in AIDS) study with 26 muslim queer men shows a causal link between fear due to criminalisation and pressure to get married or change their SOGIE with low health seeking behaviour and knowledge. In addition, the context of criminalisation, non-recognition and exclusion also limits employment opportunities, ability to live with dignity, ability to access to redress, increases vulnerability to poverty and falling into poverty, among others.

## **Intersectional lens in monitoring SDG**

The SDG provides a framework to end marginalisation by 2030. However, an intersectional lens is critical in ending all forms of marginalization. The Independent Expert on SOGI in a report on SDG and SOGI rightly states

“Although no explicit references to SOGI nor LGBTI were made in the final Agenda 2030 outcome document nor included in the indicators or metrics for monitoring SDG progress, the mandate believes that the goals cannot be achieved if those experiencing discrimination and violence based on SOGI continue to be left behind.”<sup>3</sup>

Applying an intersectional lens is imperative in ensuring that the SDG truly does not leave anyone behind. This means analyzing and assessing the compounding effect as a result of intersecting identities, especially marginalized identities. While some goals, targets and indicators specify the type of data needed or populations targeted, it is important for state and other actors to use an intersectional lens in interpreting and monitoring the goals.

For example, indicator 1.1.1 requires states to monitor the proportion of population living below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/local). While these categories are critical, they are not exhaustive or be seen as restrictive. Disaggregating poverty related data based on disabilities, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, among others are also important in ensuring vulnerability faced by marginalized populations are captured and addressed.

Similarly, indicator 5.5.1 calls for monitoring of the number of seats held by women in parliaments and local governments. However, it is important to understand the diversity of women who are in parliament and local governments.

## **Challenges in using the SDG framework**

The Independent Expert’s report identifies several challenges faced by LGBTIQ human rights defenders and groups in engaging in SDG monitoring and the VNR process. This includes

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<sup>3</sup>A/HRC/50/27: Report on the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health of persons, communities and populations affected by discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals  
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc5027-report-right-enjoyment-highest-attainable-standard-physical-and>

- Inadequate coverage of SOGI issues in SDG implementation & tracking
- Restrictions on LGBT rights defenders and barriers to participation in SDG processes
- Data and research gaps

This section builds on the challenges identified by the IE Expert on SOGI. Justice for Sisters has identified the following challenges based on our experience in using the SDG in monitoring and measuring the inclusion of LGBTIQ persons

### **1. The understanding of sex, gender and sexual orientation**

In Malaysia, the understanding of gender remains binary and convoluted, despite it being a ground of discrimination in the Federal Constitution. Often, gender is used interchangeably with sex, although they are two separate categories.

### **2. Access to data, especially in the context of criminalization & intersectional data analysis**

The criminalization, non-recognition and exclusion of LGBTIQ and gender diverse people not only have a systemic impact on quality of life, but it also pose additional barriers in measuring the systemic impacts given the risks in disclosing their sexual orientation, gender identity and their experiences related their identities. In the context of Malaysia, Muslim LGBTIQ persons find it even more challenging to disclose their identities due to fear of discrimination and prosecution under state syariah laws.

### **3. Lack of meaningful inclusion**

The discrimination and exclusion based on SOGI is not monitored by other actors. For example, UN agencies, non-LGBTIQ civil society organizations and private sectors.

### **4. Understanding of discrimination**

As evidenced by the state reports to the CEDAW committee and UPR working groups, in spite of the context of criminalization, state actors tend to believe that LGBTIQ are treated equally and without discrimination.

## Synergy between CEDAW, UPR and SDG

Justice for Sisters monitors the implementation of the SDG through the implementation of LGBTIQ related CEDAW concluding observations and UPR recommendations. The concluding observations and recommendations could be summarized into four main key areas

- Legal and policy reform
- Education
- Healthcare
- Human rights defenders

These thematic areas intersect with several SDGs including

- Goal 3 on health and well-being
- Goal 4 on education
- Goal 5 on gender equality
- Goal 10 on reduced inequality
- Goal 16 on peace, justice & strong institutions

**Table 1: Summary of LGBTIQ related UPR recommendations and CEDAW concluding observations**

Theme	Summary of action points or recommendations
Legal & policy reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Repeal laws that discriminate LGBTI persons.</li><li>● Allow legal gender recognition for trans and gender diverse persons.</li><li>● Introduce anti-discrimination laws that protect LGBTI persons from mistreatment and violence.</li><li>● Discontinue measures which aim to ‘correct’ or ‘rehabilitate’ LGBTI persons.</li><li>● Develop public awareness programs.</li></ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Adopt anti-bullying policies in schools based on alternative</li></ul>



	<p>strategies to address bullying.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Undertake awareness-raising measures to foster equal rights for LGBTI students.</li> </ul>
Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 39. The Committee is concerned about the obstacles faced by certain groups of women that block their access to health-care services in the State party, including asylum-seeking and refugee women, women migrant workers, rural women, transgender women and indigenous women.</li> </ul>
Human Rights Defenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 50. The committee raised concerns over the harassment and intimidation by the state against human rights defenders who defend the rights of muslim women, LGBTI women, democratic reforms, among others.</li> </ul>

### **Thematic area 1: Legal and policy reforms**

In relation to the legal and policy reform thematic area, the state has been recommended to

- Repeal laws that discriminate LGBTI persons.
- Allow legal gender recognition for trans and gender diverse persons.
- Introduce anti-discrimination laws that protect LGBTI persons from mistreatment and violence.
- Discontinue measures which aim to ‘correct’ or ‘rehabilitate’ LGBTI persons.
- Develop public awareness programs.

These directly contribute to among others, Goal 16 and Goal 10. Specifically, they contribute to the following targets

- Target 10.3 which calls for elimination of discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action to reduce inequality.
- Target 16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
- Target 16.b Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

## **Thematic area 2: Education**

The recommendations in relation to education contribute directly to Goal 4 and target 4.a which calls for the state to provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

## **Thematic area 3: Healthcare**

There are two specific action points from the CEDAW concluding observation that intersect with health - 1) discontinue measures which aim to ‘correct’ or ‘rehabilitate’ LGBTI persons 2) barriers faced by transgender women in accessing healthcare services.

As explained in the earlier section, the Malaysian government continues to invest, initiate and support rehabilitation and conversion practices programmes, which are widely discredited due to its adverse harms and lack of scientific validity. This not only increases stress among LGBT population, but it allows others to continue to provide these harmful practices.

Transgender and gender diverse persons face tremendous barriers in accessing healthcare services due to a 1982 fatwa (religious edict) which prohibits gender affirming procedures for trans people. The fatwa also deems trans people as haram (forbidden). This fatwa had a negative impact on a pioneering trans specific healthcare service that was provided at the university Hospital in the 1980s.

In addition, in addressing the health related issues faced by LGBTIQ persons in Malaysia, the government must ensure

1. Availability of affirming LGBT, trans and intersex specific healthcare services and information in national healthcare system. This also includes availability of sexual reproductive health services and information, mental services, among others
2. Provision of healthcare services are in line with human rights standards and evidence. As such, the Ministry of Health must undertake a review of the government current programmes, guidelines
3. Elimination of discrimination based on SOGIE in the healthcare sector by training healthcare providers and improving complaint mechanisms

4. Elimination of health related misinformation, harmful practices, among others. This includes undertaking additional efforts to reduce manipulation of HIV data to stigmatize LGBTQ population.

It is also important to note the overall legal and societal context has a significant impact on health and well-being.

As such, the implementation of the CEDAW concluding observations will directly address the following targets

- Target 3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all
- Target 3.c Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States

#### **Thematic area 4: Human rights defenders**

The CEDAW committee in its concluding observations acknowledged the increased vulnerability faced by LGBTI human rights defenders, and recommended the state to ‘ensure that women human rights defenders can carry out their work by guaranteeing their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association as enshrined under the Federal Constitution, subject to the Malaysian law.’

This conclusion observation contributes to the implementation of Goal 10 and Goal 16 and targets under the goals, including:

- Target 16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
- Target 16.a, Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.

## **Persatuan Komuniti Berdikari**

Registered Society: PPM-015-07-27032015

### **The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the eyes of a refugee in Malaysia**

by

**Zahid Alam Dil Mohamad (Community Worker at Penang Refugee Network/Persatuan Komuniti Berdikari)**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

A refugee is ‘someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence’. They have “a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group”. Refugees are fleeing from life-threatening situations from many countries around the world. For Malaysia, they significantly include those fleeing from the well documented genocide in Arakan state and other parts of Myanmar, as well as from other lands. There is no option for any imminent return to their homelands safely. This differentiates a refugee from an economic migrant: their situations are fundamentally different. To be ‘verified’ as a refugee, a person has to go through a stringent verification process conducted by national governments, or, in the case of Malaysia, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). A person who has applied for refugee status but is still waiting for verification is known as an ‘asylum seeker’.

Misunderstandings about the life-circumstances facing refugees, together with a reluctance by countries around the world to readily accept refugees, is shared across the globe. Many national governments are unsure of how to deal with numbers of refugees fleeing from life-threatening situations. There is also an accompanying and often demeaning rhetoric from certain people in most countries which exacerbate misunderstandings and inflame anti-refugee sentiment in the local populace. Such sentiments are often extended to denigrate any migrant. Xenophobia is a consequence and is not at all helpful to achieve social stability, let alone SDG commitments.

With the generous and much appreciated support of the All Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia (APPGM), I and my refugee colleague have been helping deliver the programmes to contribute towards SDG hopes. This is through the Penang Stop Human Trafficking Campaign (PSHTC) which has been addressing for over ten years some of the consequences of the situation facing refugees in Penang. We are honoured to be invited to contribute this article as a review of this context, our work with APPGM, and to make some recommendations as to the way forward towards 2030.

So this article starts with a description of the refugee situation in Penang. It goes on to describe our approach to community work and how this relates to the SDG Goals. It looks at the work done under the project funded by the APPGM and addresses the impact this project has had on the refugee beneficiaries who participated in the project.

It adds some comments about some of the wider faced by the refugees in accessing healthcare services, education for the refugee children and employment. In all of this, the SDG tagline 'leaving no one behind' is referenced as a constant background and potential inspiration.

Finally, some recommendations are made as to future possibilities for working with the goals of the UN SDGs, not least in providing some kind of legal status and protection for refugees in Malaysia as key to reducing our vulnerability, marginalisation and limitation to our community making a more effective contribution to this country and to the discussions and targets of the different SDGs. We hope we are not left out or left behind - we really want to be part of the ongoing discussions and actions.

## **CONTEXT OF OUR WORK**

### **The situation facing refugees in Malaysia**

There are some 183,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers with the UNHCR in Malaysia. The vast majority of these are from Myanmar, where there is on-going and systematic violence being perpetrated against many of the ethnic minority groups. Other refugees come from countries including Pakistan, Yemen, Syria, Somalia, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Palestine. In Penang, there are some 20,000 of these refugees. We are scattered across the state and are primarily Rohingya or Burmese Muslims fleeing from

well-documented genocide in Myanmar. There are families as well as single men. There are an estimated 4,500 children (under 18), none of whom have ready access to Malaysian national mainstream schooling (refugees are not 'recognised' so the children are not given this right).

The Malaysian government see refugees as 'in transit' to third countries. It therefore has not given refugees any legal or administrative status. It has invited the UNHCR to process and verify refugee applications in Malaysia and arrange resettlement. UNHCR is also given the overall responsibility for refugee welfare while refugees wait for resettlement. With the number of places being offered by third countries variable year by year and dependent on political situations for example in USA, the fact has been that for many years resettlement places are a long way below what is needed. This means that there are thousands of refugees who have been living in Malaysia and Penang without any real status or protection for many, many years.

Our daily lives are therefore precarious. Without clear legal status, we have no legal avenue to work and no protection at work. At the same time, we have to work to ensure the survival of ourselves and our families. We are regularly exposed to discrimination, harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention. We cannot send our children to government schools and wonder what the future holds for them. Our access to health care is often uncertain and unaffordable and if anything happens to us or our children, it is unclear whether we can get any support or help from the authorities including from the police.

All of this means we are a highly vulnerable community, and, in terms of the UN SDG commitments, a community which is marginalised to the point we are a long way from being recognised and included in the 17 goals. We are "left behind" or even "left out". But we have always been working hard to change this within our community (see below) and with the efforts and support of groups like the APPGM, we have hope that there is good reason for optimism for changes to be made for the betterment of all.

## **The community work under PSHTC**

I started my community initiatives in Penang under PSHTC. PSHTC is a small group of committed individuals who came together in 2012 with a shared vision to work closely with the refugee community over the long-term to promote community self-reliance and resilience. This was seen as one approach to a long-term tackling of human trafficking. The consistent and expanding community work that has resulted is also captured under the umbrella of Aspire Penang.

The community work addresses two basic and significant challenges facing our refugee community in Penang. These are

1. The need to re-establish a sense of connection, a community of support. Refugees come from many different villages and towns in Myanmar. Often, when refugees arrive here, they do not know anyone or just have one family or friendship connection. Once here, refugees are geographically disbursed.
2. Building a sense of hope for the future.

So one thing that we have done under PSHTC/Aspire Penang is to build a network of refugee community leaders from different locations across Penang, to share experiences and exchange ideas for programmes and solutions together. This is informally called the Penang Refugee Network. This network also allows rapid information sharing and dispersal (about things like COVID vaccinations, for example) and quick identification of particularly vulnerable individuals or families for whom help can then be sought and delivered. It is this network which is involved in the delivery of programmes like the ones under APPGM. The building of the network is on-going and helps us extend our reach, impact an ever-larger number of refugees and help rebuild a sense of shared community ownership and responsibility. It is very much in line with the inclusion goals of the SDGs and is a ready-made forum for exchange and dialogue with government, non-government and other potential partners and collaborations, as per SDG 17.

Of course nearly everything we do under PSHTC/Aspire Penang and with the network is attempting to build a sense of hope for the future. This is practically done through delivering a range of programs and activities, all of which are initiated, led and staffed by refugees themselves. These activities are designed to empower and enrich the lives of persons in our

community, including children, youth, women, single mothers, men, the elderly and those with disabilities. At the same time, we are able through our network to respond to emergencies, one example of which is that we were able to provide food and cash assistance to over 2,000 Penang refugee families and 750 single refugees during the initial time of COVID/lockdowns, to help them survive. This was done in close collaboration with other groups in Penang, including the state government, and with UNHCR.

Current programs and services include running of a pre-school for 72 children, a very successful youth football program, the provision of a number of life skills education classes (i.e. English, computer class, first aid), workshops covering leadership and personal development, as well as support to teams of youth, women and men to discuss and tackle issues such as child marriage, a range of protection issues, and human trafficking. This is in addition to attending to individual cases and providing (limited) financial support to severely disadvantaged community members such as the elderly and persons with disabilities.

### **Addressing Sustainable Development Goals With The Help Of APPGM**

In 2021, with the help of Ms Lilianne Fan and YB Kasthuri Patto, MP for Batu Kawan, Penang (thanks to both of them), we received a visit from the APPGM-SDG Team that has put us together and set us on this journey towards working to localise and realise the SDGs in Malaysia.

As we know, “the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.” (from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>)

In general, all of the work of PSHTC/Aspire Penang relates to one or more of the 17 SDGs, and now that we have been honoured to have become a solution partner with the APPGM team, the APPGM-supported programmes have been able to specifically address especially SDGs 3, 4, 8 and 17. We describe this work and impact below.



### **SDG 3: Health And Well-Being**

The fact that refugees have no legal or administrative status in Malaysia has a number of critical consequences. One is that our access to basic provisions such as income, housing, health and education become precarious or non-existent. With regard to health, our access has been compromised by a confusion amongst Malaysian healthcare providers as to whether refugees can legally be treated and at what price. There has been some recent improvement in clarifying this, but many refugees still prefer to avoid seeking healthcare because of three main factors.

These are:

- fear of arrest and detention
- exorbitant cost /affordability, and
- intimidated by language barrier.

These three factors need to be addressed if our community's experience is to be included in initiatives to realise the ultimate goals of the SDGs, specifically SDG 3. And at the same time, the link to the lack of legal status for refugees needs to be made. The vulnerability of refugees to arrest and detention at hospitals or at other healthcare providers also extends to places of employment. There is no security, and therefore no security of employment and therefore of income. This severely compromises the ability of refugees to earn a livelihood, let alone accrue some savings. This is critical in understanding why healthcare costs for refugees are, for us, prohibitively high.

It is also one reason why one component of our partnership with APPGM focussed on providing financial support to cover the costs of child delivery. This is an unavoidable but high cost and leads to many refugee families having to borrow and become further into debt. It is a vicious circle: lack of income, high expenses, few options but to borrow from friends or moneylenders at an interest which sends them into further indebtedness. This can then result in further problems for the family. The focus here is on SDG 3 but might as well be on SDG 2 (Poverty) as well as SDG 8 (Decent Work). The impact of those families who were able to benefit from the APPGM support was hugely significant. But sadly we are only able

to help a few women and families. In looking forward, it is clear a more thorough review of the obstacles facing all refugees in being guaranteed good Health and Well-Being (SDG 3) will lead to policies and solutions that will support all refugees benefitting from our commitments to the SDGs, not least SDG 2, 4, 5, and 8.

#### **SDG 4: Quality Education / Sdg 5: Gender Equality**

Lack of legal and administrative status also has impact on our community's access to education. None of our children are recognised as having a right to attend national schools, with the result that most refugee children have little or (in the majority of cases) no schooling at all. At the same time, depending a little on which ethnic group they are from, many refugees arrive in Malaysia also with little or no education, especially the women. This clearly affects Malaysia's hope to realise the objectives of both SDG 4 and SDG 5 (and, in the longer term, will affect Malaysia's attainment of SDGs 2, 3 and 8).

This is why one of the programmes supported by APPGM was to do with providing some support to a few refugee children in attending school, and another was to do with literacy and language skills including for women and youth. One impetus for the literacy and language programme arises from the situation whereby the illiteracy rate in the refugee community, perhaps especially in the Rohingya community, is very high particularly among the women. The consequent problems are many but include the lack of access to written information including messages shared on social media and via websites, the difficulty of communicating with authorities, including at hospitals or clinics, and the inability to use apps like Grab. Many women cannot read the basic details of their UNHCR ID card and providing a full address may well be beyond their ability.

Helping women acquire literacy and language skills falls into SDG 4 and 5. Our programme in providing Malay classes, supported by APPGM, has reached particularly single mothers, who are especially vulnerable. They started with zero literacy and now have acquired basic reading skills. This has made a huge difference in their life as these skills free them from the dependency on others, for example in dealing with authorities or booking a Grab. It gives them some confidence of being better able to negotiate their lives. Of course the intervention remains piecemeal, in the sense that it can only reach limited numbers, but it has made a difference.

We have also provided English language classes for youth, again in order to provide at least some education and skilling which would otherwise not be available. English proficiency was highlighted by the youth as a skill they aspired to, and it was interesting that more younger women than young men attended these classes. Opportunities for learning of any sort for teenage girls is very limited and providing a class like ours clearly meets a need. Attendance at the classes has not only increased their language skills, but also their confidence that someone does care to provide such a class for them. This is very important and we are indebted to APPGM for your support.

More generally, we can note that in the area of education, there has been a little progress. There has been discussion of what it would take to allow refugee children into national schools. I am not sure what progress is being made on this. The government has also made it possible for UNHCR to form partnership with local colleges and universities to provide some refugee youth access to tertiary education although the number affected is very few. In the meantime, learning centres run by NGOs, faith-based groups or CBOs continue to do their best to provide some sort of education, but the figures are not high. An estimated 15% of pre-school and secondary school aged kids get some sort of access, meaning over 80% in these age groups do not. Approximately 45% get access to primary education, meaning the majority do not. The enrolment of girls is less after around age 8 or 9. It is difficult to see what the future holds for all these children and youth, for without basic education and basic protection there are very few options. Not only are SDGs 4 and 5 affected, but so, in the longer term, is SDG 8. There will be no decent work for refugees; instead this group will continue to be at the mercy of potentially exploitative employers and criminal syndicates. For young women, whose opportunities for education and work are more limited because of attitudes within some of our refugee communities, some families are already choosing to marry them young (it is not illegal in Malaysia) partly because they see marriage as providing some protection for their daughter. Clearly this relates to SDG 5. Is this really a future we want to create for them?

It is in this context that one of the programmes under the APPGM project is support a few selected children in accessing education through supporting their families financially to allow them to do this. You can imagine the huge difference this will make to these children and families. But I am sure we all realise that to really address the goals of SDG 4 and 5, opening

up education to all children, girls and boys, in Malaysia (which is part of the Convention on the Rights of the Child) is basic. And on the issues related to SDG 5, without proper legal protection, women remain often reluctant to go to healthcare providers and reluctant to reporting abuses, including sexual violence. This needs to change.

### **SDG 8: Decent Work & Economic Growth**

As the previous section indicates, an overall concern relating both to the situation of refugees in Malaysia as well as attainment of the SDGs relates to work and economic growth. This is SDG 8, which promotes ‘inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all’.

Without any right to work, refugees in Malaysia are excluded from this SDG. More than that, having no protection at work means we face huge challenges in getting regular income to support ourselves and families, with the knock-on effects of having little or no money to afford healthcare, education, decent housing, or anything else. Many of us are constantly in debt because of the uncertainty and difficulties of getting work (which is unprotected). Of course the authorities also raid work places and we are subject to arrest and detention just because we are trying to earn a livelihood. Because of all this, we are also vulnerable to exploitation, not least from modern day slavery and human trafficking.

The lack of legal status also makes it hard for us to do any business. Basic things which others may take for granted are not available to us. We cannot apply for business licences, have no right to have a bank account, cannot apply for bank loans, and would find it difficult to negotiate credit with merchants. That is one reason why one part of the APPGM project is to support two refugees running small businesses, again a huge boost for them and in a small way, for their immediate community and customers. But again, if we are interested in helping anyone try to run a business with minimum obstacles but their own ideas and hard work, a wider review of the situation is called for.

There are many reports documenting the benefit to a country’s economy achieved by giving refugees a status for legal employment. From the World Bank to the Malaysian IDEAS, it is shown that including refugees as full participants in Malaysia’s workforce would help drive the economy as well as remove many of the abuses and marginalisation suffered by refugees in this country. We would love to see this happen.

## **Looking Forward To 2030**

In order to embrace and implement the 17 SDGs in a systematic and measurable manner, Malaysia has put in place an enabling environment through nine initiatives, as described on the Economic Planning Unit's website. In looking at these initiatives, it is not hard to see how these can be adapted or extended to include the situations facing the refugee community in Malaysia. Given that the overall tagline is "Leave No One Behind", we should consider it important to do this, so that all communities here in Malaysia can contribute and be included in our mutual journey to meet the goals.

Of course fundamental to any inclusion is some kind of legal or administrative framework that would give refugees recognition and protection. This would be the first of our recommendations which, if granted, would greatly help make the other recommendations more attainable and doable. Without a legal framework and status, it is very hard to protect refugees from ongoing vulnerabilities and abuses. This has significant impact on the overall achievement of the SDG commitments in Malaysia. Any programmes designed to reach specific SDG targets, or generally to build capacity and resilience and inclusion of a vulnerable community like the refugee community, may not be effective. Programmes cannot be mainstreamed and their impact is further diminished by major challenges related to safety, access to services, number of people able to be reached, and the restrictions on refugees having bank accounts, licences including for driving and for operating educational or other facilities, and protection in case there is trouble. No legal protection and the constant vulnerability to arrest and detention almost guarantees refugees will be left out of programmes, and therefore, in SDG terms, 'left behind'.

Achievement of the SDGs is dependent on the inclusion and contribution of all stakeholders, with each supporting the other to realise their full potential. But it is almost impossible for refugee to realise their human potential if we are not recognised and given a security of status.

So, based on our very positive experience with APPGM and from the ongoing work we have been doing for many years, may we offer these recommendations as we look towards the 2030 Agenda.

- the provision of a clear legal and administrative framework for refugees in Malaysia, which would allow them to work, be educated and contribute to the society without fear of harassment, arrest, detention, and other exploitation;
- pending the provision of a clear legal and administrative status, address the fact that the framework to deliver the various programs and activities to localise and realise the SDGs for everyone in Malaysia at the moment does not systematically include the refugee community. This can be addressed by
- find a way to allow refugees to work legally and securely, allowing them to earn a decent livelihood and at the same time contribute to nation building; (SDG 8)
- address the issues related to access to healthcare raised above, including removing the fear of arrest and detention, making healthcare affordable to refugees, and addressing the language issues by making education accessible to all. (SDG 3)
- pursue initiatives that would allow all children in Malaysia to be accepted into national schools: implementing the right to education. Work on identifying the sort of transition necessary to make this realistic for refugee children and youth/ national schools should be continued and intensified. (SDG 4)
- providing a legal and administrative status and opening up education would greatly help women in the refugee community feel safer with access to help and redress where necessary. (SDG 5)
- a forum should be established whereby the government and its agencies can dialogue with refugee leaders, UNHCR and civil society on the ways forward for ensuring refugees are not left behind in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. (SDG 17)

With many thanks to all at APPGM who have supported us. We cannot express enough our thanks.

**Zahid Alom**

with the help of Jarni Mustafa and James Lochhead

**Persatuan Komuniti Berdikari**

Penang, November 2022



## PEMBENTANGAN KERTAS SDG

**REALITI KEHIDUPAN KUMPULAN - KUMPULAN DI DALAM MASYARAKAT  
YANG MASIH TERTINGGAL DAN KMM BERSAMA MENJAYAKAN MATLAMAT  
PEMBANGUNAN MAMPAN.**

DISEDIAKAN OLEH:

**FAIZZUL AMRI BIN SHAHABUDDIN**

**PERTUBUHAN KEBAJIKAN MASYARAKAT MARHAEN TAIPING**

Pada peringkat awal iaitu tahun 2016 saya bergerak bersama-sama keluarga dan rakan- rakan di dalam aktiviti kebajikan atas dasar tanggungjawab sosial<sup>1</sup>. Ketika itu kami bergerak atas tiket sendiri di sekitar Taiping tanpa menggunakan apa-apa badan ataupun ngo.

Walaupun ketika itu Taiping boleh dikatakan pekan yang maju dan pesat dengan pembangunan di mana terdapat pelbagai pasar raya besar tidak seperti sebelum tahun 2000 di mana bandar Taiping tiada bangunan yang tinggi ataupun pasar raya yang canggih. Ketika itu kami dapati masih ramai lagi yang miskin, anak-anak tidak bersekolah di atas sebab pelbagai faktor seperti kemiskinan dan ibu bapa yang masih lagi tidak celik tentang kepentingan pelajaran untuk anak-anak. Ini belum dikira lagi para remaja yang tidak mahu dan juga tidak mampu untuk melanjutkan pelajaran ke peringkat pengajian tinggi. Lebih mengecewakan lagi mereka ini semua tinggal di bandar Taiping dan bukan dari luar bandar Taiping.

Atas rasa tanggungjawab sosial hampir setiap minggu kami akan turun ke kawasan *red spot* sekitar bandar taiping untuk memberi makanan sambil mendekati golongan ini dengan bertujuan memberi nasihat tentang penting pelajaran dan pekerjaan. Atas sebab perkara inilah tertubuhnya Pertubuhan Kebajikan Masyarakat Marhaen Taiping (KMM) pada tahun 2019. Ketika itu kami masih belum pernah mengetahui mengenai “Matlamat Pembangunan Mampan” atau SDG. Pada tahun 2019 selain turun mendekati golongan ini, KMM berkerjasama rapat dengan pusat pengajian tinggi Pusat Pembangunan Usahawan dan Kemahiran Perak PESDC. Pada tahun itu sahaja hampir 60 orang golongan remaja berjaya dipujuk untuk memasuki PESDC bagi menambahkan ilmu kemahiran.

Pada tahun awal tahun 2020 Malaysia telah dilanda wabak Covid dan kerajaan Malaysia melaksanakan Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan PKP. KMM telah mengambil inisiatif untuk membuka Pusat Penempatan Sementara Gelandangan dari bulan mac sehingga bulan julai bagi membantu mereka-mereka yang terdedah kepada bahaya covid di jalanan. Ketika itu di Malaysia hanya mempunyai 3 sahaja pusat penempatan sementara gelandangan iaitu di Wilayah Persekutuan, Ipoh dan Taiping. Lebih membanggakan lagi pusat penempatan di Taiping adalah satu-satunya diurus oleh ngo di mana pusat penempatan lain diuruskan oleh agensi kerajaan. Pada penghujung tahun 2020 KMM telah membuka Rumah Transit Rakan

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<sup>1</sup> Menyumbang semula kepada masyarakat



Jalanan Taiping. Rumah transit ini juga dijadikan pejabat KMM. Rumah transit berfungsi sebagai:

- Tempat perlindungan sementara untuk mereka yang mempunyai masalah.
- Menyediakan khidmat nasihat mengenai pelbagai jenis bantuan yang disediakan oleh kerajaan.
- Khidmat nasihat untuk ramaja yang ingin sambung pelajaran.
- Pusat sehenti untuk mendapatkan pelbagai jenis borang agensi seperti JKM, Baitulmal, Yayasan Perak dan lain-lain.
- Penghubung antara asnaf dan agensi kerajaan yang berkaitan.
- Khidmat kaunseling
- Khidmat nasihat mengenai “*Mental Awareness*”.

Pada tahun 2022 telah pihak KMM telah diperkenalkan kepada SDG daripada APPGM- SDG di hotel Taiping Perdana. Hasil daripada pengenalan itu pihak APPGM-SDG telah membantu KMM dengan memberi bantuan kewangan untuk menjayakan program usahawan yang telah pihak KMM pilih seramai 13 orang peserta. Program ini dikenali sebagai **Usahawan Berjaya: Kejayaan Demi Kebahagiaan** (UBKDK) dipadankan dengan prioriti APPGM-SDG untuk melahirkan usahawan-usahawan yang lestari dan serba boleh. Bakal usahawan ini akan dapat membantu diri dan negara dengan menjana ekonomi. Setiap bakal usahawan ini telah dipilih oleh pihak KMM daripada pelbagai latar belakang.

Program ini khusus dirangka sebaik mungkin untuk memenuhi keperluan pihak

**KUMPULAN RENTAS PARTI PARLIMEN MALAYSIA (APPGM-SDG)**, bagi menjayakan **MATLAMAT PEMBANGUNAN MAMPAN (SDG)** selari dengan matlamat global yang diperkenalkan pada tahun 2015 PBB (*United Nations*).

Pihak Pertubuhan Kebajikan Masyarakat Marhaen Taiping (KMM) melalui program UBKDK akan membantu sebaik mungkin pihak APPGM-SDG bagi mencapai 3 daripada 17 matlamat SDG. Tiga matlamat tersebut ialah:

- a. Tiada kemiskinan (SDG 1)
- b. Pendidikan berkualiti (SDG 4)
- c. Pekerjaan yang baik dan pertumbuhan ekonomi (SDG8)

Bakal usahawan ini akan dipersiapkan dengan semua ilmu perniagaan oleh pakar-pakar dalam bidang masing-masing. Perkara utama yang diajar dalam program ini ialah:

- a. Asas perniagaan
- b. Pengurusan kewangan
- c. Pengiklanan media sosial dan e-dagang (*e-commerce*).
- d. SSM / Pendaftaran perniagaan.
- e. Bantuan dan pinjam daripada kerajaan dan swasta.
- f. Bengkel fotografi dan rekaan lanjutan.
- g. Socso / Perkeso

Matlamat KMM adalah untuk membina sumber pendapatan kepada sekurang-kurangnya 13 peniaga untuk mempunyai perniagaan berskala yang akan kami berikan geran kepada mereka untuk mengembangkan lagi perniagaan mereka. Selain itu program ini dapat mewujudkan platform bagi para usahawan mempromosikan barangan perniagaan mereka supaya lebih lagi masyarakat yang mengetahui produk mereka. Sekurang-kurang separuh daripada peserta UBKDK dapat menjadi usahawan berjaya. Objektif terakhir pula ialah untuk membantu dan menyokong NGOs (berkaitan dengan keusahawanan) di kawasan sekitar Taiping untuk membuat projek selepas KMM tamat melaksanakan projek ini.

Sesi pertama program ini telah berlangsung pada 18 Ogos 2022. Sesi ini bertujuan untuk penerangan secara lanjut mengenai UBKDK. Tugas juga dibahagikan ketika ini. Diterangkan juga objektif program UBKDK ini. Presiden juga menerangkan visi dan misi program ini. Lebih kurang 8 ahli dan staf KMM akan terlibat secara langsung bagi menjayakan program ini. Seramai 13 orang telah dikenal pasti akan menjadi peserta bagi program ini.

Pecahan peserta adalah seperti berikut:

OKU:	3 orang	
Ibu tunggal:	2orang Belia (bawah 40 tahun):	7orang
Dewasa: (lebih 40 tahun):	1 orang	
<b>JUMLAH</b>	<b><u>13 orang</u></b>	

Semua peserta adalah dikalangan **B40**.

Sesi kedua pula berlaku pada 19 Ogos 2022 di mana pihak KMM telah ke Ipoh berjumpa dengan pegawai khas Exco Pembangunan Luar Bandar, Pembangunan Usahawan Dan Koperasi Negeri Perak iaitu Encik Syed Mohamad ‘Amaruddin Bin Sayd Bekari di Pejabat Setiausaha Kerajaan Negeri Perak yang bertempat di Ipoh. Pembentangan mengenai program UBKDK telah dilakukan dihadapan beliau. Encik Syed sangat mengalu-alukan program sebegini dilakukan. Kita juga telah memaklumkan bahawa dana program ini adalaah daripada APPGM-SDG. Encik Syed juga berjanji akan memberi segala bantuan yang diperlukan untuk menjayakan program UBKDK ini. Setiap modul juga diterangkan dengan jelas kepada beliau.

Satu perjumpaan bersama Jurulatih Akademi Teratak Rindu (ADR) telah diadakan di pejabat KMM pada tarikh 20 Ogos 2022. Pihak ADR dijemput untuk menjayakan salah satu modul kepada peserta program UBKDK. Pihak ADR telah diwakili oleh Puan Aiza Binti Mohamad Yuro dan suami. Beliau adalah jurulatih dalam bidang pemasaran dan banyak membuat bengkel-bengkel untuk usahawan di merata-rata tempat. Dalam masa yang sama beliau juga adalah pakar dalam bidang pastri dan pernah berkhidmat di pelbagai hotel dalam dapur pastri. Setelah dipersetujui KMM menjemput beliau untuk bersama-sama peserta UBKDK pada 28 Ogos bertempat di Kem Perasa. Tajuk bengkel beliau ialah “SIKAP DAN KEPERLUAN SEORANG USAHAWAN BERJAYA”. Beliau akan membawa seramai 8 orang pembantu beliau untuk menjayakan bengkel tersebut. Selain itu demonstrasi membuat kuih seri ayu akan dijalankan.

Perjumpaan pertama bersama peserta telah diadakan. Dimulakan dengan pendaftaran peserta dan mengisi perjanjian program. Kumpulan *whatsapp* juga diwujudkan untuk memudahkan peserta mengetahui atau bertanya mengenai kelas dikemudian hari. Setelah itu kelas dimulakan. Penceramah ialah Encik Mohamad Onn Bin Othman, Penolong Pengarah, Sekretariat Usahawan Negeri Perak (STEP). Beliau telah datang dari Ipoh. Bengkel pertama ini bertajuk ASAS-ASAS KEUSAHAWANAN.

Antara tajuk penting dalam bengkel ini ialah:

- a. Kreatif
- b. Inovatif
- c. Sanggup menghadapi risiko
- d. Bijak mengambil peluang
- e. Daya usaha yang berterusan
- f. Halangan-halangan usahawan

Kelas mengambil masa dari jam 2.30 petang sehingga 5.30 petang. Pelbagai input telah diberi kepada peserta. Kehadiran penuh peserta iaitu 13 orang. Tayangan slide projektor digunakan untuk memudahkan lagi peserta faham. Selain itu handout nota diberi dalam bentuk *softcopy* untuk memudahkan lagi peserta mengulangkaji pelajaran di rumah.

Bertempat di Kem Perasa Changkat Jering, peserta telah mengikuti bengkel bertajuk “SIKAP DAN KEPERLUAN SEORANG USAHAWAN BERJAYA”. Ini adalah perjumpaan kedua bersama peserta. Selain itu di bengkel ini juga dibuat satu kelas membuat kuih oleh Akademi Teratak Rindu. Bengkel ini diketuai oleh Puan Aiza dan beberapa pembantunya. Bengkel yang dijalankan ini melibatkan seramai 13 orang peserta program UBKDK dan 17 wanita dan ibu tunggal bertempat di Kem Perasa, Changkat Jering. Kelas bermula daripada jam 8 pagi sehingga jam 1 tengah hari. Makan tengah hari juga disediakan. KMM juga menerima maklum balas yang positif dan sangat mengalakkan di kalangan peserta yang mana mereka sangat berpuas hati dengan bengkel tersebut dan meminta untuk adakan lagi pada masa akan datang. Suasana kem yang dikelilingi hutan rimba dan bunyi unggas-unggas sangat menyenangkan. Di bengkel ini juga peserta diajar untuk mempelbagaikan jenis jualan dan tidak mengharap pada

satu jenis perniagaan sahaja. Kebanyakan peserta sebelum berkursus tidak mempunyai idea bagaimana menjana kewangan secara sampingan. Mereka hanya nampak satu perniagaan yang sempit sedangkan perniagaan itu boleh dipelbagaikan dengan kreatif untuk mendapatkan hasil yang lebih besar.

Seterusnya pada 7 September 2022 kelas berkaitan SOCSO / Perkeso telah diadakan. Dua orang pegawai daripada pihak PERKESO iaitu Puan Nurul Husna dan Cik Aina telah datang ke rumah transit untuk memberi ceramah yang bertajuk Skim Keselamatan Sosial Pekerjaan Sendiri. Perkara yang amat ditekankan pada kelas kali ini ialah pentingnya untuk mencarum bersama SOCSO / PERKESO. Ramai peserta yang tidak tahu manfaat daripada caruman ini.

Kelas berikut pula ialah bengkel gubahan bunga telah dijalankan bertempat di Masjid Pokok Assam, Taiping. Kelas diajar oleh Puan Haizum Sarah dengan dibantu oleh dua orang pembantu. Tujuan utama bengkel ini supaya peserta dapat menjana wang secara sampingan disamping kesibukan kerja. Selain daripada peserta UBKDK terdapat juga peserta luar iaitu daripada kumpulan Fisabilillah Pokok Assam. Pada 20 September 2022 peserta diajarkan dengan modul 3 bertajuk Pengurusan Kewangan. Dua orang tenaga pengajar yang terlibat iaitu Puan Nurul Naim Binti Ahmad Rasli dan Puan Farhana. Mereka adalah pensyarah daripada Jabatan Pengurusan di Fakulti Pengurusan dan Teknologi Maklumat, Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah. Peserta diajar teknik-teknik untuk mengurus dan mengawal dengan berkesan. Pelbagai teknik mengurus kewangan telah diajar. Hasil penelitian pihak KMM, rata rata peserta tidak bijak menguruskan wang perniagaan mereka. Maka dengan kelas hari ini kami berharap para peserta dapat menguruskan kewangan mereka dengan lebih berkesan.

Seperti yang kita semua tahu antara perkara yang paling penting apabila berniaga ialah mendaftarkan perniagaan dengan Syarikat Suruhanjaya Malaysia (SSM). Didapati ramai peserta yang pada awalnya tidak mahu mendaftar dengan ssm. Ini kerana majoriti peserta adalah penerima bantuan kerajaan BR1M. Dikhuatiri mereka akan dipotong nama sebagai penerima BR1M. Oleh itu pada 5 Oktober pihak KMM telah membawakan pegawai ssm untuk memberi taklimat mengenai kepentingan mendaftar SSM telah dijalankan. Dalam masa yang sama bengkel pendaftaran SSM juga dibuat. Pihak Suruhanjaya Syarikat Malaysia (SSM) menghantar 3 orang pegawainya untuk mengendalikan taklimat dan bengkel ini. Pegawai tersebut datang dari Ipoh. Pada akhir kelas semua peserta yang belum mendaftar ssm telah pun mendaftar ssm di dalam bengkel ini. Mereka telah faham dan tahu bahawa dengan melakukan

perniagaan mereka akan mendapat keuntungan berganda lebih banyak daripada menerima bantuan BR1M.

Selain daripada itu teknik-teknik pemasaran melalui internet (e-dagang) juga diajar dan diterapkan pada peserta. KMM telah bekerjasama dengan pihak Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah (USAS). Kebanyakan peserta program ini sangat kurang mahir menggunakan teknik pemasaran melalui e-dagang. Pihak USAS telah menghantar seorang pegawai mereka bernama Puan Nurul Afiqah bagi membantu mengajar para peserta. Beliau mengajar teknik-teknik yang berkesan menggunakan instagram, facebook dan platform jual beli yang terkenal iaitu shopee dan lazada. Dengan teknik yang diajar, ia dapat membuka mata para peserta dan memberi idea-idea baru bagaimana hendak memperkembangkan perniagaan mereka.

Peserta-peserta juga telah diberikan setiap orang sebanyak rm500 sebagai *seed money*. Ini bagi membantu memotivasikan mereka dan juga untuk mereka menggunakannya untuk mengembangkan lagi perniagaan. Pada penghujung program nanti peserta akan diberi lagi sebanyak rm500 yang menjadikan jumlah sebanyak rm1000 setiap orang bagi membantu perniagaan mereka. Sehingga hari ini terdapat lagi dua modul yang belum diajar untuk mereka menamatkan program ini. Setelah tamat program peserta akan dipantau selama enam bulan oleh pihak KMM.

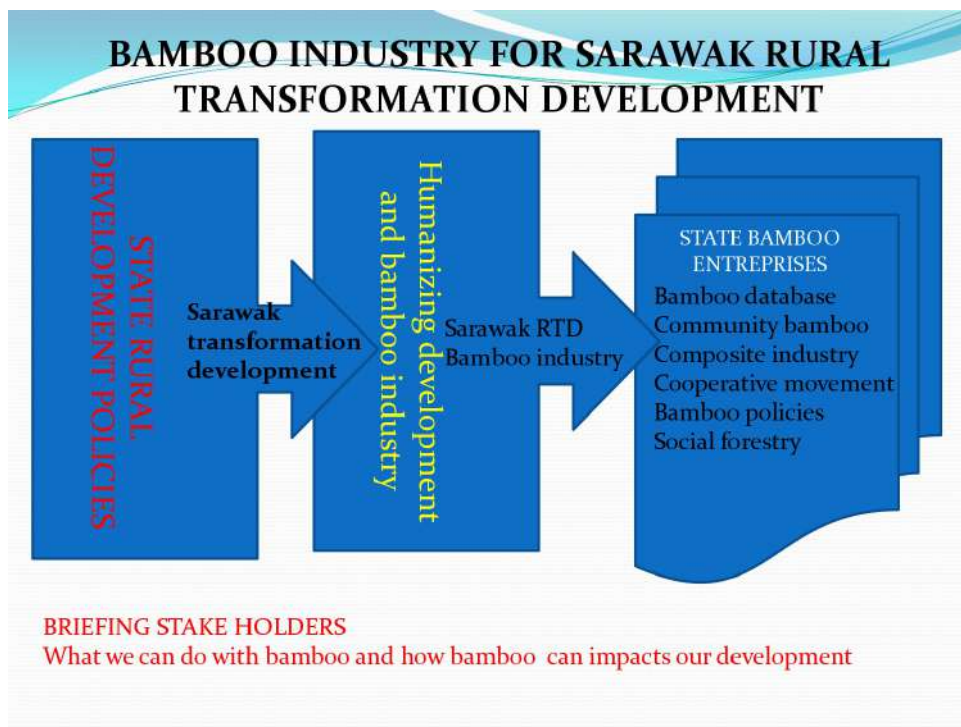
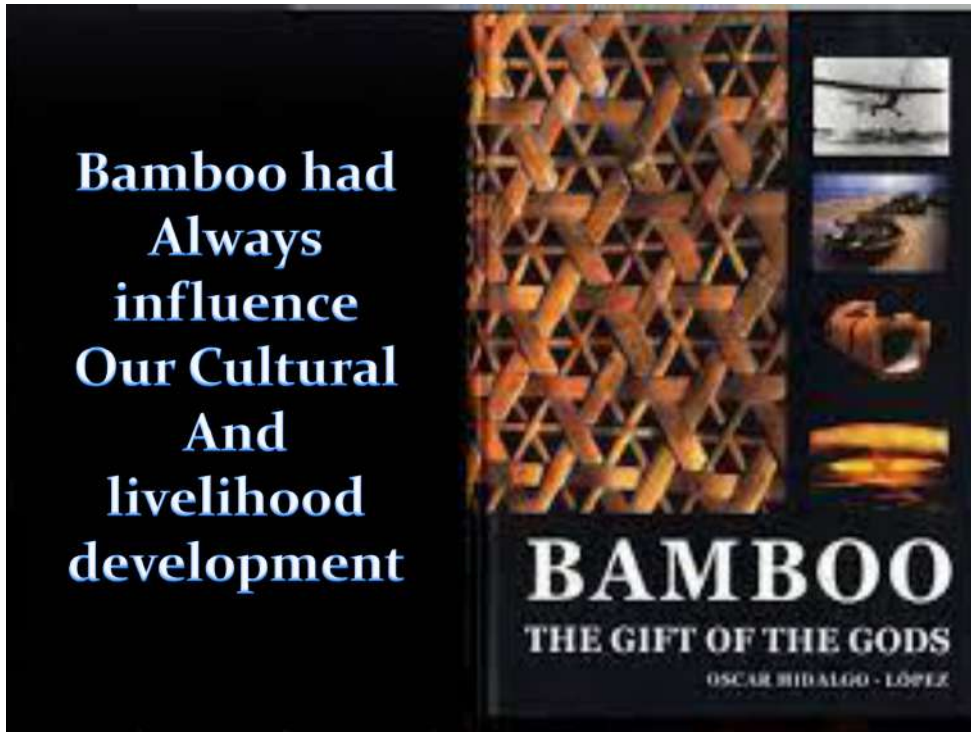
Pihak KMM berpendapat bahawa “Matlamat Pembangunan Mampan” atau SDG sangat penting kepada masyarakat. Disebabkan itu selain daripada program usahawan, pihak KMM juga sedang kerjasama dengan pihak ESDA Taiping untuk mewujudkan *Alliance NGOs SDG- CSO*. Ini adalah penting bagi tujuan pelaksanaan SDG di Taiping dapat dijalankan secara lebih bersistematik dan terurus. Secara peribadi pihak KMM sendiri sedang bergerak ke arah merealisasikan matlamat SDG 1, 4, 8 dan 17.

SDG Straight from the Heart, Will Go Far

by

JohneK Henry (Research and Development Movement of Singai - REDEEMS) -

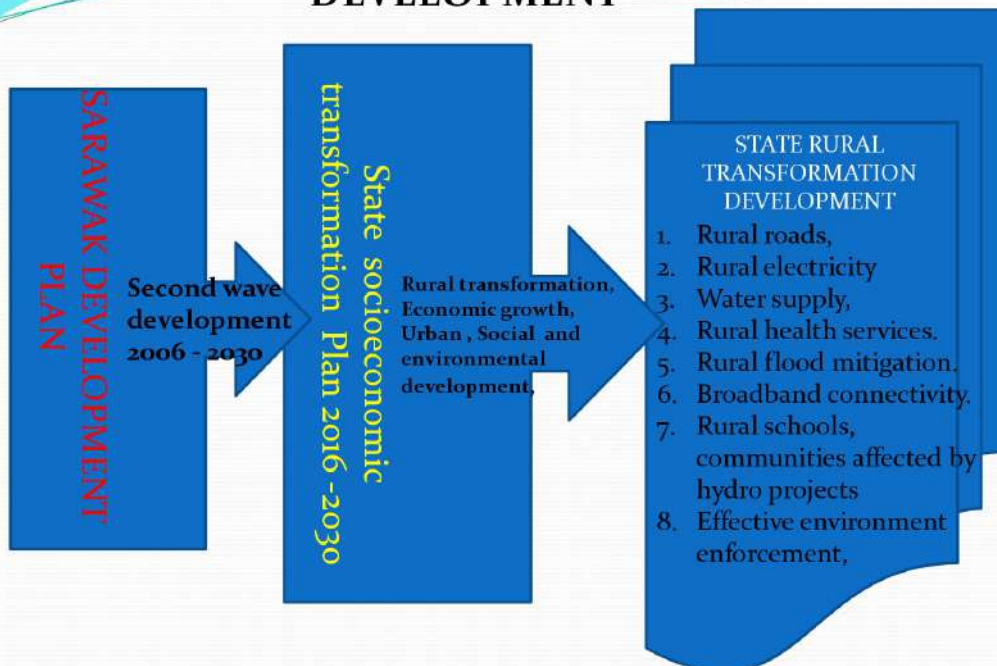
[jhnkhenry@gmail.com](mailto:jhnkhenry@gmail.com)



## Sarawak rural transformation development(SRTD)

- Rural transformation refer to the rapid, radical rural restructuring and major improvement in socio economic conditions resulting from industrialization and urbanization (*Long et al 2011*)
- Rural transformation development consist of various concepts include productivism, post productivism, deagrarianization, new rurality, countryside commodification and hybrid globalization (*Mackay et al 2009, Gibson et al 2010, Preston and Ngah 2012*)
- Malaysian rural transformation development can be discerned in economic transformation programe (ETP) to transform Malaysia into high income nation by 2020 (*MalaysiaVison 2020*)
- Sarawak economic development plan second wave 2006-2030 made up of Sarawak corridor of renewable energy SCORE and Sarawak economic transformation plan SETP (*SPU, CM office, April 2016*)

## SARAWAK RURAL TRANSFORMATION DEVELOPMENT





# Had SETP impacted rural wealth ?



**Sarawak  
SCORE and SETP  
rural impact?**  
(Assess legitimacy, policy, actions)

## PUSAT TRANSFORMASI LUAR BANDAR (RTC)

Di bawah Program Transformasi Luar Bandar (RTP), kawasan luar bandar pada masa ini sedang diransformasikan supaya menarik pelaburan swasta, menyediakan peluang pekerjaan dan merencanakan lagi kegiatan ekonomi di luar bandar. Antara inisiatif di bawah RTP termasuklah mewujudkan Pusat Transformasi Luar Bandar (RTC) yang berfungsi sebagai pemangkin kepada pertumbuhan ekonomi luar bandar.



## Humanizing SETP

- RTD require a shift in conceptual thinking. **Entrepreneurship** skill is the central force to rural economic growth and development. The acceptance **require certain enabling environment** that largely depend on the promoting policies which itself depend on the conceptual framework about **rural entrepreneurship**. (T Petrin 1994)
- Entrepreneurship skill most appropriate for rural development context are those that bear in mind the **skills needed to improve quality of life** for individual, families and community to sustain healthy economy and environment describe as the process of creating value by pulling together a unique packages of resources to **exploit opportunity**. (Jones & Sakong 1980, Stevenson et al 1985)
- SETP require community entrepreneurship development to succeed. There is a need to **humanise SETP**.

## Humanising SETP – People focus

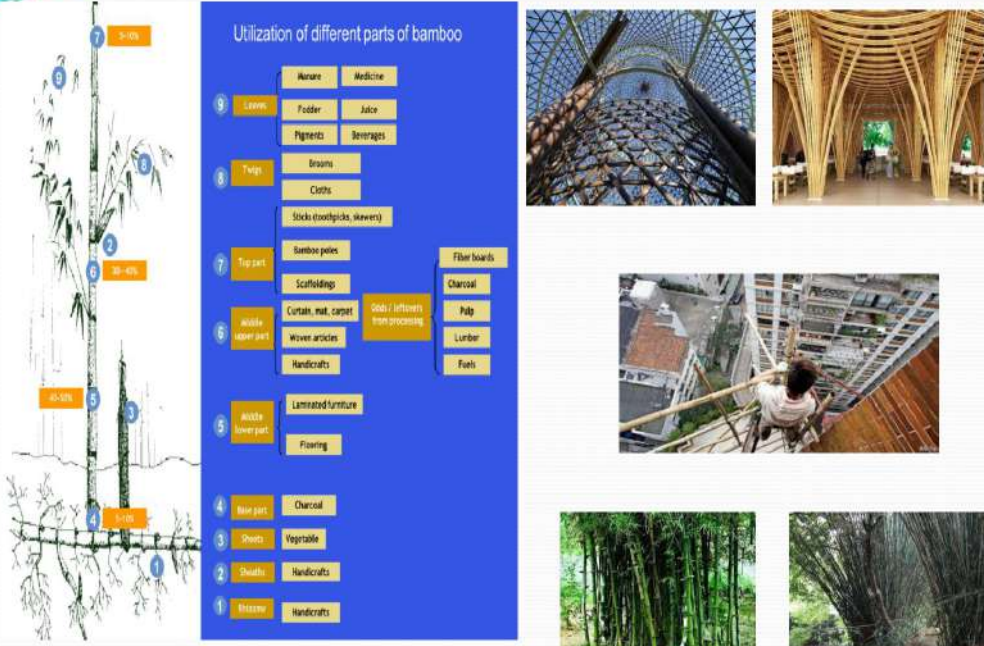


## Bamboo can humanise SETP, why and How?

- **WHY?. Bamboo** is a natural tool to encourage sustainable, integrated farming systems and **an excellent resource** on which to build a variety of income and employment-generating opportunities. With its multiple uses and high value in a range of products aimed at national and international markets, there is **great potential for value-adding operations**, and many different entry points for development interventions which are accessible to and **appropriate for resource-poor people**.
- **HOW?** To do this well, improved **understanding is required** about the bamboo sectors, about the people involved and about the main problems they face. Research is needed on the economic, policy, institutional and social aspects of the bamboo sectors, as well as on the technical aspects involved.

(Belcher, B. Inbar 1996)

## Bamboo vast untapped potential



**Utilization of different parts of bamboo**

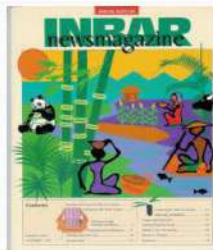
7	Shoots	Meat	Medicine
9	Leaves	Fodder	Juice
		Pigments	Beverages
8	Twigs	Brooms	
		Cloths	
		Socks (footpicks, skewers)	
7	Tip part	Bamboo poles	Fiber boards
		Scaffolding	Charcoal
6	Middle lower part	Curtain, mat, carpet	Spun / leftovers from processing
		Woven articles	Pulp
		Handicrafts	Lumber
			Fuels
5	Middle lower part	Laminated furniture	
		Flooring	
4	Base part	Charcoal	
3	Shoots	Vegetable	
2	Shoots	Handicrafts	
1	Shoots	Handicrafts	

The diagram also includes several photographs illustrating bamboo's diverse applications: a bamboo forest, a person working on a bamboo structure, a bamboo roof, and bamboo used in construction and furniture.

## National society in Bamboo and Rattan network.

- **Malaysia joined INBAR on 5.3.1998** and designated focal point with INBAR is the Biodiversity and Forestry Management Division (MDS) of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. Malaysia has 70 bamboo species belonging to 10 genera. Peninsular has 59 present species, followed by Sabah, 30, and Sarawak with 20. (*INBAR Malaysia 2018*)
- **Malaysian Bamboo Society** is a global development organization to promote the sharing of knowledge and professional expertise on bamboo and how the country can leverage bamboo resources to increase income to sustainable development action plans. Improve the well-being of bamboo-based producers in bamboo contexts as a base resource consolidate, coordinate and support strategic and adaptive research and development (<http://www.malaysianbamboosociety.org>)
- **National Society in Bamboo and Rattan Network NASIBNAR** (Not yet register) Is a converging network of bamboo and rattan communities toward community development arising out of bamboo and rattan.

## CULTURING COMMUNITY TO CREATE THE FUTURE



# Unleashes people talent to tap into bamboo potentials



## Transforming livelihood & rural enterprises

- **Rural development** is more than ever before linked to entrepreneurship. Institutions and individuals promoting rural development now see entrepreneurship as a strategic development intervention that could accelerate the rural development process. entrepreneurship stands as a vehicle to improve the quality of life.
- By **bringing together different capabilities** and experiences in entrepreneurship development, everyone could enhance their capabilities, motivation and determination in achieving the goal thereby attaining a sustainable and healthy rural economy and environment in order to ensure a high quality of life for individuals, families and communities.
- Since national economies are more and more globalized and competition is intensifying at an unprecedented pace, affecting not only industry but any economic activity, and not surprising **rural entrepreneurship** is gaining in its importance as a **force of economic change** that must take place if many rural communities are to survive. However, entrepreneurship demands an enabling environment **in order to flourish**.

(T Petrin. 1994 FAO)

# Enriching rural livelihood

**Rural Enterprise Skillnet**

**IFAD INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Cross-cutting Dimensions of SE Analysis from an Embeddedness Approach:**  
 1 - Political economy context of opportunity structures, 2 - Process as individual dimensions of social entrepreneurship, 3 - Available strategies for resource mobilization and value creation

**Capability to Create Value**  
 How is meaning and value in exchange negotiated and decided? When do benefits outweigh risks/costs? How does SE commitment align with explicit shared expectations of success and implicit shared social values embedded in the network?

**Capability to Adapt and Innovate**  
 What external factors can be controlled? Which triggers change? What level of reliance is on the network? What personal skills are needed?

**Capability to Achieve Social Impact**  
 What? How? For Whom? With Whom?

**Capability to Mobilize Resources**  
 What set of approaches and strategies are needed? How are risks overcome? How will costs get internalized?

**Capability to Identify Opportunities**  
 How are informal and formal structures engaged? How is information accessed? What ways is information, knowledge, social benefits shared?

**ELEVENTH MALAYSIA PLAN 2016-2020**  
 ANCHORING GROWTH ON PEOPLE

**OFFINSO RURAL TECHNOLOGY FACILITY**  
 METHODIST CHURCH CHINA & RURAL ENTERPRISES PROJECT COLLABORATION  
 SENTIN METHODIST JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL, OFFINSO

**MOSTI SOCIAL INNOVATION**

**MALAYSIAN CARE**

# Organised bamboo communities

**Bamboo Village, KL**

**wild bamboo**

**INBAR INTERNATIONAL BAMBOO AND RAITAN ORGANISATION**

**WORLD BAMBOO DAY**

**SABF South Asia Bamboo Foundation**

**BAMBOO ADVENTURES SINCE 1983**

**CRAFT bamboo**

**Landscape**

**Bamboo World**

**REDEEMS Association of Research & Development Movement of Singai Sarawak**

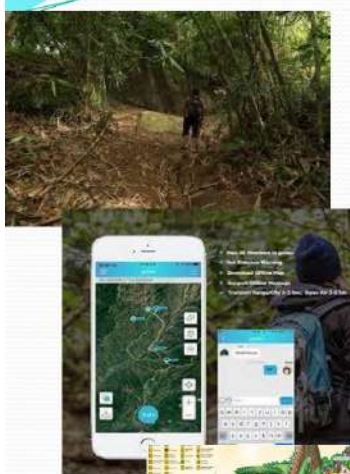
**Cooperative Identity, Values, Principles, Governance and Best Practices and Gentle Balanced Leadership**

**BAMBOO an innovation ecosystem**

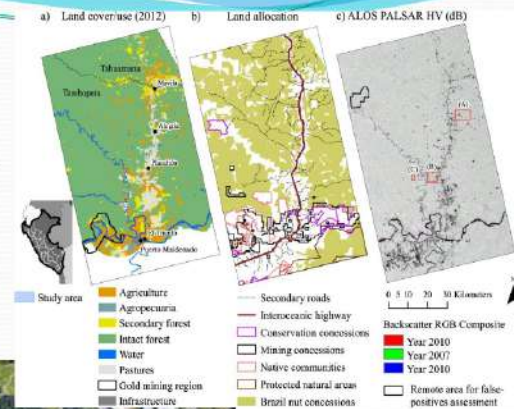
## Community bamboo resource development.

- A **national Forest inventory for bamboo and rattan** based on the Forest Resources Monitoring Survey which is integrated with a National Forest Resource Database comprising sub-national inventories. Design and adopted with Remote Sensing Survey used for identifying forest types and boundaries and estimating forest cover. The combination of **registered information and RSS images on GIS is effective for local monitoring** forest status, detecting removal and estimating forest type and quantity. Volume estimated with growth tables developed by species, region and site class, etc (MAR-SFM Working Paper 19/ 2007 )
- The propose National Society in bamboo and rattan (NASIBNAR) network can start the project "*Empowering Local Communities with Open Data and Interactive Community Mapping*" as one of several strategic initiative currently being implemented by the Caribbean Open Institute that explores the potential of citizen-generated open data using Interactive Community Mapping (ICM) **as a platform for enhanced community products and services**
- The system is to usher in a culture of market economics and let that dictate rural development. To set up community-based venture capital funds that would catalyze entrepreneur. NASIBNAR has been visualized as a **common shared platform for all organizations interested in working with bamboo.**
- Sarawak State to revive the bamboo development steering committee, initiate NASIBNAR and develop an **International centre of bamboo and rattan science and technology (ICBRST)** park at REDEEMS in kapung Apar, Singai Bau.

## RAPID BAMBOO STOCK INVENTORY



**COMMUNITY DIGITAL MAPPING INITIATIVE**  
 Inventory registration  
 Stock adoption  
 Stock locating.  
 Enrichment planting.  
 Control management  
 Marketing



## Bamboo to transform rural livelihood industry.

- **Bamboo is a symbol of flexibility and tenacity**, weathering the storm and stress of life with integrity in form and essence intact (*Betsy U Chang 2001*)
- Bamboo is a **versatile crop**. It can be used in 1,500 different ways including as food, a substitute for wood, building and construction material, for handicrafts and paper. Around 80 per cent of bamboo forests lie in Asia with India, China and Myanmar having 19.8 million hectares of bamboo. Developing bamboo as a load-bearing structural element would pave the way for its high value application in construction, which can make bamboo cultivation an economically **viable way of greening the vast wastelands**. Edible bamboo has a huge demand in East Asian cuisines and medicine (*Samir Lahiry, 4.7.2018,*)



## BAMBOO PRODUCTS



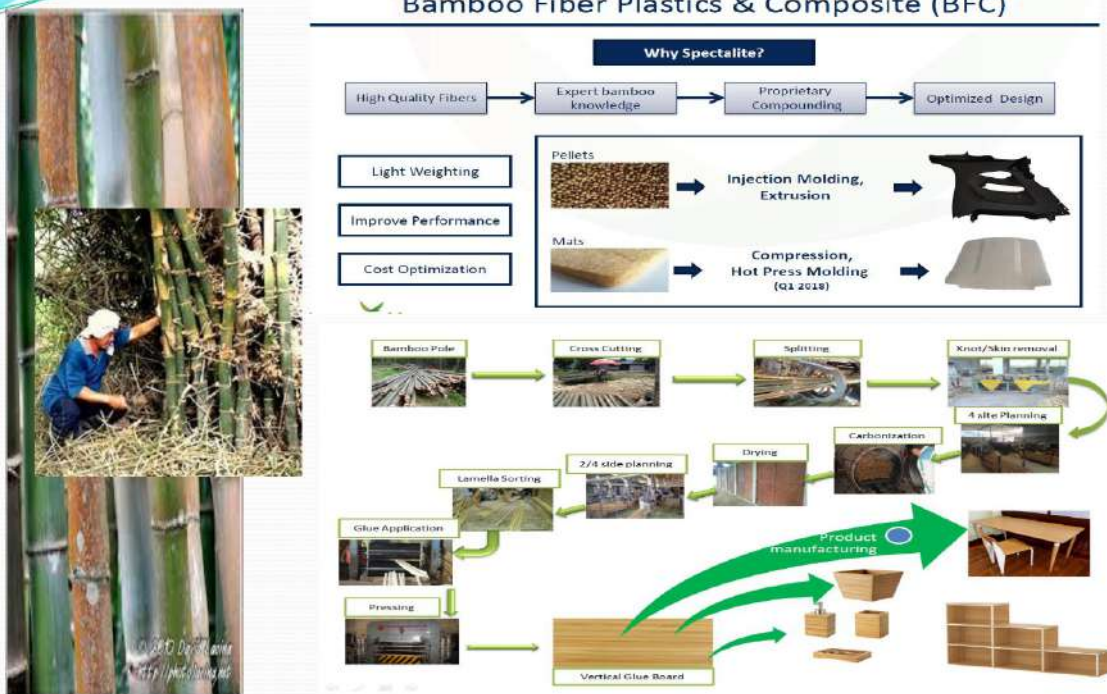


# Bamboo composite lumber industry.

- **Bamboo composite lumber industry is most relevant.** The reduction in harmful destruction of ecosystem to produce low cost polymeric reinforced composites, researchers are emerging with policies of manufacturing composites using natural fibers entirely biodegradable generated safe strategies to protect our environment utilizing bamboo fibers as reinforcement in composite materials has undergone high-tech revolution in recent years as a response to the increasing demand for **developing biodegradable, sustainable, and recyclable materials.**
- The **evolution in bamboo based composites** in house hold things, transportation, construction have moulded the bamboo economics into new direction while benefiting the common people both economically as well as socially.
- The distinctive properties of bamboo fiber reinforced bio composite nature increase the flexural tensile strength, ductility and greater resistance to cracking with larger and a **better impact strength and toughness of the composite.** All these properties are not accessible in other types of wood-based materials

(H.P.S. Abdul Khalil Et al, 2012)

## Value add biocomposite processing



## Bamboo Livelihood industry cooperative movement.

- **Bamboo can be a vehicle for integrated Development** for our vast rural and tribal population for whom using it is a way of life from time immemorial. Bamboo based communities are considered untouchables in many parts of the world even today. **Uplifting the status of Bamboo** would translate to **upliftment and development of the entire social strata**. (*Neelam Manjunath, 2016, Symphony of the Bamboos*)
- In current reality, **cooperative society movement** is most appropriate to **enable sustainable rural transformation development (RTP)**. In comparison with regular commercial business, cooperation has certain advantages and certain disadvantages. Its main strength is that it exists and operates for the benefit of its patron members. The advantages tie the patrons to the organization by making them full partners, help build an assured volume of business, favorable to efficient operation of the cooperative. Cooperatives have the weaknesses of democratic organizations cooperative businesses show an unwillingness to pay needed to attract that the mass of members may lose interest in running the organization. (*American Historian organization 2018*)

## BAMBOO COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT

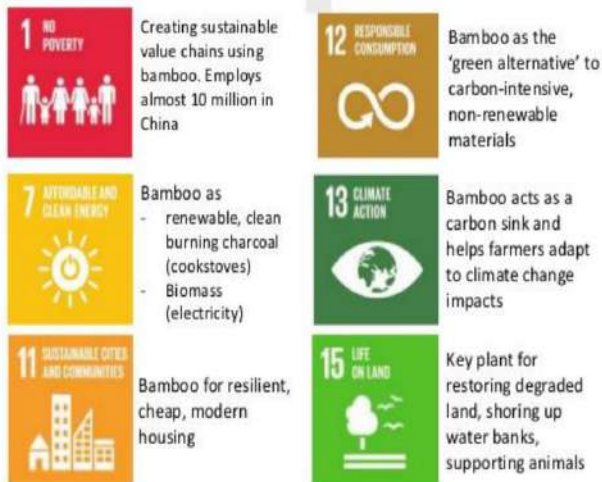


## NGO to lead bamboo industry initiatives

- **RTD** require community entrepreneurship development to succeed. **Humanise** the whole of **SRTD** through establishing **STATE BAMBOO LIVELIHOOD INDUSTRY STEERING COMMITTEE (SBLISC)**
- Sarawak to **initiate NASIBNAR** and develop an International centre of bamboo and rattan science and technology (ICBRST) park at REDEEMS in kampong Apar, Singai Bau
- **Non government organisation (NGO)** or Community based organisation (CSO) has gained **greater prominence** in the **regulatory changes** as a result of decentralization of the State and fragmentations of Regulations (*Bridget M Hunter & Joan O'mohany 2004*)

## BAMBOO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

### INBAR and the SDGs



**Bamboo  
enriching  
Present  
not  
Compromising  
the  
future**



# Bamboo had always influence Our Cultural and livelihood development

We tried to reset him, but it didn't work.  
Just gonna disassemble him now



By: Johnek Ajong Henry  
REDEEMS



## Chapter 7: SDG & PEOPLE (HEALTH)



1. Successes and Challenges in Implementing SDG 3 in Malaysia -  
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4. Health in All, All in Health: Contextualising SDG3 and its Cross-sectionality within the SDG Framework - **Dr. Murallitharan Munisamy** (National Cancer Society, Malaysia)



**Successes and Challenges in Implementing SDG 3 in Malaysia**

**by**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The SDGs are critical milestones for any nation, including Malaysia. They chart the key direction each nation should take in poverty reduction, health gains, reducing inequalities, climate action; to name a few.

Although overall progress has been insufficient to achieve the 2030 SDG aims, Goal 3 (Health) appears to have been achieved for Malaysia. However, social determinants of health and inequalities remain. There are population groups and regions that are neglected and still in poverty with higher childhood mortality rates. There are also areas with inadequate data, others where progress has been limited, and a lack of focus on morbidity. The article will focus on these gaps and challenges.

We can no longer rely on traditional and incremental approaches to improve health. We require a transformative approach that focuses on inclusive growth to achieve equality. If we are serious about child health in Malaysia, then we require radical changes in approach and not ‘more of the same’. The children of Malaysia need for us to achieve SDG 3 goals for ALL, not as an average or for a portion of the community. The SDG 3 goal is not a figure for these children but a lifeline of hope, if we are prepared to truly invest in their health.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have set a benchmark for all nations to reach, and one that allows for a comparison between countries. The SDG Goal 3 for Health aims to ‘Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages’ (United Nations 2021). The Goal addresses major health priorities including maternal and child health, communicable and non- communicable diseases, access for all for affordable medicines and vaccines, and universal health coverage. Childhood mortality is an important indicator of socio-economic development as well as the health status of any population or nation.

This paper focuses on SDG 3 (especially Goal 3.2) and looks at successes and challenges in reducing preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age.

SDG 3.2 Target by 2030 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2021):

- Reduce neonatal mortality to at least 12 per 1,000 live births
- Reduce under-5 mortality to at least 25 per 1,000 live births.

Note that the latest data available for Malaysia is for the year 2020. Data in 2020-2022 will be significantly damaged and worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. I have elected to use data from the UNICEF database as it is a more accurate reflection of the situation.

### Current Achievements

Table 1 shows the change in under five and neonatal mortality rates for Malaysia from 1950 to 2020. Malaysia has made significant improvements in mortality rates over the past 70 years appears to have achieved the SDG mortality targets.

**Table 1: Under Five Mortality and Neonatal Rates for Malaysia, 1950-2020**

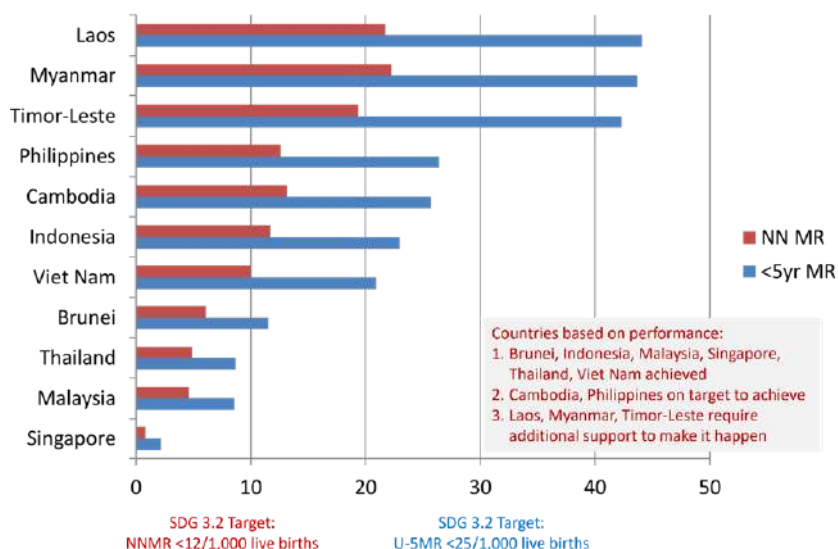
Mortality Rate	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015	2020
Neonatal	25.8*	21.5	16.3	12.8	7.6	4.9	4.2	4.2	4.6
Under 5	166.3	92.6	53.3	30.2	16.6	10.2	8.1	8.1	8.6

Source: UNICEF database, updated January 2022; \*Refers to 1955

Figure 1 compares Malaysia with other countries in the South East Asian region. It should be noted that nations with higher GDPs have lower rates.



**Figure 1: Under Five and Neonatal Mortality Rates for South East Asian Countries, 2020**



Source: UNICEF database, updated September 2020

Due to SDG targets, the focus is often on the under-5 years, especially the neonatal period. However, there is also a need to look at all under 18-year deaths as they are not insignificant and are often related to injuries (predominantly road and drowning) which are preventable. 40% of childhood deaths occur in the neonatal period, and another 40% from age 1 month to 5 years and the remainder 20% from 5 to 18 years.

The top three categories of under 5 deaths for Malaysia are prematurity (and associated neonatal problems), congenital abnormalities and lower respiratory tract infections (pneumonia). It is surprising that road traffic injuries do not appear in the top five causes of death. Injuries (drowning and road) are a poorly recognised and underreported cause of death for children; they require more attention and better data collection. There are close to 1,000 road deaths and 500 drowning events for children under 18, every year in Malaysia. Malnutrition also remains an important hidden cause of death; as a result of how cause of death is classified (underlying cause of death not used). Not all deaths are medically certified. In 2019, 37.2% of the 173,746 total deaths (adult and children) were not medically certified (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 2020). Note that discussions with the Royal Malaysia Police have resulted in police officers being required to inform the nearest hospital/clinic and get assistance to determine the cause of death for children under 5 years before issuing a burial permit. In addition, the percentage of unreported deaths is uncertain. Some regions (e.g. Sabah),

in the 2001-2010 decade, were still grossly under reporting deaths due to vast rural communities. This has improved and hence resulted in the under-5 mortality rate remaining stagnant as reporting improves.

Immunisation rates in any nation are a marker of child wellbeing and the quality of any health service. SDG Goal 3.8 speaks of achieving universal health coverage, access to quality essential health-care services and access to vaccines for all. Target 3.b.1 specifically monitors the “Proportion of the target population covered by all vaccines included in their national programme”. Table 2 shows the latest available data on national childhood immunisation coverage. Coverage for all primary childhood vaccines remains good.

**Table 2: Immunisation Coverage (%) for Malaysia, 2020**

BCG	HepB3	DTP3	Hib3	Polio3	MMR2	HPV
98.8	97.7	97.7	101.2	97.7	97.4	95.7

Source: Health Facts, MOH, Malaysia 2021; based on completed primary immunisation doses

In line with the SDG Goal 3.8 of achieving universal health coverage and access to quality essential health-care services, Table 3 shows selected maternal and newborn health indicators as a reflection of health coverage and access. There is a high percentage of antenatal care visits and institutional deliveries. The continued persistence of a high teenage pregnancy rates is of concern and is monitored in indicator 3.7.2 of SDG 3 (adolescent birth rate per 1,000 women in that age group). The maternal mortality ratio is an indicator of overall socio-economic development, quality of healthcare services and possibly female empowerment.

**Table 3: Selected Maternal and Newborn Health Coverage for South East Asian**

**Countries**

At least 4 Antenatal Care Visits during Pregnancy (%)*	Deliveries in a Health Facility (%)	Postnatal Newborn Visits by HCW (%)* (Within 2 days of delivery)	Women aged 20-24 who Gave Birth Before Age 18 yrs (%)*	Adolescent birth rate (Births per 1,000 adolescent girls, 2018)	Maternal Deaths (per 100,000 live births, 2017)
97 (2016)	99 (2014)	NA	NA	10	29

Source: UNICEF database, updated September 2020 and State of the World’s Children Report 2019

Note: \*Year of data source indicated in brackets; NA means data not available from this dataset; HCW means healthcare worker.

### **Making Sense of the Data and Understanding What Impacts SDG 3**

There are some clear messages we can obtain from the data.

1. Malaysia has made initial progress

We can see that initial continued progress was made until the year 2000.

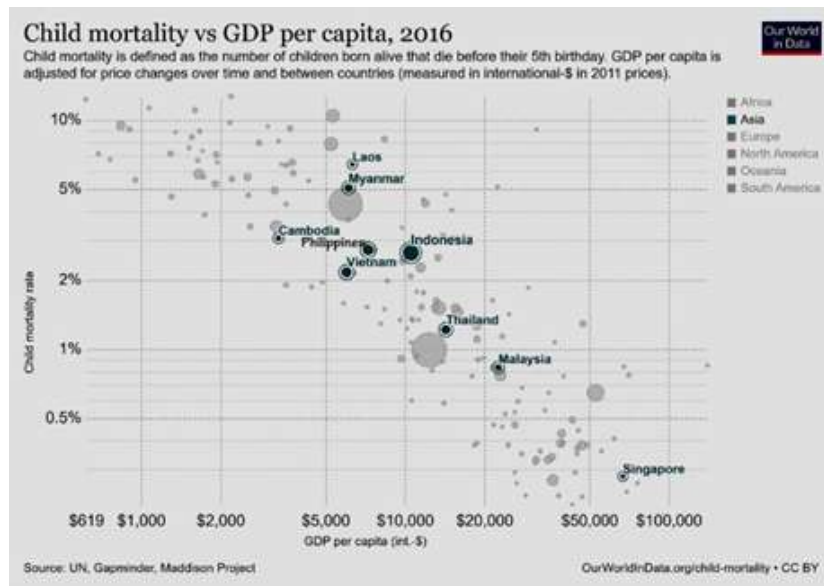
2. Malaysia has stagnated in Neonatal and Under-5 mortality rates

Our childhood mortality rates have stagnated in the past 15-20 years. We have difficulty reducing mortality rates further without significant resource inputs.

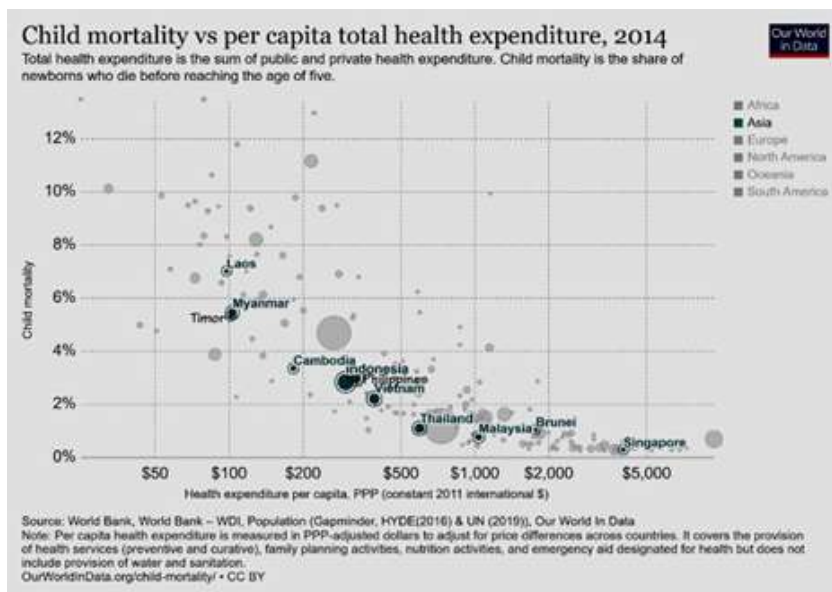
3. What is the biggest impact on SDG 3 improvement?

It would be tempting to infer that improvements in health services have brought about this change. However, we are aware that while advances in health services have some impact, particularly immunisation and access to primary health services (maternal-child clinics), the major decrease in child mortality is related to improvements in socio-economic status, infrastructure, utilities and transport. Figure 2 (log scale) compares under-5 mortality with gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and clearly illustrates the significant association between a nation's wealth and under- 5 mortality. Every doubling of the GDP more than halves the under-five mortality rate. How much governments invest in health will also have an effect on child mortality as shown in Figure 3 (log scale). Hence a similar relationship is seen when comparing child mortality with per capita total health expenditure.

**Figure 2: Child mortality vs GDP per capita, 2016**



**Figure 3: Child mortality vs per capita total health expenditure, 2014**



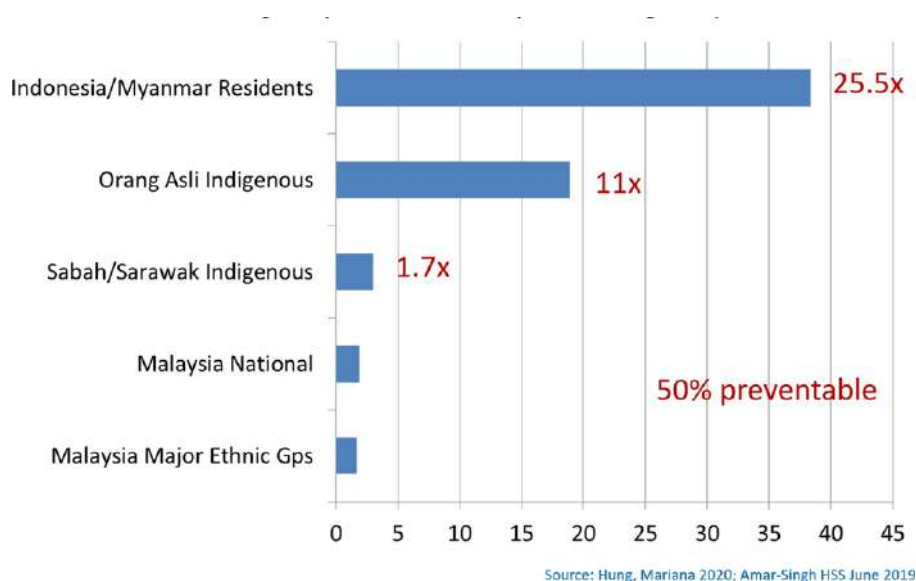
**What the Data Does Not Show**

Gross data on childhood mortality and health indices do not reveal regional, social-class or ethnic differences within a country. **We must be careful about the facade of averages.**

## 1. The Lack of Disaggregated Data Hides the Marginalised Communities

While Malaysia appears to have achieved the SDG 3.2 target, however we are well aware of the social determinants of health; that childhood mortality is related to family income. The government rarely shows disaggregated data, data broken down by detailed sub-categories (indigenous, marginalised groups and of level of income) and this is a glaring omission in SDG achievement. What we require is data showing the under-5 mortality rate by social class or income bracket. We would then see that many communities within Malaysia have a disparately high mortality rate, outside the SDG 3.2 target, even when the overall national target has been met. We can get some glimpse into this by using data on indigenous children as a proxy. For example (Figure 4), using under-5 deaths in Malaysia for 2016 (Hung LC & Aina Mariana 2020) the age-specific mortality rate by ethnic group for Peninsular Malaysia indigenous children (Orang Asli) was 11 times that of major ethnic groups; while the mortality rate for indigenous ethnic groups in Sabah and Sarawak was 1.7 times that of major ethnic groups (Amar-Singh HSS June 2019).

**Figure 4: Under-5 Age-Specific MR by Ethnic group, 2016**



Hence Malaysia appears to be becoming a high-income nation but has many pockets of unresolved poverty. We must address the mortality in indigenous and ethnic minority communities in the country. Indigenous children, inner city children in slums and poor rural communities

(especially Sabah) often have 2-5 times the under-5 mortality rate for those in the middle or upper class of society.

Hence SDG 3 goals must never be viewed as a national average but the goal of the bottom 20% of the society's social class. Improvements in SDG 3 are very closely linked to SDG 1 on the eradication of poverty. While 'leave no one behind' has become the rally call for our generation, we have not done enough to close the gap, and in reality, the gap has widened. Ideally resources should be allocated disproportionately to meet the need. But we continue to perpetuate the 'inverse care law', where those with the greatest need are ones least likely to get adequate support.

## **2. Identifying Preventable Deaths**

Just because a nation has achieved or is on target to achieve, the SDG 3.2 target does not mean that preventable deaths still do not occur. A study looking at under-5 deaths in Malaysia for 2015 (Amar-Singh HSS, Xin JL, Siti Hafsa AH, et al 2018) showed that at least 48.7% were preventable, often due to family factors (lack of awareness of severity of illness and delay in seeking treatment) and quality of medical care issues (failure to escalate care to a higher level of expertise, failure to appreciate disease severity, limited human resources). This rate was higher than the self-reported preventable rate of 27.2%. We need to monitor preventable deaths and work to reduce this rate, rather than focus on having 'achieved' SDG target status.

## **3. Hidden Deaths – Children Victimised by the System**

It is uncertain whether all non-citizen child deaths (economic and undocumented migrants) are report in our data. Under-5 mortality rates among these communities is much higher than the national average as they have either difficulty accessing healthcare due to financial constraints or a reluctance to accessing healthcare due to legal issues. The under-5 age-specific mortality rate by ethnic group (2016) for children from Indonesia and Myanmar residing in Malaysia was 25.5 times higher than the national average (Figure 4). The government is not proactively concerned to meet the healthcare needs of migrants; it does not provide basic healthcare without payment. Another 'hidden' community is children of refugees, asylum-seekers, in detention and stateless; Table 4 attempts to provide data for this issue. Malaysia has received large Myanmar refugee populations. Stateless persons have limited access to health, education

and social services for their children and this impacts SDG 3. There is limited data on refugees in detention; this can be as families in detention, parents taken into detention (children left to fend for themselves) or children in detention without guardians. Detention, perpetuate the cycle of poverty with the loss of education and adequate nutrition.

**Table 4: Refugees, Asylum-seekers and Stateless in Malaysia, 2020**

Refugees & Asylum-seekers			Stateless
Total	Children	Details	
178,450 (2020)	46,730 (2020)	153,800 from Myanmar (mainly Rohingyas & Chins), others from conflict-affected areas or fleeing persecution. >756 children in immigration detention centres (without guardians).	290,000 children (2016 data, Home Minister)  108,332 (another 55,000 'of concern')

Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2020)

### **Morbidity not Just Mortality**

The SDG 3 health goals can only be achieved with significant improvement in other SDG areas. In addition, quality of life is not merely a reduction in death rates but living a childhood and adult life free from disability and the effects of deprivation. Improving SDG 3 must come with it an alleviation of the morbidity that food deprivation and limited education impose on children for a lifetime. Table 5 shows selected morbidity indicators among children in Malaysia. Our stunting rates are high for the region and we have significant poverty. Research by the Merdeka Centre suggests that Covid-19 has pushed another 8-10% of the population into poverty. Current conservative estimates suggest that 3-4 million children live in poverty in Malaysia. Growth stunting can result in a lifetime of irreversible physical and cognitive impairment. Interrupted education affects long term financial abilities and perpetuates the cycle of poverty across generations. Children from the poor and marginalised communities are often significantly impacted by malnutrition.

**Table 5: Selected Morbidity Indicators among Children in Malaysia**

Percentage Moderate & Severe Stunting# as a Proxy Indicator of Malnutrition*	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Education</b></p> Percentage Completed Upper Secondary Education+	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Living in Poverty@</b></p>
21 (2016)	2% drop out in secondary education. However, it does not take into account the majority of students who leave during the transition phase (from Year 6 to Form 1).	405,441 households (2019) 5.6% of all households

Source: UNICEF database, updated September 2020 and State of the World’s Children Report 2019

Note: # Stunting is children under 5 years of age in the surveyed population that fall below minus 2 standard deviations from the median height-for-age of the reference population; \*Year of data source indicated in brackets; + Data based on latest available year 2013;

Poverty is a life-time trap that is very difficult to come out of and has devastating impacts. As UNICEF clearly articulates *“the legacy of child poverty can last a lifetime”*. *“Very often children experience poverty as the lack of shelter, education, nutrition, water or health services. The lack of these basic needs often results in deficits that cannot easily be overcome later in life. Even when not clearly deprived, having poorer opportunities than their peers in any of the above can limit future opportunities.”*

More issues related to ‘new’ morbidities and current and emerging child health care challenges are outlined in the **Appendix** (Amar-Singh HSS 2019).

### **Key Challenges to Achieving SDG 3**

The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been very meaningful in bringing governments back to a focus on health, environment and social justice. However, the impact of the SDGs has not permeated the health services as effectively as intended and especially failed to impact clinicians.



Some key challenges to achieving SDG 3 in Malaysia are summarised below.

### **1. Loss of Focus and Conflicting Interests**

In healthcare, often the loudest voices dictate resource allocation and development. Specialisation and sub-specialisation has engulfed health care and clouded the issues. Medical schools enamour students to curative fields and most healthcare professionals, especially doctors who hold much of the 'power', have lost a prevention focus. The 'brightest and best' of our medical personnel tend to opt for a hospital-based profession and career.

We no longer run a Ministry of Health (MOH) but a Ministry of Disease (MOD); an institutionalisation of medicine. Sadly, Public Health has not made the distance to adequately advocate for a growth in preventative services. The early primary care success of antenatal and child health clinics with immunisation, growth and development focus has not been sustained and not duplicated especially in urban settings. Hence hospitals 'eat' a large proportion (60-70%) of health resources in terms of funding, manpower and development. In recent decades there has been an "explosion" of tertiary level specialised services as means to 'meet' the health needs of the community.

This model is doctor and illness focused, expensive, fragmented and institutional based. Hence we tend to focus on disease (Paediatrics) and not health (Child Health). This 'curative' model is however inappropriate for the majority of the population, is not financially viable and a never-ending thirsty black hole.

### **2. A Public Addicted to Curative Services**

We have nurtured our public to depend on doctors and the curative health services. The cry of the public is for more hospitals nearer their homes, more specialists at their door-step and more quick-fixes for their medical problems. Our public has been weaned on a diet of curative services offered by doctors and focused on specialists. They are now addicted to this model - specialist care and curative care. They have little concept of prevention. They desire to live as they choose and ask us to fix their health problems with drugs or procedures.

### 3. The Damage of Private Health Services

The Private-Public divide also worsens our health services. The private sector is totally dedicated to treating disease; they thrive on the non-communicable disease (NCD) epidemics. They are profit driven so there is no major incentive to promote preventative health. The commercialisation of healthcare, the use of healthcare as a means of obtaining financial wealth, has undermined the trust of individuals and communities in healthcare professionals and even governments. We currently have a major trust-defect of the community in healthcare systems and professionals.

Governments have begun investing in private healthcare, a serious conflict of interest. There may also be a subtle opposition from the private sector and big business (private hospital groups) to a preventative approach as they thrive on a curative model and on sick people.

### 4. Inadequate Financial Resources, Health Spending by Governments

The percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP) spent on health is at currently 2.6% of the GD. Malaysia has among the smallest public health care budgets among middle income countries. This inadequate government spending on health, limits SDG 3 improvement. We can see this also in the relative reduction in the MOH paediatric budget over time (Table 6).

**Table 6: Proportion of the Total Health Budget Allocated to Paediatric**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Paediatric Budget</b>	<b>Total Health Budget</b>	<b>Percentage of Total</b>
2023	610,506,300	36,139,861,200	1.7%
2022	591,088,200	32,409,629,800	1.8%
2021	578,878,900	31,941,504,300	1.8%
2020	660,210,700	30,602,080,900	2.2%
2019	630,411,000	28,678,743,500	2.2%
2013	384,920,300	19,227,189,500	2.0%

Source: Annual budget reports, MOF, Malaysia

## **5. Failure to deal with Social Determinants of Health**

This key major challenge has been outlined in the earlier discussion. Families that are poor, disadvantaged, marginalised or have poor access to health care are the ones where the children have the highest mortality and morbidity. Unfortunately many of our services are urban based and focused on those that have wealth (Inverse Care Law).

Note that I have chosen not to discuss the ‘elephant in the room’, corruption. Institutionalised corruption and corrupt practices in some of the countries have a significant impact on the healthcare system in terms of spending and development.

### **Special Focus on the Impact of Covid-19 on SDG 3**

Covid-19 is an enormous spanner in the works; a great distractor that has siphoned off resources, energy and focus on SDG 3. It is anticipated that the impact of Covid-19 will set us back by decades. It is likely that we will continue to see worsening malnutrition, psychological morbidity, demographic change and limited educational outcomes for many generations to come. Childhood immunisation efforts have been interrupted in a number of countries (United Nations 2021). It is expected that gains in child mortality will be halted or slowed down. A summary of the key impacts on SDG 3 include (UNICEF data hub, 2020; Amar-Singh HSS, November 2020):

#### **1. Downward Poverty Spiral**

It is anticipated that the loss of income and jobs will push more of the population into poverty. In Malaysia this has been estimated as an additional 5-8% of the population, which translates into an additional 2-3 million children thrust into serious poverty.

#### **2. Worsening Childhood Malnutrition**

The increasing poverty, decrease in non-governmental organisation support, decrease in charity and corporate giving, and loss of schooling means that malnutrition in children has worsened with long term consequences for height growth. For example, a sizeable proportion of children in Malaysia, with poor food security, who depended on the school-based Supplementary Food Programme, lost this resource in 2020-2022. In addition support services and community feeding programmes for indigenous children have been impaired or retarded in growth.

### **3. Interrupted Education**

Schools have been closed intermittently for 2 years and attempts have been made to move schools to online classes. There is a huge digital divide (unequal access to technology) and disparity between different social groups, worsening the access to education. Data is emerging that children from poorer communities are losing interest in schooling. Children with disabilities have been the hardest hit by a loss of education and therapy. The Asian Development Bank (April 2021) suggests that Malaysia has had one of the highest learning losses among Asian developing nations. Education poverty will have enormous lifetime implications, not just for children, but also for the Malaysian economy and SDG goals (Amar-Singh HSS, Ong Puay-Hoon, Gill Raja, et al April 2022).

### **4. A Generational Scar/Gap**

Due to Covid-19 many couples are delaying getting married or postponing having a child. This reduction in planned births will take its full effect in 2022 where we will see a major change in births. The reduction in yearly birth volume may last much longer after Covid-19 due to increased poverty and the need to rebuild lives. In Malaysia the annual reduction in total births of 1.5-2.5% has accelerated to 10.1% in 2021 (2019 487,957 births, 2021 438,774 births). The impact of this 'lost generation' will be seen in the education system (reduction in students/classes), long term manpower needs and health considerations (increased later age pregnancies).

### **The Looming Impact of Climate Change**

It is estimated that 26% of childhood deaths and 25% of the total disease burden in children under five could be prevented through the reduction of environmental risks such as air pollution, unsafe water, sanitation and inadequate hygiene or chemicals (Prüss-Ustün et al 2016).

No discussion on SDG 3 would be appropriate without pointing out that climate change, the impending climate emergency that threatens to engulf us, will reverse all SDG 3 gains.

This may prove to be the major health challenge of our time and children will be the most affected.

## **Transformative Approach to Achieving SDG 3**

While Malaysia have made progress to achieve the SDG 3 goals, the current progress has not been achieved at a regional or community level. Our national achievement belies the many we have left behind - many of the marginalised communities in our nation are poorly served.

If we are serious about child health in our country, then we require radical changes in approach and not 'more of the same'. **The children of Malaysia need for us to achieve SDG 3 goals for ALL, not as an average or for a portion of the community.** The SDG 3 goal is not a figure for these children but a lifeline of hope, if we are prepared to truly invest in their health.

We can no longer rely on traditional and incremental approaches to improve health. We require a transformative approach that focuses on inclusive growth to achieve equality.

What does a transformative health service look like? Some key aspects include:

### **1. A healthcare system which focuses on community care**

The cornerstone for developing community care will be enabling and empowering the community to care for themselves. We need to move away from a mind-set of delivery of healthcare to the community and work towards the development of capability within the community for self-care. We need a healthcare system that is developed for children and families, and not one that is developed for managers and the healthcare professional (Amar-Singh HSS, September 2019).

### **2. A healthcare system which focuses on preventative services**

We need to revolutionise the training of our healthcare professionals and move away from a disease approach. We need to provide incentives for our brightest minds to work in the community and in prevention activities. We need to encourage clinicians to spend at least 40% of their working time in the community. We need to dramatically increase funding and manpower resources for public health. We need to develop and enlarge mobile health services to meet urban child health needs (70% of our population is in urban environments).

### **3. A healthcare system which focuses on marginalised communities**

For true change to occur we require disaggregated data, broken down by detailed sub-categories (indigenous, marginalised groups, level of income, gender). We then need to map communities with high child mortality rates and focus sufficient resources on those with high rates. For this to happen we need compulsory death registration and mandated medical certification of deaths by law.

### **4. A government committed to adequately funding the healthcare system**

Recognising the problem and what needs to be done for child health is half the battle. We need to advocate with the government to allocate sufficient health resources to meet the need in the community. Funding for the national health service for Malaysia needs to be doubled. This must be the agenda of any good government and advocating for it should become the mandate of all political parties.

### **5. A government committed to ending child poverty and malnutrition (achieving SDG 1 & 2)**

Working on health alone will not result in the dramatic change in SDG 3 child mortality and morbidity that we hope for. For this to happen there is a need to end child poverty and hunger. The achievement of SDG 1 and 2 will go a long way to help achieve SDG 3.

### **Some Closing Remarks**

While we may look to governments to provide strong leadership, direction and funding to develop such a health system described above, the real transforming movement might be from the community itself – a grassroots, grounds-up advocacy and development.

The paediatric professional community has been ‘clouded’ by many issues and failed to adequately advocate for the poorest children in each of our nations. We cannot leave this task to others. These children and families have no voice; we have the data and the capability to lend them ours. What is required is a willingness in our hearts to choose to do so.

As a nation we must never compare with other nations and think that we are doing better. Every preventable child death in our country is a travesty. Every child that continues to live in (relative) poverty is our nation’s shame.

## **Acknowledgement**

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## **Appendix**

### **Current Child Health Care Challenges & Suggestions:**

#### **Improving Child Health Services in Malaysia**

Amar-Singh HSS (Dato' Dr)

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This brief overview looks at the challenges faced in child health in Malaysia and some solutions to overcome them (written for the RMK 12 plan and submitted to MOH Malaysia).

Health challenges have changed over time and now relate more to health care delivery systems, lifestyle diseases, genetic disorders, environmental problems and urbanisation. In the past health systems were more concerned with mortality. With the rapid decline in perinatal and child mortality, problems that cause significant morbidity have emerged as more important. As a society we have moved from mortality to morbidity to new mortalities and morbidities. There is a need to move away from just a focus on under 5 years of age to the entire paediatric population (0-18 years).

Some of the key health challenges faced by the paediatric population are summarised in the table.

**Table: Current Child Health Care Challenges & Suggestions**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Size of the Problem (one example)</b>	<b>Key Initiatives that Work</b>
Unreached/Poorly reached indigenous & rural populations	Indigenous people (Orang Asli, Penans) and rural poor (esp. Sabah). Mortality rates in excess of 10x national average. Worsening health and socio-economic status over many years.  A “silent genocide” of our people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National community re-feeding programme for the indigenous with uninterrupted funding</li> <li>● Improved health access and community trained healthcare workers</li> <li>● Remove or revamp JAKOA</li> <li>● Development work (uplifting communities) with NGOs but based on Orang Asli opinion</li> </ul>
Unreached/Poorly reached urban populations	75% of the population lived in urban environments in 2018. Urban poor, local migrants, immigrants face poor access to healthcare, environmental risks, air pollution, unsafe water, sanitation issues, heat-stress, injuries, unhealthy housing. WHO 2016 estimates that 26% of childhood deaths & 25% of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Improved housing for low-income sectors of cities &amp; slum upgrading for urban health equity</li> <li>● Mobile health care delivery systems</li> <li>● Rights-based (UNCRC) services for immigrants</li> </ul>

	total disease burden in children < 5 years are due to this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National agenda to reduce vehicular air pollution</li> <li>● Revise national poverty line to RM 3,000</li> </ul>
Unintentional Injuries (especially Road & Drowning)	<p>Road traffic injuries and Drowning are a leading cause of death and burden of disease for children and adolescents.</p> <p>Injuries account for more than 1,500 deaths per year and 4 times as many become permanently disabled.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mandatory car seat programme that is enforced</li> <li>● Affordable, extensive, bus-based, public transport system is critical to reduce motorbikes</li> <li>● Drowning awareness for families, child-care minders, children/teens</li> <li>● Child-proof medication dispensing of all MOH drugs to reduce poisoning (blister packs, CPC)</li> </ul>
Lifestyle related adult illnesses with an onset in childhood & behavioural problems	with increasing depression, anxiety, suicides, drug addiction and gender confusion are very common among teens (20-30% obesity or overweight, 38% internet addiction, 1: 5 of boys smoke, 3-4% of teens currently on drugs,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A national campaign to move adults away from screens, so as to support children - promote screen free days weekly for families</li> </ul>

	<p>10% of form 1 students say they have attempted suicide, NHMS 2017).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Routine obesity screening programme at 2 years of age</li> <li>● Investment in mobility: Bus rapid transit (BRT), walking &amp; cycling</li> </ul> <p>Major need to address parenting</p>
<p>Disability and Genetic disorders</p>	<p>15% of the community comprise children with disability requiring assistance.</p> <p>Current services are limited, too late, do not reach rural communities and often not rights based. Too much focus and funding of services in the Klang valley.</p> <p>Also many parents refuse to register children as disabled as the OKU term is viewed as demeaning and inhibits inclusive education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Partner with &amp; fund NGOs to expand services throughout the country</li> <li>● Dramatically revamp the CBR centres and remove them from Welfare oversight to MOH (they should become vibrant, community based NGOs)</li> <li>● Train trans-disciplinary therapists to meet the needs</li> <li>● Advocate for MOE to have a true inclusive education policy</li> </ul>
<p>Intentional Injuries (Child Abuse)</p>	<p>Epidemiological studies done locally on community prevalence of child sexual abuse show rates of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There are no easy solutions for this but a national pre-school &amp; primary school training</li> </ul>

	<p>8-26% of all children (Amar 1996, Kamaruddin 2000, Choo 2011).</p> <p>Current services are extremely poor &amp; Child Act not implemented fully since developed (1991).</p>	<p>programme to teach all children protective sexual behaviours would help reduce abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All MOH, Welfare staff &amp; police to implement Child Act fully to protect children</li> </ul>
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Some ideas taken from: Amar-Singh HSS. Editorial: Current Challenges in Health and Health Care. Asia-Pacific Journal of Public Health, 2004, Vol 16(2)

It is important to recognise that a major issue is the ‘Social Determinants of Health’. Families who are poor, disadvantaged, marginalised or have poor access to health care are the ones where the children have the highest mortality and morbidity. Health services need to be targeted at reaching these populations. Unfortunately many of our services are urban based and focused on those that have some wealth. The Private-Public divide also worsens our child health services. Within MOH, Paediatricians and managers tend to focus on disease and not health (Paediatrics not Child Health).

We need to move away from the present ‘curative’ model of health services where the model is doctor and illness focused, expensive, fragmented and institutional based. We need to move to develop a ‘wellness’ service as opposed to ‘illness’ service. This includes a lifetime health plan that aims at keeping the child and family well. It focuses on prevention issues and includes visits to health professionals on a regular basis from conception right through childhood and adolescence to adulthood.

Child health is critical for the nation’s health. If we do not take care of and invest in children we will have ‘failed’ adults. It is important that the government recognise and respond to the serious health changes posed by rapid socio-economic mal-development. Solutions for change often lie beyond the health sector, and require the engagement of many different sectors of government and society. In this era, individuals and communities have the capacity to take the

initiative to advocate for change and work to improve child health and secure a future for their children.

**Finally there is a need to address the impending climate emergency, as that is the major health challenge of our time and children will be the most affected.**

Citation for Appendix: Amar-Singh HSS. Current Child Health Care Challenges & Suggestions: Improving Child Health Services in Malaysia. September 2019. Malaysia. Note that this was written for the 12th Malaysia Plan (RMK 12) and submitted to the Ministry of Health Malaysia.

**Coverage and Reception of Healthcare Services for Refugees in Klang Valley -  
A Qualitative Study**

**by**

**Philiya Mary Thomas<sup>1</sup>, Nur Emylia Farhana binti Syaharudin<sup>2</sup>**

**ABSTRACT**

Malaysia hosts approximately 185,920 refugees registered with UNHCR as of August 2022, whereby the majority of the refugees are from Myanmar, followed by Pakistan, Yemen, Syria, Somalia, Afghanistan, and others. Amidst the large numbers, Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, which protects the rights, acknowledges the status and prevents the risk of deportation, arrest and detention of refugees without cause. Therein, the status of refugees in Malaysia is jeopardised. As the livelihood of refugees are dependent upon non-conforming systems and uncertainty, healthcare services are often unaffordable for the community as sufficient income or resources to meet physical or mental health needs are at lack. Besides unaffordability, healthcare services are often inaccessible to refugees due to multiple reasons including protection issues, language barriers, and fear of being discriminated against due to legal status and poor health literacy. On this account, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), goal 3.8.1, ensuring healthy lives and well-being of all people regardless of age to attain universal health coverage; this review evaluates and examines the coverage of essential healthcare services to the refugee community in Malaysia. Also, based upon SDG goal 10.3.1, reducing inequalities in line with the target to put an end to discriminatory practices, this review explores the reception of healthcare organisations on providing healthcare services to refugees. The information gathered is supported by primary and secondary data that emphasises the gaps in healthcare services. This review seeks to address the present gaps and suggest the necessary interventions needed to localise SDGs within the refugee community in Malaysia.



## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Refugees, by definition, are people who have run away from their homeland to a much safer country because of reasons such as war, violence, conflict or persecution to secure their safety; according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (n.d.). These individuals are vulnerable, especially in maintaining a satisfactory level of well-being. They are subjected to the policies, and the system provided to them by the host country regarding healthcare. This brings us to how healthcare is covered for refugees and the accessibility of healthcare services for this vulnerable group. To define healthcare coverage, an individual's legal right to claim payment or compensation from their insurance company under a group health plan (U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, n.d.). Though coverage may be defined as an individual's lawful right to medical compensation under insurance, refugees do not experience the same luxury as a normal person would. Refugees escape from their home country with nothing but clothes on their bodies and some important items, especially the Rohingya people from Myanmar, tend to bring along practical items that can be used in their daily lives (UNHCR, 2019). Hence, coverage can be understood as the efforts made by the host countries like Malaysia, India or Bangladesh to provide any sort of medical/psychological/psychosocial aid to these individuals who have been exiled from their own homeland.

Healthcare on the other hand is the ability to maintain or regain physical, emotional, or mental well-being through the service of licensed professionals (Merriam-Webster, 2019). In Malaysia specifically, there are opportunities for the refugees to seek healthcare by going to clinics or hospitals; despite that, the outrageous fees hold them back from getting the much-needed medical attention as they are rendered unable to afford the treatment needed (Chuah et al., 2018). The ailments that these refugees may face could be communicable and non-communicable diseases. Communicable disease refers to infectious illnesses such as measles and Hepatitis A to name a few, while non-communicable disease refers to illnesses like heart disease and diabetes which require long-term patient care. To combat the policy imposed on the refugees, the UNHCR came to an agreement with the Ministry of Health (MOH) on the Memorandum of Understanding so refugees can receive a 50% discount on the foreigner's rate at government healthcare facilities. Chuah et al. (2018) mentioned that the refugees were also given insurance in 2014 through a program named REMEDI, a collaborative effort between

UNHCR and a private insurance company. The way for refugees to receive these benefits at public healthcare facilities is with a discount only if they have a UNHCR card or an asylum-seeking letter. Hakimie (2022) reported that the UNHCR had made the process of giving out refugee cards become stricter. Such a thing happened because the Minister of Home Affairs, Hamzah Zainudin, questioned whether the cards were given out haphazardly, as several Indonesian refugees were able to stay legally in Malaysia.

Due to the objection raised by the minister, the refugees in turn are facing difficulties in receiving the issued refugee cards (Hakimie Amrie, 2022), causing their inability to seek proper healthcare from all healthcare services as they charge the refugees excessive amounts that the refugees are unable to pay for. In turn, refugees are victims of the system, having their health and lives at risk despite running away for a better future. Therefore, practices by stakeholders do not align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators introduced by the United Nations (UN), namely SDG 3.8.1 which is the coverage of essential health services and SDG 10.3.1, which is to eliminate any discriminatory practices, especially towards this vulnerable group. Though it may not be stated implicitly, we can see how the Malaysian government's stance on refugees, especially receiving healthcare through the policies made over the years. Despite the indoctrinated practices the stakeholders have been improving their policies and advocacy for inclusivity of refugees in the coverage and reception of healthcare services such as, involving the refugees in the COVID-19 vaccination drive (UNHCR, n.d.), however certain vaccination locations have been discriminatory towards the refugees and asylum-seekers, threatening to report them for deportation if they were to come to receive vaccination (Ng, 2022). This proves that, while there are efforts to include and protect refugees' rights to healthcare, there are setbacks mainly coming from the prejudiced attitudes of the citizens. This article is set to inform on the experiences of refugees living in the vicinity of Klang Valley, and draws attention on the roles of stakeholders in advancing the SDGs with regard to the attainability and availability of healthcare for refugees.

## Literature Review

There has been little past research done on the accessibility of healthcare services towards refugees in Malaysia, especially with the involvement of stakeholders like the governmental sector, private sector and the local communities. The involvement of stakeholders is pivotal when it comes to policy advocacy, empowerment of refugees and mainly supplying affordable and quality healthcare to refugees (Chuah et al., 2019), placing into inquisition the reality of the accessibility of services to refugees rendered in line with SDGs 3.8.1 and 10.3.1. Though there may be a lack of literature on this topic, available literature currently show common themes of discriminatory practices, gaps in policy and awareness, and a general lack of social support rendered to refugees (Pocock et al., 2020).

Considering how Malaysia is not part of the 1951 Refugee Convention (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2011), legally Malaysia is not required to protect refugees' rights and their status. It also meant that Malaysia has no framework that can protect or provide them with certain basic needs like healthcare and education (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2011) and employability (Pocock et al., 2020). Refugees are forced to do odd jobs (Ng, 2022) to keep themselves afloat, paying for their basic necessities as they are denied any legal employment as Malaysian legislation forbade refugees and asylum-seekers alike from working legally (Pocock et al., 2020). Their daily income from odd jobs is barely enough to help them to pay for housing and food, resulting in refugees having to put their health second (Ng, 2022). However, there are several programs that give refugees an opportunity to receive treatment at an affordable cost such as the foreigner's rate discount and the REMEDI insurance (Ng, 2022). Other than the insurance program, UNHCR made successful negotiations with the Malaysian Ministry of Health, agreeing that all recognised refugees will receive a 50% discount on the foreigners' rate in all public health facilities (Chuah et al., 2018).

In reality, despite the 50% discount at public health facilities, there is a 100% increase in the foreigners' rate for medical services as there were amendments in the medical charges in 2014 to rid all subsidised medical fees for foreigners (Chuah et al., 2019, Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia, 2014). The change in medical fees through the circulated letter by the ministry of health truly proves that the Malaysian government has little regard for the refugees, especially when the laws to protect the rights of refugees in Malaysia are non-existent (Yik, 2021). Not

only that, discriminative acts committed towards the refugees in the healthcare sector happen where the refugees who come to such facilities are turned away based on the excuse that they are not able to afford medical services (Siah et al., 2019), increasing further their inability to access healthcare (Pocock et al., 2020). The prejudice citizens have towards refugees has been so normalised to the point where refugee children are denied healthcare in health facilities despite Malaysia being part of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, emphasizing that there should not be any kind of discrimination against a child (Siah et al., 2019) irrespective of their race and origins (United Nations, 1989). The refugees' living situation in urban areas that are packed to the brim with inadequate sanitation lends to the quick spread of diseases (Ng, 2022).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the homes of refugees were raided by police to prevent the disease (Aung et al., 2021) from spreading further; though the actions of the Malaysian authorities terrified the refugees with their fear of detainment increased. This vulnerable group refuses to seek medical help as they fear that it could mean detainment or deportation from the country (Aung et al., 2021) further making them vulnerable to the virus COVID-19 (Ng, 2022). Their position of remaining unprotected limits their ability to understand the severity of their condition as they have low health literacy (Chuah et al., 2019). At the peak of the pandemic, the government extended free vaccinations to all foreigners, including migrant workers and refugees alike to reduce the risk of infection by the disease (Human Rights Watch, 2021) through a collaborative effort with UNHCR for free (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2021). In any case, despite the vaccination at no cost, refugees are turned away by healthcare officials and warned of possible banishment (Ng, 2022). Their fear is further heightened by the raids committed against them during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ng, 2022), resulting in the refugees hiding away and leaving them at higher risk of contracting the virus (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

## **Methodology**

This study utilised a qualitative approach in order to gather detailed and in-depth information on experiences of refugees in Malaysia in relation to reception of the healthcare system and to explore the extent to which Malaysia has progressed in terms of its initiatives in enabling refugees to gain equitable access to healthcare services without prejudice and discrimination. Primary and secondary data were gathered in this study.

The primary data was gathered through a face to face semi-structured interview and the data was analysed using the thematic analysis approach. Open coding and axial coding were carried out before deducing the themes for this study. This methodology was utilised to explore the following research question: What are the experiences of refugees residing in Klang Valley, Malaysia in terms of the reception of the healthcare system?. A total of seven refugees from Myanmar, Liberia and Indonesia were interviewed. Purposive sampling technique was used to identify the participants for this study. The inclusion criteria are a) aged 18 years and above b) able to speak in English or Malay and c) refugee. The exclusion criteria are a) below 18 years b) unable to speak in English and Malay and c) Malaysian citizens or foreigners with identification status.

Meanwhile, the secondary data was analysed using the narrative analysis approach. Information was gathered through various sources such as journal articles, newspaper articles, reports and others. This analysis method was used to explore the following research question, that is, how have the stakeholders extended the healthcare services for refugees?

## **Findings**

### ***Research Question 1: What are the experiences of refugees residing in Klang Valley, Malaysia in terms of the reception of the healthcare system?***

The aim of the research is to explore the experiences of refugees in terms of the reception of the healthcare system in Malaysia. Through open coding, four axial codes were derived and categorised into three themes.

**Theme 1: Affordability of Healthcare Services.** In this theme, one axial code was deduced, that is, unaffordable physical healthcare services.

***Unaffordable Physical Healthcare Services.*** The interview findings revealed that the majority of the participants addressed issues related to affordability, such that the cost for medical care burdens the livelihood of the refugees, particularly due to unstable work and monthly source of income. This is evident in the excerpts below as expressed by the refugees:

P1: We go to clinic also, when children fever or anything, that time very difficult. It's money-wise about money. Very worried about money, but the service is very good. We

show the card, then it's good, but about money, we need to worry about it. Our family, there is a problem because no money during the COVID time.

P6: My work now is okay lah, can manage but I am in a very difficult state. My older sister is now suffering from kidney disease, so must do dialysis. We went to Ampang hospital. I couldn't work for three to four days, I went to the hospital with my sister. Now, it's very difficult, I'm telling the truth. The doctor said that just for operation it's RM8000, if there is anything else..then it would go up to RM12 000. And dialysis, for each month it's RM4000. So how am I going to take care of my family if like this. I am making a bit of money, can lah, managing, but I have to rent house and all, it's very difficult. My wife also works but like part time. Mine also not full time.

**Theme 2: Mental Health Literacy.** This theme consists of subthemes, lack of awareness on mental health and reception of mental health.

***Lack of Awareness on Mental Health.*** The findings identified that the majority of the refugees were unable to understand what entails mental health and its significance for the well-being of an individual. It was evident based on the minimal responses of refugees on topics surrounding mental health. The following excerpts affirm the aforementioned statement:

P3: Hmm, my people don't have that problem usually. We don't receive. All okay.

P1: Umm, no

***Reception of Mental Healthcare Services.*** In this dimension, five out of seven participants demonstrated a lack of understanding of mental healthcare services. Meanwhile, two participants shared about the availability of mental healthcare service. However, the services were generally limited. This indeed revealed that most of the refugees did not receive mental health care services as needed.

P5: Government don't give but UNHCR got. I also get help sometimes.

P7: So sometimes they'll, I'm on medications as well. So sometimes they bring it, do just,

they will bring it and then I'll just pick it up from downstairs from my place, or

sometimes also to go and see the doctor, they will send a taxi or a Grab or something,

then they will come and pick me up. Hmmm, when it comes to mental health, I think our community definitely needs it a lot but yeah there isn't.

**Theme 3: Sociological Interactions.** One subtheme was deduced in this theme, that is, societal discriminatory behavioural patterns.

*Societal Discriminatory Behavioural Patterns.* In this sub-theme, mixed responses were obtained from participants, some expressed positive remarks in terms of treatment by society, others expressed that a mutual positive relationship can be established depending on how one treats another while another participant expressed about experiencing discrimination based on refugee status identity and race. This subtheme also depicts the chances of discrimination in society possibly indirectly penetrating into the healthcare system. The following excerpts cite the example for the findings:

P2: Malaysian people are okay. The people are good. At my work, there are Malaysians, we are like friends. If we are good, then they are also good. If we are not good, then they are also not good. If we have a good heart, then they will also be good to us.

P7: Um, it has be a challenge by itself. Although, when I was at the refugee home, it was tough, it was difficult, but I never experienced, uh, discrimination to the highest extent until I got here. Like I actually got no idea, like what that was until I actually got here. Here, you see it is okay. But we face a lot of discrimination like in our day in, day out, you know, like being a refugee is one issue and being discriminated because of your race is also another issue. Right. So being a refugee and then plus the racial issue. It's...I don't know..I really....

***Research Question 2: How have the stakeholders extended the healthcare services for refugees?***

In terms of the initiatives undertaken by stakeholders, it was found that Malaysia is significantly lacking in terms of enabling access for refugees to receive healthcare services. This was determined in terms of the policies and strategies implemented by stakeholders. Besides, access to healthcare services is further restricted with existing discrimination and prejudice of society against refugees. Findings in this section are gathered based on findings of previous research studies and current status of Malaysia in extending healthcare services to refugees.

**Legislation and Policies.** Malaysia is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, nevertheless tolerates and accepts the presence of refugees in the country. Although this is the case, refugees in Malaysia are categorised as illegal migrants due to the reason that there is no existing legal framework in the country that acknowledges the status and identity of the population (Razali et al., 2021). Moreover, the laws and policies in Malaysia with regards to refugees threaten and place the population at a continuous risk of arrest and detention. Despite being a member of the United Nation Human Rights Council and being in cooperation with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR] in addressing refugee issues, this continues to be a crisis due to the absence of a framework that protects the rights of vulnerable groups and the existence of policies that overlook the status of refugees (Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs [IDEAS], 2022; Razali et al., 2021).

In the year 2001, the Ministry of Health Malaysia issued Circular 10/2001 addressing to hospitals and clinics stating that foreigners who arrive in Malaysia without permission (Pendatang Asing Tanpa Izin, PATI) to seek treatment at healthcare facilities are to be immediately reported to authorities and if not adhered to, the responsible hospitals or clinics will be charged under Section 6 (3) and Section 15 (4) of the Immigration Act 1959/63 (1997 Amendment). This circular was also applicable to refugees as they fall under the category of ‘illegal immigrants’ (pendatang asing tanpa izin) in Malaysia due to the reason that the population does not possess any legal or valid document that recognises their status as refugees, even though the refugee may or may not be UNHCR cardholders.

Besides, Jalil (2021) stated that a circular issued in 2005 by the Attorney General’s Chambers, provided some immunity to refugees from being prosecuted due to immigration status. However, it contradicts with the strict immigration law (Section 6 of the Immigration Act 1959/63 [Act 155]) on non-citizens who enter the country without a valid entry permit or a lawfully issued pass. Hence, although with the possession of the UNHCR card and the existence of the 2005 Circular, the risk of arrest and detention for refugees is not entirely eliminated (Yik, 2022). Moreover, the Passport Act 1966 permits the arrest of an individual without a warrant as long as the immigration, police or customs officer reasonably believes that an individual has committed an offence against the act. As the matter is subjective to the interpretation of the officers, arrest, deportation and detention still persists among the refugee community (Munir-Asen, 2018).



With the existence of the aforementioned policies and legislations, accessibility of refugees to healthcare services are highly limited. This is because there exists a continuous fear of arrest and detention when seeking healthcare services. With laws and policies that threaten the livelihood of the population, refugees often refuse to get appropriate care and treatment for medical conditions (Hkawng & Fishbein, 2021; Ng, 2022). The pandemic further aggravated the situation as Malaysia announced the decision to arrest and detain all undocumented migrants in order to ensure that all persons receive the Covid-19 vaccination. This decision however had worsened the fear among refugees, encouraging the population to go into hiding to protect themselves from being arrested by authorities (Rao, 2020; Sherman & David, 2021). The decisions also indirectly encouraged hostility toward the community as the actions encourage society to have prejudice and discriminate refugees, that is contributing to the resurgence of xenophobia (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 2020).

***Practices/Strategies.*** In term of implementation of practices or strategies with regards to ease accessibility to healthcare services for refugees, a Memorandum of Understanding was initiated by UNHCR with the Ministry of Health in 2005, that is, to provide a 50% discounted rate for refugees under the foreigner's price at public healthcare facilities (Chuah et al., 2018). Despite the discounted rate, it was found that the price to seek medical care is expensive and unaffordable for refugees, particularly due to the unstable work and income of refugees. This is as such because Malaysia does not legally permit refugees to work to earn a living for their families. Such a scenario brings about a rise to affordability issues in seeking healthcare services (Chuah et al., 2018; Ng, 2022). In the study conducted by Ng (2022), the case of Syahirah, who was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes mellitus and hypertension, was demonstrated, whereby her illness progressed and worsened due to her livelihood situation. As finances were required to receive optimum treatment, and due to her having to work odd jobs to earn, yet not sufficient to meet her needs, she was unable to obtain optimum treatment for her condition, which then progressed to nephropathy, peripheral neuropathy and diabetic retinopathy. Similar instances were described in the study by Chuah et al. (2018).

One among the notable strategies that can signify improvement and enable the right to health for refugees is the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness by 2024. According to UNHCR Malaysia (2019), Malaysia is working toward implementing and taking necessary actions to

reduce and prevent statelessness in the country. Among the actions undertaken involve encouraging civil registration and ensuring transparency in procedures related to application for citizenship and by educating and creating awareness to better protect stateless populations (“UNHCR welcomes renewed commitment”, 2019). To cite an example, in Sabah, a National Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Centre was established, which aims to track the growth and development of initiatives in line with reducing and preventing statelessness (Ghani, 2022). This signifies a step forward toward better accessibility to healthcare services for refugees in Malaysia as identity plays a key role in enabling access to receive care and treatment as identity often becomes a barrier to access healthcare facilities (Chuah et al., 2018; Chuah et al., 2019).

Other than that, a notable initiative that was identified was in terms of the implementation of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support framework in aiding refugees. In particular, UNHCR’s MHPSS programme aims to build the capacity of healthcare workers, communities and support in the management of various mental health conditions in healthcare facilities. This is carried out by training healthcare professionals in managing and identifying refugees with varying severity of mental health illnesses, and thereby to offer support and care based on the needs of the person of concern. The main idea is to ensure and promote a positive health and psychological well-being. In terms of its implementation, although its coverage is limited, initiatives to promote health and well-being through the MHPSS approach is evident and continued collaboration and partnership of UNHCR with other stakeholders in providing mental health care and psychosocial support to refugees is ongoing (UNHCR Malaysia, 2022).

In a gist, the efforts undertaken by the stakeholders are indeed in line with SDG Goals 3.8.1 and 10.3.1 as it is moving forward, although slow-paced, toward good health and well-being and in reducing inequality. Nevertheless, major reforms are required to achieve this stage as the foundation is unstable, that is, legally, the right to protection for refugees are to be established in order to ensure that other actions or strategies that follow do not exploit or withhold one’s right to living without fear.

## **Discussion**

The findings narrate the conceptualization of the experiences of refugees in Malaysia (Klang Valley) with regard to the reception of health care services. The nature of the reception in its gaps with regard to the services rendered to refugees as categorically positioned to a) financial vulnerability, b) attitudinal vulnerability, and c) educational vulnerability. Moreover, with reference to the coverage of mental and physical healthcare services, the implications revolve around the gaps in existing policies, roles of governmental agencies, organisations, community orientations, and personal convictions toward the reciprocation of the extension of the provision of healthcare services to refugees residing in Malaysia. There is unequivocally an ecological non-reciprocation toward the acknowledgement and provision of relevant services to the refugee community, such that available research on the situation of refugees in Malaysia though limited, provides similar accounts of perspectives to the motioned gaps including aspects of social, cultural, economic, educational, and communicational discrepancies (Aung et al., 2021; Chuah et al., 2018; Chuah et al., 2019; Yunus et al., 2021).

### ***Financial vulnerability***

Vulnerability in relation to the socioeconomic reality of refugees and the services rendered account for the major of the issues that refugees face, such that the unstable work market, and the high costs of services render refugees impaired to receive quality treatment and healthcare services. This proves counterproductive localisation of SDG 3 on attaining universal health coverage regardless of demographics. Complementing this, as per the soft data indication from the experiences of refugees and reviews from past literature, there is a cycle of influence of the services rendered to refugees being restricted by other underlying factors (Ormond & Nah, 2019; Pocock et al., 2020; Yunus et al., 2021). This is narrated such that as findings and literature have indicated, financial constraints among refugees are caused by job insecurities implicated by restrictive policies (Yik, 2021), which further has a cyclical effect toward the well-being of the refugee, specifically in the context of mental well-being, causing help-seeking. However, help-seeking is discouraged due to the high costs of medical services.

### ***Attitudinal vulnerability***

Attitudinal vulnerability is thematised by societal stereotype and discrimination refugees face restricting the reception of healthcare services and the perception of refugees toward the disassociation of the community from the population at large instilling fear of rejection that discourages seeking healthcare services in the first place. The former is presented in the findings and existing research addresses the same, however the latter is an understudied topic. With respect to societal stereotypes, Don and Lee, (2014) narrates the role of political elites representing the refugee community in Malaysia as illegals, threats, and victims. A similar perception of this ideology is present as a meta-stereotype among the refugees, such that they are treated with discrimination in society when seeking healthcare services. This reciprocates to the extent of the reception of healthcare services rendered to refugees as a question of “deservingness” (Ormond and Nah, 2019). The variables by which stereotype is represented in the social context of refugees raises questions of the advocacy of SDG 10 through means of literacy and awareness of the situation and circumstance of refugees in Malaysia, and the implications to the roles of stakeholders to promote an environment that is accommodative to refugees to live with accessibility and equality of rights to the coverage and reception of healthcare services (Ehmer and Kothari, 2020). Therefore, social stereotypes (i.e., cognitive bias) and discrimination (i.e., behavioural bias) are indoctrinated stigma that forms a culture of hate toward the refugee community, implying much to the negative well-being of refugees.

### ***Educational vulnerability***

The evidence seen in the findings with regard to the non-reciprocation of society toward refugees needs (health care service), the gaps in policy, and lack of awareness shows in essence a lack of literacy on the needs, effect, and impact of refugees with respect to coverage and reception of healthcare services (Siah et al., 2019). Educational aspects of the theme of this report also indicate that refugees are unaware of their rights and the framework of the same, and the awareness of the provisions of healthcare services. These are interactional with the attitudinal vulnerabilities of the refugees (i.e., fear). Nonetheless, it does not only encompass illiteracy from the refugee community, rather, there is lack of awareness even in the non-refugee community. This calls to action the role of stake holders, especially governmental and non-governmental agencies to build orientations of advocacy to the society at large on issues revolving around refugees.

The tri-factor involving vulnerabilities of refugees are such that it is interactional and inter-relational affecting the orientation of healthcare services received and covered for refugees whether by means of material help and emotional or cognitive support. Recommendations are drawn to direct the attention of stakeholders in their roles to advocate natural justice, build an inclusive empowering society, and a resilient refugee community in facing the daily challenges of living in a foreign land.

## **Recommendations**

Stakeholders involvement in the movement, mobilisation, and localisation of the SDGs are the vitality of the goals indicator's achievement by the year 2030. In the context of refugees residing in Malaysia, healthcare systems and services offered and the reception of the same with respect to the ecological role of society and nation is understudied. As such, we propose in this paper a frame of work for a) government and its relevant agencies, b) organisations, and c) communities. Recommendations are provided to encourage stakeholders involvement in pushing for positive progress in relation to treatment of refugees as a whole, and certain specific aspects on improving the healthcare service coverage and reception through its various means.

### ***Government***

The policy makers in the government, and influential figures of the same sector are the backbone of the implementation of policy amendments and changes that can be made in the country. Even so, they have a greater responsibility to make decisions that impact the dynamic layers of community in the nation, to which refugees contribute a percentage in the society. Commonalities found along the findings and research conferred the gap in terms of policy. Therefore, 3 recommendations are mapped out to engage governmental stakeholders to open the borders of healthcare for refugees, and other implications to the livelihood of refugees.

1. Institutionalise freedom of movement, with rights to education and work. Refugees live in constant fear of the unpredictability of the governance of the host country, namely, Malaysia, with under-defined and non-specific policies that are intact. Relevant agencies and parties in governance ought not take an over-generalised approach to the stakes of the refugees, in matters related to suspicion, or threat. Rather, these aspects of the freedom of movement, rights to education and livelihood ought to be implemented

through the works of ministries, on the basis of natural justice, humanity, and to serve the underserved.

2. Make policy changes/amendments. As (1) states, there is vagueness, and under-definition of current policies that accounts refugees as illegal immigrants, the government has a role to specify and adhere to the internationally recognised policies and laws with regard to refugees. There is certainly fear and stigma when it comes to immigrants in Malaysia, on matters related to the overpopulation of the said group. However, categorically, refugees are individuals who have fled their home country due to persecution and the other factors that underlie it, hence, law and policy is to uphold the victim.
3. Increase reciprocity of government agencies and government sector workers toward issues of refugees through means of literacy. Policy makers, and relevant workers in the government may not entirely know the reality of the situation and issues that refugees face as threats in Malaysia, a lack of awareness per-say. Therefore, refugee literacy in the context of Malaysian policies and the daily living of refugees, including the coverage and reception of healthcare services ought to be administered.

### ***Organisations***

Organisations, namely NGOs, are pivotal to the training, education, advocacy, and attitude developments of the refugee community, and the non-refugee community. In other words, NGOs stand as mediators of the two worlds. A right orientation, mechanism, and influence to implement and localise the SDG goals relevant to refugees, especially in context, related to healthcare service, organisations are the active bonds that break the barriers and fill the gaps existing in the restrictive world of refugees in Malaysia. 3 recommendations are drawn for action orientation of organisations to facilitate change.

1. Advocacy. Specified advocacy leads to sustainable changes. Organisations have the ability, grit and social competence to advocate for change, with matters regarding refugees' healthcare coverage and reception, organisations should be able to identify the right kind of advocacy and the objectives of the same, and a lasting plan to implement change. Such are policy advocacy, rights advocacy, and solutions advocacy. Therein to state the problems, the effects, the impacts and the right way to overcome.

2. Refugee literacy. This is done through awareness programmes, talks, campaigns, and dialogues that organisations can take lead in to implement such ways of educational models to create awareness and literacy of the status of refugees in Malaysia, and the need to make a change. Often this is represented to the community at large, to create a national awareness and knowledge on the issue.
3. Service. As aforementioned, NGOs are as bridges, therein, organisations should be engage in service and social work for the refugees in the provisions of needs and necessities, guiding frameworks, and relevant humanitarian service for the marginalised and underserved refugees.

### *Community*

Communities are tied to ideologies, and ideologies are tied to cultural implications, therefore, communities, which rightfully represent the people of the nation should be oriented to the right kind of mindset, breaking barriers and gaps of prejudice, stereotype, and discrimination. 3 Recommendations are drawn to lay out the perspectives of the roles of communities.

1. Engage in service-oriented actions. Such may include donations of provision or financial donations through the right means, namely through registered and recognised organisations who provide service to refugees or get involved in volunteerism to help the underserved community.
2. Re-educate self and society on stigma revolving around refugees, such that all humans are deserving of natural justice, livelihood, and quality service. Break the norms of stereotyping refugees as threats and illegal immigrants and break the ideology that non-refugee groups are more deserving that refugees to obtain healthcare services, or any kind of service as a matter of fact.
3. Acceptance. Communities moreover play a strong role in making the marginalised community feel welcomed and feel at home despite their traumas. The well-being of refugees will also increase when they feel safe and welcomed. Therefore, communities are encouraged to be an agent of peace and love, to the broken.

## **Conclusion**

The roles of relevant stakeholders in providing low-cost and quality healthcare to refugees are crucial to ensure proper well-being but in spite of that, current literature and findings that is available demonstrates that there are acts of discrimination and lack of social support towards them. Such is the case since Malaysia does not have a proper legal framework to protect the refugees' rights, particularly regarding healthcare, employability and education. Their inability to have an official and legal occupation in Malaysia leads to the refugees taking up odd jobs to earn their livelihood. Be that as it may, it would mean that their necessities such as food and housing would be prioritised over their health. Nonetheless, there is seen relevant parties and stakeholders working toward the awareness and advocacy for the issues faced by refugees. The experiences shared by refugees in Klang Valley Malaysia and local literature, although contains the gaps in developments of refugee help in Malaysia, there is seen a slow linear development in the localisation of SDGs 3.8.1, and SDG 10.3.1 with respect to the healthcare services offered to refugees.

Nonetheless, there is much to be done, and gaps to be filled, and it takes partnership of the goals (SDG 17) to orient stakeholders to work collaboratively to ensure the quality of life for all citizens. A right mindset, mechanism, action, and impact is therefore created by the responsible orientation of action by stakeholders. It can be deduced that Malaysia is at its stage of infancy with regard to healthcare and refugee reciprocation. It is hoped therefore this article provides a perspective on the reality of the first hand experiences of refugees with regard to healthcare coverage and reception, and what research has shown on the reciprocity of the same.



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# **Recommendations for Encouraging Mental Health Help-Seeking in Malaysian Youth for SDGs Mobilisation: A Narrative Review**

**by**

**Iffah Suraya binti Jasni, Philus George Thomas**

## **ABSTRACT**

In line with the sustainability of the planet, people, peace, prosperity, and partnership in the year 2015, the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The third SDG calls to attention the sustainability of health and wellbeing, including of the mind, body, and spirit. In line with this SDG, this narrative review aims to provide recommendations for specific elements to be included in programs and modules that intend to encourage mental health help-seeking behaviour, reduction of stigma, and awareness about the significance of mental health, thereby contributing to the localization of the third SDG in Malaysia. More specifically, this study addresses help-seeking behaviour amongst Malaysian youths. 4 key recommendations are outlined from a review of studies involving youth, help-seeking behaviour, and its impact on SDG developments. It is hoped that anyone interested in conceptualising a program to draw youth in for counselling and other mental health services may benefit from such recommendations. Implications span from an up-to-date review highlighting the imperative need for advocacy, the possible application of the summarised recommendations to programs involving Malaysian youth with mental health problems, and increased utilisation of mental health services amongst Malaysian youth across schools and universities; enhancing collective effort to utilise a bottom-up approach to prepare Malaysian youths for the future. The narrative displays a chronological imperative of mental health help-seeking, including the process, obstacles, and goals to be achieved in this area of sustainability.

*Keywords: mental health, help-seeking, Malaysian youth, stigma, mental health literacy, awareness, mental health in SDGs*

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

According to the United Nations, youths refer to those between the ages of 15-24. As of 2020, 15.6% of the Malaysian population was made up of youth, amounting to approximately 5 million Malaysian youth. This makes the said group a promising age to focus on for the development of communities and nations, in which socio-emotional development is just as important as cognitive, ethical, and physical development (New Straits Times, 2015). At the same time, the development of youth itself is necessary for nation building and sustainable living for the future; and Malaysia has plans for their youth to achieve the same level of competitiveness as youths in developed nations (New Straits Times, 2018). To do so, it helps to observe the United Nations' third sustainable development goal to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, as it outlines the significance of good health and well-being to collective health, in which mental health falls under this category (SDG Progress Report, 2019). More specifically, target four of SDG three hopes to reduce premature mortality from noncommunicable diseases by one third (WHO, 2015) through its varied means, calling out mental well-being as a factor of contribution to the same target. Hence, it can be implicated in the localisation of the UN goals in respective states, that mental well-being and the awareness of the same would be a contributing factor to the localisation of the SDGs.

Help-seeking in context is constituted by the communication of needs for psychological and personal support through its varied means (Aguirre Velasco et al., 2020). 1 in 7 youths in the world experience mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression, and symptoms of anxiety and depression in adolescents can lead to chronic dysfunction if such mental health conditions are not addressed (WHO, 2021a). The fact is that not all of youth receive treatment, which can result in consequences such as poor school performance, absenteeism, social withdrawal, isolation, loneliness, and suicide (WHO, 2021a). Similarly, in Malaysia for instance, despite the fact that a majority of youth struggle with anxiety (Irfan et.al, 2021) and depression (Ibrahim et.al, 2022), a very low number of youths are aware of the option of seeking mental health support (Berry et.al, 2020) and many are not prone to seek help from counsellors (Salim, 2010). Additionally, unprecedented events such as the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has also triggered a rise in the prevalence of anxiety and depression around the world, with women and young people being the worst hit demographic (WHO, 2022) that further constricted the need to implement the UN goals in daily living a definite

plausibility. Likewise, in Malaysia, based on distress call statistics by government agencies (MOH-Mercy Malaysia's Psychosocial Support Helpline, KPWKM's Talian KASIH, JAKIM's KSK Care), 85.5 percent of calls received throughout the pandemic were related to mental health issues (Bernama, 2021), where youths were more likely to call (The Straits Times, 2021). Therefore, as Aguirre Velasco et al. (2020) affirms, a thorough understanding and awareness of help-seeking amongst youths is pivotal to overcoming the gaps of achieving SDG 3 and to further promote a society that localises sustainable living.

### **Purpose And Objective Of Review**

The prevalence of mental health issues and the rise of the same amongst youths in Malaysia (Kok and Low, 2019, Sahril et.al, 2021) further necessitates the need for the said group to seek appropriate help. Past research has shown that there is a reluctance amongst youth with mental health problems in accessing and receiving support (Gulliver et.al, 2010, MacDonald et.al, 2018). Moreover, since mental health problems typically originate in adolescence (Kessler et.al, 2005), youthful age becomes an imperative for intervention and prevention to take place (Malla et.al, 2016). Yet, mental health help-seeking in youth is generally understudied (Westberg et.al, 2020), providing little information on how to draw youth towards seeking help. In their narrative, the gaps identified show a significant deterioration in the localisation of SDG 3.4.

Such a lack of studies pertaining to mental health help-seeking in Malaysian youth comes at a cost to society at large, as mental health problems that go unnoticed and untreated throughout youth eventually affect future workers of society and thus become a burden to the economy (Ning, 2020). As it is, a majority of Malaysians resort to other kinds of help such as traditional healers and general practitioners, the main reason being a lack of awareness of one's own symptoms as being mental health-related (Phang et.al, 2011), in which such a lack of awareness maintains the stigma surrounding help-seeking which in turn maintains low rates of help-seeking behaviours (Berry et.al, 2020, Raaj et.al, 2021). Therein lies a chain reaction, in which such lack of awareness and incompetence of persons involved in the practice and advocacy of SDGs continue to fuel each other.

As such, this study aims to provide suggestions and mechanisms based on existing research of mental health help-seeking in Malaysian youth that can be included in mental health awareness programs wishing to reduce stigma and promote help-seeking to prepare youths in developing



prosocial behaviour and sustainable lifestyles by first addressing personal and psychological growth. By reviewing potential factors that influence mental health help-seeking in Malaysian youth, attitudinal barriers to accessing mental health services can be removed more effectively (Rickwood et.al, 2005), which then compliments the localising of SDG 3.4. The objective of this study is to therefore come out with a summary of research-backed themes of suggestions on how to better increase awareness and lower stigma amongst Malaysian youth, simultaneously increasing help-seeking behaviours, with the research question as follows: what do the existing literature say about the best ways to go about promoting mental health help-seeking among Malaysian youth?

### **Significance Of Study**

Social stigma and a lack of awareness and knowledge about mental health problems are attitudinal barriers to receiving mental health support and care, without which help-seeking would not happen even with the prevalence of psychiatrists and psychologists. Despite the existence of societal stigma and low rates of help-seeking behaviours, there is evidence that younger people in Malaysia are interested in increasing their knowledge and understanding of mental health problems and have fewer stigmatising attitudes towards those undergoing mental health problems (Berry et.al, 2020). Therefore, this report reviews and summarises key ideas influencing awareness, stigma, and help-seeking, bearing in mind that mental health problems is one of the leading causes of poor health and disability in Malaysia, its prevalence associated with absenteeism, presenteeism, and turnover which eventually also burdens the economy (Ning, 2020). It is also hoped that this review will be utilised as a thought and action-provoking resource for young people, advocates, and members of the society to take stock and collectively curate an environment and reason for youths to be mobilised for the active implementations of sustainable goals in their respective localities.

### **Scope, Limitations And Implications Of Study**

The limitations of this study being in nature a narrative review are such that the studies gathered during the search were not content coded for theoretically important aspects. In addition, no systematic methodology was set up to help with the article search process, resulting in a less empirical study design (Huedo-Medina et.al, 2013). However, in order to prevent a biased review, conclusions were drawn from a significant knowledge base involving the largest

possible number of related articles, and major differences between studies were constantly compared and contrasted (Green et.al, 2006). Implications of this study are as follows: it adds to the literature on how to improve help-seeking in Asia (Sanghvi et.al, 2022). It also aids in the development of shared definitions and theoretical frameworks in research regarding help-seeking behaviours in adolescents (Aguirre Velasco et.al, 2020). Equally important, it serves as a resource to advocates, educators, and writers.

### **Research Design And Methodology**

A narrative review approach was used, specifically, a narrative overview. Narrative reviews are an comprehensive yet condensed and unstructured way to present a broad perspective on a topic, selecting articles without the use of any explicit criteria for inclusion, therefore suitable for the purpose of gathering previously published information about a particular subject area to help readers understand it and its significance, and suitable for encouraging future research based on any gaps in knowledge identified in the summarised body of knowledge (Paré et.al, 2017) and for stimulating scholarly dialogues and bringing various issues and opinions to light (Green et.al, 2006). Narrative reviews consider the analysed subject matter within a wide spectrum and does not involve detailed statistical evaluation of study data such as in systematic reviews (Gülpınar et.al, 2013).

Firstly, research databases including Scopus, PubMed, and Taylor & Francis were searched for relevant literature content, through which several keywords were identified (e.g., mental health, awareness, stigma, help-seeking, youth, adolescents) and repeatedly used in consequent searches. Secondly, 168 articles most relevant to the research question gathered during the preliminary search were analysed, and then further shortlisted to 74 main articles using Google Sheets, bolding and highlighting key articles and themes along the way. Finally, key findings from all relevant articles were synthesised and summarised into a coherent review that answers the research question.

### **Review: Key Findings, Discussion, Recommendations, And Implications**

## **Key Findings**

Seeking formal help for mental health is a significant barrier in achieving well-being in youth (Ratnayake et.al, 2019), yet there continues to be barriers in accessing more formal sources of support and treatment (Studen et.al, 2020), with stigma (attitudinal aspects) and low mental health knowledge (health illiteracy) having been identified as leading barriers to mental health help-seeking (Eigenhuis et.al, 2021, DeLuca, 2020) which in turn constricts youths to translate awareness of sustainable living to actions that produce impact. More specifically, in Asia, the common finding is that high stigma and moderate mental health knowledge come together to result in low willingness to seek help. Since help-seeking behaviour is influenced by mental health literacy and stigma (Dessauvage et.al, 2022), these two components of help-seeking will be discussed throughout this review in its relation to the influence on the localisation of SDG 3.4.

## **Stigma**

Negative beliefs that result in stigma is a significant barrier to help-seeking in youth because such negative beliefs affect intentions and behaviours to seek help (Aguirre Velasco et.al, 2020). Such beliefs typically include beliefs about the causes of disorders and beliefs about the validity of mental health services and treatment for mental health disorders (Choudhry et.al, 2016, Park et.al, 2018, Pang et.al, 2018), falsely believing that mental illness is a sign of personal weakness (Yap et.al, 2013), but interestingly also preferring to use cultural, religious, and socio-environmental explanations for mental illnesses like schizophrenia (Swami et.al, 2008) and depression (Khan et.al, 2009) perhaps in an attempt to reduce self-stigma, develop less negative attitudes about their symptoms, increase others' acceptance and willingness to engage with them (Lauber et.al, 2007), and maintain their 'normal' status (Ab. Razak, 2017), all in all looking to external causes to explain their symptoms. Others' acceptance matters in that perceived stigma from others tends to precede self-stigma in youth, suggesting that young people look to others to decide on what beliefs and attitudes to hold regarding mental health problems and help-seeking (Wang et.al, 2009).

Clair (2018) cites Goffman's stigma theory in his definition of stigma towards mental illness as being an "attribute that is deeply discrediting". Therefore, the awareness of the same with regard to it's a) causes, b) context, c) consequences, and d) responses (Clair, 2018), an action

plan toward promoting destigmatizing help-seeking will come to positive effect in orienting youths toward practising sustainable living and promoting mental well-being. In addition, knowing another person with a mental health problem also works to increase one's familiarity and knowledge about treatment and help-seeking in general, stimulating one to be more willing to approach medical professionals, deal with mental health symptoms, and take medication for depression (Manescu et.al, 2020).

Naturally, those who believe mental illness is a sign of personal weakness have less intention to seek professional help and believe that professional help is not helpful (Yap et.al, 2013), whereas a preference for cultural and religious explanations for mental illness typically result in help-seeking behaviours directed towards religious healers, which is perceived as a less stigmatising and more comforting approach to solving their symptoms (Ab. Razak, 2017); though resorting to religious healers may also delay the seeking of professional help itself in cases of severe mental illness because such religious beliefs about mental health challenges result in scepticism towards mental health services and treatment (Lauber et.al, 2007), which is why integrating both psychological/counselling and religious/faith services may serve useful in efforts to encourage help-seeking in populations where religion is valued.

Other beliefs that contribute to stigma include beliefs about people with mental illness as being aggressive and dangerous (Lauber et.al, 2007). These beliefs result in discrimination of people with mental health disorders in Asia, also prompting the devaluation of those who have connections to people struggling with mental illness. Indeed, strong social disapproval towards mentally ill people exist in Asia where even somatic manifestations of mental health challenges are more welcomed than the expression of psychic symptoms, which is problematic because somatization is associated with less intention to seek help, perhaps as a result of not recognizing symptoms of mental health problems in the first place due to the physical expression of stress and emotions (Seo et.al, 2022). Truly, social disapproval encourages denial and somatization in order to protect individuals and their families from marginalisation, shame, and stigma (Lauber et.al, 2007), which is unfortunate since negative attitudes towards mental health and help-seeking make people even more hesitant to disclose their own emotional problems (Li et.al, 2018).

The impact of stigma toward mental health help seeking in its correlation to the need to mobilise youths to the localisations of SDGs can be seen in the developments of SDG 3.4.2 on reducing suicide mortality rate and promoting mental well-being (Ritchie et al., 2018). Statistical data comparing the suicide rates from 2015 to 2019 shows a linear increase in the rates, where 2015 recorded 4.80% of suicide rates , which increased to 5.70% in 2019 (Macrotrends LLC, 2020). Data on the developments of suicide rates in the year 2021 was shown to have doubled from the year 2019 (UNICEF, 2022), this too with a correlating factor of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, implying that stakes are still at its peak with no positive progression of SDG 3.4.2. Indeed, the pervasiveness of stigma toward mental health help-seeking is contributing to the ineffectiveness of the localisation of SDG 3 in its forms and mobilisation of advocacy for youth.

Despite the prevalence of social and self-stigma, self-help matters as a distinct form of low intensity support (Stunden et.al, 2020), therefore, efforts to motivate self-help amongst youths can still make a difference, such as by offering “online text-based information and counselling services”, especially since there is an increased preference for online, webchat, and phone-based counselling services amongst youths (Watling et.al, 2021), who are more likely to search for help via online search engines and social media platforms than from health professionals and are more likely to disclose personal information through their online activities related to mental health (Scott et.al, 2022), in which the latter can be a starting point for clinical consultations to begin. Indeed, those from a Chinese background have been found to prefer self-reliance, viewing help-seeking as burdening their family and possibly eliciting family opposition, thus sticking to alternative sources of help due to this fear and other negative attitudes towards and poor experiences with help-seeking (Shi et.al, 2020). Nevertheless, the effectiveness and extent to which people from a Chinese background would help themselves is questionable as they have also been found to be unwilling to disclose symptoms of mental illness. Still, online mental health resources and services still do a good job of facilitating help-seeking amongst youths, who have been found to regularly use online mental health resources and are overall satisfied with such online resources (Kauer et.al, 2014).

## **Literacy: Awareness, Knowledge and Attitudes**

In addition to stigma, knowledge about mental health and services affect attitudes towards mental health problems, mental illness, mental health treatment and services, and naturally, help-seeking intentions and behaviours too. Mental health literacy (MHL) refers to the knowledge and abilities needed to maintain mental health and prevent mental health problems (Kim et.al, 2020). High MHL has been found to indicate low negative stereotypes about mental health problems (Villatoro et.al, 2022), which may also help explain why MHL and other related educational programs improve help-seeking attitudes and help normalise mental health problems (Kumar et.al, 2021). Certainly, MHL reduces stigma and encourages help-seeking: Whatever boosts MHL also reduces stigma (Doğan et.al, 2021, Kim et.al, 2020). Literacy of the same correlates with the educational literacy of the sustainability of well-being that is implied in the localisation of SDG 4.7, where skills and knowledge is acquired (SDG tracker, 2019) by the subject group in matters related to sustainable living where mental well-being is a factor played.

Just as stigma is generally directed towards mental health problems and mental health services & professionals (Aguirre Velasco et.al, 2020), mental health literacy also revolves around these two, in that a lack of awareness and knowledge of mental health problems and a lack of awareness and knowledge of treatment and services make up mental health literacy (Aida et.al, 2010, Yi Gu et.al, 2021). Indeed, a major issue is that; a) most youths do not realise they have mental health problems until a crisis point has been reached (Yi Gu et.al, 2021), not knowing when help-seeking is necessary a major problem amongst youth, who are only aware of their mental health problems for several years before seeking help (Cohen et.al, 2009). Another major issue is that b) youths may believe nobody can truly help them (Aida et.al, 2010), which may make them rely on smoking, alcohol, and drugs to cope instead of seeking professional treatments and services, unlike older Malaysians, who are more likely to rely on religious and cultural coping mechanisms due to their “supernatural and mystical” understanding of mental illness (Mohamad et.al, 2013). Yet another major issue in boosting mental health literacy to improve help-seeking is that c) youths may still choose to rely on friends and intimate partners even when they do believe professional help can be helpful, despite the limited nature of what informal sources of support can accomplish (Amarasuriya et.al, 2015). Finally, in addition to knowledge about mental health symptoms/ mental illness and knowledge about mental health

treatments & services, knowledge of stigma itself is an important aspect of mental health literacy, which is why taking proactive action to destigmatize mental illness is also a strategic way of boosting MHL and subsequently increasing help-seeking (Villatoro et.al, 2022).

As aforementioned, symptom recognition is key to increasing help-seeking. When people are able to recognize various types of mental disorders, their attitudes and beliefs about mental illness will be one that no longer hinders them from seeking professional treatment (Stunden et.al, 2020), their symptom recognition ability essentially thus enabling them to act on their recognized symptoms. Truly, it is often the case that people are unaware that changes were related to mental health problems, symptoms, or mental illness. Consequently, their first instinct is to make contact with services unrelated to psychiatry and psychology. During the Covid-19 catastrophe, a hike in the need for mental health literacy was seen emerging (Hassan, 2021). In the same spectacle, MHL was advocated for and put to action with positive impact of the knowledge development of society in mental health awareness and the sustainability of the same to reduce the detrimental effects that it held when left untreated or unaware, which was evidently seen in the statistics of suicidal rates in Malaysia increasing from 2015 to 2021 (Mat Ruzlin et

al., 2021). Without a doubt, there is a need for education opportunities that teach people to become mental health literate (Singh et.al, 2019, Yi Gu et.al, 2021) and that help teach early detection (Phang et.al, 2011), helping youths to accurately recognize and label various types of mental health disorders, as the ability to do so is associated with choosing to get appropriate help instead of dealing with the problem alone (Wright et.al, 2007). Though it should also be noted that sometimes, people are aware of their distress, but they may continuously alter their definition of 'normal distress' in hopes to avoid seeking help (Guillver et.al, 2010).

### **Demographic and Individual Factors**

Based on existing research, demographic and individual factors such as age, education level, gender, mental health status, mental health literacy, ethnic background, religion, and residential location affect knowledge and attitude towards mental health issues (Yeap et.al, 2009). More specifically, being younger, having a higher educational level, being of female gender, having a deep personal experience of mental health problems such as depression. Indeed, despite both genders perceiving a lot of barriers for seeking help such as cost and waiting time, females

seem to be more aware of mental health services than males (Haavik et.al, 2019). Furthermore, those with more suicide literacy and lower glorification of suicide stigma are more likely to seek psychological help (Al-Shannaq et.al, 2021).

Regarding ethnicity affecting help-seeking attitudes, studies have found that endorsement of Asian values predicts poorer help-seeking attitudes, intentions, and usage (Li et.al, 2018). Truly, Asian American students are significantly less likely to seek help than their Caucasian peers, which is why interventions must approach Asian-American students who do not seek any mental health services despite reporting similar levels of mental health difficulties as youth of other ethnic groups, approaching Asian youth in a culture-sensitive way that gradually reduces stigma amongst them (Wang et.al, 2019). Similarly, in Japan, despite the presence of universal health coverage, many Japanese do not seek mental health help due to stigma, disliking the use of diagnostic labels and remaining sceptical about the benefits of seeing mental health professionals (Suka et al. 2016). In another study with regards to help-seeking in its correlation with multi-ethnic societies in the context of Malaysia, help-seeking behaviour in its varied means and reasons were also culturally specific (Wong et al., 2012), as the results indicated that those of Malay and Indian ethnicity would preferably not resort to help-seeking due to cultural stigma they perceive from their community.

Other individual factors are as follows: Language barriers and communication difficulties may also deter someone from getting help as they anticipate struggling to concisely explain their symptoms (Yi Gu et.al, 2021) in a way that is understandable to others (Rickwood et.al, 2005). At-risk youth who come from family backgrounds with low parental education and poor parental mental health are also more likely to have less knowledge and poorer attitudes towards mental health and help-seeking (Sahril et.al, 2021). The demographic barriers that constrict help-seeking behaviours in youths raises the inquisition of the inclusivity of society in accommodating the gaps presented: SDG 10 on reduced inequalities plays a pivotal role in localising such matters. As such, it might be particularly helpful to target Malaysian youths with the demographic and individual characteristics mentioned above when implementing mental health literacy programs that help destigmatize mental health problems and promote psychological help-seeking.



## **Other Takeaways on Help-Seeking**

Although reducing stigma and boosting mental health literacy can encourage help-seeking behaviours, other factors and phenomena that may also either promote or come in the way of help-seeking ought to be mentioned. Such promoting factors include a willingness to participate in positive psychological interventions and attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help (ATSPPH), which is naturally influenced by one's understanding of mental health treatments and services as mentioned as part of mental health literacy. In addition, having a history of mental illness including indications of a previous mental health problem contributes to better mental health literacy and hence an increased likelihood of help-seeking (Oftadeh-Moghadam, et.al, 2022): Even better, those who had sought help from mental health professionals in the past 12 months are more likely to be aware of, and participate in help-seeking and other mental health initiatives such as campaigns (Ross et.al, 2019), suggesting that it is not just 'prior personal experience with mental health problems' but 'prior access to services' that effectively encourage help-seeking, with higher optimism and better perceived ability to manage one's emotions characterising those who have sought help and in turn are more likely to seek help (Lei et.al, 2017). Besides that, people with more emotional competence, a heightened sense of awareness of their emotions, and who practise emotion-focused coping —versus problem-focused coping and avoidance/ distraction— are more likely to engage in help-seeking behaviour (Ward-Ciesielski et.al, 2019).

Phenomena that come in the way of help-seeking include a sense of mistrust and scepticism towards mental health services and treatments (Lauber et.al, 2007), which may emerge from problems with communication and general distrust towards health professionals or/ and negative past experiences with mental health services that lead youth to believe that treatment is not going to be helpful. More specifically, communication difficulties due to cultural differences may affect youths from immigrant and refugee backgrounds who may feel mistrustful of mental health diagnoses and professionals due to a possible lack of cultural sensitivity in the services provided (Aguirre-Velasco et.al, 2020), which puts the responsibility on professionals to foster positive experiences and relationships with youth who seek help (Cohen et.al, 2009, Rickwood et.al, 2005, Stunden et.al, 2020), so that negative perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about mental health care services and professionals do not remain as barriers to help-seeking

(Aguirre-Velasco et.al, 2020), especially in youth populations who may also perceive the social influence of mental health professionals as a threat to their freedom of choice.

Youths may also have a distrust of on-campus counselling as informed by past experiences (Kirschner et.al, 2022), which further highlights the significance of fostering positive experiences in counselling. What's more, at-risk youth who come from family backgrounds with low parental education and poor parental mental health may lack the resources in terms of knowledge and awareness (Sahril et.al, 2021). Symptom severity is another phenomena that may come in the way of help-seeking, even if it initially pushes youths to seek help, as youths with higher symptom severity (e.g. higher depression levels) may be more vulnerable to stigma and other difficulties in the help-seeking process, with stigma affecting them the most (Aldalaykeh et.al, 2019); and may be more psychologically resistant and rejective of the idea of help-seeking due to higher levels of psychological reactance, essentially a desire to maintain their freedom to experience their depressive state (Siegel et.al, 2017). In fact, heightened depressive symptomatology is associated with higher psychological reactance (i.e., a desire to be free to return to their normal baseline of experiencing depressive states), more hopelessness (Rickwood et.al, 2005), and the tendency to misinterpret messages related to help-seeking negatively, leading to lower likelihood of help-seeking (Siegel et.al, 2017). In essence, more intense forms of mental health problems such as more severe depression may be a barrier to help-seeking in that the psychological reactance associated with it makes youths adhere to cognitive errors (e.g., personalization, all-or-nothing thinking) that not only maintain a sense of hopelessness but lead to misinterpretations and thereby rejection of professional help.

### **Discussion: Help-Seeking And Sdgs Developments**

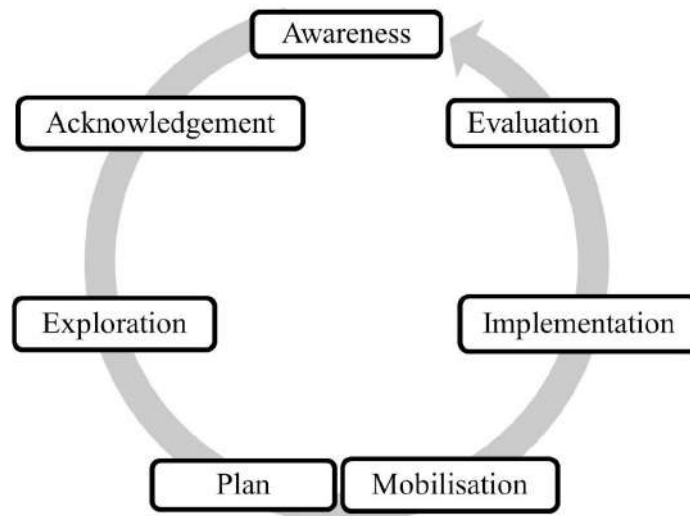
The cause and effect of help-seeking among youths in Malaysia is undoubtedly a factor that affects the growth and well-being of youths, which aligns us in the pursuit towards personal and national developments, thereby accounting for the advocacy of the localised SDGs, since mental well-being has a positive relationship with social behaviour (Waters et al., 2021, Çelik, 2016, Bhugra, 2016). As aforementioned, there has been a digression in the development of mental well-being as part of SDG 3.4. There still exist gaps that are foundational to be broken in order for a breakthrough to be achieved. Ibrahim et al. (2020) highlights the findings that show a positive improvement on mental health reception and literacy with regard to self-stigma

and depression with the availability of educational programs. However, the same did not account for the stigma toward the mental well-being of others. SDG 17.16 is a pillar of confluence that intermingles the developments of SDG 3.4 by the way of SDG 4.7.

In essence, a model of approach is presented as follows in figure 1, displaying a modular approach to mobilise youths in SDGs implementation, with respect to where Malaysia is in its current circumstances in regards to mental health help-seeking and further developments through what is known as an ecosystemic approach. As cited by Cooper and Upton, (1990), the ecosystemic approach derives from the general systems theory, giving meaning in a context that the sociological interactions of humans are self-regulatory, in which the interactions of the sub-systems such as organisations, government, culture, and families are sustained by patterns shaped by needs constantly changing with time (Cooper and Upton, 1990). Therefore, proposing a directional change in the system with the acceptance of each subsystem with regard to mental health help seeking may result in empowerment, consequently mobilising youths to action-oriented advocacy in sustainable practices by the guidelines of the SDGs.

Starting with awareness of the matter being represented in each sub-system, there is a concurrent recognition of the voice of the stigmatised topic (i.e., mental health help-seeking), which then according to the reciprocation of the same and the reception of the matter in the dynamically interacting subsystems, there comes an acknowledgement of the need for promoting mental health help-seeking behaviours in youths; bringing about a commitment for exploration for alternatives and identifications of ways to overcome the gaps that caused the depression in the goals implementation (where this review currently stands). This leads to a plan orientation being paved out for execution, taking into account the positives and negatives of the matter and its effects on personal, societal, familial, national, and global developments. Once the plan has been carved, youths can be effectively mobilised with assurance of success for growth and sustainable implementations that are curated for local and global impact based on the interactions between the individual and the subsystems in the ecosystemic approach, which eventually brings us to the evaluation aspect, by which the impact of the change in the system is evaluated and modifications are made where necessary for the right kind of developments. The following recommendations capture help-seeking promotion through various means.

**Figure 1** Modular approach in youth mobilisation for SDGs localisation through the lens of mental health help-seeking



### **Recommendations For Best Practises In Promoting Help-Seeking**

The recommendations as it is, that this report verily stands on, overlaps the stage of exploration into the aspects of promoting mental health help-seeking among youths. 4 recommendations were drawn from the aspect of the SDGs involved and the stakes in implementing them in the dynamic context of societal development that includes personal, community, societal, cultural, and national change.

- 1.** Breaking stigma and its implications by the implementation through means of SDG 4, providing quality education that addresses the importance of mental well-being. The means by which this is executed may include:
  - a.** Correcting beliefs through open dialogues and conversations about the cause of mental health problems and the helpfulness and validity of mental health services. For example, the false belief that mental health problems are a result of personal weakness.
  - b.** Increasing mental health literacy by integrating help-seeking elements in SDG advocacy.

2. Mobilising youths to engage in prosocial behaviour, enabling them to become changemakers by promoting the hope of well-being to each other, relying on each others' informal educational impact to motivate prevention and treatment, through means of capacity building in schools, universities, grassroots, and organisations.
3. Curating partnership models among sub-systems of society that include the roles of family, peers, organisations, and government to address gaps that prevent help-seeking by a) promoting safe spaces free of stigma for youths to freely acknowledge mental issues and the need to seek professional help and b) directing youths to formal help when necessary.
4. Reaching out to youths in various localities with the lens of finding unity in diversity; acknowledging diversity of thought and behaviour regarding mental health in its cultural contexts and empowering at-risk communities through educational means and awareness to promote help seeking behaviour, diversity of thought and behaviour referring to Asian values that stigmatise mental health, a mistrust of mental health services as informed by past negative experiences, an absolute preference for problem-focused coping especially in males, differences in language and communication abilities, and a family background of poor mental health and low education.

### **Policy-Related And Other Implications**

The key recommendations from this review may have the following implications:

1. Serves as an up-to-date review highlighting the imperative need for an improvement in knowledge and attitudes related to mental health amongst Malaysian youth
2. Serves as a resource for those interested in pushing for mental health help-seeking empowerment in Malaysian youth.
3. Implicates the need for an expansion in the mental health field and the awareness of it from grassroots to urbanised localities.
4. Implies the need to make the society mentally and emotionally competent in creating a sustainable future.
5. Holds relevant members of the community responsible for playing their part in promoting psychological help-seeking, such as family members, religious healers,

fellow peers, organisations, and relevant parties in governance in promoting a safe space for youths to speak of mental health issues.

6. Summarised recommendations can be used in programs empowering Malaysian youth.

## **Conclusion**

Mental health help-seeking in the context of Malaysian youth is an unequivocally important factor of measurement of society's success in localising SDG 3.4 and mobilising youths for advocacy and implementing SDGs in their respective localities. There are identified gaps and barriers that constrict the mental well-being and growth of individuals and societies which further paralyses the current and future generation to be competent in actively participating in nation-building and the localisations of the goals for sustainable living. Nonetheless, the awareness of the gaps presented and the action plan as recommendations for individuals, families, communities, societies, and the nation as a whole provides a bottom-up approach in preparing Malaysian youths for the future.

Certainly, the criterion for analysing the barriers to mental health help-seeking are personal, societal, educational ones. Mobilisation of the issue at hand must be drawn in coherence with the systemic interactions between these criteria, whether it be by nature of demographic influence, literacy, or stigma toward help-seeking behaviours as proposed in the report. It is hoped that this narrative review will be taken into account in the movement towards action plans taken and the parameters of localising SDG 3.4 and improving the mental well-being and competence of youths in personal, societal, national, and global developments.

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# HEALTH IN ALL, ALL IN HEALTH: CONTEXTUALISING SDG 3 AND ITS CROSS-SECTIONALITY WITHIN THE SDG FRAMEWORK

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## SDG 3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

<b>TARGET 3-1</b>  REDUCE MATERNAL MORTALITY	<b>TARGET 3-2</b>  END ALL PREVENTABLE DEATHS UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE	<b>TARGET 3-3</b>  FIGHT COMMUNICABLE DISEASES	<b>TARGET 3-4</b>  REDUCE MORTALITY FROM NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES AND PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH	<b>TARGET 3-5</b>  PREVENT AND TREAT SUBSTANCE ABUSE	<b>TARGET 3-6</b>  REDUCE ROAD INJURIES AND DEATHS	
<b>TARGET 3-7</b>  UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE CARE, FAMILY PLANNING AND EDUCATION	<b>TARGET 3-8</b>  ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE	<b>TARGET 3-9</b>  REDUCE ILLNESSES AND DEATH FROM HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS AND POLLUTION	<b>TARGET 3-A</b>  IMPLEMENT THE WHO FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON TOBACCO CONTROL	<b>TARGET 3-B</b>  SUPPORT RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE VACCINES AND MEDICINES	<b>TARGET 3-C</b>  INCREASE HEALTH FINANCING AND SUPPORT HEALTH WORKFORCE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES	<b>TARGET 3-D</b>  IMPROVE EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS FOR GLOBAL HEALTH RISKS



## CROSS-SECTIONALITY OF SDG 3

Target	Description	Cross-Cutting SDGs																
		1	2	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
3.1	By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100 000 live births.	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X					X	X	
3.2	By 2030, end preventable deaths of new-borns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1000 live births.	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X					X	X	
3.3	By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases.	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
3.4	By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X			X	X	

## CROSS-SECTIONALITY OF SDG 3

Target	Description	Cross-Cutting SDGs																
		1	2	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
3.5	Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.	X		X	X			X	X	X	X					X	X	
3.6	By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.	X		X				X	X	X	X		X			X	X	
3.7	By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.	X		X	X			X	X	X	X					X	X	
3.8	Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X				X	X	

## CROSS-SECTIONALITY OF SDG 3

Target	Description	Cross-Cutting SDGs																
		1	2	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
3.9	By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
3.A	Strengthen the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries, as appropriate.	X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X					X	X



## CROSS-SECTIONALITY OF SDG 3

Target	Description	Cross-Cutting SDGs																	
		1	2	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
3.B	Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regarding flexibilities to protect public health, and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all.	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X
3.C	Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States.	X		X	X			X	X	X	X							X	X
3.D	Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks.	X		X		X		X	X	X	X		X					X	X



## CROSS-SECTIONALITY OF SDG 3



## CROSS-SECTIONALITY OF SDG 3



## Chapter 8: SDG & PROSPERITY (ECONOMY)



1. Leveraging SDGs with Masala Wheels - **Aishwaryaa Gobi**  
(Pepper Labs - Masala Wheels)

- 
2. A model of Green Entrepreneur Fertigation for the Flood-Affected Cash-Crop Community in Telaga Papan, Setiu, Terengganu -  
**Dr. Roslina Ismail** (Universiti Malaysia Terengganu) & Noor Zatul Iffah Hussin

- 
3. Mukadimah Sri Lovely - **Tashrul Talib** (Sri Lovely)

- 
4. Assessment of Livelihood Vulnerability Index among Smallholder Farmers Living in Flood-Prone Area: Case Study in Kota Bharu, Kelantan -  
**Nurul Atikah Zulkepli** (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) & Nor Diana Mohd Idris

- 
5. Ekonomi Penanaman Cili Padi Bara Secara Teknologi Fertigasi Terbuka -  
**Sadang Anak Paing** (Syarikat Permata Umang)

## **Leveraging SDGs with Masala Wheels**

*Written by Aishwaryaa Gobi*

In 2010, when Unilever introduced its Sustainable Living Plan aiming to decouple the company's growth and enhance the livelihoods of thousands of people in their supply chain, Unilever was among just a handful of global companies pioneering such ambitious environmental and social goals. Based on the principle of 'leaving no one behind,' the United Nations General Assembly adopted the agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 and much has changed in the past decade.

2030 is eight years away and in the span of these several years, for the second year in a row, the world is no longer making progress on the SDGs. The average SDG Index score slightly declined and this is partly due to slow or nonexistent recovery in poor and vulnerable countries. Multiple and overlapping health and security crises have led to a reversal in SDG progress. With citizens and decision-makers shifting their attention to the immediate effects of the crisis, and with a global recession looming, the future of people and the planet, embodied by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Sustainable Development Agenda, is at risk of permanently falling behind.

However, this is not true for Malaysia as it has developed much more than we envisioned. Sustainability literacy is all about demonstrating one's awareness of sustainability and its complex relationships in the economy, environment and society. It is about possessing the necessary information, knowledge, skills and mindsets that allow individuals to commit, formulate and communicate sustainable solutions that matter through multidisciplinary approaches. According to Sustainable Development Report 2021 published, Malaysia ranked 65 out of 165 countries with an SDG Index of 70.9%. However, looking at the report for the year 2022, Malaysia has seen an increase in which it has ranked 72 out of 163 countries with an SDG index of 70.4%.

Malaysia is on track in achieving two goals which are no poverty (SDG1) and decent work and economic growth (SDG8). We achieved a moderate score for eight goals but not enough to attain these goals. Six other goals saw a stagnating score — zero hunger (SDG2), clean water and sanitation (SDG6) climate action (SDG13), life below water (SDG14), life on land

(SDG15) and partnerships for the goals (SDG17) while reduced inequalities (SDG 10) have no data available for analysis. Malaysia's Spillover Index stood at 79.2%. The SDG Index measures a country's total progress towards achieving all 17 SDGs. The score can be interpreted as a percentage of SDG achievement (a score of 100 indicates that all SDGs have been achieved). The Spillover Index, however, assesses spillovers along environmental and social impacts as embodied in trade, economy, finance and security. A higher score means that a country scores more positive and fewer negative spillover effects and we can gladly say that Malaysia has achieved a significant score.

Masala Wheels significantly contributed to the achievement of this score by concentrating on the three primary SDG goals of SDG 1, SDG 8, and SDG 17. The specific targets are including 1.2, 1.4, 8.2, 8.3, 17.14, 17.15 and 17.16 but are not limited to other goals. Distinctive for its focus on grassroots capacity development, Masala Wheels is a social enterprise founded to feed and empower marginalised communities through capacity building and employment opportunities in the F&B business, with a key focus on poverty alleviation through economic models.

The elimination of poverty and the improvement of the growth of the nation by providing decent work and economic growth are often at the essence of every country's economic and development policies. This can be achieved by partnering with an organisation that advocates for the same cause. Over the years, Masala Wheels have been improving in advocating for SDGs and contributing back to the nation. Whilst, there have been some setbacks in understanding the goals and indicators but through constant learning and research, Masala Wheels is proud to achieve multiple awards that are related to SDGs.

What started as a food truck is now evolved into a social enterprise. While serving affordable cuisine, it is also used as mobile empowerment for targeted community groups, especially the at-risk youths and offering them job opportunities and even informal counselling sessions on the premise. Some of the contributions Masala Wheels has done throughout the introduction of the SDGs are taking in youths at risks and putting them through a short training course to give them a taste of the food business and to learn discipline and life skills. One of the many projects conducted was the Changemaker Journey for Youths. It was launched in 2021 and the participants improved their learning about social innovation and UN SDGs where they were able to map specific problems and solutions to SDG goals. Even with the perception of the

youths that SDGs were complex to comprehend and only meant for the elites, the youths were persistent in understanding them and resolving local community-based issues.

Distinctive for its focus on grassroots capacity development, it has expanded into a comprehensive infrastructure of support for beneficiaries through digital and economic empowerment. For Micro-Entrepreneurship & Digital Empowerment, the programs are focused on the digitalisation of existing or new micro-enterprises through entrepreneurial training and digital mentoring, including training on managing logistics, e-commerce and payment systems so that the local community can improve their livelihood and sustain their business. It started with a small number of participants but the rippling effect is felt by the others in the local community during the pandemic and many were motivated to run their businesses. At present, ten home-based cloud kitchens are launched across Klang Valley, promoting community-based entrepreneurship and digital inclusivity. A total of 20,000 meals were prepared by Cloud Kitchens with a minimum revenue of RM 1,200 to RM 1,400 impacting over 800+ B40 individuals with food security. In regards to Socioeconomic Policy Consultation & Impact Assessment, the social enterprise continues to offer policy input towards shaping the social entrepreneurship space in Malaysia through recommendations, guidelines and budgetary allocations, via its role as the Chair representing Malaysia in the Malaysian Chapter of Catalyst 2030 - a global movement of social entrepreneurs and social innovators. These movements are aligned with the targeted SDGs of Masala Wheels and are interrelated with other goals as well. The success of Masala Wheels is not only based on how much money they make but also on how many lives they touch.

Not all social enterprises are formed with the conscious intent to further the SDGs, but the SDGs are broad enough that any true social enterprise should be able to map its environmental or social mission against at least one, if not several, of the 17 SDGs. The new generation of social entrepreneurs is often coming from promising backgrounds and is experimenting with business models, innovating new distribution and replication methods, and holding themselves accountable for results. Since Masala Wheels is the epitome of grassroots entrepreneurs, it has never received any monetary donations from the public. The growth of Masala Wheels is from the purchasing power of people and the sole belief in using the capacity building to enrich lives and create sustainable digital and economic empowerment for inclusive growth. By offering

opportunities to upskill that in turn opens doors to a better future, the hope is to sustain a virtuous cycle that will improve the well-being of more and more people.

Often, the best practices are stemmed from preparation. It is the key to any advocacy initiative and this includes collecting the relevant data and mapping the power dynamics. Having concrete proof points when starting an advocacy initiative helps to gain traction and offers the government a justification for its policy. Simultaneously, mapping the power dynamics of the different actors involved prevents inefficient deployment of advocacy capacity. In advocacy, chances for success are greater with the backing of large numbers. This applies to the sheer number of social innovators as well as to the size of the community they represent and the impact they have achieved. Masala Wheels has been donating meals and provisions to those in need through their Pay Forward initiative. This has garnered lots of support from the public, to the extent that it got the attention of the Implementation Coordination Unit (ICU) from the Prime Minister's Department. The ICU collaborated with Masala Wheels to make an even bigger impact in the community by identifying and helping underserved beneficiaries. Masala Wheels was accorded a seat at the table representing social enterprises at the Poverty Circle under the Prime Minister's Department to provide feedback and ideas on policy to help improve livelihoods through entrepreneurship. Masala Wheels built momentum through their operations on the ground, which helped them in articulating their needs for advocacy toward the government media played a big role in the advocacy of Masala Wheels to amplify their voice and the further impact was achieved through building their circle of influence beyond the government, including corporates.

Many countries have also developed strategies for SDG monitoring. Governments have adapted the SDG framework to their context and identified a set of nationally relevant indicators. On average, such national sets comprise around 135 indicators. Several countries have also developed online platforms to report on progress towards the SDGs. These efforts to strengthen mechanisms to monitor sustainable development are critical to inform SDG interventions. However, in order to achieve this in Malaysia, it would take quite some time as the social enterprises here are facing ongoing challenges; lack of support from financial institutions and security to scale their businesses, and there is little support for business development to go beyond local, regional or even to enter the international arena. Social enterprises also tend not to have market access, offering equal opportunities just like any other SMEs, where social

enterprises are able to tap into the full spectrum of the supply chain. Social enterprises also do not get enough attention or help with the adoption of technology and innovation in terms of scaling the impact of social enterprises, unlike other profit-driven technology companies. Hence, in order to achieve sustainable development goals, we must address the ongoing challenges of the social enterprise as a whole.

The Social Enterprise Action Framework (SEAF) 2030 was launched recently and it is great that it has acknowledged these challenges. The main theme of the SEAF is mainstreaming social enterprises and normalising social impact towards an inclusive, balanced and sustainable nation. It has outlined good strategies but to truly enable the social enterprises to contribute more effectively towards social and economic growth in Malaysia is first, the need to follow up on the accreditation of social enterprises. While this accreditation framework was initiated in the previous Blueprint, the enhancement of this accreditation was not addressed. This accreditation system is addressed quickly, as it would be critical for social enterprises to achieve social and economic equality among the beneficiaries that they impact. Secondly, the importance of a robust governance structure cannot be overstated. The details of this governance structure remain vague at this point; a Social Enterprise Council is said to be in the works to provide a transparent and systematic monitoring mechanism. Since 2018, there have been advocacy efforts for an independent council equally represented by policymakers and practitioners to be established and we hope it comes to fruition with the SEAF.

Cross-ministerial collaboration with clear demarcation of the roles and responsibilities in achieving these goals would be needed as well. The role of key stakeholders, and intermediaries, both from public and also private organisations are equally important in building this ecosystem. There needs to be a clear impact measurement framework and constant gap assessments conducted on a year-to-year basis, with involvement from all stakeholders - both top-down and bottom-up - folding in feedback from social enterprises with good leadership from both the Prime Minister's office and also the Minister's Office. In the United States, President Obama established an Office for Social Innovation during his administration. Only with leadership from the highest office of the nation, we would be able to see progress in both social and economic impact towards achieving SDG goals. Lastly is a central coordinating agency to bring all these together. One of the key successes of the first Social Enterprise Blueprint (2015-2018) was that MAGIC was appointed the anchor coordinating agency.

However, since 2019, and in the past 3 years, there has not been a clear “go-to” agency for social enterprises. It is no small feat to achieve this, and there is a long journey ahead. The first steps have already been taken, but it will take policy leadership, stamina and willpower if we are to truly help social enterprises burn brightly for the good of the people.

In general, the sustainable development agenda is not a single-party effort. To achieve these goals, establishing collaboration and partnership are essential. The top-down approach, driven by various assistance from the government administration, is the key to social and economic commitment. The linkage starts from the partnership for the goals. Importance role must be placed for public research institutes and government agencies in supporting social innovations that are related to SDGs.

Impact assessment must be given consideration as an evaluation method to track the SDGs' development. Better statistics that are in line with the SDGs are in increasing demand from decision-makers, but Malaysia lacks the necessary data to develop an effective set of policies to carry out the goals of the 2030 Agenda. The SDGs must be transformed into an action agenda through the development of ambitious and sound national targets, strategies, and plans. Moving towards 2030, the national development priorities need to be aligned and integrated into the SDGs by identifying priority areas, key enablers and critical ‘accelerator points’ for lagging SDGs, ensuring policy coherence across all levels of government, and recommending strategies and plans of action.

All stakeholder input, engagement, and resource sharing lead to decent work and economic growth. Diversification and an agile business model that emphasizes the zero-waste concept, technology adoption, and innovation help to support productive activities. Since Masala Wheels is a community-oriented social enterprise that creates equal job opportunities for many involved; from housewives to school leavers, it has taken the responsibility to reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education, or training and allows decent work and economic growth. Next, in regards to partnership, Masala Wheels is partnered with multiple organisation and globally have partnered with Catalyst 2030. In Malaysia, social innovation is an emerging concept. The Malaysian government currently recognizes innovation as a tool in dealing with challenges by making efforts to nurture an innovation culture in society including the establishment of several agencies to carry out initiatives to improve social well-being via innovation. Therefore, how social programs and initiatives are conducted to achieve sustainable



goals is worth understanding. Likewise, it is imperative to acknowledge the relationships among the stakeholders that shape the success of social innovations and the outcomes produced. This will allow for reporting the best practices, establishing new knowledge, and making continuous improvements.

**A MODEL OF GREEN ENTERPENEUR FERTIGATION FOR THE  
FLOOD-AFFECTED CASH-CROP COMMUNITY IN TELAGA PAPAN, SETIU,  
TERENGGANU**

**by**

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**ABSTRACT**

In Malaysia, smallholder farmers are part of the vulnerable communities. This is particularly the case for the cash-crop farming community living in the village of Telaga Papan, Setiu, Terengganu. They are the B40 group with their farming areas have also been faced with frequent floods during and outside the monsoon that threaten their livelihoods. This paper analyzes the issues and needs of selected cash crop farmers of the village in the context of the SDGs and proposes a specific model for addressing issues based on the localization actions of the SDGs. The study used a qualitative method in the form of in-depth interviews with 17 farmers. We used the Ishikawa diagram and SWOT analysis to analyse possible causes for the vulnerability and propose a solution model. The results show that five issues affect their vulnerability. They include the absence of Methods, Machines, Materials, Manpower and Environment. Based on the issues, this paper identified strengths influencing a strategy for introducing an alternative agriculture. It found from the SWOT analysis that establishment of an organization can help with collective actions and that fertigation has the best strength and opportunity for the community as compared to the existing traditional farming system. Thus, this paper proposes a model of green entrepreneur fertigation for the flood-affected cash-crop community that attempt to resolve the issues in line with the indicators of SDG1, 2 and 13. The model supports sustainability of income generation and food security of the community.

## **INTRODUCTION**

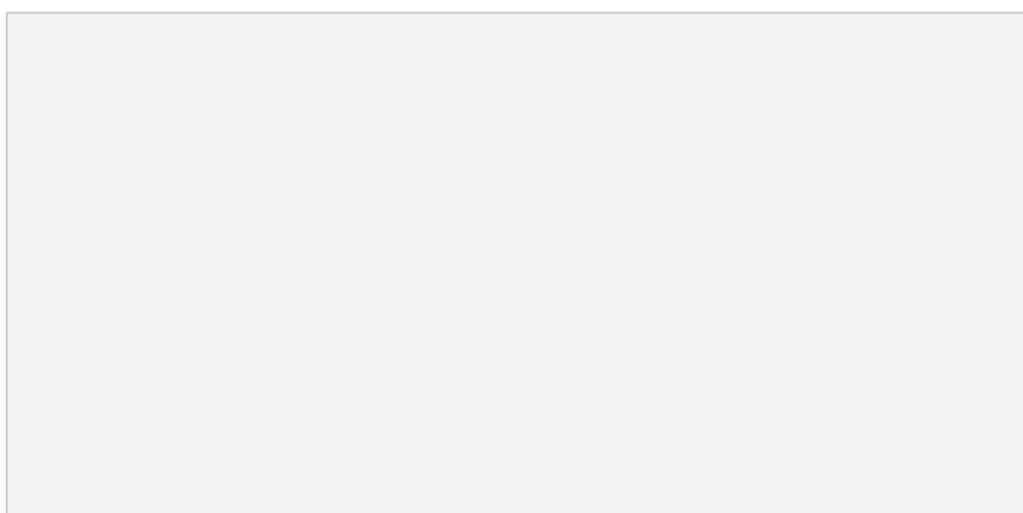
Fisheries and agriculture play an important role on the eastern coast of the Peninsular Malaysia, including in the district of Setiu - the rural Terengganu (Lola et al., 2016). In Malaysia, indigenous smallholder farmers are part of the vulnerable communities (Saifullah et al., 2018). This is particularly the case for the cash-crop farming community living in the village of Telaga Papan, Setiu, Terengganu. This study focuses on the community. They are the B40 group with their farming areas have also been faced with frequent floods during and outside the monsoon that threaten their livelihoods. This paper analyses the issues and needs of selected cash crop farmers of the village in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and proposes a specific model for addressing issues based on the localization actions of the SDGs. It is in the hope of putting in place or improving mechanisms that would help the group to get out of poverty. It would also help support the Malaysian commitment to SDGs 1, 2 and 13.

### **Literature Review**

Income vulnerability and its relationship to the impacts of climate change in rural agricultural communities is a persistent issue that has not been sufficiently explored in the existing literature. This is especially in the context of Terengganu. In addition, many studies involving Terengganu farmers, including in Setiu, have focuses dominantly on the rice community instead of the cash crop community. For example, Siwar (2013) places emphasis on the vulnerability and sustainable livelihoods of rice farmers in the North Terengganu Integrated Agricultural Development Area (IADA KETARA) (Siwar et al., 2013). Abdul Ghani (2018) emphasises on governance aspects that are still unclear the effectiveness. Abdul Ghani (2018) in his study on the agriculture aspect found that the implementation of governance, which indirectly contributes to zero bioenergy development in the Terengganu areas, remains unclear and inadequate (Abdul Ghani, 2018). Besides, Terano et al. (2013) found that poverty has been a phenomenon sustained in the livelihood of paddy farmers in Terengganu as their livelihoods have depended heavily on agricultural income. However, when it comes to paddy granary areas, the income of farmers can be varied. It depends on the different attributes of the raw rice yield in the granary area which directly influence the raw yield per hectare of rice production. For instance the usage of pesticide, fertilizer and seedling method (Terano et al., 2013). This paper pays attention to cash crop farmers of the Telaga Papan village in the context of the SDGs to fill the gap.

## Methodology

The study used a qualitative method in the form of in-depth interviews with 17 farmers from Telaga Papan village in Setiu, Terengganu. These participants were selected from a programme funded by the Ministry of Finance, through the APPGM-SDG, and assisted by the Setiu Member of Parliament and several government agencies at the local parliamentary level. The methods for identifying vulnerability issues and developing the research model is as shown in Figure 1, adapted from Leavy (2017) and the top-down policy approach of (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1983). The purpose is to show the entire study process through which it is selected and to reflect an ethical practice.



***Figure 1. Methods for identifying vulnerability issues and developing the research model***

The Ishikawa diagram and SWOT analysis were used to analyse possible causes for the vulnerability and propose a solution model. The Ishikawa diagram makes it possible to discover the causes of an effect (problem) and to recognize the probable root causes (Luning et al., 2006). The analysis has the identification of inputs of the root causes derived from measurement, manpower, machine, method, material, and environment categories. The definition of the categories are as follows: 1) Measurement – root causes from measurement devices 2) Manpower – root causes from people involved directly or indirectly 3) Machine – root causes from machine (s) involved 4) Method – root causes from the procedure used or done 5) Material – root causes from direct or indirect materials used 6) Environment – root

causes from surroundings. It can be used in qualitative research just like this paper (Zielińska-Chmielewska et al., 2021). SWOT analysis represents strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats – where strengths (S) and weaknesses (W) are internal factors and opportunities (O), and threats (T) are external factors. The four key aspects paves the way for a more productive brainstorming and strategic planning decision (Kotler et al., 2016).

### **Site Profile**

Telaga Papan is located on the Eastern shore of Terengganu in the district of Setiu. The district stands by the coast on the east and the lowland and hilly in the western part (See Figure 1). The low-lying areas are used for agriculture, which is the main source of economic activity for population of the area.



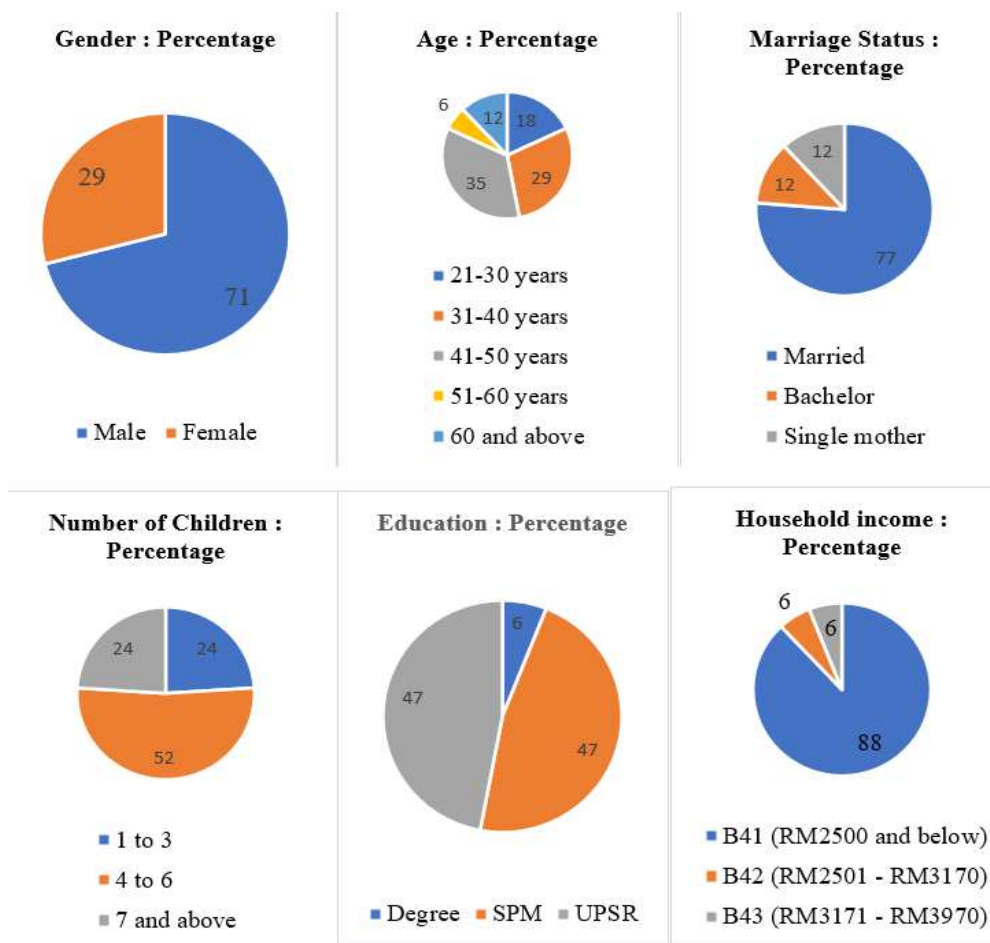
**Figure 2 : Telaga Papan village in Setiu, Terengganu**

## **Results**

### **Socio-demographic profile**

Figure 3 shows that the male respondents were 71% whereas the female respondents were 29%. This means that the proportion of women in comparison with men is 1:3. As far as age is concerned, adult participants over the age of 40 were the majority, with 64 per cent (39 per cent plus 35 per cent). In terms of the background of the participants, most of them were married and had many children. The highest level of educational attainment was the degree, but the

number was lower than those with UPSR and SPM leavers. In terms of household income, the category below RM2500 was the highest with 88 per cent.



*Figure 3. Socio-demographic profile*

### Possible Causes of Vulnerability

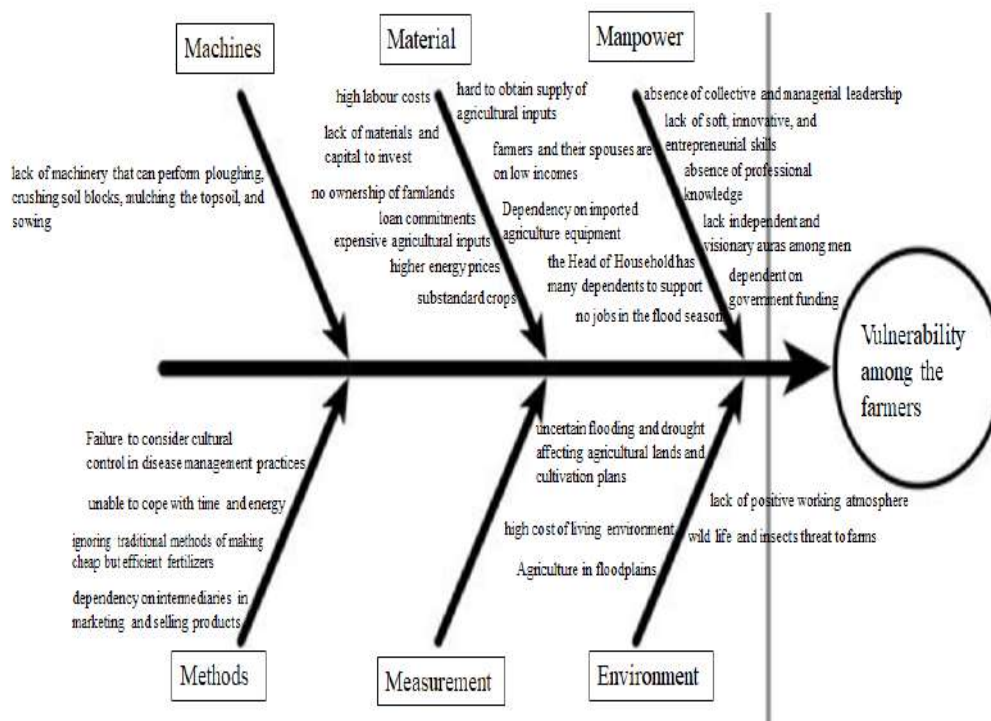
The results in Table 1 and Figure 3 show that there were 16 controllable causes of vulnerability and 10 "noises" or not controllable amongst farmers. In the findings, manpower causes were at the highest controllable levels (7) compared to methods (4), machines (3), machines (1), environment (1) and measurement (0).

**Table 1. Controllable and non-controllable causes of vulnerability**

Causes	Controllable (c)/ Noise or non-controllable (n)
<p><b>Methods:</b></p> <p>failure to consider cultural control in disease management practices. c</p> <p>ignoring traditional methods of making cheap but efficient fertilizers. c</p> <p>unable to cope with time and energy. c</p> <p>dependency on intermediaries in marketing and selling products. c</p>	4c
<p><b>Machines:</b></p> <p>lack of machinery that can perform ploughing, crushing soil blocks, mulching the topsoil, and sowing. c</p>	1c
<p><b>Materials:</b></p> <p>lack of materials and capital to invest. c</p> <p>no ownership of farmlands. n</p> <p>loan commitment. c</p> <p>higher energy prices. n</p> <p>substandard crops. c</p> <p>hard to obtain supply of agricultural inputs. n</p> <p>Dependency on imported agriculture equipment. n</p> <p>expensive agricultural inputs. n</p> <p>high labour costs in rural areas. n</p>	3c, 6n

<p><b>Manpower:</b></p> <p>lack of soft, innovative, and entrepreneurial skills. c</p> <p>absence of professional knowledge. c</p> <p>most of them lack independent and visionary auras. c</p> <p>absence of collective and managerial leadership. c</p> <p>farmers and their spouses are on low incomes (less than Rm2500). c</p> <p>the Head of Household has many dependents to support. n</p> <p>no jobs in the flood season. c</p> <p>dependent on government funding. c</p>	7c 1n
<p><b>Environment:</b></p> <p>uncertain flooding and drought affecting agricultural lands and cultivation plans. n</p> <p>lack of positive working atmosphere. c</p> <p>high cost of living environment. n</p> <p>wild species and insects that pose a threat to farms. n</p> <p>Agriculture in floodplains. n</p>	1c 4n

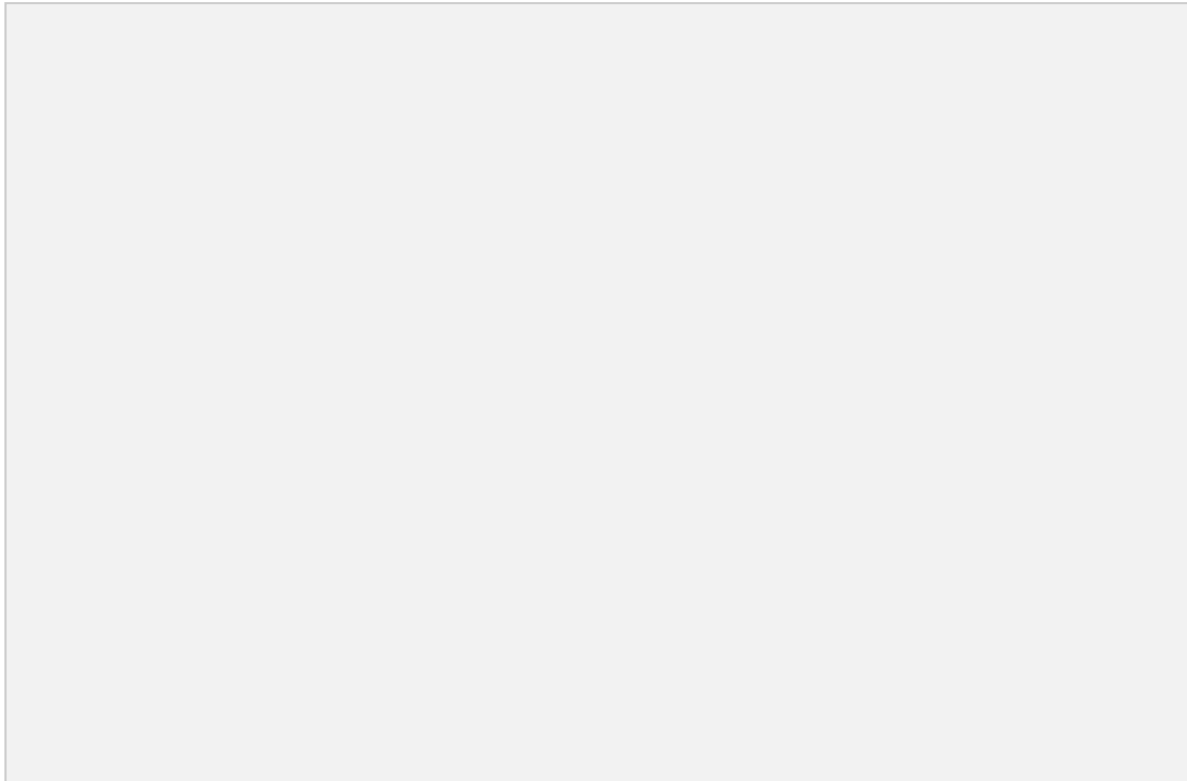




**Figure 4. Analysis of possible causes of vulnerability among farmers in Telaga Papan village, Setiu, Terengganu**

### **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of the Existing Cash-crop Agriculture**

The study found that homogeneous internal and external factors played an important role in determining the working environment conditions of participants. All 17 participants were experienced farmers interested in fertigation as alternative agriculture. These were the strengths found from the in-depth interviews with them. The constraint that they had or their weaknesses were the lack of entrepreneurial knowledge, innovation and technology, the lack of collective effort or joint management to sell and market the produce, and the political ideology that divided between them. This study found that the opportunities that the farmers may have is knowledge transfer from local high education institutions and research-based NGOs as well as development of an organization to support income generation amidst threats from the impacts of climate change. The study also found that land without property, unpredictable monsoon floods and intermediaries were factors that could become threats to their farming operations.



***Figure 5. Fieldwork 2022.***

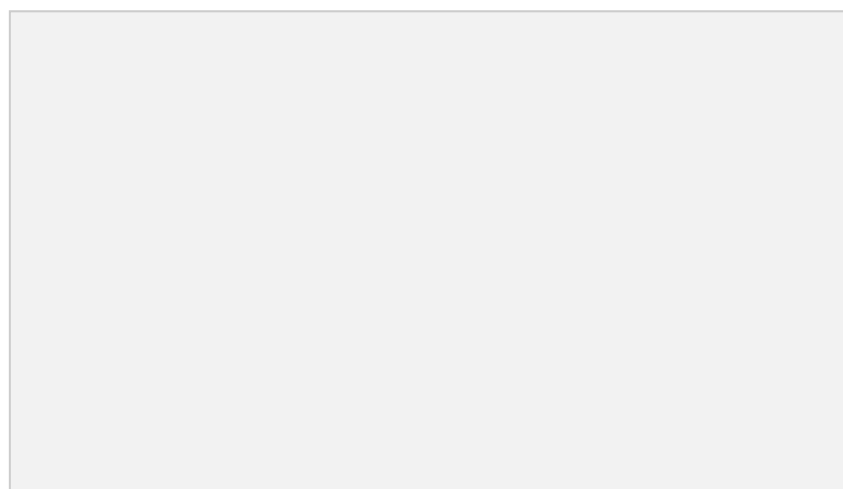
Based on the findings above, establishment of an organization can help with collective actions of the community. Moreover, fertigation represents the greatest strength and opportunity for the community compared to the existing traditional agricultural system.

### **Recommendations**

This study found that the identified agriculture community is economically, socially and ecologically vulnerable. The success or failure of a community depends on the role of a leader and how effectively the organization is governed, administered and managed (Scheffert, 2007). Thus, this paper proposes a model of green entrepreneur fertigation for the flood-affected cash-crop community that attempt to resolve the above vulnerability issues that ultimately support the indicators of SDG1, 2 and 13. This model supports sustainable income generation and community food security.

The proposed model we have tested through MUHiF project for a selected group of 30 cash-crop community members in Telaga Papan village. The cornerstone of the proposed model is that community poverty and hunger, environmental problems and governance implications of globalization should be tackled systematically rather than individually to capture the

efficiencies that come with economies of scale and the learnings that derive from studying. Figure 6 is a MUHiF implementation model covering the concept of community development, Environmental awareness and initiatives, Collective leadership and collective and entrepreneurial leadership. For the sake of this paper, the community development refers to community members coming together in a collective action to solve shared problems or seize opportunities (Ndiege, 2019). Collective leadership refers to a type of leadership culture which is the result of the collective actions of formal and informal leaders acting together to influence organizational success (A. West et al., 2014).



***Figure 6. Concepts underlying Greenpreneur Fertigation Model (Model Usahawan Hijau Fertigasi -MUHiF)***

## **Conclusion**

This paper has analysed the issues and needs of selected cash crop farmers of Telaga Papan village in the context of the SDGs. The results show that five issues affect their vulnerability. They were causes associated with Methods, Machines, Materials, Manpower, and Environment. Based on these issues, this paper identified the forces influencing a strategy to introduce alternative agriculture. The study showed that homogeneous internal and external factors were important in determining the working conditions of the participants. The 17 participants were experienced farmers interested in fertigation as an alternative agriculture. These are the highlights of the in-depth interviews with them. From the SWOT analysis, the establishment of an organisation may contribute to collective actions. In addition, fertigation is the best strength and opportunity for the community compared with the existing traditional agricultural system.

This paper also has proposed a model of green entrepreneur fertigation for the flood-affected cash-crop community that attempt to resolve the issues in line with the indicators of SDG1, 2 and 13. The model supports sustainability of income generation and food security of the community for the cash-crop farming community living in the village of Telaga Papan, Setiu, Terengganu.

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## **SDG Sri Lovely**

**by**

**Tashrul Talib**

### **Pembuka - Kertas SDG Sri Lovely**

Sri Lovely Organic Farm adalah sebuah ladang sawah padi organik berkeluasan 9 hektar yang terletak di Kg. Lintang, Sik, Kedah Darul Aman. Tanah yang dimiliki oleh penduduk kampung ini telah sama-sama dibangunkan dalam sebuah koperasi yang dinamakan Koperasi Agro Belantik dibawah seliaan Kedah Development Authority (KEDA) bermula pada tahun 2009.

Hari ini, Sri Lovely Organic Farm dikenali sebagai Sri Lovely Organic Farm Sdn Bhd, sebuah syarikat 'social enterprise' yang menghasilkan beras organik berkualiti tinggi dan menganjurkan program pembangunan luar bandar berasaskan pertanian alami.

Aktiviti sampingan yang dianjurkan Sri Lovely adalah membantu membangunkan ladang organik dalam dan luar negara, menganjurkan program pembelajaran pertanian organik, menjadi lapangan praktikal untuk pelajar institusi jurusan pertanian, menganjurkan acara pertanian organik, menjadi sumber rujukan dan pengajian buat petani, wakil institusi dan wakil kerajaan, menjadi hos para sukarelawan dari serata dunia dengan mewujudkan pusat budaya (Edu-Tourism), dan sebagai sebuah wakil badan NGO antarabangsa yang dikenali sebagai Slow Food International.

Di harap dengan pembentangan ini, aktiviti, pencapaian, kegagalan dan harapan Sri Lovely menunjukkan bagaimana Sri Lovely menyantuni istilah 'pembangunan mampan' iaitu pembangunan yang dapat memenuhi keperluan semasa dengan mengambil kira penjagaan hak generasi akan datang supaya mereka juga dapat menikmati keperluan yang sama.

### **2015 - 2022**

#### **Sri Lovely sebuah ladang organik**

2015 adalah tahun penuh pertama Sri Lovely Organic Farm bergiat dengan rasminya sebagai sebuah ladang organik setelah mendapat pensijilan MyOrganic daripada Kementerian Pertanian Dan Industri Asas Tani Malaysia pada bulan April 2014.

Sijil Organik Malaysia (SOM) adalah berasaskan Malaysian Standard MS 1529:2001 serta dua standard antarabangsa, iaitu IFOAM (Persekutuan Gerakan Pertanian Organik Antarabangsa) dan Standard Codex FAO (Pertubuhan Makanan dan Pertanian Pertubuhan Bangsa-Bangsa Bersatu). Sehingga hari ini, beras Sri Lovely masih satu-satunya beras dihasilkan tempatan yang diiktiraf di bawah SOM dengan no sijil MyOrganic SOM.01.13/K120.

Padi adalah tumbuhan yang lebih cenderung menyerap arsenik berbanding tumbuhan lain & telah banyak kajian mendapati kandungan arsenik yang melebihi piawai di dalam banyak produk- produk makanan berasaskan beras. Pendedahan jangka panjang terhadap arsenik berkait rapat dengan pelbagai sakit kronik seperti kanser, penyakit kardiovaskular, neurotoxicity serta diabetis. Dalam bentuk yang tidak organik, arsenik adalah sangat bahaya. Arsenik tidak organik meresap ke dalam sumber air terutama sekali akibat dari penggunaan bahan kimia seperti baja serta racun rumpai ke atas tanah. Air ini kemudiannya digunapakai oleh tumbuhan & kita terdedah secara perlahan-lahan kepada bahaya ini melalui air serta makanan tercemar tersebut.

Di Sri Lovely, padi kami hanya diberi air bukit yang bersih yang keluar dari hutan tropika Lembah Lintang, dipupuk dengan kaedah penanaman tanpa kimia menggunakan air sekadar cukup sahaja untuk pertumbuhan mereka.

Dalam tahun 2015, Sri Lovely telah dijemput untuk memperkenalkan produk beras Sri Lovely di acara Karnival Usahawan Desa Putrajaya dan sempena Hari Malaysia bersama Malaysian Agroecology Society for Sustainable Resource Intensification (Sri-MAS).

Pada awal lagi, kami telah mendapati tahap kesedaran pengguna tentang baiknya beras organik (produk organik) adalah amat rendah. Sri Lovely mengambil langkah pro-aktif dalam meningkatkan kesedaran dengan mengalu-alukan kedatangan pengunjung ke ladang, dan mereka diiring dengan penyampaian ilmu tentang perbezaan beras organik berbanding beras konvensional serta kaedah penanamannya.

## **Pusat Edu-Tourism Lestari**

"Telah timbul berbagai kerosakan dan bala bencana di darat dan di laut dengan sebab apa yang telah dilakukan oleh tangan manusia; (timbulnya yang demikian) kerana Allah hendak merasakan mereka sebahagian dari balasan perbuatan-perbuatan buruk yang mereka telah lakukan, supaya mereka kembali (insaf dan bertaubat) - Surah Ar Rum ayat 41."

Sering, petikan terjemahan ini diajukan kepada para sukarelawan yang kerap bertukar-tukar di Sri Lovely. Sukarelawan boleh dikatakan datang dari serata dunia, dari Brazil ke Jepun, dari benua Eropah, Afrika, dari negara jiran dan sehingga wakil dari Korea Utara, datang menimba ilmu bertani dan budaya tempatan. Terjemahan ini adalah untuk mengingatkan kita tentang bencana yang kerap timbul (pencemaran sungai, wujud penyakit baru, pupusnya kehidupan liar dan sebagainya) akibat dari pertanian yang tidak beretika dengan penggunaan racun dan bahan kimia yang tidak terkawal.

2016 menyaksikan Sri Lovely siap membina fasiliti dewan utama berukuran 60 kaki panjang dan 8 buah rumah chalet dengan menggunakan bahan seperti kayu, buluh dan atap daun serdang yang dibina oleh masyarakat setempat dengan menggunakan ilmu tempatan. Pengunjung yang tidak henti mengunjung telah mengilhamkan Sri Lovely untuk membina sebuah Pusat Edu-Tourism Lestari, dimana ianya bertujuan menyediakan tempat menginap bagi pengunjung yang datang menimba ilmu, bagi membolehkan mereka terlibat serta dengan aktiviti praktikal di bendang.

Dengan adanya Pusat Edu-Tourism Lestari, Sri Lovely bukan sahaja berkongsi ilmu tani dan budaya setempat, malah Sri Lovely juga dapat bertukar fikiran dengan pengamal pertanian alami/ organik dari dalam dan luar negara serta mengenali budaya mereka.

Plot tanaman sayur organik telah dibina bagi tujuan penghasilan makanan dihasilkan sendiri. Sayur seperti terung, bende, kacang panjang, timun, labu, ulam ulaman dan banyak lagi telah ditanam dengan kaedah pertanian alami.

Seorang sukarelawan dari negara Belanda telah menghasilkan 'Internship Report on Sri Lovely Organic Farm' yang telah diserahkan ke Wageningen University, Belanda; sebuah universiti yang memberi tumpuan terhadap makanan sihat. Manakala seorang lagi sukarelawan dari Italy



telah berjaya memperoleh PhD (Pengurusan Ladang Organik) Sri Lovely daripada Universiti Utara Malaysia.

Pusat Edu-Tourism Lestari telah memberi kesan terhadap penduduk tempatan dimana ramai dari kalangan anak muda didedahkan tentang negara & budaya asing, dan ramai yang menjadi fasih dalam penggunaan bahasa inggeris dan bahasa jepun. Pusat ini juga telah meletakkan nama Sri Lovely mata dunia.

### **Padi dalam Polibag**

Sebagai sebuah gedung ilmu, Sri Lovely tidak terlepas dari menghasilkan kajian-kajiannya sendiri dimana antaranya kaedah penanaman padi dalam polibag. Kajian ini telah berjaya dianugerahkan ‘Inovasi Nasional’ oleh Kementerian Sains, Teknologi & Inovasi Malaysia (MOSTI) pada tahun 2015.

Tujuan kaedah ini diwujudkan adalah untuk menggalakkan penanaman padi dikawasan yang agak kecil keluasan tanahnya di kampung-kampung dan dengan tiadanya sumber air bersih. Kumpulan sasaran adalah penduduk kampung dan golongan B40 di kawasan bandar.

Pusat Pemindahan Ilmu, Universiti Sains Malaysia dibawah bimbingan Dr. Nurul Salmi (Fakulti Biologi) telah mengambil inisiatif untuk mengkaji lebih mendalam tentang impak secara komersial kaedah penanaman padi dalam polibag yang dianjurkan bersama Sri Lovely & Ecopro Team USM, dimana Projek Penanaman Padi Organik di Dalam Polibag di USM telah dimulakan sekitar tahun 2018.

Sekumpulan pelajar dari USM telah dilatih secara berjadual dan kumpulan ini telah menanam 170 padi dalam polibag yang diletakkan diatas bumbung perpustakaan USM.

Secara keseluruhan, inisiatif ini dilihat gagal kerana hasilnya yang agak kurang. Ini adalah berpunca dari kegagalan menangani masalah burung yang makan hasil padi, dan juga tenaga kerja yang separa komited.

Walaupun bagaimanapun, terdapat polibag yang menghasilkan sehingga 100 tangkai dari satu benih padi, dan catatan yang dibuat sekiranya plot ini dijaga dengan baik, hasil tuaian boleh dikomersialkan.

Kesan dari inovasi ini juga menampakkan petani bandar berkunjung ke Sri Lovely dan mempelajari kaedah padi dalam polibag khususnya dan kaedah SRI amnya. Antaranya adalah Kebun-Kebun Bangsar, Urban Hijau, Planter Box House Bangsar, Persatuan Permaculture Malaysia dan ramai lagi.

### **Sri Lovely sebagai ‘Sekolah Lapangan Petani (FFS)’**

Projek selama 2 tahun ini bermula pada 2018 - 2020 bertajuk Peningkatan Sistem Penanaman Padi Berasaskan Agrobiodiversiti melalui Sistem Keamatan Padi (SRI) di Malaysia.

Sekolah Lapangan Petani (FFS) ialah sebuah pendekatan pendidikan secara praktikal/vokasional yang menghimpunkan sekumpulan pengeluar makanan berskala kecil untuk menyelesaikan masalah pengeluaran makanan melalui pertanian lestari.

Geran ini di bawah pembiayaan Program Pembangunan Bangsa-Bangsa Bersatu (United Nations Development Programme-UNDP), Fasiliti Persekitaran Global (Global Environment Facility-GEF) dan Program Grant Kecil (Small Grants Programme –SGP) dan SRI-Mas.

Kursus yang dianjurkan adalah ‘Training of Trainers (ToT)’. Modul kursus telah dibangunkan bersama dengan Universiti Utara Malaysia, manakala tenaga pengajar selain UUM adalah petani di Sri Lovely sendiri.

Kaedah pembelajaran adalah dalam bentuk praktikal di bendang, interaksi soal jawab serta perbincangan tentang penyediaan & kesihatan tanah, persediaan anak benih, pengawalan serangga, penuaian hasil, pengurusan ladang organik dan yang paling penting tentang ‘System of Rice Intesification’ & ‘Agrobiodiversity’.

Tujuan ‘SRI Farmers Free School’ adalah untuk menjadikan petani lebih berazam, membolehkan mereka dengan sendirinya mengevaluasi kaedah pertanian yang diamalkan dan membuat keputusan sendiri. Mereka yang hadir untuk modul ‘ToT’, apabila pulang ke kawasan masing- masing akan menganjurkan program ‘Training of Farmers’ (ToF).

Hasilnya, sehingga tahun 2020, seramai 367 peserta telah mengikut program ‘Training of Farmers’, rata-rata di negeri Selangor, Kedah, Perlis, Terengganu, Kelantan dan Johor.

Program ini telah memberi impak yang besar dikalangan petani yang mahukan perubahan ke kaedah pertanian yang lebih bertanggungjawab terhadap ekosistem sekeliling. Sebagai contoh,

komuniti petani dari Tg. Karang, risau akan penggunaan racun dip persekitaran kawasan tanaman yang semakin hampir dengan kawasan sekolah, telah berkunjung ke Sri Lovely dalam kumpulan yang besar. Sebahagian dari mereka hari ini telah meninggalkan kaedah penggunaan racun dan bahan kimia.

### **‘Terra Madre’ 2018**

Pada tahun 2018, Sri Lovely telah dijemput ke persidangan antarabangsa ‘Terra Madre Salone del Gusto’ yang dianjurkan dua tahun sekali oleh Slow Food International. Persidangan ini dihadiri oleh 5,000 delegasi dari seluruh dunia, dan bertempat di Turin, Italy.

Tujuan utama persidangan ini adalah untuk memartabatkan makanan sihat (slow food as oppose to fast food) berlandaskan budaya tempatan. Sri Lovely selaku delegasi negara telah berkongsi dalam satu sesi soal jawab tentang aktiviti pertanian mampan berunsurkan padi SRI dan agrobiodiversiti

Sri Lovely telah mendapat pengiktirafan oleh Slow Food International sebagai sebuah komuniti yang mewarisi ilmu tempatan serta memperkasakannya dengan mengamal, berkongsi, meningkatkan kesedaran dan memberi inspirasi.

Pada 2019, hasil dari penglibatan Sri Lovely, Slow Food International telah mengiktiraf Sekolah Cempaka, Damansara sebagai ‘Cempaka Garden to Table Kuala Lumpur’ menjadikan ianya komuniti kedua di Malaysia selepas Sri Lovely.

### **‘Local Farmers Local Food 2019’ & Institusi Ladang Organik Bersepadu Negeri Kedah**

‘Local Farmers Local Food’ sebuah acara yang dianjurkan oleh Sri Lovely pada tahun 2019, bertujuan untuk menyampaikan hasrat para petani lestari supaya mengamal kaedah pertanian ini diberikan keutamaan dan permekasaan makanan tempatan yang bersih dan sihat serta adil dalam transaksinya secara keseluruhan.

Selain itu, acara ini juga bertujuan untuk mengeratkan lagi rangkaian mengamal pertanian lestari seluruh negara, dimana setiap negeri telah berjaya menghantar wakil. Selain mengamal pertanian lestari, acara ini juga turut disertai oleh para perwakilan dari golongan NGO, kumpulan Orang Asli, golongan aktivis makanan sihat (antaranya Slow Food International),

pengkaji dari beberapa universiti tempatan dan juga komuniti luar bandar yang berhasrat bertukar cara bertani dari kaedah konvensional ke penggunaan baja dan kaedah organik.

Turut dijemput dalam acara ini adalah Menteri Besar Kedah ketika itu, iaitu Dato' Seri Mukhriz Mahathir. Kehadiran beliau turut disertai oleh jabatan-jabatan kerajaan, antaranya Jabatan Pertanian, Jabatan Perparitan dan Saliran negeri dan juga Menteri Besar Incorporated (MBI).

Para peserta telah bersepatat dalam menghasilkan sebuah memorandum acara 'Local Farmers Local Food' yang telah ditandatangani semua terlibat dan diserahkan kepada Dato' Seri Mukhriz pada hari acara tersebut.

Hasil dari acara ini, Sri Lovely telah dicadangkan agar menjadi sebuah institusi pengajian yang dikenali sebagai Institusi Ladang Organik Bersepadu. Institusi ini adalah kerjasama antara Sri Lovely, MBI dan UUM. Program yang dirancang adalah sebuah modul dimana peserta akan dipilih daripada anak muda tempatan yang gagal dalam bidang akademik; seramai 20 orang pada satu masa akan di latih oleh Sri Lovely secara praktikal selama 6 bulan bersertakan modul pembelajaran yang akan disampaikan dengan kerjasama Universiti Utara Malaysia. Setelah tamat pembelajaran, peserta akan diberi tapak tanah di kawasan luar bandar berkeluasan 1 hingga 2 ekar untuk dibangunkan selama 2 tahun.

Fasiliti baru akan dibina diatas tapak Sri Lovely; seperti Dewan Utama, Hostel, Kantin & Muzium Padi.

Usaha ini memerlukan sejumlah dana yang besar dimana nilainya telah dipersetujui semua pihak. Sehingga hari ini, sebahagian dana sahaja yang telah disalurkan dan projek ini telah dihentikan tanpa sebarang sebab diberikan secara lisan ataupun secara bertulis.

Pembinaan Institusi ini telahpun bermula, beberapa kontraktor telah di anugerahkan kerja-kerja membina, sebahagian dari struktur telahpun dibina, apabila dana dihentikan, Sri Lovely dibebankan dengan menanggung segala kos perbelanjaan semasa. Selain dari itu, persetujuan dua hala bersama UUM dan juga para kumpulan pelajar terpaksa ditangguhkan.

## **‘Pembangunan Luar Bandar’**

Sri Lovely percaya bahawa dengan mewujudkan peluang pekerjaan melalui pertanian alami di kawasan luar bandar dan kawasan terpencil, anak muda tempatan dapat meningkatkan ekonomi diri, ekonomi setempat, kurang kebergantungan dan menyelesaikan masalah tanah terbiar.

Di antara projek dibawah seliaan Sri Lovely adalah pembangunan ladang sawah SRI di Tambatuon, Sabah dan juga di Ba’Kelalan, Sarawak. Satu dibawah tajaan UNDP - GEF dan satu lagi WWF Malaysia.

Kedua-dua komuniti pertanian ini telah berjaya menggunakan sistem keamatan padi SRI secara organik dengan mengambil kira penjagaan ekosistem sekeliling. Malah, apabila tanah menjadi subur, mereka telah kembali menanam benih padi yang diwarisi nenek moyang mereka; seperti beras rubi, beras adan dan beras hitam. Komuniti pertanian Ba’Kelalan telah dianugerahkan sijil Malaysian Good Agricultural Practices (MyGap).

Selain dari projek-projek ini, banyak lagi projek mebangunkan ladang berasaskan kaedah pertanian lestari dibangunkan Sri Lovely di semenanjung Malaysia, antaranya di Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, Terengganu, Johor dan Selangor; dan usaha ini dilakukan bersama dengan NGO Sri-Mas, NSI (North South Initiatives), PAN-AP (Pesticide Action Network), Ecopro dan dengan beberapa persatuan dan individu tempatan.

Pembangunan komuniti adalah seiring dengan pembangunan modal insan.

Hari ini juga, seorang anak muda tempatan dari Kg. Belantik, Sik, berada di Asian Rural Institute, Jepun dijemput khas oleh pengarahnya sendiri iaitu Prof. Tomoko Arakawa dan ditaja penuh oleh Japan Fund for Global Environment bagi pengajian Rural Leaders Training Program selama 2 tahun yang akan berakhir pada bulan Disember 2022 ini.

### **Sri Lovely hari ini**

Ketika pandemik, aktiviti pertanian di Sri Lovely berjalan seperti biasa, tanpa sukarelawan dan program pembelajaran. Isu keselamatan makanan menjadi hangat dan Sri Lovely sekali lagi menjadi tumpuan ‘policy maker’ negara. Aktiviti Sri Lovely disebut dalam Dewan Rakyat negeri dan juga Dewan Parlimen. Namun, tiada bantuan sebagai batu lonjatan telah diberikan.

Sri Lovely terus menghasilkan beras organik dari benih MRQ 74, dalam kadar purata 8 tan sehektar, dengan tenaga kerja ‘organ mekanik’ anak muda tempatan seramai 9 orang dan beberapa pekerja khas bagi tujuan pemprosesan.

Selain dari tanpa racun dan bahan kimia, antara kehebatan beras perang organik Sri Lovely adalah kandungan indeks glisema -nya yang rendah. Serat di dalam beras perang membantu mengurangkan kadar penukaran karbohidrat kepada gula darah, lalu menjadikan beras perang rendah index glisemia. Beras kami mempunyai indeks glisema sekitar 40 sahaja berbanding sekitar 80 bagi beras biasa.

Beras perang organik dijual pada harga RM13/sekilo. Produk lain adalah seperti minuman beras organik dengan harga RM45/sebotol. Penjualan dilakukan dengan kerjasama Kedah Halal Hub, Olive House, ‘farmers market’ dan juga ajen persendirian.

Julai 2022, Sri Lovely telah dilanda banjir besar, mengakibatkan hampir 6 hektar sawah padi dinaiki air. Punca banjir adalah kerana hujan yang tidak henti untuk beberapa hari dan kerana kawasan tadahan air bukit hilang punca serap air akibat daripada pembalakan yang telah dilakukan di sekeliling kawasan Belantik, Sik. Kesan dari banjir ini, padi yang ketika itu semakin matang telah rosak dan benteng bendang telah pecah dan dinaiki pasir. Kerja-kerja pembaikan masih sedang giat dijalankan berperingkat-peringkat mengikut kemampuan semasa.

Sekali lagi, Sri Lovely dilanda banjir iaitu pada bulan November baru-baru ini, ini adalah rekod buat pertama kalinya banjir berturut-turut berlaku dan jelas sekali banjir ini adalah kesan dari pembalakkan yang berleluasa disekitar kawasan Sik.

Ujian adalah sebahagian dari kehidupan, namun berbekal prinsip Sabar, Redho dan Istiqomah, perjuangan harus diteruskan.

Pada bulan September lepas Sri Lovely menerima kunjungan daripada USM, program pemindahan ilmu akan dijalankan bersama Fakulti Biologi, bersama akar umbi petani. Sri Lovely terus menerima kunjungan mereka yang ingin menimba ilmu dan menyebarkannya.

## **Hasrat 7 Tahun Ke hadapan**

Sebagai satu-satunya ladang penghasilan makanan ruji (beras) organik negara, dan sebagai tempat rujukan pengkaji tempatan, tempat menimba ilmu dan menjadi inspirasi buat petani alami, Sri Lovely kekal berhasrat untuk menubuhkan sebuah institusi sepertimana dirancang.

Aktiviti 'Rural Development' Sri Lovely memerlukan sebuah modul pembelajaran yang berjadual dan diiktiraf serta sebuah program untuk membantu petani luar bandar dan kawasan terpencil untuk memulakan usaha tani mereka.

Institusi Pengurusan Ladang Organik Bersepadu (INSPEK) yang akan diwujudkan mempunyai silibus seperti berikut;

Modul 1: Konsep Pertanian Organik

Modul 2: Kepentingan Pertanian Organik untuk Kesihatan

Modul 3 : Pengurusan Nutrien Tumbuhan Organik

Modul 4: Perlindungan Tumbuhan Organik

Modul 5: Amalan Pengeluaran Tanaman Organik Bersepadu

Modul 6 : Pensijilan Organik

Modul 7: Pengurusan Ladang, Rekod Ladang dan Penyimpanan Rekod

Modul 8 : Pembangunan Agropreneuership

Modul 9 : Kajian Kes Inovasi dan Laporan Projek

Modul 10 : Projek Kerja Lapangan Utama

Keseluruhan pengajian ini adalah berasaskan 2 fasa;

Fasa Pertama : (Modul 1 - 9) : 600 jam di Institut - Teori 20% & Praktikal 80% Fasa Kedua : (Modul 10): 600 jam, Praktikum di sawah.

Pensijilan program adalah setaraf Sijil Kemahiran Malaysia (SKM).

Selaku NGO Slow Food International, Sri Lovely akan terus menganjurkan acara-acara untuk mempromosi makanan sihat dengan acara seperti 'Local Farmers Local Food' tidak lama lagi dan dengan tangan yang terbuka sentiasa mengalu-alukan pengunjung dan sukarelawan dari dalam dan luar negara.

Sri Lovely akan terus giat berusaha untuk merealisasikan impian pembangunan luar bandar berasaskan pertanian yang menjaga hak generasi akan datang.

### **Sri Lovely berkait rapat dengan SDG #**

#1 'Zero Poverty' iaitu dengan memberi peluang kedua buat anak muda dari kawasan luar bandar dan kawasan terpencil terutamanya yang kurang berjaya dalam jurusan akademik untuk memperolehi sumber asas makanan dan pendapatan melalui pertanian alami.

#3 'Good Health and Well Being' iaitu dengan menggalakan pengeluaran hasil tanaman yang organik, sihat dan bernutrisi tinggi.

#4 'Quality Education' iaitu dengan berkongsi kaedah pertanian secara vokasional yang mempunyai kos rendah dengan pengeluaran hasil yang tinggi serta aktiviti pertukaran budaya.

#15 'Life on Land' iaitu dengan mendidik dan memberi inspirasi buat petani alami dalam dan luar negara untuk membangunkan tanah dengan pertanian dengan mengambilkira tentang kesuburan tanah, sumber air dan kehidupan liar (ekosistem).

Terima kasih.



**Assessment of Livelihood Vulnerability Index among smallholder farmers living in a flood-prone area: A case study in Kota Bharu, Kelantan**

**by**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The increasing number of natural disasters caused by climate change has become an alarming issue for the world. Various natural disasters such as floods, droughts, and storms have affected low-income countries more frequently due to climate change. A report released by Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disaster (CRED) in 2022 states that the number of disastrous events that were reported in 2021 was significantly higher than the average number of such incidents that were caused by climate change from 2001 to 2020 (CRED, 2022). The events have affected nearly 101.8 million people worldwide with 10,492 deaths and a total loss of nearly 252.1 billion US dollars (CRED, 2022). Globally the event of floods is reported as the most occurring climate-related disaster event same as Malaysia. Flood-related events are reported as the highest occurrence event annually in Malaysia and affect more than nine percent of the land (NADMA, 2018).

According to the National Disaster Management Agency (NADMA), flood events in Malaysia are influenced by factors such as temperature shifts, weather patterns, and human activities (NADMA, 2018). Human activities such as development, industrialisation, agriculture, logging, and housing increase the possibility of flood events. While temperature shifts and the weather pattern is uncontrollable, human activity can be controlled and reduced to ensure sustainable life for society. There are four types of floods that usually occur in Malaysia that is monsoonal floods, flash floods, coastal floods, and groundwater floods (DID, 2022). Flash flood usually happen due to heavy rain that causes the water to rise in a short amount of time usually within six hours, but the flood water receded quickly compared to other types of floods, while coastal flood happens when heavy rain clash with the high tide and causing flooding in the coastal area. While groundwater floods happen due to the low area and the water cannot subsides quickly due to the flow of water and low-level area. Monsoonal floods usually happen every year in

Malaysia known as northeast monsoons which happen between the month of October till March and bring heavy and longer rain time causing the flood to subside slowly. Monsoonal rain happens due to the seasonal change causing the direction of the wind to shift in that area (PLANMalaysia, 2019).

Every year during the monsoon season, the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia will be hit with continuous rain that will eventually cause the flood. A state like Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, and Johor are often hit by floods causing the community to be vulnerable. In 2014, those four states were hit by a flood which is the worst flood to hit the east coast of Malaysia in half a century (NADMA, 2018). The aftermath of the disaster has caused 25 deaths, displacement of 541,896 flood victims from 136,447 families to evacuation centres, destruction of 2,076 houses, and damages of 6,696 houses. The disaster especially caused severe destruction to the state of Kelantan that year. Flood is a phenomenon occurring annually in the state of Kelantan particularly near the river basin of Kelantan rivers which frequently spill over during the northeast monsoon season and causes flood (Achmad Bahar et al., 2020). Kelantan river is known as the third biggest river in peninsular Malaysia and the main river in the state of Kelantan which is the location of settlement for more than 80% of the population in Kelantan (Awadalla & Noor, 1991). The river flow passes four main districts in Kelantan which is Pasir Mas, Tanah Merah, Kuala Krai, and Kota Bharu. Besides, the Kelantan River basin is home to most of the population of the state of Kelantan, hence any changes will impact greatly on the socio-economic of the community in Kelantan (Awadalla & Noor, 1991).

There are a few factors causing flood in Kelantan according to the Department of Irrigation and Drainage including heavy rain, unmaintained drainage system, the overspill of the river, and lastly development, land clearing, and garbage. Kota Bharu especially located at the mouth of the river and near the South China Sea is always affected by the flood. The location of Kota Bharu is close to the mouth of the Kelantan River which holds a large volume of water, especially during the rainy season causing the river to overflow and become a flood (PLANMalaysia, 2019). The increasing number of flood-related disaster in Kota Bharu increased risk including its impact on livelihoods, health, and wellbeing of a community. In 2019, the state of Kelantan recorded the highest number of people affected by flood (37,506 individuals) followed by state of Johor (Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department, 2021). Besides, increasing flood-related event can cause damages to environments and

interference to people's life. Therefore, an effective analysis of flood assessment is needed to fully understand the issue and mitigate the flood-related event (Muqtada Al et al., 2014).

According to study by Nor Diana et al. (2018), there is a need for an adaptation of research that can reduce the vulnerability of the flood victims as well as increase their livelihoods. Therefore, a study regarding the livelihood assessment of a flood victim in Kota Bharu, Kelantan by using Livelihood Vulnerability Index (LVI) is an approach use in this study to analyse the vulnerability of a community living in a flood prone area. Livelihood Vulnerability Index is an assessment by Hahn et al., (2009), is used to assess the level of livelihood vulnerability of a community that are exposed to climate change and natural disaster. The assessment use LVI as a composite index of a various indicators and aggregates of the major components into three contributing factors to vulnerability (LVI-IPCC) that include exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity.

The difference of Livelihood Vulnerability Index with other climate-related study is it does not depend on the climate model to assess the vulnerability of a community. Climate model usually use in a large scale to provide an accurate projection while LVI can be use in community level to assess their vulnerability in terms of sociodemographic, social network, livelihood strategies, access to water, access to food, health, land, housing, finance and income and natural disaster and climate change. The study is benefitted to assess the development in a community level. Instead of identifying the issue in macro level, the LVI assessment can be used to identify the vulnerability in a micro level. Besides, beneficial in contributing to the economic, social, and environmental aspect of sustainability. It is also significance in combating the climate change and its impact on the community and build the resilience of the community and those in vulnerable situation. As well as reduce exposure and vulnerability to climate-related events. Therefore, the study aims to analyse the assessment of Livelihood Vulnerability Index of a community living in a flood prone area by taking into account the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) particularly goals 1 and 13 that is to end poverty in all its form and to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact.

Goal 1, target 1.5 of SDG, to build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social, and environmental shocks and disaster and Goal 13, target 13.1 of SDG is to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disaster in all

countries. The assessment made using this Livelihood Vulnerability Index can mainly provide an overview of the level of vulnerability especially in terms of livelihood and the ability of the farmers community in Kota Bharu, Kelantan to be resilience and the capacity of the community to adapt to the situation.

## Methodology

Quantitative method is use in this study, where survey using questionnaire is used to collect the data. The assessment of Livelihood Vulnerability Index particularly use primary data collected from the farmers' household in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Primary data is chosen as the main method to collect the data as the approach is different from the previous method of analysing the vulnerability (Hahn et al., 2009). Therefore, this study is significant since less study regarding livelihood vulnerability is introduced in Kota Bharu. The questionnaire survey is based on the eleven indicators of livelihood that include sociodemographic profile, livelihood strategies, social network, technology, food, water, health, land, housing, finance and income and lastly natural disaster and climate change. All the indicators use in this study will be reflected in LVI-IPCC factor contributing to vulnerability as it will determine the extent of the farmers exposure, sensitivity, and the ability to be adaptive towards this situation.

The calculation of the index adapted from Hahn et al., (2009), where first the value of the index for each subcomponent of the indicator were averaged using the formula [1]. Each subcomponent is averaged to ensure each of the value is standardised. After each of the subcomponent value is calculated, the average value of each indicator is determined by using the formula [2].

$$Index_{S_d} = \frac{S_d - S_{min}}{S_{max} - S_{min}} \quad [1]$$

$$M_d = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n index_{S_d^i}}{n} \quad [2]$$

After each indicator value is obtained from the calculation [2], the weightage of all eleven indicator will be used to calculate the Livelihood Vulnerability Index (LVI) for the farmers. The level of vulnerability will be then classified into four categories: invulnerable (0.000000-0.239500), less vulnerable (0.239501-0.479000), vulnerable (0.479001-0.718500), and most vulnerable (0.718501-1.000000).

$$LVI_d = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{10} W_{M_i} M_{di}}{\sum_{i=1}^{10} W_{M_i}} [3]$$

Formula [4] will be then used to analyse the contributing factors of vulnerability that include adaptive capacity (*a*), sensitivity (*s*), and exposure (*e*). After the value of each contributing factors is earn, formula [5] will be used to calculate the value of LVI-IPCC. The final value of LVI-IPCC will be then classified as -1 (the least vulnerable) and 1 (the most vulnerable).

$$CF_d = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n W_{M_i} M_{di}}{\sum_{i=1}^n W_{M_i}} [4]$$

$$LVI - IPCC_d = (e_d - a_d) * s_d [5]$$

## Result

**Table1 The value of Livelihood Vulnerability Index (LVI) and LVI-IPCC**

Indicator	Indicator value	LVI value	LVI-IPCC component	Contributin g factor	LVI-IPCC = $(e-a) *s$
Sociodemographic profile	0.274882	0.376695	Adaptive Capacity, <i>a</i>	0.361778	-0.07908
Livelihood strategies	0.397270				
Social network	0.437398				
Technology	0.371273				
Health	0.286840		Sensitivity, <i>s</i>	0.422739	
Food	0.485264				
Water	0.346158				
House	0.407317				
Land	0.668292				
Finance & Income	0.354471		Exposure. <i>e</i>	0.174695	
Natural Disaster & Climate Change	0.174695				

From the finding of the study, the result of the Livelihood Vulnerability Index determines that the farmers household is less vulnerable to flood events (0.376695) (refer to Table 1). From the eleven indicators in Table 1, land (0.668292) is identified as the vulnerable while natural disaster and climate change (0.174695) is invulnerable state. Even though the community in Kota Bharu always hit by the flood every year, the finding of the study found that the exposure of a farmer's community is invulnerable state (0.174695), while the value of farmers' household sensitivity (0.422739) and adaptive capacity (0.361778) is in less vulnerable state. The result of the LVI-IPCC contributing factor to vulnerability also shows that the farmers' community in Kota Bharu is in less vulnerable state (-0.07908).

## **Discussion**

As the finding of the study found that the farmers community living in Kota Bharu is invulnerable state to natural disaster and climate change such as flood. It does not mean that the community does not need to take a precautionary measure toward natural disaster since flooding event is an annual event affecting the community in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Especially when the majority of the Kelantan population living near the river basin area, therefore any changes in climate pattern will directly affect most of the population in Kota Bharu (Awadalla & Noor, 1991) particularly to the farmers' community. Hence, there is a need for a community resilience to ensure that the farmers' community can recover quickly from the disaster. Adaptation from the community and mitigation action from the local agency is one of the contributing factors for a better livelihood. Individual action such as adaptation training and government support is one of the efforts to strengthen the community resilience (Nor Diana et al., 2022). Besides, external indicators such as financial stability will be a stepping stone for an individual effort to adapt to climate change and natural disaster.

Financial stability can increase the capability of a household to adapt and be resilience to the flood disaster, as poor household can hinder the capacity of the household to adapt. A natural disaster such as flood bring a lot of disadvantages to poor households since they need to endure losses caused by flood. Destruction and damages caused by flooding bring difficulties to the household and the limitations due to economic disadvantage can increase the vulnerability to the farmers' communities. Moreover, economic disadvantages can limit the ability of the household to sustain the shock and impact of the flood. According to Munyai et al., (2019), household vulnerabilities to the natural disaster events can be determine by the capacity and the

degree of adaptation by the household itself. The higher the capacity of adaptation for a household, the less likely for the household to be vulnerable to climate change and natural disaster.

Besides, the finding of the study shows that most of the farmers in Kota Bharu is too dependent on agriculture and farming activities as the main income and does not have any other contribution of income beside agriculture activity. Too dependent on one income can be a risky aspect especially when farming activities require a good climate for a better agricultural production. Report to the UNFCCC 2018 (TNC-BUR2) by the Third National Communication and Second Biennial determine that the impact of climate change especially to the country like Malaysia is flooding event, land and coastal erosion, increase the transmission of climate-sensitive diseases and importantly reduce the crops yield (Economic Planning Unit Prime Minister's Department, 2021). A study by Alam et al., (2013), found that the agricultural sector is react negatively towards climate change, therefore it can affect negatively to the household that highly dependent on agriculture as the main source of income.

In line with the SDG goal 1, to build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events such as flooding as well as goal 13, to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disaster, there is a need to increase the resilience of a community. One way to improve the resilience of the farmers' community living in a flood prone area is by reinforcing the capacity of adaptation in agricultural as well as their livelihood activities (Nor Diana et al., 2022). Increase in resiliency will help the farmers community to be immune towards natural disaster event such as flood as well as decrease the vulnerability of the farmers. Therefore, recovery and preparedness is an important theme for the community living in a flood prone area as it will help the community to be prepared for the incoming climate-related event as well improving their livelihood to be more sustainable.

It is important to the community living in a flood prone area to sustained and be resilience to ensure a better livelihood. Thus, assistance from local government and Non-Government Agency (NGO) is important in helping the community to mitigate the climate-related event as well the need for the household to be prepared to increase their resilience to flood events. The mitigation action implied by the local agency should always help the household not only for short time but also in a long run to ensure community sustainability. Early warning system

introduce by the government in a flood prone area is one of mitigation action that can help communities in a long run. The system was introduced when a major flood occurred in the state of Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, and Johor in 2014 which destroyed and damages the affected area. Early warning system introduce in 40 river basins in Malaysia in 2015 which will help in identify and predict flood event as early as seven days (NADMA, 2018). Therefore, will help in reducing the vulnerabilities of a community in living in a flood prone area as well as increasing their preparedness toward natural disaster event.

## **Conclusion**

An assessment of Livelihood Vulnerability Index is important in identifying the vulnerability of a community especially living in a flood-prone area. The increasing amount of natural disaster and climate-related events have increased the need for an assessment or model that can identify and analyse the issue of climate-related or natural disaster events. Livelihood Vulnerability Index assessment especially can be use in local communities to identify the level of exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity of a community. In order to combat poverty and climate-related events, there is a need for an identifying the level of vulnerability. Thus, Livelihood Vulnerability Index is one of the approaches can be use in a local scenario in combating poverty in all its form and increase the resilience of the community living in a flood prone area



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## **Ekonomi Penanaman Cili Padi Bara Secara Teknologi Fertigasi Terbuka**

**by**

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### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The purpose of this project summary is to provide an overview of each solution project from the perspective of the implementing partner. Most of the problems in Kg. Long Beyak is a poverty trap and generational poverty. In most cases, women and the elderly are left behind in the village as young men and women migrate to work in urban areas and take on various family responsibilities. They mostly do care work. Therefore, it can limit their ability to engage in economic activities, attend training, and travel distances to markets.

The project aims to increase the economic opportunities of local residents including training, supporting infrastructure such as Community Learning Centers (CLC) for group activities, and networking to empower rural residents' income is essential. Due to the Covid-19 crisis, agricultural entrepreneurs experienced a major decline, especially those living in rural areas.

Long Beyak has the potential to be expanded as an area of chili fertigation as one of the alternatives to improve their socio-economic field. The participants can seize the opportunity to participate in this gardening program to develop their potential. A project to improve gardening skills using the fertigation method is a planting method that does not use soil. Fertigation has several advantages over conventional methods or systems of cultivation that use soil. Among them is that this system can be practiced in areas that are not suitable for normal cultivation such as acidic soil. Then, faster crops produce better quality, cleaner crops and less threat from pesticides. Gardeners don't have to weed, water or plow. Gardeners can use water and fertilizers in a controlled and more effective way.

The project improves the skills and develops these farming methods and increases the number of modern gardeners. Crop production can also be increased by improving existing cultivation methods. Then, participants can develop their basic knowledge and skills in modern gardening. This project can also develop the fertigation chili plant project as an income-generating career.

Beneficiaries of this project's solution consisting of 30 men and women made up of local residents, aged 18 years and above. The solution provider for this project is the Selangau Naga Company. The duration of the project is three months with an allocation of RM40,000.00. The main SDGs impacting this solution project proposal are

Goal 1. Zero Poverty, Goal 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth, and Goal 5. Gender Equality.

<b>SDG Goal</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Application</b>
1. No Poverty	<b>1.2</b> Local residents are mainly interested in agricultural activities.	<b>1.3</b> Local residents outside the city who do not have a permanent job aged 18 and above.	<b>1.4</b> Fertigation Crop Skills Module Complements Modern Gardening to increase side income.
5. Gender Equality	<b>3.2</b> Mastering the skills of this module can be learned by all genders.	<b>3.3</b> This module can be done by all genders because this project does not require heavy labor to implement this project.	<b>3.4</b> This module only requires technical skills and knowledge from teaching staff who are directly involved in this field to produce crops in the right and accurate way in order to be able to give returns that can increase the income of the local people involved.
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth	<b>2.2</b> Create A space for local residents to generate additional income.	<b>2.3</b> This skill module is without using land and has minimal time allocation.	<b>2.4</b> This module can be done by local residents who have other activities such as fishing or owning a restaurant because the monitoring of these fertigation plants does not take a long time.

## **Project Impact**

This project improves the skills and expands this farming method by increasing the number of modern gardeners. Production can also be increased by improving existing cultivation methods. Then the participants can expand their knowledge and basic skills in modern gardening. This project can also expand the chili farming project as a career that produces income.

In the past, there was no one who knew the method of planting using fertigation, but after this chili fertigation planting project was introduced in Long Beyak, we can see that there have been some individuals who participated in this program before they started to cultivate using fertigation with their own efforts.

Previously, the residents of the Long Beyak Area only practiced nomadic agriculture, but now they are starting to plant "cash crops" or cash crops such as chilies and so on by using the fertigation method, which resides in one area only.

The very significant impact that we can see through the chili fertigation project in Long Beyak is that, on average, they have been able to generate a return of RM2,500.00 per month. It is estimated that in one season they are expected to get a return of RM30,000.00 by planting chili using a fertigation method of 300 poly bags and the number of chili trees they plant is 600 trees.

With the implementation of the chili fertigation planting project in Long Beyak using the fertigation method, it has been proven that this modern agriculture if practiced correctly can bring great results and bring in a lot of income. It will also Improve skills and develop these farming methods and increase the number of modern gardeners. Increase production by improving existing cultivation methods. Exposure to basic knowledge and skills in modern plantations and expanding the chili fertigation project as an income-generating career.

The fertigation method in the skill improvement project is expected to increase the level of understanding of modern horticulture. This will definitely improve the socioeconomic status and increase the income of entrepreneurs.

In maximizing the rate of profit obtained, this method of fertigation will certainly use every space more efficiently. This is also a sign of support for the government's efforts in increasing the country's food resources.

At the end of the program and project, everyone hopes to produce modern gardeners who are more viable in line with current technological developments and to produce better quality products with the maximum number of production quantities.

### **Best Practise**

It was noted that the people living in the interior have a very close relationship. The project we are running in Long Beyak has been implemented jointly through the Village Security and Development Authority (JKKK).

Since Long Beyak has not yet been connected to the electricity supply through the grid system, the chili fertigation project carried out in Long Beyak has been generated using solar energy, this is the best achievement to reduce smoke and noise pollution to preserve our earth.

This project is to improve skills in plantations using the fertigation method a method of cultivation that does not use soil. Fertigation has several advantages compared to conventional methods or systems of cultivation that use soil.

Among them are:

- This system can be practiced in areas that are not suitable for normal cultivation such as acidic soil.
- Crops yield faster
- Crops are better quality, cleaner, and free from any pesticides.
- Gardeners do not need to weed, water or mulch.
- Gardeners can use controlled and more effective water and fertilizer.
- Participants use these skills more effectively to develop their potential, product/service marketing, and local socio-economic development.

## **Mentee Mentor Session**

Through this mentor session, participants will present the results of their assignments and explain the "Do It Yourself (DIY) method, Fertigation plants with the lowest cost. Participants will be together in a bilateral improvement and correction session.

Apart from that, the participants will be more understanding of cost calculation, and needs, and will improve their skills and understanding of methods and techniques. Participants will show more dedication to the task and be more creative and inspired. Through Mentor Mentee's method, participants also have a better understanding of the basics of fertigation.

Through the mentor-mentee program, the participants share the location and list of suppliers who supply all equipment in fertigation plants. With this method, it will be easier for participants to get equipment for fertigation crops with quality and reasonable prices.

- Residents in Long Beyak have split into two political groups who cannot cooperate in the activities they carry out.
- Group work in this project has been carried out in "*gotong royong*" which, has created a platform for them to interact and strengthen closer friendships among the locals and also the implementing partners.
- In the past they were less interactive among themselves, now they have been able to face each other and do the same activities through this project.
- Participants began to show a deeper interest in fertigation agriculture.
- The educational backgrounds of the participants varied, in fact, some participants had never set foot on the school bench, and this created a varied and diverse understanding among the participants.
- There are also participants who do not understand Bahasa Malaysia at all, this situation further complicates the process of learning and channeling information.

## **Addition of Allocations**

1. Since Sarawak is far behind compared to other states in the peninsula, especially in terms of infrastructure development such as roads and the like, it is recommended here that allocations to carry out projects in the hinterland or rural areas of Sarawak should be increased. This is to help and as an encouragement to the "Solution Provider" to be more enthusiastic to carry out projects in rural areas. As we all know, it is the people in rural areas who are in dire need of guidance and projects to increase their income and improve their socioeconomics.
2. The addition of allocations for rural projects and inland areas in Sarawak is considered in terms of the high cost of transport and maintenance of vehicles. If the "solution provider" rents a vehicle, the rental cost is also very high. Apart from that, for areas that have to use river transport, the cost of renting a boat is also very high. So, because of that, it would be very good if the allocation involving projects in the area is increased according to the suitability of the project.
3. Recommendations for the future so that additional allocations can be given, enabling course participants to be given closed fertigation courses. With a closed fertigation system, the fertigation planting method can be carried out without the disturbance of the rainy season. In open-system fertigation, the fertilizer we give will be washed away by rainwater.

## **Safety**

4. In line with the high cost of transportation, safety issues are also a very important aspect of implementing projects in the rural areas of Sarawak. To get to Long Beyak we had to use an unpaved oil palm plantation road, only on gravel, and a very high and steep log road with only soil. Slippery road conditions during the rainy season require an efficient and highly skilled driver as well as an understanding of traffic laws on logging roads. During the dry season, these logging roads emit very thick dust, and further complicate travel, as the dust obstructs visibility. This condition is very dangerous and the tendency for fatal accidents is very high. Considering the high cost of transportation and security risk reasons as well as considering that the cost of goods nowadays has increased, it is very appropriate that the value of the project in the interior of Sarawak needs to be added (special allocation) according to the current needs to create a win-win situation.
5. To include some other separate courses such as bead craft art, "pua" waving and etc....



6. To help rural students in education, by giving them tuition on core subjects, especially those who sit for the exam such as primary 6, form 3, and form 5 students.
7. Make sure the project implementation time is appropriate.
8. Ensure that the project implementation time does not conflict with certain seasons. examples: Rice harvest season, fasting season, and so on.
9. Encouraged to conduct course activities on weekends, school holidays, and public holidays. The reason is that during the weekdays peoples work at their own respective farms.
10. Avoid taking courses during the pandemic. Examples of Covid-19. The participants were more careful about their health, which surely, they would not take the risk of following the course conducted.
11. Avoid carrying out project activities during the harvest season, as the residents involved are busy harvesting paddy.
12. Organizing this "costing course" this will help them to determine the price of their products.



Looking Back: Ascribing Malaysia's Progress towards Achieving Agenda 2030 -

1. **Prof. Dr. Khairul Wahidin Awang** (Universiti Malaysia Kelantan), Assoc. Prof. Mazlina Mustapha (UPM) & Nur Syuhada (UMK)

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2. The Progress of Publicly Available Information in Malaysia -  
**Ho Yi Jian** (SDSN- Sustainable Development Solutions Network)

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3. Data Disaggregation to make Indigenous People Visible in SDGs -  
**Prof. Wong Chin Huat** (SDSN-Asia)

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4. Rethinking the Role of Education in Preventing Violent Extremism in Malaysia -  
**Thomas Koruth Samuel** (University of Malaya)

## **Looking Back: Ascribing Malaysia's Progress towards Achieving Agenda 2030**

by

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This is a policy context paper designed to ascribe Malaysia's progress in embracing Sustainable Development Goals for the past 8 years, since Agenda 2030 was proclaimed in 2015. This paper focusses on SDG#16, which is to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. This implies the provision of accessibility to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all level. This paper is framed, methodologically, on reflective analysis. This paper is based on the authors' collective thought on the implementation of the SDGs in Malaysia, whereby secondary data, including documents pertaining to Voluntary National Review Reports 2017 and 2021, localisation of SDGs at parliamentary constituencies, and other significant and relevant literature formed the basis of findings. The researchers' intuition too helps to mount the paper's findings. The researchers have an aggregated 55 years of academic work at higher institutions of learnings, whereby teaching, research and consultancy work and publishing research findings dominate the agenda. The paper's findings will be shared with readers in the tune of Malaysia's achievement and challenges, the gaps that need to be filled, and the way forward for the critical remaining 8 years until 2030.

### **Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**

Social justice denotes the means of respecting human rights and the redistribution of human need equally (Balasingam, 2018). To this Dewi (2021) posits that social justice is amounting to a creation of an equal balance with regard to people's welfare, underpins by equality in division of labour and income as exhibit by fair wages, balanced workload, equal working hours and fair division of responsibility. Strong social justice invokes on environment of peace and tranquility. However, Kornienko and Syryamkina (2015) opined that ideal-based justice couldn't be realized optimally. Malaysia, for example, which have more than 40 government agencies and

local authorities that are either directly or indirectly involved in tourism development (National Tourism Policy 2020-2030), a sheer number of such entities which needs a herculean effort to coordinate and govern. On the other hand, however tough the journey ahead is, it would make the nation's institutions stronger, a necessity to achieve SDG#16, if appropriate measures are taken and implemented. SDG#16 calls for strong institutions, blessed with transparent, responsive and accountable attributes (United Nations, 2016).

## **Achievement and Challenges**

### **Localising Sustainable Development Goals at Parliamentary Constituencies**

The United Nations proclaimed Agenda 2030 in 2015, though, it was much sometime later that its sidekicks i.e., all the 17 SDGs found their way into the realm of Malaysia's life. Localising of SDGs at parliamentary constituencies, started when the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia (APPGM) on

SDGs was incepted in October 2019. Members of Parliament, whom represented this bipartisan group identified and selected parliament constituencies to advocate implementation of SDGs, reaching local communities at the ground level. It is one of the ways, very important in that sense, bridging to the grassroots, resulting in positive recipience of the United Nations' goal. This multi-stakeholder group, championed by respective Members of Parliament, identified local development issues and formulated ways to find solutions to these issues. In 2020, this APPGM reached out to 10 parliamentary constituencies as a pilot phase program. Projects were funded by a special grant of RM1.6 million, put aside by the Ministry of Finance. A total of 34 SDGs solution-based projects were identified and prioritized, ranging from the field of education, inequality, poverty, environment and waste management, focussing on four categories of people; rural area's folks, urban area B40 including squatters and those leaving in low-cost housing projects, youth and women, and specific disadvantage groups including Peninsular Malaysia's Orang Asli, indigenous groups of Sabah and Sarawak, and migrants (Jayasooria, 2021). The Members of Parliament provide the livewire to debates on SDGs in the legislative arena.

In 2021, another RM5 million were put aside. Similarly, like what had transpired in 2020, Members of Parliament who were the policymakers themselves and local leaders initiated and facilitated the so- called actions to localised SDGs at parliamentary constituencies. By the end

of 2021, 20 more parliamentary constituencies have become involved in grassroots implementation of SDGs, a double increased from the previous year. This reflects an extensive expansion of the program. According to APPGM-SDG 2021 Annual Report, prioritised issues within the 20 parliamentary constituents involved in 2021, were categorized into 11 themes (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Themes of Prioritised Issues**

	<b>Themes</b>
<b>1</b>	Youth, development, employment and drugs
<b>2</b>	Food security and agrofood supply chain
<b>3</b>	Welfare and right of single mothers and gender mainstreaming
<b>4</b>	Poverty and imbalanced development (infrastructure, including digital connectivity)
<b>5</b>	Environmental governance (pollution, human-wildlife conflict, oceans and river governance and wastemanagement)
<b>6</b>	Social protection, social safety and welfare
<b>7</b>	Land tenure, security and settlements
<b>8</b>	Disaster management (floods) and climate change
<b>9</b>	Rights of refugees, migrants and stateless
<b>10</b>	Sustainable tourism
<b>11</b>	Affordable housing and urban poverty

**Source: APPGM-SDG 2021 Annual Report**

Collectively, the prioritised issues under all the 11 themes touched all the 17 SDGs (please refer to Table 2). More so, the issues have strong ties to SDG#16, as well as SDG#17, evidenced with the overwhelming quantification. On other note, since the authors have some working research experience on sustainable tourism (theme number 10 of Table 1), an approach used in tourism industry or field, sustainable tourism will be touched in later part of this paper.

**Table 2: The Number of Times SDGs Been Touched Based on 11 Themes**

SD G #1	SD G #2	SD G #3	SD G #4	SD G #5	SD G #6	SD G #7	SD G #8	SD G #9	SD G #10	SD G #11	SD G #12	SD G #13	SD G #14	SD G #15	SD G #16	SD G #17
6	5	6	3	3	1	2	3	5	9	7	2	3	1	1	11	11

**Source: Authors' analysis**

Another positive note is that the program of localising SDGs at Parliamentary constituencies delved into a different form of engagement, which was capacity building on the understanding and awareness of SDGs. However, this capacity building process was very challenging when only two parliamentary constituencies; Batu Kawan and Permatang Pauh, were involved (APPGM-SDG 2021 Annual Report). Most of the 27 participants of each capacity building program (the same number applies to each constituency), agreed that the program raised their level of awareness on SDGs.

### **Civil Society Groups and Non-Governmental Organisations' Contributions**

According to APPGM-SDG 2021 Annual Report, there were Civil Society Groups and Non-Governmental Organisations that contributed through a working groups format, a process initiated by the APPGM-SDG Alliance, with regard to localisation of SDGs. There were 5 working groups all together, though they were not named (see Table 3 below). The table illustrates the working groups (identified by numbers) relationships to specific SDGs they were tasked to deal with.

**Table 3: Working Groups and SDGs Involved**

	<b>Working Group</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>SDGs</b>
<b>1</b>	WG#1	Poverty and nutrition	1, 2
<b>2</b>	WG#2	COVID-19 and health recovery	3
<b>3</b>	WG#3	Inclusive economic growth	8, 10
<b>4</b>	WG#4	Sustainability and climate change	12, 13
<b>5</b>	WG#5	Governance, social cohesion and partnership	16, 17
	<b>Total</b>		<b>9</b>

CSOs and NGOs are known to inspire, and are champions of development progress in many arenas. The headings under the themes in Table 3 are such examples. There were 9 SDGs, including SDG#16, that were touched by the 5 working groups. The challenge here is to increase the number of working groups, with the involvement of more CSOs and NGOs, expanding into remaining SDGs.

Challenge can also be in a different form. While much can be said about the transformation of ideas on sustainability from the parliamentary domain to the grassroots, there is a lack of such transformation process from the Federal Government to the State Governments, and subsequently to the Local Governments.

## **Sustainable Tourism**

In preceding segment, sustainable tourism was treated as one of the themes of prioritised issues in 20 Parliamentary Constituencies in 2021. The United Nations General Assembly of 2017 declared the year 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. This declaration amplifies tourism as a tool to advance Agenda 2030, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations World Tourism Organization and the United Nations Development Program emphasized the account of tourism's journey to achieve laid out SDGs (Hall, 2021). Contemporary dominant discourses in tourism industry reflects this approach. Beforehand, research on tourism is dominated by neoliberal market orientation, not focusing on sustainability. On the flipside Hall (2021) also remarks that it doesn't make tourism more sustainable but tourism has become less sustainable by most empirical measures.

Beach resorts as tourist destinations if properly managed would not only provide the host or local community the economic benefits but also enhance social cohesion and multistakeholder partnership, implying SDG#16. Several case studies involving small resorts on Perhentian, Redang and Kapas Island embarked by the authors, exemplified the participation of locals as labour work force on the island destinations (see Khairil & Mazlina, 2020, Mazlina et al, 2020). This reflects inclusivity of society in the tourism industry, which is known to hire fulltime and parttime workers during periodic peak and low seasons. Resorts willingly received university student-interns too. Some of these resorts that were family-owned businesses channeled their clients to other service providers on the islands when the former was unable to cater to some cliental requests due to limited resources (SDG#17).

Perhentian Island received clean treated water supplied through submarine pipeline, enforcing the Terengganu State Government's desire to provide basic services in rural isolated area. This imbues SDG#6, the provision of clean water. However, sanitation is problematic, whereby some small resorts discharged their used water to natural ponds more often than not found located behind resort buildings away from the beach front. Environment qualities do have impact on social welfare of the island's community. There is an urgent need for a comprehensive and integrated sewage system for the island destination, underlying the carrying capacity issue of holiday destinations. This is a challenge to both State and Federal Governments, whereby the capital needed for such venture is high and the image of top island destination is at stake. An environment catastrophe or incidence of disease outbreak, for



example, could severely tarnish Malaysia's image as one of the top tourist destinations in the Asia Pacific region.

On another note, resort owners' persistence during the early days of the resorts' growth, ensure decent and economic growth of the rural region, even though they faced monumental tasks when banks spurned their request for loans (SDG#8, SDG#16). Perhaps, this a venue for the state to implore.

### **Community-based Tourism**

One of the many forms of sustainable tourism is the Community-based Tourism, acronym as CBT. CBT is inherently a tool for rural development and empowerment (SDG#8, 10, 11, 16 and 17). The authors, hereby are highlighting one program conducted by the office of the State Secretariat of Kelantan, with the help of the former in designing and facilitating a Community-based Tourism program in 2019, sometime before the advocacy of SDGs by the APPGM-SDG Alliance. The CBT program was a two- day one-night affair held in the enclosure of Min Camp, on the outskirts of Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Participants whom ranged from District Officers, staff of district offices to *Ahli Jawatankuasa Kampung*, were given exposure on some elements of sustainability, including waste management and understanding and preserving nature-based tourism products found within the vicinity of the camp. Participants were tested on their understanding of respective concepts through SWOT analysis at the end of the program. Though, until now there is no equivalent program known to be held within the state. Within the world's academic fraternity, sustainability started to take a firm footing in academic discourses at a much earlier date (Hall, 2021).

Another CBT worth mentioning here is the Batu Puteh Community Tourism Co-operative, KOPEL Berhad. CBT by KOPEL started with the opening of Miso Walai Homestay program in 2000, Sabah's first homestay program 15 years before the United Nations' proclamation of SDGs in 2015. KOPEL made in road on programs that dealt with employment provision, protection of ecosystem and biodiversity of Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary linking to current SDG#8, 12 and 15. With the help of NGOs and state authorities, KOPEL grew to become what they are now amidst the challenges of Batu Puteh Village located in interior part of Sabah, with poor accessibility, a poverty laden community and hard to convince villagers to become

co-operative member initially. KOPEL is a success story of a strong cooperative institution (SDG#16), apart from helping disadvantage group (SDG#8).

While KOPEL may be one of some best practice of co-operative run business programs, the fact is closing the gap between economically developed and well to do urban areas with poverty laden rural region is seemingly hard to achieve.

### **Addressing the Gaps, Way forward and Conclusion**

One has to raise the stakeholders' awareness on Agenda 2030, with its 17 SDGs. The increased in number of Parliamentary Constituencies involved in localisation of SDGs programs in brief succession period reflects a positive attitude amongst Members of Parliament. This indicates the buy-in has worked rather significantly.

However, more intense buy-in should be conducted to encourage more participation from CSOs, NGOs or semi-autonomous think tank groups. The low number of working groups represented by such organisational set-ups in relevant programs mentioned in earlier segment of this paper exemplifies this notion.

The build-up in hosting human capacity building programs has to match the desires of the SDGs. There is a huge gap to fill in when there were only 2 Parliamentary Constituencies that were involved in program that disseminate understanding and awareness values pertaining to SDGs.

Localising SDGs in Malaysia requires greater innovation. Co-operation from Federal, State and Local Governments should be strongly enticed so that officials from these three levels of governance could actively participate in sustainability-related programs. A similar set-up like the APPMG-SDG Alliance should be strongly encouraged to be incepted at the state or provincial level, perhaps at a less grand scale. Local action is pillar to progress and success. The Honourable Speaker of the House of Representatives too, could influence his counterparts, in the State Legislative Assemblies in this matter.

Lastly, the policy making process in Malaysia is an inward-looking one, with the existence of a highly Centralised Government. It is best, perhaps, at this juncture to use a constructive engagement approach with different levels of administrative governments, CSOs, NGOs, semi-autonomous think tanks or even individual champions.

The all-important attributes of SDG#16 which are good governance, transparency and accountability may still far from being reachable in Malaysia. Though, tremendous progress has been seen for the past few years. The country still needs to continue “localising the SDGs”, putting energetic efforts to realise all the 17 SDGs for the next 8 years. Suffice to say that entrenching the thinking on Agenda 2030 in the minds of the stakeholders is still a big challenge for Malaysia.

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# **The Progress of Publicly Available Information in Malaysia**

**by**

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A Freedom of Information (FOI) or Right to Information (RTI) law is a piece of legislature that has two functions: (i) setting a clear framework for how government held information is managed and distributed to the public or kept secret; and (ii) establishing a mechanism and service standards for the public to request for government-held information. SDG 16.10.2 establishes the goal that countries should “adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information”. In this paper, I outline the state of information availability in Malaysia and gauge the feasibility of a future federal FOI law in the Malaysian context. This is based on collected data on the 2015-2020 public usage of the Selangor and Penang FOI Enactments (gazetted 2011 and 2012 respectively). I demonstrate that these FOI laws had significant usage, despite secrecy laws embodied in the Official Secrets Act 1972 and sections of the Penal Code, thus implying that a federal RTI law may be possible at a federal level in Malaysia.

## **Relevant SDGs Target/Indicators:**

- SDG 16.10 “Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements”
- SDG 16.10.2 “Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information”

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## Introduction

The public right to access government information is recognised in SDG Target 16.10, which is a two-fold target. Its first half asks for governments to “*ensure public access to information... according to national legislation and international agreements*”. While there are developments in the informational environment of the Malaysian government in the past seven years, we always remain at the cusp of legislating a definitive guarantee of access to information (ATI) for Malaysian citizens/residents.<sup>4</sup>

In this article, I will outline the state of information availability in Malaysia and gauge the feasibility of a future federal ATI law in the Malaysian context in compliance with SDG 16.10. It requires that we unpack the meaning of ATI with respect to the informational environment that Malaysian citizens/residents can interface with, explore the history of ATI in Malaysia, and reflect upon the possibility of national legislation and/or policy guarantees in line with international agreements and norms. Furthermore, for effective ATI, an ATI guarantee can be hamstrung either by a low-quality token law or if the law is implemented poorly. The danger is that SDG Indicator 16.10.2, “*adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information*” can be satisfied without actually delivering such rights and the governance benefits its supposed to accrue.

The UNCAC definition is pivotal to unpacking the meaning of “Access to Information” as it crucially distinguishes *information request procedures* from *proactive disclosure* (Article 10):

(a) *Adopting procedures or regulations allowing members of the general public to obtain, where appropriate, information on the organization, functioning and decision-making processes of its public administration and, with due regard for the protection of privacy and personal data, on decisions and legal acts that concern members of the public;*

(b) *Simplifying administrative procedures, where appropriate, in order to facilitate public access to the competent decision-making authorities; and*

(c) *Publishing information, which may include periodic reports on the risks of corruption in its public administration.*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Terminologically, “Right to Information” and “Freedom of Information” are synonymous to “Access to information”. While RTI is the preferred term amongst contemporary activists to emphasise it as a human *right*, ATI is the preferred usage here as it is the wording used by SDG 16.10.

<sup>5</sup> UNCAC, Article 10, [https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/Publications/Convention/08-50026\\_E.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/Publications/Convention/08-50026_E.pdf). Malaysia ratified UNCAC in 2008.

The former means that there should be an accessible, fair and legally binding mechanism for residents to extract information that has not been released to the public for various reasons—inclusive of being covered by exemptions and secrecy laws. Ideally, this mechanism should also include procedures to escalate a denial of request to an independent review body and otherwise the courts to adjudicate disclosure in the public interest. The implication is that both are necessary although separate. Without the information request procedures, the wider public remains reliant on whatever the government chooses to disclose, which can be scant, piecemeal, inconsistent and is ultimately discretionary.

I would argue that Malaysia is making some steps towards greater *proactive disclosure*, although we have not made formally made a Federal-level guarantee mechanism for information request procedures—and a prognosis can be made towards it: there are serious obstacles for the latter, some issues which emerge from the administration of state-level Freedom of Information Enactments (FOIE). Wider informational management reform is sorely needed even within the government itself, which both at the governmental and public level is slow going.

### **A Brief Pre-2015 History of ATI in Malaysia**

The Malaysian constitution does not explicitly support the right to receive information. The Malaysian constitution supports the right to expression (Article 10) but access to information has to be inferred from the same right to expression.

Put into practice, no such inference has occurred. There is no right to access information because Malaysia's public information ecosystem is dominated by the Official Secrets Act 1972 (OSA). The OSA, while following UK Common Law conventions, grants blanket powers for ministers, department heads and appointed public officers to classify documents as “top secret”, “secret”, “confidential”, or “restricted” (OSA Section 2B). While the language used in the OSA implies that the law is primarily targeted at preventing foreign espionage, the historical purpose was to prevent racial violence in the wake of the 1969 race riots in Kuala Lumpur; the practical effect is the blanket classification of all official documents;<sup>6</sup> and the unintended effect is the cover up of abuse and corruption. The 1986 amendments added a mandatory prison sentence, which disincentivised disclosure by civil servants at risk of running

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<sup>6</sup> This is done through a government circular called the *Arahan Keselamatan* ('Security Instructions')

afoul of the law. Section 2C of the OSA does allow for declassification, but immediate practice gives the government broad discretionary powers in declassifying information, while means that there is no consistent, formal and accountable process for the public to seek a particular piece of information of public interest. Additionally, Article 203A of the Malaysian Penal Code criminalises the disclosure of “any information or matter which has been obtained by him in the performance of his duties or the exercise of his functions under any written law” by a civil servant. Ikhsan and Matah (2022) in their legal analysis note that while the UK has a coexisting OSA and ATI law, their implementation of the OSA has a higher bar, requiring the demonstration of damages, malicious intent, and only applies to civil servants; in Malaysia, there is a statutory presumption all unauthorised communication is harmful to national interest and applies to anyone involved in the chain of communication.<sup>7</sup>

On the political front, Malaysian journalists and activists picked up the ATI issue (then as Freedom of Information, FOI) circa 2005. A draft bill was drawn up by Malaysian activists and subsequently amended according to the needs of the time and place. With several state governments switching administrations in the 2008 General Elections, activists managed to work with Selangor and Penang state governments to enact FOI Enactments (FOIE) in each state respectively. Selangor would be first to adopt it in state legislature in 2010 with the greatest input from activists and stakeholder consultations, and entering into force in 2013. Penang would later model its enactment after Selangor’s enactment, but with some changes. Penang’s FOIE would be adopted in 2011 and entered into force in 2015. I have argued elsewhere that Selangor’s FOIE is more accessible than Penang’s FOIE.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Federal Appetite for ATI**

When the SDGs started, the federal appetite for FOI was chilly. In 2015, Paul Low, the minister in charge of governance and integrity in the Prime Minister’s department, publicly dismissed a federal ATI law as unfeasible and unready, highlighting concerns of manpower, civil service culture, worries about irresponsible use and the vast quantities of data that needs to be

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<sup>7</sup> Muhammad Izwan Ikhsan & Lenny James Matah, ‘Enacting Freedom of Information Act in Malaysia: A Cost-Benefit Analysis’, *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* (MJSSH), 7(2), e001297, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v7i2.1297>

<sup>8</sup> Ho Yi Jian, ‘A Rights Plan for FOI in Malaysia’, C4 Center Report, 2018. <https://c4center.org/report-rights-plan-freedom-information-malaysia/>



managed.<sup>9</sup> Some of these concerns are also echoed in engagements with civil servants: civil servants are worried that information used are not “used responsibly”.<sup>10</sup> This is understandable as their careers are most likely at risk if public controversy was generated.

ATI then more seriously came into the picture after the 2018 General Elections as the Pakatan Harapan Government (PH, 2018-2020) had committed to joining the Open Government Initiative, a voluntary association of states which membership requires at least a roadmap for constitutional amendments or legislation toward implementing ATI. Ministers under the PH government had openly supported ATI legislature, especially under Liew Vui Kong (Minister in the Prime Minister's Department [Legal Affairs]), and also Gobind Singh Deo (Minister of Communications and Multimedia).<sup>11</sup> Multi-sectoral consultations also begun under the PH government: By early 2020, The Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) managed to find a partnership with *Bahagian Hal-Ehwal Undang-undang* (BHEUU) under the Prime Minister’s Department to conduct wider consultations with stakeholders across Malaysia, although progress and subsequent government reception was hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, as the government reformed as the Perikatan Nasional Government (PN, 2020-2022) in March 2020, priorities were shifted and civil servant cooperation on ATI matters began to turn colder. Nevertheless, the new Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department (Parliament and Law) for the PN government, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, has taken up the issue and has expressed support for ATI.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, by the 15<sup>th</sup> General Election in November 2022, a formal ATI bill has yet to be presented to Parliament.

There are now developments in terms of proactive disclosure and a potential for information management systems across the government to be rationalised and thus more amenable for public disclosure. However, the developments are not by formal legislation, but by government

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<sup>9</sup> Patrick Lee, ‘Paul Low: Malaysia not ready for Freedom of Information Act’, *The Star*, 18 August 2015, <https://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2015/08/18/Paul-Low-Data-Free>

<sup>10</sup> From author interactions with civil servants and at CIJ-organised “Roadshow on Right to Information (RTI) Legislation” in Selangor 2020, and “IDUAI Forum: AI, E-governance and ATI”, 20 October 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Govt to formulate Freedom of Information Act — Liew”, *The Borneo Post*, 15 August 2018, <https://www.theborneopost.com/2018/08/15/govt-to-formulate-freedom-of-information-act-liew/>

<sup>12</sup> Azril Anuar, “Putrajaya looking to amend Official Secrets Act, make it current: Wan Junaidi”, *The Vibes*, 17 Nov 2021, <https://www.thevibes.com/articles/news/47480/putrajaya-looking-to-amend-official-secrets-act-make-it-current-wan-junaidi>; “Right to access accurate information vital to reduce spread of fake news: Wan Junaidi”, *The Sun Daily*, 8 June 2022, <https://www.thesundaily.my/local/right-to-access-accurate-information-vital-to-reduce-spread-of-fake-news-wan-junaidi-IE9305291>.

circular.<sup>13</sup> In 2015, the Public Sector Open Data initiative<sup>14</sup> established a platform for government agencies to release (machine-readable) data to the public under an open license.<sup>15</sup> This is also in addition to the Guidelines on Public Sector Content Development (*Garis Panduan Pembangunan Kandungan Sektor Awam* UPTM 159/05/648 (14)) and Public Sector Website/Portal Management (*Pekeliling Am Bil 1 Tahun 2006: Pengurusan Laman Web/Portal Sektor Awam*).<sup>16</sup> There are appointed Chief Information Officers who are tasked with updating government websites.

More recent initiatives, as driven by MAMPU, are plans to manage the digitalisation of civil service with the emphasis on cross-agency data sharing and the rationalisation of data management. Similarly, they exist mostly at the government circular level. They include:

- MyGovEA: *Pelaksanaan Pendekatan Reka Bentuk Berstruktur Ekosistem Organisasi Perkhidmatan Awam* (Implementation of Public Sector Structured Organisational Ecosystem Design Approach, Pekeliling Am Bil 1/2020)
- The Public Sector Digitalisation Strategic Blueprint 2021-2025
- *Dasar Perkongsian Data Sektor Awam 2021* (Public Sector Data Sharing Policy 2021)
- The Malaysian Government Central Data Exchange (MyGDX), and the concomittant
  - a. *Garis Panduan Pengurusan Keselamatan Maklumat melalui Pengkomputeran Awan dalam Perkhidmatan Awam* (Guideline for Information Security Management of Cloud Computing in the Public Sector, Pekeliling Am Bil 1/2021)
  - b. Public Sector Data Dictionary (DDSA, Pekeliling Am Bil 2/2022)
- Data Driven Government Action Framework 2022-2025.

In this sense, there is greater impetus to manage data as a matter of security and quantity—given the scale and transmissibility of data, especially if being shared across

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<sup>13</sup> According to Syed Saleem Faruqi, government circulars amount to “quasi-legislature” and “are regarded by the civil service as absolutely binding”, but at best exposes civil servants to internal disciplinary measures if violated. See <https://www.umlawreview.com/lex-in-breve/malaysian-legal-system-an-introduction>

<sup>14</sup> *Pelaksanaan Data Terbuka Sektor Awam*, [The Implementation of Public Sector Open Data]. Pekeliling Am 1/2015, MAMPU, 30 September 2015, <https://dasar.mampu.gov.my/search-d/download-file/25/7f821c650c868d025fb5351d7d45d001>

<sup>15</sup> *Terma Penggunaan Data Terbuka Kerajaan 1.0* [Usage Terms for Government Open Data 1.0], Data.gov.my, 30 September 2015, <https://www.data.gov.my/p/terma-pengguna>

<sup>16</sup> See UNODC, ‘Country Review Report of Malaysia’, 2017, pp 224. [https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/CountryVisitFinalReports/2018\\_11\\_16\\_Malaysia\\_Final\\_Country\\_Report.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/CountryVisitFinalReports/2018_11_16_Malaysia_Final_Country_Report.pdf)

agencies; and it is likely that other forms of relevant information and documents will also be managed as data. Kudos must be given to MAMPU for proactively anticipating future informational needs and trends of the government, and better management of government produced data will be indirectly useful to ATI as proactive disclosure when it arises.

However, these documents do not immediately include citizens or the wider public as stakeholders in the process, except for the Public Sector Open Data initiative. Even the support for availability of information under MyGovEA is predicated on it not being designated a state secret and support for public access is not clear.<sup>17</sup> The issue with [data.gov.my](http://data.gov.my) is that data submission is purely voluntary and again at each ministry's discretion—thus not an immediate guarantee for citizen's access to any sort of information. While some of the above circulars may create standards for agencies to adhere to, timeliness and accuracy are also another matter of compliance. The World Bank conducted a 2017 review on the readiness of the government for the Open Data Initiative, which amongst its findings are that the buy-in with agencies could be stronger, the legal framework is fragmented due to the OSA, and not much high quality data is released in practice.<sup>18</sup> Ahmad Ashraf in his 2021 assessment of Open Government data, stresses the need for an RTI/ATI law as a means of reform because “the largest impediment to open government data in Malaysia is the lack of clarity in the legal framework concerning government data”.<sup>19</sup>

Ultimately, information should not be conflated with data. There exist government documents with qualitative information that fall within the public interest but can be held back against the spirit of SDG Target 16.10. For example:

- (2017) The High Court dismissed a Christian church bid to find out why the government bans the word “Allah” in non-Muslim publication, as it is classified under the OSA and, the information does not fall under judicial discovery in this case.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See ‘Jadual 3.3: Prinsip Data MyGovEA’, pp 13-19, in *MyGovEA: Pelaksanaan Pendekatan Reka Bentuk Berstruktur Ekosistem Organisasi Perkhidmatan Awam*, Pekeliling Am Bil 1/2020, MAMPU, 2021.  
<https://dasar.mampu.gov.my/search-g/download-file/193/0fa5b684775c519b2c85ef9ec99624ff>

<sup>18</sup> Zijlstra, Anton Arnold; Vaira, Carolina Luisa; Boothe, Robert. *Open data readiness assessment : Malaysia (English)*. Malaysia development experience series Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group.  
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/529011495523087262/Open-data-readiness-assessment-Malaysia>

<sup>19</sup> Ahmad Ashraf Ahmad Shaharudin, *Open Government Data in Malaysia: Landscape, Challenges and Aspirations*, Discussion Paper 3/21, Khazanah Research Institute, 12 April 2021.  
[https://krinstitute.org/Discussion\\_Papers-@-Open\\_Government\\_Data\\_in\\_Malaysia-;\\_Landscape,\\_Challenges\\_and\\_Aspirations.aspx](https://krinstitute.org/Discussion_Papers-@-Open_Government_Data_in_Malaysia-;_Landscape,_Challenges_and_Aspirations.aspx)

<sup>20</sup> Dayak Daily, ‘Reason Behind Allah ban in Non-Muslim publications classified under OSA’, 17 October 2017.  
<https://dayakdaily.com/reasons-behind-allah-ban-in-non-muslim-publications-classified-under-osa/>

- (2018) Azmin Ali (then MP for Gombak) and Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) supreme council member Muhammad Zahid Md Arip filed a suit to the High Court to declassify the Auditor-General's report on 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), which had previously been presented briefly to a Parliamentary Select Committee. The ruling was that they had no locus standi and the court had no legal standing under the OSA to declassify the report.<sup>21</sup>
- (2021) PDRM classifies supplementary correspondence with other government agencies in light of a trial regarding an enforced disappearance of Indira Gandhi's daughter over a custody dispute with her husband.<sup>22</sup>
- (2022) The Pakatan government set up a "Special Investigation Committee on Public Governance, Procurement and Finance" under PMD, producing 15 reports, most of which we classified under OSA. One report investigating an Automatic Enforcement System (AES) which was coming under heavy public scrutiny, was only partially declassified.<sup>23</sup>
- (2022) MACC uses OSA to classify eight investigation papers related to Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's corruption trial, which prevented the defence from impeaching a witness.<sup>24</sup>

These cases indicate that even until today, the judiciary generally will not have legal standing to declassify a government document under the OSA. This is also consistent with *Lim Kit Siang vs Public Prosecutor 1980* which upholds that the judiciary has not been granted power to declassify a document under the OSA, which contradicts the UNCAC Article 10(A).

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<sup>21</sup> Ida Nadirah Ibrahim, 'Azmin, PPBM man fail court bid to declassify Auditor-General's 1MDB report', *The Malay Mail*, 24 Jan 2018. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2018/01/24/azmin-ppbm-man-fail-court-bid-to-declassify-auditor-generals-1mdb-report/1561283> .

<sup>22</sup> Jason Thomas, 'Why are documents in Indira Gandhi case under OSA, asks activist', *Free Malaysia Today*, 28 November 2021. <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2021/11/18/why-are-documents-in-indira-gandhi-case-under-osa-asks-activist/>

<sup>23</sup> Shazni Ong, 'PAC regrets Govt's action not to fully declassify report related to AES', *The Edge Markets*, 1 August 2022, <https://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/pac-regrets-govts-action-not-fully-declassify-report-related-aes>

<sup>24</sup> Ida Lim, 'In Zahid trial, judge orders prosecution to declassify defence witness' MACC statement for impeachment hearing', 31 October 2022. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2022/10/31/in-zahid-trial-judge-orders-prosecution-to-declassify-defence-witness-macc-statement-for-impeachment-hearing/36555>

## The State-Level Experiment

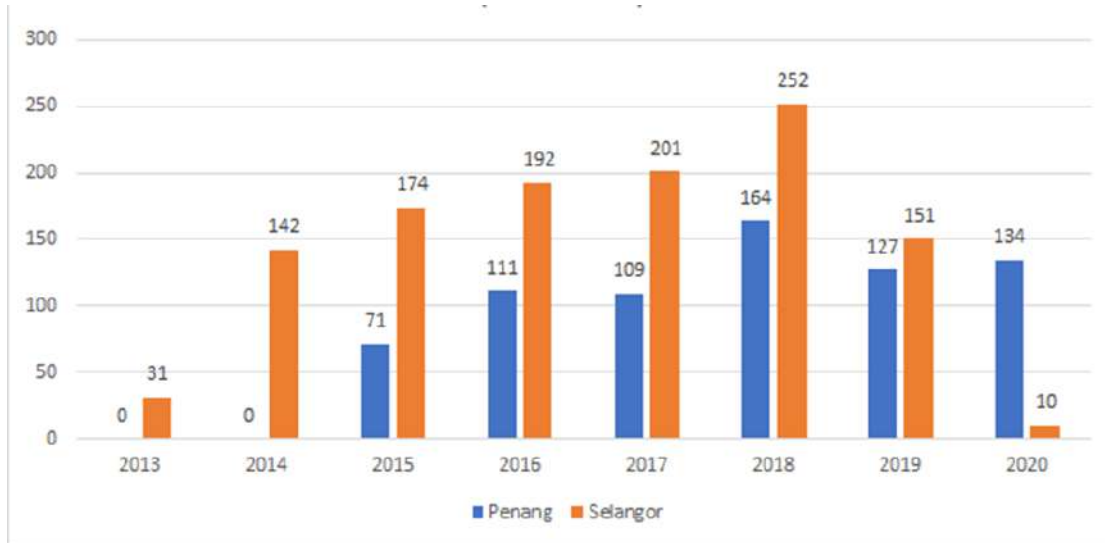
The experience at the state level is significant because it is a weathervane of further potential issues that may crop up in implementing ATI legislature at a federal level in Malaysia and is response to issues that may hold federal ATI legislation back, if not a response to the purported issues above. Based on combining publicly available data and using the FOIE mechanism itself to request for data about its usage, we can come to several conclusions about ATI in the Malaysian context. Despite the OSA being an overriding law—and in some cases, the OSA was invoked to protect documents from disclosure, FOI is being used by the Malaysian public.

The basic usage data suggests that there is significant uptake of the enactment's mechanism in its early years. Usage numbers were steadily rising to a peak of 252 requests a year in 2018, and 164 requests in Penang in the same year (See Figure 1). However, 2019 began a downward trend for Selangor, as well as a skewing of requests to one particular government department (*Majlis Bandaraya Seberang Perai*) in Penang (See Figure 2 and 3). MBSP as a city council seems to receive a disproportionate amount of FOI requests likely due to the amount of new industrial development in its area, such as for approvals of buildings and business premises.

Secondarily, we can observe state *Jabatan Kehakiman Syariah* (Syariah Court Department) and *Majlis Agama Islam* (Islamic Council) both making the top 5 list. This likely indicates a weakness in the information provision ecosystem in the administration of the Islamic judiciary system, although it seems to have tapered off in from 2018 onwards.

**Figure 1: Number of FOI Requests in Penang and Selangor by year (2013-2020)**

*\*Note: 2020 for Selangor only covers January-June 2020.*



**Figure 2: Top Five state government agencies in Penang receiving FOI Requests,**

*Disaggregated by year, ranked by Total Number of FOI requests (2015-2020).*

	Government Agency (Penang)	Year						TOTAL
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
1	Majlis Bandaraya Seberang Perai	20	15	72	159	119	129	514
2	Jabatan Kehakiman Syariah Negeri Pulau Pinang	24	66	16	0	0	0	106
3	Majlis Agama Islam Negeri-negeri Pulau Pinang	11	11	11	3	6	4	46
4	Pejabat Setiausaha Kerajaan Negeri Pulau Pinang	2	12	6	1	1	1	23
5	Majlis Bandaraya Pulau Pinang	13	4	2	0	0	0	19

**Figure 3: Top Five state government agencies in Selangor receiving FOI Requests,**

*Disaggregated by year, ranked by Total Number of FOI requests (2013-2016).*

	Government Agency (Selangor)	Year				Total
		2013	2014	2015	2016	
1	<u>Jabatan Kehakiman</u> Syariah Negeri Selangor	0	34	46	47	127
2	Lembaga Urus Air Selangor	13	25	32	23	93
3	<u>Perbadanan Perpustakaan Awam</u> Negeri Selangor	10	29	17	11	67
4	Majlis <u>Perbandaran</u> Ampang Jaya	0	14	13	19	46
5	<u>Perbadanan Kemajuan</u> Negeri Selangor	0	0	3	41	44

A third trend that emerges is that controversial government bodies, especially the *Pejabat Setiausaha Kerajaan* (State Secretariat Office) as central body, are more likely to receive FOI Requests and are also more likely to reject them (see Figure 4). In Selangor, *Lembaga Urus Air Selangor* (Selangor Water Management Board) and *Perbadanan Kemajuan Negeri Selangor* (State Development Corporation of Selangor, PKNS) have received several cases of public controversy,<sup>25</sup> so it is not surprising that they also receive many FOI requests.

However, just as important is that some FOI requests can be rejected because of the OSA. For example, the following two requests were rejected in Penang:

- A request for the meeting agenda of the permanent committee of the city council was denied as it is classified as secret (*sulit*);
- A request for the meeting agenda of the OSC was denied as it is classified as secret (*sulit*);<sup>26</sup>

In Selangor, a 2015 SELCAT statement also put on record that 5 FOI requests were rejected for 2013-2015, and one of the requests was rejected because “It required the approval of the chief minister”.

<sup>25</sup> As a state land developer, they are ripe for controversy over land disputes and a potential hotbed for cronyism. For example, in 2014 PKNS had plans to develop a sports complex into a commercial development, but was done under conflicting zoning designations. PKNS then had spike of requests (44) from 0 in 2013-2014 in 2016.

<sup>26</sup> Pejabat Setiausaha Kerajaan Bahagian Dewan Undangan Negeri Pulau Pinang, ‘Lampiran Kepada Soalan-Soalan Bertulis, Dewan Undangan Negeri Pulau Pinang yang Ketiga Belas, Mesyuarat pertama, Penggal Persidangan Kelima, Volume 1, dated May 2017, uploaded 27 September 2017, in section ‘Lampiran Soalan YB Datuk Sr Haji Muhad Farid bin Haji Saad’, pp. 1 to xxiv. <https://dun.penang.gov.my/index.php/hansard/category/102-folder-lampiran-bertulis?download=357:lampiran-soalan-ber-tulis-jld-1>

While there may be reasonable grounds for these rejections, at this stage the public/requestor may not know exactly why it was undisclosed, or if it was properly considered. In any case, an FOI officer may err on the side of caution and keep information undisclosed, leaving the actual decision to the appeals board. However, we also detected a weakness that by 2020, neither Selangor or Penang appeals board has met substantially to consider an appeals case.<sup>27</sup> We speculate that the appeals process is not well known or too troublesome for the public to further pursue the issue. As a result, it remains *hypothetical* if the appeals board can effectively order an OSA declassification mechanism to happen.

There are several lessons for a federal-level ATI law. First of all, the state-level enactments demonstrate that ATI mechanisms will be used and can be implemented in Malaysia. Administratively, the quantity of requests being made at the state level does not seem to need full time FOI officers to process the requests—at its peak, 252 requests a year does average out to just under 1 request per working day, and the receipt point are spread across various government departments.<sup>28</sup> Second, more controversial government offices and departments with weaknesses in information delivery are likely to receive more FOI requests and are more likely to deploy the OSA to protect their information, and we should expect the same with certain ministries and federal departments if a federal ATI law should come into effect. This begs soul-searching questions for if, how and what kind of information should be released if it pertains to race, religion and royalty, especially in light of the history of the OSA. Finally, this should not be interpreted to mean that ATI and information request mechanisms can broadly coexist with the OSA. The appeals process at both state and the federal level needs to be able to trigger an OSA declassification if an appeals board or a court deems that it is in the public interest that information should be disclosed.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The Penang appeals board has met at least once, however, it dismissed the case as the appellant did not complete formal appeals procedures.

<sup>28</sup> Assuming 260 working days per year. Hannah Yeoh as part of SELCAT of DUN Selangor mentioned that between 2013-2015, for FOIE administration, training costs amount to RM4,362, while allowances for Information Officers amounted to RM246,000. Thus, a more stringent estimation exercise needs to be conducted to project costs to administer a federal level ATI law. See The Edge Markets, 'Paul Low giving excuses on freedom of information law, says Selangor speaker', 19 August 2015, <https://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/paul-low-giving-excuses-freedom-information-law-says-selangor-speaker>

<sup>29</sup> A public interest test can be developed for the Malaysian context. For a UK example, see: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guidance-index/freedom-of-information-and-environmental-information-regulations/the-public-interest-test/>



## **Conclusion**

The Selangor and Penang state experience demonstrate that it is possible for federal level ATI legislation to exist in Malaysia within the next few years, but hint at potential problems that need to be solved. One can think of the problems at the ‘tactical’ micro level, and then another set at the ‘strategic’ macro level. The micro level issues should be quite surmountable and can be designed—ensuring that civil servants working in their capacity as information officers servicing the requests and generating proactive disclosure documents do not suffer from disclosing government information, budgets and workloads are managed, and that the barriers for effective implementation are progressively lowered.

However, at the macro level, the feasibility of an AT law depends on politicians and decision-makers: they need to decide on how specific thorny issues should be handled. Some more controversial government agencies will likely be made more accountable and held under more scrutiny with an ATI law, and political will and organisational effort needs to prepare all ministries to handle potential controversy. PKNS also shows we also need direction that government-linked corporations should also fall under ATI.

Next, since most of the digitalization and informational management reforms taking place under the purview of MAMPU do not immediately build in citizen’s rights to access information, at best it may only be inform. Finally, some level of OSA reform still needs to be necessary to allow courts to declassify documents in the process of judicial discovery or with a public interest test—in addition to establishing locus standi for citizens to request for information. Failing that, an ATI law may not be such a guarantee of access after all.

## **Data Disaggregation to Make Indigenous People Visible in SDGs**

**by**

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***(with inputs from Zara Phang, WWF-Malaysia)***

As SDGs are quantifiable measures through their indicators, the usefulness of data lies much with its precision, and one key manifestation of precision is data disaggregation. Aggregated data may provide a misleading picture on the state of affairs if the most affected communities, such as indigenous peoples, are too small to be numerically visible. A policy-maker viewing only aggregated data therefore would miss gaps in achievement of goals and targets from these communities, leading to a lack of action to address issues which may affect indigenous groups. Hence, data disaggregation has long been advocated by researchers on and rights advocates of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, Canada, 2009)

“SDGs For Indigenous Peoples”, an exploratory study on how the SDG project may be refined to advance social inclusion for the Indigenous Peoples, by Jeffrey Sachs Centre on Sustainable Development (JSC), Sunway University, commissioned by World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in 2020-2 found that data can be disaggregated on 100 out of 247 indicators besides the current two specifying indigenous peoples, Indicators 2.3.2 and 4.5.1. It also proposes 12 new Indicators under SDG16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and SDG17 Partnership for the Goals.

The SDG indicator data in 2020 provided by the Department of Statistics Malaysia, DOSM (2021) however presents a more acute problem: full or partial unavailability of data, including for Indicators 2.3.2 and 4.5.1 where indigenous peoples are highlighted. Where the empowerment and inclusion of indigenous peoples in Malaysia are concerned, maximum data availability and disaggregation should be a key focus in advocacy.

## The Room for Data Disaggregation in SDG Indicators

Thus far only two indicators have specified the indigenous peoples, namely

*Indicator 2.3.2: Average income of small-scale food producers, by sex and indigenous status*

*Indicator 4.5.1 Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated.*

However, combing through all 247 indicators under 170 targets, we find that data can be disaggregated for 102 indicators under 65 targets to make indigenous peoples and their challenges visible in the SDG works. (Table 1),

**Table 1 Limited Indicators for Which Disaggregated Data is Possible to Make Indigenous Peoples Visible**

No	Goal	With Disaggregated Data			
		IP-visible Targets	%	IP-visible indicators	%
SDG1	No Poverty	5/7	71.43%	7/13	10.92%
SDG2	Zero Hunger	3/8	37.50%	6/15	40.00%
SDG3	Good Health and Well-Being	11/13	84.62%	25/27	92.59%
SDG4	Quality Education	9/10	90.00%	11/12	91.67%
SDG5	Gender Equality	8/9	88.89%	11/14	78.57%
SDG6	Clean Water and Sanitation	2/8	25.00%	2/11	18.18%
SDG7	Affordable and Clean Energy	1/5	20.00%	2/6	33.33%
SDG8	Decent Work and Economic Growth	7/12	58.33%	10/16	62.50%
SDG9	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	2/9	22.22%	2/12	16.67%

No	Goal	With Disaggregated Data			
		IP-visible Targets	%	IP-visible indicators	%
SDG1	No Poverty	5/7	71.43%	7/13	10.92%
SDG1 0	Reduced Inequalities – affirmative actions	3/10	30.00%	3/14	21.43%
SDG1 1	Sustainable cities and communities	4/10	40.00%	5/15	33.33%
SDG1 2	Responsible Consumption and Production	0/11	0.00%	0/13	0.00%
SDG1 3	Climate Action	1/5	20.00%	1/8	12.50%
SDG1 4	Life below Water	0/10	0.00%	0/10	0.00%
SDG1 5	Life on Land	0/12	0.00%	0/14	0.00%
SDG1 6	Peace Justice and Strong Institution	8/12	66.67%	16/24	66.67%
SDG1 7	Partnership for the Goals	1/19	5.26%	1/25	8.00%
	<b>All 17 SDGs</b>	<b>65/170</b>	<b>38.23%</b>	<b>102/247</b>	<b>41.30%</b>

For most of these 102 existing indicators, data should be disaggregated by ethnic group.

The necessary disaggregation of data for these indicators varies. For some, such as

*Indicator 1.1.1 Proportion of population living below the international poverty line aggregated by sex, age, employment status, and geographical location (urban/rural)*

*Indicator 1.3.1: Proportion of population covered by social protection systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, new-borns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable"*

data disaggregation is already in place, but there is no specified mention of indigenous peoples, reflecting an under-appreciation of such need. For some indicators such as

*Indicator 4.a.1 Proportion of schools with access to (a) electricity; (b) the internet for pedagogical purposes; (c) computers for pedagogical purposes; (d) adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities; (e) basic drinking water; (f) single-sex basic sanitation facilities; and (g) basic handwashing facilities (as per the WASH indicator definitions)*

derivative categories like “schools with 50% or more Indigenous Students” and “schools with 20%-<50% Indigenous students” may need to be constructed using the ethnic data of students.

Consideration need to be taken on whether a general indigenous category would suffice or further disaggregation by specific Indigenous ethnic groups is needed. The latter would require accurate collection of ethnic data, which will also help affirm the identity of ethnic groups.

### **Data availability in Malaysia**

For 2020, DOSM had data available – fully, partially, or by proxy – for 146 (59.11%) of the indicators, an improvement from 52% in 2019. (Table 2) The increased availability of data shows both the Malaysian Government’s commitment to SDGs and DOSM’s commendable dedication. However, where indigenous peoples are concerned, data are still much lacking.

For Indicator 2.3.2 (*Average income of small-scale food producers, by sex and indigenous status*), the data was ‘partially available but needs to be developed’, implying that it was not ready for public consumption.

Considering the word ‘indigenous status’ is translated as ‘status pribumi’ in Malay, this points to a fundamental question in the categorisation of indigenous peoples in Malaysia. In comparative usage, indigenous is defined by not just indigeneity, but also non-dominance

status. For example, while ethnic Swedish is native to Sweden, the term ‘indigenous people’ is not used on them but is reserved for the Sami people who constitutes around 1% of its population. In Malaysia, the term “Bumiputera” (sons of soil) would include the politically and demographically dominant Malays alongside the “Orang Asal” in East Malaysia and “Orang Asli” in West Malaysia.

As economist Muhammed Abdul Khalid (2014) argues convincingly in his book “The Colour of Inequality: Ethnicity, Class, Income and Wealth in Malaysia”, such aggregation has in fact concealed the marginalisation and poverty of the Indigenous Peoples within the Bumiputera under the New Economic Policy (NEP). However, even a disaggregation into Sabah Natives and Sarawak Natives may not suffice to identify the non-dominant groups under the umbrella of “natives”. As a policy of affirmative actions, the NEP paradigm has not provided equal opportunity access in upward social mobility through education and employment to most native groups, especially those who refuse to be religiously or culturally assimilated.

**Table 2 Data Availability for SDG Indicators in Malaysia, 2020**

SDG	Available				Partially Available but needs to be developed	Not Available	Not Relevant	Total	Percentage of Availability (%)
	Fully	Partially	by Proxy	Total					
<b>1</b>	4	1	3	<b>8</b>	3	2		<b>13</b>	61.54%
<b>2</b>	4	1	2	<b>7</b>	4	2	1	<b>14</b>	50.00%
<b>3</b>	18	1	6	<b>25</b>	1	2		<b>28</b>	89.29%
<b>4</b>	6	3	2	<b>11</b>	1			<b>12</b>	91.67%
<b>5</b>	4	2	1	<b>7</b>	3	3	1	<b>14</b>	50.00%
<b>6</b>	3	1		<b>4</b>	6		1	<b>11</b>	36.36%
<b>7</b>	3			<b>3</b>	2	1		<b>6</b>	50.00%
<b>8</b>	5	2	4	<b>11</b>	2	1	2	<b>16</b>	68.75%
<b>9</b>	9		2	<b>11</b>			1	<b>12</b>	91.67%
<b>10</b>	3	1	1	<b>5</b>	3	6		<b>14</b>	35.71%
<b>11</b>	4			<b>4</b>	10			<b>14</b>	28.57%

<b>12</b>	5	1	2	<b>8</b>	4	1		<b>13</b>	61.54%
<b>13</b>	6			<b>6</b>		1	1	<b>8</b>	75.00%
<b>14</b>	3		1	<b>4</b>	4	2		<b>10</b>	40.00%
<b>15</b>	4		2	<b>6</b>	7	1		<b>14</b>	42.86%
<b>16</b>	5	1	4	<b>10</b>	12	2		<b>24</b>	41.67%
<b>17</b>	14		2	<b>16</b>	1	1	6	<b>24</b>	66.67%
<b>Tot al</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>59.11%</b>

Source: DOSM (2021) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Indicators Malaysia 2020, page 58

The other indicator where indigenous peoples are specifically underlined, Indicator 4.5.1 (*Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available)* for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated), the data was partially available with the Education Ministry and in the Labour Force Survey. However, the data disaggregation in Labour Force Survey for the indigenous people ends at the “Bumiputera” category.

Aggregated data prevents identification of gaps and inaccuracy and hamper advocacy for necessary actions. For example, Indicator 1.2.1 (proportion of population living below the national poverty line by sex and age) shows only 8.4% of Malaysian populations by 2020 (estimate), and state variation from 0.2% in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya to 12.9% (Sarawak), 21.2% (Kelantan) and 25.3% (Sabah). (DOSM, 2021: 101, Table 1.2.a) How would such instances of poverty be distributed across ethnic groups in Sabah, Kelantan and Sarawak? If disaggregated data by ethnic groups is available, researchers and advocates working on indigenous communities would be able to examine if such distribution is accurate and to identify what needs to be done.

## Conclusion

Without disaggregated data, SDG achievements may be deceiving when indigenous peoples are concerned. As Malaysia deepens its efforts on SDGs, including the establishment of a national SDG centre under the Economic Planning Unit, data disaggregation for indigenous people and other marginalised categories should be made one of the top priorities.

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# Rethinking the Role of Education in Preventing Violent Extremism in Malaysia

by

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper intends to look at the perception and attitudes of young people in Malaysia based on two empirical studies which was the *Undergraduate Radicalisation in Selected Countries in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Quantitative Analysis on the Perception of Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Among Undergraduates in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand* monograph and the *Perception of Malaysian Youth on Unity, Violent Extremism and Hate Speech* report. Subsequently, the paper provides a brief analysis of the violent extremism<sup>30</sup> landscape in Malaysia. Finally, the paper devotes considerable emphasis on a possible framework on how education can be used to prevent and counter violent extremism among young Malaysians.

### The Perception of Young Malaysians

*Insights from the Undergraduate Radicalisation in Selected Countries in Southeast Asia<sup>31</sup> monograph.*

In this study,<sup>32</sup> 21% of Malaysian undergraduates agreed that violent extremism was an effective strategy to achieve an objective. 7% of the undergraduates believed that violent extremism, even when it was defined as taking the lives of civilians, was not illegal or unethical. 20% of the Malaysian undergraduates surveyed were willing to visit a violent extremist site. More than half (14%) of those who were willing to visit such websites were even keen to further engage with the terrorists by chatting with them online.

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<sup>30</sup> The terms 'violent extremism' and 'terrorism' is used interchangeably in this paper and is defined as criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes.

<sup>31</sup> Samuel, T.K. (2018). *Undergraduate Radicalisation in Selected Countries in Southeast Asia*, Kuala Lumpur: Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia.

<sup>32</sup> This study was conducted by the author in 2018 when he was based in the Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT) and was funded through the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF). For the Malaysian component of the study, a total of 2,116 Malaysian undergraduates in Malaysian universities were surveyed but only 1,989 (94.0%) were completed accurately.

Most of the Malaysian undergraduates (52%) believed that radical ideas were the first step in the pathway of radicalisation, and it was significant that more than half of them (52%) were also of the opinion that there was potential for them as undergraduates to develop radical ideas such as violent extremism. What was also of concern was their assessment that once they developed such ideas, it was very well possible for them to move on to actually conduct acts of violent extremism.

The majority of the undergraduates (54%) did not know of non-violent alternatives to address grievances. Also, they (59%) believed if such awareness was indeed present, there was the possibility that fewer people would then resort to violence. More than half (53%) of the undergraduates felt that non-violence was a possible alternative as a strategy to address injustice.

*Insights from the Perception of Malaysian Youth on Unity, Violent Extremism and Hate Speech report*

In this study,<sup>33</sup> 16% of Malaysian youth felt that violent extremism in certain situations and circumstances was permissible. 15% of the respondents believed that messages that promoted violent extremism was not always wrong. 11% felt that in certain circumstances and situations, they would consider violent extremism.

67% of the respondents felt that Malaysian youth could be drawn to violent extremism if they lacked an outlet to release their frustration while 62% felt that this was the case when the youths lacked an opportunity to do something meaningful with their lives. It is significant to note that 20% of the respondents were personally sympathetic to the cause of the terrorists, 6% would personally consider joining a terrorist organisation while 20% were sympathetic towards those who promote violent extremism.

When considering how the pandemic has affected young Malaysians, 64% of the respondents believed that because of the pandemic, they were more vulnerable mentally while 65% felt more vulnerable emotionally. It is also significant to note that during the pandemic, 31% of the respondents felt that they were more willing to befriend an individual regardless of his or her

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<sup>33</sup> This yet to be published report was conducted by the author on February 2022 and was funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Malaysia. This on-line survey had 1,192 respondents but only 828 (69.46%) were accepted. There were 75 respondents between the ages of 15 to 17, 568 respondents between the ages of 18 to 22, 177 respondents between the ages of 23 to 27 and 8 respondents between the ages of 28 to 30.

views on violent extremism and hate speech, so long as they (i.e. the youth) were shown empathy and sympathy.

91% of the youth believed that Malaysians believed should be taught about peace. With regards to education in preventing violent extremism, 94% of the respondents believed that education was an important factor in the prevention of violent extremism while 66% of them believed that specific programmes on the dangers of violent extremism would be most effective when conducted in schools or universities as part of the syllabus and curriculum. 85% of the respondents believe that to prevent violent extremism in Malaysia, it would be best to focus on learning specifically about the dangers of extremism, violent extremism and hate speech in school and university and 82% of them believed that schools and universities were best place for this to happen. 69% of the Malaysian youth trusted their teachers while 86% felt that the suitable people to teach them about peace were teachers and lecturers. Specifically, 69% believed that teachers were the suitable people to guide them on preventing violent extremism and hate speech. It is also significant to note that 82% of young Malaysians felt that most people would consider using the strategy of non-violence if they had learned about its effectiveness in school or university.

### **Lessons Learned**

There is a small minority of young people in Malaysia who were open to considering violent extremism as a means to achieve one's objectives or as a legitimate route to address grievances. There is also a significant minority who are neutral and have yet to make up their minds on the morality and legitimacy of violent extremism.

The majority of young Malaysians were not aware of non-violent alternatives to address grievances. Interestingly, they believed if such awareness was available, fewer people would then resort to violence.

The majority of young Malaysians were of the opinion that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected them mentally and emotionally. It is significant to note that in their opinion, this vulnerability made them more accepting to violent extremists so long as the latter showed the former sympathy and empathy.

Young Malaysians were very keen that education in Malaysia play a more direct and comprehensive role in preventing violent extremism. They were also very accepting of the possibility that schools and universities be the venue for this to happen and were very much open for teachers and lecturers to be the ones delivering the content.

### **Violent Extremism Landscape in Malaysia**

According to the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP),<sup>34</sup> the violent extremism threat level in Malaysia is assessed to be ‘probable’ and this is due to three factors, namely strong intentions and capabilities by terrorist actors, exploitation of ideology and easy access to materials enabling radicalisation. Since 2013, a total of 559 individuals have been arrested on terrorism related issues. Out of these, 506 (90.52%) were males and 53 (9.48%) were females. Out of the 559 individuals arrested on terrorism related issues, 362 (64.76%) were Malaysians and 197 (35.24%) were non-Malaysians. In 2012, the RMP started detecting Malaysians recruiting other Malaysians to fight in Syria. According to the RMP, 54 Malaysians still remain in Syria and Iraq. They also revealed that 17 Malaysians linked to terrorism had returned from Syria and Iraq to Malaysia. The reasons that they had returned to Malaysia included the feeling that they were unfairly treated, the perception that they were only given menial work such as sentry and domestic duties, the perception that achieving martyrdom or *syahid* was not achievable, family issues and problems and injury or health problems. The RMP believes that 51 Malaysians have either been killed or died in Syria and Iraq.<sup>35</sup>

### **Case Studies: Young Malaysians and Violent Extremism**

On 26 May 2014, 27- year old Ahmad Tarmimi Maliki became the first Malaysian suicide bomber linked to *Daesh* when he killed 25 elite Iraqi soldiers at Iraq’s SWAT headquarters in the al-Anbar province. He did this by driving a ‘military SUV which was filled with tonnes of explosives’ into the SWAT headquarters killing himself in the process. This was then reported in *Daesh*’s official website with the heading, *Mujahidin Malaysia Syahid Dalam Operasi*

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<sup>34</sup> Communications with DCP Normah Ishak (E8, Special Branch, Royal Malaysian Police) on ASP Mohammad Muzhafar Mohammed Yusoff, E8, Special Branch, Royal Malaysian Police (RMP), 24 May 2021.

<sup>35</sup> Communications with Special Branch, Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) in May 2022.

*Martyrdom* describing Tarmimi as Malaysia's first suicide bomber.<sup>36</sup> He was 27-years old when he died.<sup>37</sup>

In 2014, 26-year old Muhammad Wanndy Mohamed Jedi left for Syria with his wife. He was subsequently killed on 26 April 2017 in a drone attack there. He came to the limelight when he appeared in a video that showed the beheading of a Syrian man. He was credited to be the mastermind behind the Movidia-Puchong attack which injured eight people in June 2016 and which thus far, remains the sole Daesh inspired attack in Malaysia.<sup>38</sup> Given these developments, Wanndy was named 'Specially Designated Global Terrorist' making him a 'high-profile target for law enforcement agencies worldwide'.<sup>39</sup>

Sham, a 26-year old Malaysian female who claimed to be a doctor started a blog called '*Diary of a Muhajirah*'. She used the moniker 'Bird of Jannah' to relate her experience in becoming a *Daesh* fighter. She claimed to have travelled from Malaysia to Syria and had married Moroccan born-fighter Abu Barra. Sham's blog gained tremendous following as she was successful in humanising a group which was primarily known for beheading its adversaries.<sup>40</sup>

### **Radicalisation in schools and universities**

School children have in the past been exploited by violent extremists to carry out acts of violence. In Southeast Asia, schools were often the 'go-to' source for violent extremists to actively radicalise and recruit.<sup>41</sup> For example, hundreds of Indonesians, Malaysians and

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<sup>36</sup> Samuel, T.K., Don't-Lah Wei: A Peer-to-Peer Resource Guide on Ensuring that Your Kawan Never Becomes a Terrorist. Kuala Lumpur: Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, 2018.

<sup>37</sup> ISIS and the first Malaysian suicide bomber - Nation | The Star Online. (2014, June 14). Retrieved on 6 April 2018 from <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2014/06/14/isis-and-the-first-malaysian-suicide-bomber/>

<sup>38</sup> Samuel, T.K., Don't-Lah Wei: A Peer-to-Peer Resource Guide on Ensuring that Your Kawan Never Becomes a Terrorist. Kuala Lumpur: Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, 2018.

<sup>39</sup> Top Malaysian ISIL operative killed in Syria, Aljazeera, 9 May 2017. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/top-malaysian-isil-operative-killed-syria17050818>Final Editing (9 January 2018).docx2519182.html

<sup>40</sup> Samuel, T.K., Don't-Lah Wei: A Peer-to-Peer Resource Guide on Ensuring that Your Kawan Never Becomes a Terrorist. Kuala Lumpur: Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Samuel, T.K. (2012). *Reaching the Youth: Countering the Terrorist Narrative*, Kuala Lumpur: Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia.

Filipinos, among them students, volunteered as Mujahideen warriors to fight in Afghanistan and returned radicalised.<sup>42</sup> In the Philippines, the ASG had a policy of selecting only the “brightest and toughest students who were willing to fight for their religious cause.”<sup>43</sup> In some cases, violent extremist groups established religious schools and then provided financial scholarships, making it extremely attractive for students to study in such institutions.

In the case of universities, violent extremists have looked at such institutions as a source of recruitment and support. In their eyes, these undergraduate students were seen “as a strategic target audience and that by recruiting them, the violent extremist network would be able to build up a support base amongst a group that might one day become influencers themselves in the wider community and future leaders”<sup>44</sup>. Peter Neumann observed that, “universities were places of vulnerability” because undergraduates were young, “often away from home for the first time, feeling quite lost and often experiencing a sort of crisis of identity”. According to him, this made it easy for “extremist groups to pick them up and to say to them, “Come along to our meeting, we are like you”.”<sup>45</sup> Ramakrishna highlighted that the majority of undergraduates who were young were ‘still maturing both emotionally and intellectually’ making them “susceptible to idealistic appeals from charismatic ideologues who seem to have clear-cut answers for the confusion that these undergraduates might feel about the world around them”<sup>46</sup>. Universities were also used as a venue of propaganda by foreign students and lecturers from countries that were in conflict zones. Lecture sessions were ‘hijacked’ to ‘preach’ and describe the injustice and atrocities taking place in their respective countries. It was then possible that

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<sup>42</sup> Welch, A. (2015). *Countering Campus Extremism in Southeast Asia*, International Higher Education, No. 82. URL: <https://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/ihe/article/viewFile/8864/7935> (accessed on 2 April 2020).

<sup>43</sup> Samuel, T.K. (2012). *Reaching the Youth: Countering the Terrorist Narrative*, Kuala Lumpur: Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia.

<sup>44</sup> Samuel, T.K. (2018b). *Undergraduate Radicalisation in Selected Countries in Southeast Asia*, Kuala Lumpur: Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia.

<sup>45</sup> *Roots of Violent Radicalisation*, House of Commons, Home Affairs Committee, 19th Report of Session 2010-2012, February 2012, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmhaff/1446/1446.pdf> (Accessed on 13 March 2020).

<sup>46</sup> Samuel, T.K. (2018b). *Undergraduate Radicalisation in Selected Countries in Southeast Asia*, Kuala Lumpur: Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia.

these lecturers could influence their undergraduate students into believing that the ‘propaganda of the deed’ was the only route available in addressing grievances<sup>47</sup>.

### **Whole-of-Education approach: Rethinking education in preventing violent extremism in Malaysia**

In this regard, there is the distinct possibility that education in Malaysia could be a pivotal tool in preventing violent extremism. The education ministry could play a significant role in ensuring that the values and insights taught and subsequently reinforced in a young Malaysian at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, will remain and stand the best chance to be an effective defence and ‘firewall’ against possible future violent radicalisation. This would mean that the Malaysian education system would now envision and plan to protect a Malaysian student against violent extremist radicalisation in the ten to twelve years that the student was in the institution of learning as well as to teach, inspire and equip the student with all that is necessary to be able to be in the best position to withstand the process of radicalisation, in the event that it happens in future.<sup>48</sup>

Given this challenging role, the Malaysian education sector needs to re-evaluate and consider the following steps: (i) Identify specific areas in the cognitive and emotional spheres that it intends to build resilience and fortitude; (ii) Target and teach specific qualities that it intends to develop during particular window periods (for example, focusing on developing qualities such as tolerance and compassion during the primary schooling while emphasising empathy, appreciation of diversity and critical thinking during the secondary/tertiary schooling, etc.); (iii) Seek outside assistance in reinforcing PCVE content to students (for example by utilising rehabilitated terrorists, victims of terrorism, religious and spiritual mentors, social media influencers and celebrities to heighten the reach, appeal and impact of the PCVE narratives); (iv) Develop a Malaysian syllabus on preventing violent extremism that would cover all the relevant issues and ensure its continuity for the student from primary to secondary and even to tertiary levels; (v) Train specialised teachers at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels not

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<sup>47</sup> Bedi, R.S. (4 July 2010). *Falling into the Extremists Net*, The Star Online. URL: <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2010/07/04/falling-into-the-extremists-net/> (accessed on 24 April 2020).

<sup>48</sup> *At the Crossroads: Rethinking the Role of Education in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE)* in the *Handbook of Terrorism Prevention and Preparedness*, edited by Alex P. Schmid, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT), the Hague, November 2020. <https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2021/10/Chapter-7-Handbook.pdf>

only to teach, mentor and guide the students in discussing PCVE issues but also in being able to recognise and detect possible signs of radicalisation; (vi) Develop and build networks of specialised expertise, for example psychologists, youth counsellors, religious leaders and even the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP), for teachers to seek help or even to refer students who are showing signs of worrying behaviour which might be beyond the expertise of the teacher to handle; and (vii) Develop a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to assess, rectify and modify all the efforts being undertaken at the working and policy levels within the education sector.<sup>49</sup>

Essentially, a wholistic and comprehensive approach is suggested when looking at education and preventing violent extremism in Malaysia. This Whole-of-Education PCVE approach would seek to impart and instil values and knowledge associated with preventing violent extremism in a comprehensive and methodical manner, through various approaches and interventions, spanning the students' entire academic and extra-curricular journey, from nursery to university.

### Seeking help

While teachers would play the main role in preventing violent extremism in educational institutes, it would be counter-productive to assume that they were the only channels to reach and impact the students. In this regard, rehabilitated violent extremists, victims of violent extremism, influencers, celebrities and youth heroes have tremendous potential to make a significant impact when it comes to preventing violent extremism among the youth.

### Inculcation of 'mental and emotional firewalls' in students

The Malaysian education sector could also consider designing and deploying both mental and emotional 'firewalls' into the hearts and minds of the students whereby certain skill-sets and values such as critical thinking, empathy, diversity, resilience, and awareness on the failure of violence and the power of non-violence should be developed and institutionalised into our education system. These firewalls could provide a possible barrier against the proliferation of violent extremist ideologies among young Malaysians.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*



Education in Malaysia has the potential to play a significant role in preventing violent extremism amongst young Malaysians. Given the time that most Malaysians spend in school and university and their access to trained and qualified teachers, leveraging on the education system to develop and deliver curricula, syllabus, activities and programmes in an age-appropriate manner could be a powerful tool in preventing and countering violent extremism among the Malaysian youth. This paper would like to make the case that given the vulnerability of young Malaysians towards violent extremism, there is a plausible need to revisit the role of education in Malaysia to expand its mandate, resources and delivery mechanism to become a primary source for preventing violent extremism among Malaysian youth.

## Chapter 10: SDG & PARTNERSHIP



1. CSOs as Solution Providers - Opportunities and Challenges - **K. Eruthairaj** (SDG Society)

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2. Realising SDGs 16 and 17 through Impact Evaluation of SDG projects in Malaysia - **Prof. Dato' Dr. Rashila Ramli & Prof Dr. Sity Daud** (PSSM)

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3. A Mid-Term Review of Malaysia Civil Society Organisation in Engaging Youths in SDG Implementation - **Zoel Ng**, Philus George (SDG Society) & Mohd Idham Mohd Yusof (Universiti Teknologi MARA-UiTM)

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4. The Whole of Society Approach - **Jeffery FK Phang** (MyPJ)

## **CSOs As Solution Providers – Opportunities and Challenges**

**By**

**K.Eruthaiaraj**

**APPGM-SDG**

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper reviews the role of CSOs in the alliance from the year 2015 – 2022. The review will objectively analyze the change in the role from 2015 and now. The review will aim to answer some key questions such as, what organizational and leadership structural change has taken place since 2015 and now? who are the members then and now? What are the opportunities and challenges and change trends? Has the role changed from advocacy to service at the grassroots or vice versa? The geographical locations of the alliance members will also be reviewed to understand the distribution of the CSO members in rural and interior areas apart from the Klang Valley Base.

The review also acknowledges the role of CSOs from 2015 to 2019 that were heavily based on advocacy work and have actively participated in providing inputs in the 11 & 12<sup>th</sup> MP and both VNRs (2017 & 2021). It also highlights the challenges of the CSOS members that are not able to run service-oriented and conduct projects at the grassroots level.

CSOs have active roles in both advocacy and service at the grassroots. The review demonstrates that both roles are important and cannot be separated in service to the community. Since 2020, the membership of the alliance has attracted more CSOs who are service-based oriented and active at the grassroots. Therefore, from 2015 to 2022, the alliance membership has increased from 56 members as of 2020 to 72 who are contributing actively to localizing SDGs in 2022.

The partnership modal that promotes SDG 17.17 will be the base of the review paper to strengthen grassroots-based CSO in advocating the voices of the marginalized and addressing local issues by undertaking SDG micro projects. The review quotes the example of APPGM-SDG from 2020 to 2022 in undertaking 236 Micro SDG-based projects in 57 Parliamentary Constituencies with 120 solution providers at the grassroots level reaching communities both at the Klang Valley and the interior locations.

The review concludes that the CSOs need to have a good equilibrium in advocacy and service at the grassroots. Leadership transition and building a strong team for the next generation is of the utmost importance to continue the legacy to ensure leaving no one behind.

**Keywords: CSO, Solution Providers, Micro SDG Projects, Grassroot**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance was formed as a forum of concerned citizens and organizations to undertake the facets of Sustainable Development Goals to address national, state, district, and local communities issues and policy concerns. The alliance was initiated on October 27, 2015, a month later in September when global leaders met at the United Nations and universally agreed to undertake SDGs as a core framework to address global and respective country issues. The SDG replaced the Millennium Development Goals to take on the challenges and the multi-dimensional issues faced by 193 participating countries. The approach is to apply the framework of SDGs in all development plans for the country.

Since October 2015, The Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance has been active in SDG matters as a network of organizations involved in economic, social, and environmental development concerns. The Alliance is a member of the National Steering Committee established by the Economic Planning Unit in 2016 and has actively participated in all national seminars, including providing input to the Malaysian VNR in 2017 and 2021 and the National SDG Roadmap.

The members of the Alliance have multi-disciplinary expertise that has a common passion which is to raise awareness and discuss policy matters in addressing poverty, environment, social development, matters related to peace and justice, and good governance. This is the identity of the forum that has a strong inclination and genuine concern to build the multi-stakeholder partnership to build a better Malaysia for all.

The forum has no organized structure that governs the forum but it is rather a flexible structure that has two members as chair and co-chair that provides directions and organize activities with collective decisions from the participating members in deciding an activity or any press statement that concerns national matters

Over the period the forum has galvanized membership from 72 active organizations along with some prominent organizations that joined as umbrella organizations like the National Council of Women's Organization (NCWO), MENGO, UN Global Compact, FOMCA has affiliates and individual organizations that could be national or local bodies such as PROHAM<sup>50</sup>

The Alliance has made a significant contribution to championing the SDG and the Agenda 2030 with numerous discussions, seminars, RTDs, and conferences engaging government agencies at the federal, state, district, and local levels. Persuading lawmakers and government key officers to address some major policy concerns such as corruption, statelessness, environment degradation, structural reforms, inclusivity, and justice for marginalized communities. This needs a strong political will and a strong human rights-based approach that has been neglected seriously. The Alliance has made perfect inroads in making this clear in all forum discussions with government agencies, and the members of parliament.

The partnership modal has a multi-sectoral partnership that conglomerates different players and sectors to find a common ground to discuss matters that are most close to the marginalized and neglected groups and the key focus here is only have been policy advocacy and not matching in addressing the real issues at the grassroots level.

This has been the challenge of the Alliance which is unable to coordinate the projects that need to build the capacity to raise ground support to create and become a strong push factor to initiate change at the higher level to influence policymakers. This needs a strong grassroots movement or rather an army of grassroots champions ushering the change from the bottom up.

### **The Alliance Journey from 2015 to 2019**

From October 2015 to 2019, the Alliance has been active in advocating the rights of the marginalized and addressing their concerns through various forums, and dialogues. The Alliance served as a coordinating network of civil society organizations that made direct representation to the EPU on SDG matters

CSO & NGOs with a focus on economic, social, and environmental concerns began to network on both national and global development agendas. These included organizations working

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<sup>50</sup> Denison Jayasooria, Alliance Governance Paper, Pg 4 (2022)  
Annual Report, Pg 72 (2020)

among children and youths, women, indigenous people, the poor (rural and urban), and disabled people, including human rights organizations, and social and environmental organizations.

The Alliance has been active in providing input to the formulation of the SDG Roadmap and the National Voluntary Review (2017 and 2021). Since 2016, the Alliance has been a member of the National SDG Steering Committee, which was formed by the Economic Planning Unit, PM Department. It participated in national SDG gatherings in 2016 and 2019 as well as has been active at the global level at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2017 and 2021 when Malaysia tabled the VNR report.

In the early years of the Alliance (2015 – 2019), the Alliance played a major role in policy advocacy and has been active in the CSO Reform Group, which is a wide national network of CSOs in Malaysia since its founding in 2018 as the sustainability cluster<sup>51</sup>

The role of the Alliance began to take a shift after the formation of the All Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG) in October 2019. The Alliance became the secretariat and took a major agenda for the promotion of SDGs at the local level by working with the members of parliament at greater length in localizing SDGs with a bottom-up approach mobilizing grassroots communities for reform and social change.

### **Alliance Journey from 2020 and Beyond**

The Alliance is known for its reform agenda and policy advocacy. The members of the Alliance have been active in raising the issues of the *rakyat* in all public lectures and forums, and dialogues. Hence when meeting with federal and state actors, the members are known for their strong voice and for pushing hard on matters related to human rights and highlighting systemic weaknesses in addressing national issues.

This sometimes or most of the time keeps the agencies aloof and *'fear'* of facing some strong agencies and characters in the Alliance. Well, this is good at providing pressure at the national level to push for better governance and to strategize ways to institutional change and implement government policies but what good does this structural change do for the communities at the

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<sup>51</sup> Denison Jayasooria, Alliance Governance Paper Pg. 3 (2022)  
Annual Report, Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance, Pg 72 (2020)

local level to appreciate the change at the national level without the people's participation from the ground?

The APPGM-SDG has played a key role to feel the vacuum by engaging people from the grassroots communities through community-led SDG Micro Solution Projects. In 2020, the work of APPGM-SDG began in 10 Parliamentary constituencies then in 2021 gradually moved into 20 parliamentary constituencies and in 2022 we are in 27 parliamentary constituencies. Now in total, the work has enlarged to 57 constituencies in the mammoth task of localizing SDG by engaging local solution providers and grassroots communities. From 2020 to 2022 APPGM-SDG conducted **236 projects** engaging **120 community-Based Solution Providers** in 57 parliamentary constituencies. From this figure, **30 (25%)** organizations are registered as members of the Alliance since 2021 and 2022. It is expected there will more new organizations that just started projects with APPGM-SDG will register as members by the end of December 2022.

These organizations are the ones that provide feedback on the ground needs and they are the grassroots champions that mobilize the local communities to address the ground-based issue and provide input for policy development for the respective parliamentarians to be brought up at the parliament to find concrete solutions on the issues that centers on three main themes- social, economic and environment.

APPGM-SDG adopts a grounded research methodology as its operationalize framework that engages with the local community to understand the local issues and the ground needs and sentiments. This methodology gives equal attention to the process and attainment of the SDGs and a policy evaluation on the development delivery to uphold the global Agenda 2030 principle of Leaving No One Behind. The research methodology for localizing the SDG by the APPGM-SDG comprises four main scopes of work- issue mapping, prioritization of issues, situational analysis, and solutions identifications<sup>52</sup>.

To achieve the principle of 'Leaving no one behind it requires active participation from all stakeholders as listed in the UN Sustainable Development Goals Charter, Goal 17.17 which reads, "Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnership"<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Annual Report, Research Methodologies for Localising SDGs, Pg 30 (2022)

<sup>53</sup> Sustainable Development Goals, SDG Indicators, Pg.29 (2017)

The Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance being the strong partner to the APPGM-SDG has been playing a major role in strengthening the functions of APGGM- SDG in the areas of research, Issue mapping visits, capacity building for the solution providers, local communities, and government agencies, providing support as review persons in evaluating the proposals, as subject matter experts in delivering talks, RTDs, dialogues and forums, policy advocacy based on the policy issues identified during the issues mapping, writing thematic based case studies and situational analysis reports. The Alliance members who are senior in their services in the areas of policy advocacy on some key issues such as environment, poverty, food security, and gender have been providing good guidance and support to the secretariat team as mentors and resource persons to strengthen the policy development work of APPGM-SDG. Having said this, the Alliance has to move beyond the current role and be active at the grassroots level, to instill change and reform from a bottom approach point of view vis a vis educating local communities and building their capacity to take ownership and empower them to voice out their issues laudably and be vigilant and responsible citizenry based on human rights approach. This is very much lacking on the ground. Advocacy groups are active and laud at the national, regional, and global but not at the local and grassroots level which is the most neglected.

### **Some Challenges and Way Forward**

Therefore, Alliance has to be more visible on the ground to address grassroots issues and provide solutions to the issues at the local level. This has been a major setback in most organizations based in the Klang Valley. These organizations are heavily based in the Klang Valley, and almost **75%** and these organizations are advocacy in nature championing issues related to the environment, justice, gender, inequality, structural reform, and human rights. These organizations have no representatives at the state and local levels.

So this challenge was only realized when APPGM-SDG called for the proposal to apply for micro SDG Solution Projects-grants to localize SDG in the local community to the alliance members. To the dismay of APPGM-SDG, no takers from the alliance members to run the projects except for the ones who are from the APPGM SDG Solution providers who have become the new members of the Alliance.



The personalities who have been very active in the alliance and who have been passionately championing reforms and striving for a better Malaysia have to train new and young minds to take on the baton and continue the legacy. The leadership change is imminent only when the current leadership identifies the right individual and mentors and the transition will be more viable and productive in near future.

## **Conclusion**

The Alliance serves as a forum and, therefore adds a significant contribution to the larger spectrum of localizing SDGs at the local level. However, this has to begin from the bottom pyramid of the community. The alliance with APPGM-SDG and the concerned stakeholders from the national and state actors contributes eminently to the effort of localizing SDG. This is made possible by the following initiatives:-

- Building a strong CSO-NGO network of organizations and government agencies and private sectors committed to SDGs
- Providing the platform for CSOs in policy advocacy aspects on SDGs with agencies
- Undertaking active promotion of SDGs
- Ensuring effective localization of SDGs
- Serving as the secretariat of the APPGM SDG
- Capacity building for federal and state government officers on good governance, justice, and human rights-based approach service to the community
- Hosting policy advocacy forums on national matters and human rights

It is important to understand and take action and this can be the way forward for the future, that advocacy-based organization has it responsibility to also have strong grassroots touch and appreciation at the local level, Building a resilience community needs organizations to work closely with the community, handholding and working towards building trust in the process for community cohesion and change.

The grassroots-based organization desires to see communities rising as one voice to advocate local concerns and what they want best for their communities by taking ownership and working

along with the elected representatives, local government, state, and federal agencies in multilateral partnership in addressing community concerns taking on a human rights approach; as to ensure the voices of the people are heard, the poor, the disabled, children, elderly, migrants, youths, refugees as in the 2030 Global Agenda theme beautifully spelled out, Leaving No One Behind. *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."* -**Margaret Mead**<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> <https://www.idealists.org/en/careers/20-quotes-inspire-and-committ-to-social-change>

# **Realizing SDGs 16 and 17 through Impact Evaluation of SDG projects in Malaysia**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

SDGs 16 and SD17 are two goals which cut across all SDGs. Without good governance of institutions or organizations, most programs will not be implemented well. Furthermore, partnerships with many stakeholders are needed to maximize output and outcome. The All Party Parliamentary Group on SDG (APPGM-SDG) is an organization which places high value on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) which is Target 16.6 under SDG 16. Furthermore, it places special importance on multi-stakeholdership. This paper focuses on APPGM-SDG efforts in realizing SDGs 16 and 17 through the execution of its M&E process in its effort to localize SDGs in Malaysia. This is in line with issues of governance as discussed in the Malaysian VNR 2021. Localising Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a process of adapting the content of SDGs to a specific locality by taking into consideration the needs of the people most affected by certain issues, cultural norms of the community and stakeholders' commitment. M&E of APPGM is seen as a pioneering effort to analyse impacts on SDGs in relations to targets and indicators relevant to the evaluation of SDGs programmes at the local level and subsequently extended to the national level. Under APPGM, there are 34 Solution projects which were implemented in 2020. This paper discusses the Impact Evaluation methodology, as well as qualitative and quantitative findings. The findings show that M&E is an integral part of any project in order to uphold good governance as stated in Malaysia Voluntary National Reports 2017 and 2021. In reviewing the 34 projects using the 5Ps of SDGs, the most impactful programs are related to PEOPLE (55%), followed by PROSPERITY (33%). Moreover, while SDG17 is seen as cross-cutting, not a single solution project focuses on Partnership. However, lack of partnership is recognized as a major source of the failure in implementation.

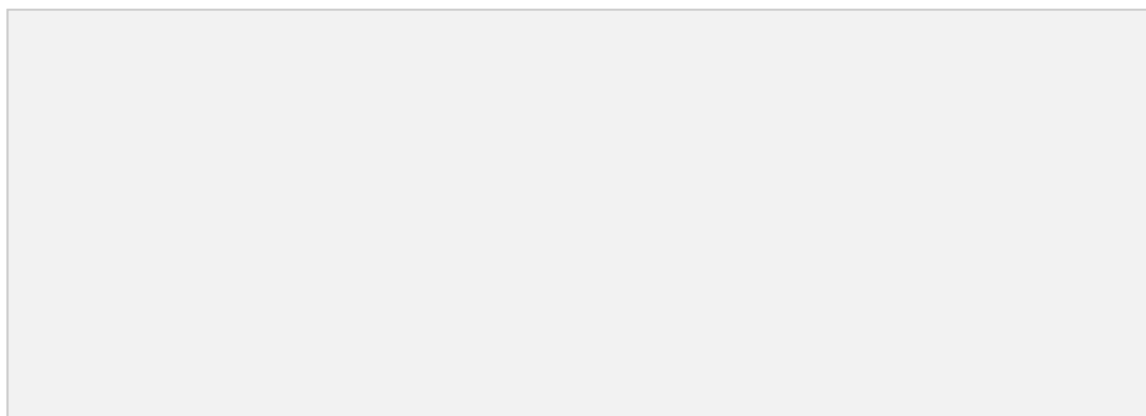
**Key words: SDGs, good governance, community, solution providers, monitoring, impact evaluation**

## **INTRODUCTION**

SDGs 16 and SD17 are two goals which cut across all SDGs. Without good governance of institutions or organizations, most programs will not be implemented well. Furthermore, partnerships with many stakeholders are needed to maximize output and outcome. The All Party Parliamentary Group on SDG (APPGM-SDG) is an organization which places high value on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) which is Target 16.6 under SDG 16. Furthermore, it places special importance on multi-stakeholdership. This paper focuses on APPGM-SDG efforts in realizing SDGs 16 and 17 through the execution of its M&E process in its effort to localize SDGs in Malaysia. This is in line with issues of governance as discussed in the Malaysian VNR 2021. Localising Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a process of adapting the content of SDGs to a specific locality by taking into consideration the needs of the people most affected by certain issues, cultural norms of the community and stakeholders' commitment. M&E of APPGM is seen as a pioneering effort to analyse the impacts of SDGs in relation to targets and indicators relevant to the evaluation of SDGs programmes at the local level and subsequently extended to the national level. Under APPGM, there are 34 Solution projects which were implemented in 2020. This paper discusses the Impact Evaluation methodology, as well as qualitative and quantitative findings. The findings show that M&E is an integral part of any project in order to uphold good governance as stated in Malaysia Voluntary National Reports 2017 and 2021. In reviewing the 34 projects using the 5Ps of SDGs, the most impactful programs are related to PEOPLE (55%), followed by PROSPERITY (33%). While SDG17 is seen as cross-cutting, not a single solution project focuses on Partnership. However, lack of partnership is recognized as a major source of the failure in implementation. Therefore, the progress of those projects must be monitored and evaluated for its impacts.

## Research method

M&E is an integral part of any project to assess the impact of a project. Monitoring is viewed as a process of gathering information to compare actual use of project inputs and completed outputs with the planned use of inputs and completed outputs. Evaluation is the process of gathering information to assess the effects and impact of a project. The study utilises a mixed-method research but predominantly qualitative especially for ground work through document analysis, focus group discussions and interviews with key informants. This ground work is organised along three steps of information gathering and data collection method. The project also incorporates quantitative method of data collection through scoring on impact evaluation to complement the ground work. What are the three steps and their rationales are explained as follows.



**Figure 1 Methodology for IE: IE Three-step Approach**

The three steps of social inquiry began with an impact identification stage. At this stage, evaluators studied all related documents on the projects assigned to them. Documents comprise of proposal, progress/completion report, and mid-term review report (MTR). Documents review is important to compare the objectives of project and outcomes and/or output. Face to face and online interviews were conducted with project leaders/managers to check on the progress of projects. This identification stage of impacts is very important as some of the projects were affected by the movement restrictions order following the spread of Covid-19 since March 2020.

Step two which is impact verification is another level of data collection and analysis. At this stage, online interviews with beneficiaries and stakeholders were conducted to verify the data

obtained in step 1. Focus group discussions were organized in a workshop attended by evaluators and selected beneficiaries and stakeholders to confirm or negate the impacts. The instrument for this purpose of verifying impacts is APPGM Impact Evaluation Analysis Sheet.

The last step is impact validation which is the final stage of evaluation of project impacts. At this stage, online interviews were conducted to validate the data obtained in steps 1 & 2. Focus group discussions were organized in a workshop attended by evaluators and MP officers to confirm or negate the impacts. The instrument for this purpose of validating impacts are template for final report by evaluator and template for consolidated report by core team.

**Table 1 Procedures of IE Three-step approach**

<b>Step 1: Impact identification</b>	<b>Step 2: Impact verification</b>	<b>Step 3: Impact validation</b>
<p>Review all Proposal, Progress Reports, MTR Report Final Report, Financial Report to compare data in schedule, and impacts as written out in the reports. Evidence of impacts can be in the outputs such as modules, videos, testimonials as well as reports.</p> <p>Evaluators to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- identify the types of expected impacts based on the proposed outcomes of each project.</li> <li>- to analyse preliminary impacts on stakeholders</li> <li>- to identify the 5 impacts.</li> </ul> <p><b>Instrument: APPGM Impact Identification Sheet</b></p>	<p>Input from beneficiaries through interview in FGD with beneficiaries of projects by MEG evaluators (11 of them to do 3-4 projects each)</p> <p>Evaluators to identify the impacts from the beneficiaries</p> <p><b>Instrument: APPGM Impact Evaluation Analysis Sheet</b></p>	<p>Input from stakeholders through interview in FGD with stakeholders of projects by MEG evaluators (11 of them to do 3-4 projects each)</p> <p>Evaluators to confirm/negate impacts with stakeholders (MPs Officers)</p> <p><b>Instrument: APPGM Impact Validation Analysis Sheet</b></p>

Based on the documents available per project, the Midterm review report and the interviews that evaluators had with beneficiaries of projects, evaluators are asked to provide their views on the 5 areas of impacts. In order to give their scores, evaluators are guided by the Scoring Guideline on Impact Evaluation.

**Table 2 Scoring Guideline on Impact Evaluation**

<b>IMPACTS</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>DEEP (PERSONAL)</b>	No changes	Indicated some areas of self awareness in confidence	Some changes in self confidence	Profound change in confidence, self esteem	Grateful for the changes in self
<b>CLEAR (SKILLS)</b>	No new skills gained	Improvement to present skills	Learn new skills	New skills can be used to improve own work	Skills can be used to generate income
<b>WIDE (NETWORK)</b>	Did not form any network	Identify some possible networks	Made new friends and network to enhance own work	Connected with new network after the program	Planning to cooperate with network in the future
<b>HIGH (SYSTEM)</b>	No new guidelines/SOP/ TOR	Indication of intent to create SOP	Starting to create Guidelines/SOP/TOR	Draft Guidelines/SOP/Tor in place	New Guidelines/SOP/TOR in Place
<b>SDGs</b>	No apparent understanding on SDGs	Some understanding of SDGs	Able to indicate clearly which SDGs	Able to prioritize SDGs relevant to their work	Apply SDGs in their work

For the APPGM Cohort 1 program there were 34 Solutions projects in 10 parliamentary Constituencies as follows.

**Table 3 APPGM Cohort 1 program**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Constituencies</b>	<b>Projects</b>
<b>1</b>	Bentong, Pahang	2
<b>2</b>	Tg. Piai, Johor	2
<b>3</b>	Batang Sadong, Sarawak	2
<b>4</b>	Kuching, Sarawak	2
<b>5</b>	Papar, Sabah	3
<b>6</b>	Pensiangan, Sabah	4
<b>7</b>	Petaling Jaya, Selangor	4
<b>8</b>	Selayang, Selangor	8
<b>9</b>	Pendang, Kedah	4
<b>10</b>	Jeli, Kelantan	3
	Total	34

### **Conceptual framework**

This project particularly emphasize Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 on Peace, Justice and Inclusion that promotes peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. SDG16 breaks new ground in development thinking - not only that it is the first time that these issues are being addressed in a dedicated global development goal with detailed targets, the Thematic Review of SDG 16 at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2019 also recognized that peace, justice and inclusive institutions work as enablers for the entire 2030 Agenda. Despite some efforts for accelerating progress on SDG 16, the Sustainable



Development Goals Report 2019 notes that there is still some way to go before realizing peaceful, just and inclusive societies worldwide. SDG 16 is measured by 12 global targets with 24 associated indicators which were agreed by UN Member States in the UN Statistical Commission. Together, they show progress, or lack thereof, on peace, justice and inclusion.

UNDP as a custodian agency for some SDG indicators argues that first, for peace, although some countries reported positive progress for reaching higher levels of peaceful societies, the world at large is experiencing a negative trend with further tensions and societal insecurities, as well as escalating conflicts with an ever-expanding refugee crisis as a result. Second, access to fair justice systems is an inherent human right, yet victims of violations do experience unjust treatments and unresolved prosecution processes. Third, transparent, accountable and inclusive public institutions serve as the cornerstones for the state to provide the citizens their basic human rights. Birth registration counts as one of the most intrinsic right which in many countries is far from being realized for the whole population, neglecting marginalized people which fail to endorse the principles of leaving no one behind (<https://www.undp.org/policy-centre/oslo/sdg-16-measurement-and-monitoring>).

Meanwhile, the nature of the project also requires the application of SDG17 as the SDGs can only be realized with strong global partnerships and cooperation. A successful development agenda requires inclusive partnerships — at the global, regional, national and local levels — built upon principles and values, and upon a shared vision and shared goals placing people and the planet at the centre.

Chapter 6 of Voluntary National Report 2021 on Governance, Social Cohesion and Partnership: SDG16 and SDG17 states that Malaysia has a total estimated population of 32.7 million in 2020, where 69.6 per cent are Bumiputra (Malays and native groups of Sabah & Sarawak), 22.6 per cent Chinese, 6.8 per cent Indian and another 1 per cent other ethnicities<sup>192</sup>. It is a diverse and multicultural society. However, issues pertaining to race and religion continue to be a challenge to this day. There is a renewed commitment by Malaysia in fostering inter-ethnic harmony and peaceful relations towards adopting an inclusive development agenda ensuring no one is left behind.

## Findings and discussion

In line with the four key impacts, the findings can be categorised into personal feelings, types of skills acquired, relationships and tangible system. The second findings focus on the quantitative aspects as interpreted by evaluators. By looking at the consolidated quantitative data, one can rank the levels of impacts. This will allow for better insights

Deep impact is associated with personal experience and feelings of the beneficiaries. When beneficiaries utter the words such as empowered and proud, there is an intrinsic change within the person. Indirectly, the activities they have participated in have empowered them in such a way that their self confidence has increased. The environment in which the programs were conducted allowed them to feel safe and comfortable. They felt grateful for the opportunities.

Below is the Consolidated results for all the projects

**Table 4 Tabulated data for impact evaluation**

<b>IMPACT EVALUATION</b>	<b>PROJECT</b>	<b>Deep (personal)</b>	<b>Clear (skills)</b>	<b>Wide (network)</b>	<b>High (system)</b>	<b>SDG</b>	<b>Total</b>
SP01	Organic Farming by Yayasan Kajian & Pembangunan Masyarakat	4	5	4	3	4	20

SP02	Pembikinan Filem Masyarakat Felda Lurah Bilut by Persatuan Generasi Bentong						
SP03	Litter Clean-Up & Installation of Buy-Back Centre to Address the Unsustainable Livelihoods & Litter Problem in the Water Settlements of Kg. Air Masin & Kg. Melayu Jalan Benteng by Impactlution	4	4	4	5	5	22

SP04	Project to Enhance Marketing & Promoting Small Farmers and SME activities by Persatuan Mahasiswa Fakulti Sains Kognitif & Pembangunan Manusia (UNIMAS)	1	5	5	4	1	16
SP05	Enhancement of English Language Proficiency by MYReaders	5	5	3	3	4	20
SP06	TVET Workshop by ROSE	1	4	4	0	5	14
SP07	Slum Incubator Project by Sarawak Dayak Iban Association (SADIA)	5	4	5	5	5	24

SP08	Health & Wellbeing by SAWO	5	4	4	4	5	22
SP09	Waste Management & Economic Empowerment by Kelab Belia Kg. Sinaron (KBKS)	5	5	4	4	5	23
SP10	Aqua Project for the Fishermen by UMS	3	2	3	1	5	14
SP11	Agro Project for the Farmers by UMS	5	5	2	4	4	20
SP12	Women Empowerment Through Entrepreneurship Training by University College Foundation Sabah (UCSF)	1	2	5	4	3	15

SP13	Development “Go Tanjung Piai” Eco-tourism by Raleigh KL & RESTORE	5	5	5	4	5	24
SP14	Women Economic Empowerment Programme - By Setting up Soup Kitchen in PPR Desa Mentari by MyPJ	5	4	5	5	5	24
SP15	Education Project in PPR Lembah Subang 1 by Yayasan Generasi Gemilang	5	4	5	5	4	23

SP16	Inter-Agency Government Dialogue by Pertubuhan Pembangunan Komuniti dan Pembelajaran Berterusan	1	2	5	4	3	15
SP17	Production on a Guide on Post-Covid Community Crisis Management by Persatuan Penggerak Rakyat (PPR)	1	2	5	4	3	15
SP18	Pengurusan Taman Selayang Makmur by Pengurusan Taman Selayang Makmur	3	3	4	5	5	20

SP19	Café and Bakery Skills Training – Bakery by Pertubuhan Perkhidmatan Sosial dan Pembangunan Komuniti Daerah Gombak, Selangor (PSPK)	5	4	4	4	5	22
SP20	Micro Entrepreneurship Social Enterprise by Pertubuhan Perkhidmatan Sosial dan Pembangunan Komuniti Daerah Gombak, Selangor (PSPK)	5	4	4	5	5	23



SP21	Air-Conditioning Training Course for Youth by MySkills Foundation	5	5	4	5	4	23
SP22	2-Day Skills Fair Exhibition for Holistic Transformation Skills Training Program by MySkills Foundation	4	4	4	4	5	21
SP23	Digital Marketing Workshop by Pertubuhan Perkhidmatan Sosial dan Pembangunan Komuniti Daerah Gombak, Selangor (PSPK)	5	5	5	5	5	25

SP24	Basic Malay Spoken Language Learning for Refugees by Pertubuhan Perkhidmatan Sosial dan Pembangunan Komuniti Daerah Gombak, Selangor (PSPK)	5	4	4	4	5	22
SP25	Housing Census by Pertubuhan Perkhidmatan Sosial dan Pembangunan Komuniti Daerah Gombak, Selangor (PSPK) in collaboration with Sejahtera Centre IIUM	4	4	5	5	4	22

SP26	Women's Income Generation Sewing and Breast Cancer Awareness Project in Batang Sadong by Yayasan Salam	5	5	4	3	4	21
SP27	Program Penternakan Ikan Tilapia di Kampung Jerimbong, Jeli by Institut Penyelidikan dan Pengurusan Kemiskinan (InsPek), Universiti Malaya Kelantan (UMK)	4	4	4	4	4	20

SP28	Program Perusahaan Sosial Cendawan di Kampung Sungai Rual, Jeli by Institut Penyelidikan dan Pengurusan Kemiskinan (InsPek), Universiti Malaya Kelantan (UMK)	5	5	4	4	4	23
SP29	Program Perusahaan Sosial Ekopelanconga n di Kampung Gunong Reng, Jeli by Institut Penyelidikan dan Pengurusan Kemiskinan (InsPek), Universiti Malaya Kelantan (UMK)	4	4	4	4	4	20

SP30	Program Perusahaan Sosial InoProduct di Kampung Sungai Rual, Jeli by Institut Penyelidikan dan Pengurusan Kemiskinan (InsPek), Universiti Malaya Kelantan (UMK)	4	5	3	4	4	20
SP31	Community Dialogue by Pusat Kecemerlangan : Economic & Financial Policy Research Institute (EcoFI), UUM	5	5	5	4	5	24

SP32	EcoTourism & Community Centred Business EcoSystem Incubation Project by Muliabudi Consulting PLT	4	4	3	4	4	19
SP33	Impart Knowledge & Skills to implement organic farming to generate income & enhancement for their families and communities	4	4	1	1	2	12
SP34	Social Economic Training by ROSE	2	3	2	2	4	13
	Overall Score	3.94	4.09	4.16	3.96	4.30	
		Deep	Skills	Network	System	SD G	

Based on the tabulated data above, the highest score associates with knowledge gained by beneficiaries and application of SDGs by solution providers. This finding indicates that main objectives of all solutions projects in localizing SDGs is achieved through APPGM-SDG. The details on the impact of SDGs will be discussed in the following chapter.

With regard to the other four domains, the most impactful domain is network at 4.16. From the beneficiaries' point of view, the network that they have gained from the programs include new friends from among the participants and solution providers. The other important category is local authorities. Prior to the program, beneficiaries may be aware of local authorities, but felt alienated from them. With contacts made through the APPGM-SDG activities, beneficiaries can directly initiate discussion with local authorities.

Skill based activities are highly appreciated by beneficiaries. Skills gains such as baking, sewing, fixing aircon, organic farming are producing income for participants. Communication skills such as basic Malay language for refugees, English for children at PPR flats are helping various groups to interact better within their communities, and to study better in schools respectively.

Personal and System impacts have similar scores. At a personal level, a person can experience changes because of new knowledge, skills as well as network that they have gained. Feelings such as being empowered, increase self-confidence, grateful and comfortable in an environment are important keywords uttered by beneficiaries. Positive changes within self can have a profound impact a person's wellbeing.

Finally, system impact can be rather illusive because one has to document the set-up of new guidelines, procedures, rules and regulations in place. However, in this evaluation, evaluators did take into consideration beneficiaries writing down specific process of connecting with local authorities to voice out their concerns, as well as learning and applying for the registration of their new NGOs.

## Tracking SDGs Targets and Indicators

Every project should at least have one SDG goal attached as its primary objective. Except for SP02, all other projects have 1 or two SDG goals, targets and indicators. The deliverables of projects are varied but the impacts are measured against SDG indicators according to the cost and timeframe available.

Our SDG Tracker presents data across all available indicators from the existing database, using official statistics from the state governments and other local organizations. It is a free, open-access publication that tracks national progress towards the SDGs and allows people to hold their state governments accountable to achieving the agreed goals. This database is compared with primary and secondary data from our projects.

**Table 5 SDG Tracker**

	<b>Focus</b>	<b>SDG</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
<b>SP01</b>	Organic Farming	2	2.3	2.3.2
<b>SP02</b>	Film	KIV	-	-
<b>SP03</b>	Waste management	12	12.5	12.5.1
<b>SP04</b>	SMEs marketing	1	1.a	1.a.1
<b>SP05</b>	MYReaders	4	4.6	4.6.1
<b>SP06</b>	TVET skills	4	4.3	4.3.1
<b>SP07</b>	Slum incubator	1	1.4	1.4.1
<b>SP08</b>	SAWO awareness	5	5.1	5.1.1
<b>SP09</b>	Environmental	12	12.8	12.8.1
<b>SP10</b>	Aqua	1	1.a	1.a.1
<b>SP11</b>	Agro	1	1.a	1.a.1
<b>SP12</b>	Women entrepreneurship	5	5.a	5.a.1
<b>SP13</b>	Teroka Tg Piai	8	8.9	8.9.2
<b>SP14</b>	My Soup Kitchen-MYPJ	2	8.5	8.5.1
<b>SP15</b>	Education Project Yayasan Generasi Gemilang	4	4.6	4.6.1



<b>SP16</b>	PPR inter-agency dialogue	16	11.a	11.a.1
<b>SP17</b>	Covid-19 management	3	3.b	3.b.1
<b>SP18</b>	Waste Management	3 11	3.9b	
<b>SP19</b>	Entrepreneurship	5. 8	5.5 8.5	5.5a 8.5.1
<b>SP20</b>	Bakery	5 8	5.5 8.5	5.5.a 8.5.1
<b>SP21</b>	Air Con	8 5	8.5, 8.6	
<b>SP22</b>	Fair Exhibition	8	8.5	8.5.1
<b>SP23</b>	Digital Marketing	5 8	5.6 8.5, 8.6	5.6.a 8.5.1
<b>SP24</b>	Language for Refugees	4 5	4.6 5.1	4.6.1
<b>SP25</b>	Community Needs	11	11.3	11.3.2
<b>SP26</b>	Breast Cancer Awareness	3 4	3.8 4.7	
<b>SP27</b>	Harvesting Ikan Tilapia	1 8	1.2 8.5	1.2.2 8.5.1
<b>Sp28</b>	Cultivating Mushrooms	8	8.5	8.5.1
<b>Sp29</b>	Eco Tourism	8	8.5	8.5.1
<b>SP30</b>	Batik production	8	8.5	8.5.1
<b>SP31</b>	Community Dialogue	16 17	16.7 17.14	16.7.2 17.14.1
<b>SP32</b>	Eco Tourism	8	8.5	8.5.1
<b>SP33</b>	Organic Farming	2 8	2.3 8.5	2.3.2 8.5.1
<b>SP34</b>	Community projects Chili	8	8.5	8.5.1

	Education	4	4.1	4.1.1
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From Table 5 above, SDGs covered are SDGs 1, 2, 3,4,5,8,11,12, and 16 are primarily covered by the projects with the breakdown of 33% of the projects are associated to SDG 8, 36% are covered equally by SDG 1, 4, 5, 18% focused on SDG 2 and 3, and 13% focused on SDG 11, 12, 16. None on the project focused on SDG17.

## Conclusion

All solutions projects should focused on a particular or multiple 5Ps of SDGs. The 5Ps are People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership. However, non was found for partnership. Indirectly, projects are linked to education, the sciences and culture. Thus, this project is important because it allows for not only Malaysia, but other countries to monitor and evaluate SDGs programmes within their context.

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## **A Mid-Term Review of Malaysia Civil Society Organization in Engaging Youths in SDG Implementation**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Youths are the pillars of development, however the involvement and engagement of the group in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG) in Malaysia is also dependent on the roles of organisations to engage youths for the SDGs implementation. The Registrar of Youth (ROY) records 9,433 organisations and 80,316 under the Register of Society in Malaysia (ROS) as active organisations where many of the organisations are focused on engaging youths in local, national, and global developments. This paper reviews civic engagement by including youth participation in implementing the sustainable development goals (SDGs), the nature of collaborative engagement of the organisations with youths in the initiatives and activities of the organisation and the views of organisations toward the roles of youths in societal, national and global developments. Findings indicate the engagement of youths through means such as education, skills training and advocacy through the elements of SDG 4.7. In this paper, we seek to review the ways organisations engage youths in localising the SDGs since it has been in effect to present developments, analyse trends and limitations, and provide future directions to ensure sustainability.

*Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Youth Participation; Capacity Building; Malaysia, SDG 17, partnership model*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Youths are in the spotlight for the world in recovering from the pandemic as they make up one-third of the world's population. Youth is the first generation that can end poverty and the last that can end climate change. This mandate stems directly from the country's first National Youth Development Policy (1997), which views youth as *“a resource of tremendous potential...who can contribute significantly to the overall development of the nation”* (p. 9).

The immediate action to include the youth in the SDG implementation framework is by including them into the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) localisation process. As stated in Oosterhof (2018), the SDG localisation has been described as the following:

*“the process of defining, implementing and monitoring strategies at the local level for achieving global, national, and subnational sustainable development goals. It includes “the process of taking into account subnational contexts in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, from the setting of goals and targets, to determining the means of implementation and using indicators that measure and monitor progress.”*

The above interpretation indicates that the SDG localisation is a process of executing the SDG at subnational and local level by infusing the global agenda principles into their policies and its implementation. Hence, it requires partnership among numerous SDG stakeholders at this multiple governmental system, including the youth. In localising the SDG, youth based organisations play an important role. They help to raise awareness about the goals among youth and provide a platform for them to get involved in the process of achieving the goals. Such organisations also help to engage youth in different sectors of society and promote their participation in decision-making processes.

The implications that youth organisations bring toward the global goals are pivotal in view of the narratives of the future that societies and nations strive forward toward sustainability. David Aberle introduced the idea of the typologies of social movements in his book *“The Peyote Religion Among the Navaho”* where social movements that are initiated are classified by categories referred as the alternative, redemptive, reformative, and transformative movements (Christiansen et al., 2011). The nature of the organisations in the movements advocated for in the localisations of the SDGs in this research make up of reformative movements, redemptive movements, and alternative movements:

- a) Reformative movements in the context of the work of organisations in the advocacy of the global goals are enlarged in scope of societal or group change for a specified goal, such that the organisation advocates for social change in norms and values (21.3B: *Types of Social Movements*, 2018; Christiansen et al., 2011)
- b) Redemptive movements are radical in essence to which the change that is sought is a total change in individuals (Christiansen et al., 2011), such an example of the movement to provide context would be Alcoholics Anonymous.
- c) On the other hand, alternative movements are those that seek partial change in individuals, such as a specific behavioural or cognitive change toward an issue. A greater number of organisations are alternative movements as they advocate for an alternative way of doing things, to which sustainable practices are key factors (Christiansen et al., 2011).

This paper aims to explore the mechanism and view of organisations that engage with youths in localising SDGs since 2015 till today and to recommend some way forward to the future development. By referring to the literature, official SDG document and data from selected youth NGOs and CSOs, this paper has successfully illustrated the current progression of SDG localisation from the CSOs and NGOs perspectives which has significant contributions towards the country's SDG progression.

### **Literature Review**

The definition of youth is dependent on the country and institutions (Vambe, 2018). The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has defined "Youth" as those within the group of age "between 15 and 24". As for Malaysia, the youth age has been increased to 15-30 years old, concomitant with the legislation changes made by the government. This bold action is to guarantee that the younger generation can play more active roles and to ensure their voices could be heard. This mandate stems directly from the country's first National Youth Development Policy (1997), which views youth as "*a resource of tremendous potential...who can contribute significantly to the overall development of the nation*" (p. 9).

From the various definitions of youth, as presented above, it can be concluded that there is no single definition to constitute the youth. Hence, it depends on the governmental system and context of the interpretation.

The SDG implementation includes youth as one of the key players. Youths are recognised by the UN as Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGOS) which support the idea of SDG Multistakeholders who will work toward the SDG. Past literature and official documents considered youth as the SDG “torchbearer” (UNICEF, n.d.) and pillars for its success (Yahya, 2020). This is based on the prediction that the youth group was projected to become 1.3 billion by 2030 as compared to 1.2 billion in 2015 (UNDESA, 2015). As for Malaysia’s, the population is recorded to have reached 32.7 million as of 2022, with youth groups making up the majority. In the context of SDG advancement, it makes sense to take youth (and their organised entities) into account while planning the nation’s development around the SDGs. Since there is a likelihood that youth may be impacted by the current sustainability decisions, their involvement in the sustainable development action is necessary (Borojević et al., 2017).

### **Youth and Their Roles to Localise the SDG: A Global Perspective**

There is consensus that youth participation is essential to achieving the SDGs by 2030, whether at the national, organisational, or societal level (Vambe, 2018). Few studies and official publications have also emphasised youth responsibilities, contributions, and SDG awareness (Petkovi et al., 2018; UNICEF, n.d.; Vambe, 2018; Vijaywargia, 2017; Yahya, 2020). This indicates that the study of youth and their SDG roles is becoming increasingly prevalent. However, discussion on the SDG localisation process including youth and entities is currently limited, necessitating the conduct of additional empirical research. In Malaysia, for example, few studies are being conducted in the context of SDG localisation, such as those conducted by Khoo and Tan (2019), Rahman and Yusof (2020), and Yusof et al (2022).

In localising the SDG, youth was regarded as the government’s partner in implementing the community-related projects relevant to sustainable development and to protect the environment (Vambe, 2018). In Petković et al. (2018) the role of the youth has been mentioned in supporting the sustainable development (and SDG localisation) by referring to the Agenda 21 as the leading agenda in promoting the sustainable development at the local level. Moving to the SDG as the present sustainability commitments, it has presented 17 goals which are integrated,

inseparable, and universal in that they provide complete system guidelines for governments, private sectors, and community (Yahya, 2020). This focus on community is the essence of SDG localisation that needs to be steered and led by the youth as the young sustainability leaders. Furthermore, youth has the ability to be the person in charge to bring sustainable changes (Yahya, 2020). However, it is most important to take note that the SDGs are focused more on participation and empowerment as compared to the previous sustainability agenda (Fennell et al., 2018). Hence, youth is considered as the best group of stakeholders that need to be guided and authorised in materialising their sustainability actions towards the SDG localisation process.

Localising the SDG is challenging and it is not easy. SDG has upheld the three basic tenets of sustainable development: Economy, Social and Environment. To be precise, all the elements were incorporated into its 5Ps: People, Prosperity, Peace, Partnership, and Planet. In doing so, it requires the following support system: good governance which include a sound policy that encourages youths to actively involve in SDGs implementation (Petković et al., 2018; Vambe, 2018; Yahya, 2020) and opportunities for youth to participate in SDG process (Borojević et al., 2017; Solís et al., 2018).

Youth participation was deemed crucial for the advancement of the SDG. In practice, it depends on the extent to which the government has chosen to incorporate youth into the SDG governance system. This was evidenced by the SDG reports and documents that referenced the global agenda's advancement at the global levels. The following Table 1 presents several exemplary methods demonstrating how youth were integrated into the SDG framework in various nations. It demonstrates how youths were involved in executing the SDGs at the multi-governmental level, indicating their existence at the SDG localisation process. The following information was obtained from the Voluntary National Review (VNR) submitted and presented by respective countries to the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF):



**Table 1 : Example of Youth Involvement in the SDG Implementation (As Reported in the Countries VNR)**

Country Process	Youth Involvement in the SDG Implementation/SDG Localization (By referring to the SDG VNR)
Denmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Youth were contributing towards SDG VNR</li> <li>● Youth were considered as the SDG Partner</li> <li>● Danish Youth Associations assisting the government in campaigning for SDG at numerous educational system</li> <li>● Danish Youth Organizations has engaged with SDG at global and national platforms</li> </ul>
New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Youth at universities were engaged at the National SDG Summits with other SDG Stakeholders</li> </ul>
Papua New Guinea affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The country commitments to engage the youth in SDG was by COVID-19</li> </ul>
Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Youth were engaged with SDG through voluntary activities</li> </ul>
Indonesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Youth organizations support the SDG localization process through voluntary programs and disseminate the SDG awareness</li> <li>● Youth organizations were included in the VNR preparation</li> </ul>
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Youth were selected as delegates at HLPF</li> </ul>
Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Youth were among the parties engaged in VNR preparation</li> </ul>
Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Swedish youth council were consulted in preparing the VNR</li> <li>● Youth representative for HLPF delegate</li> </ul>
Czech Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Youth point of view were illustrated in each SDG progression</li> </ul>

The aforementioned table indicates that only a small number of best practices from other countries have been successful in catalysing youth participation to localise the SDG. Only a few countries actually consult and prepare VNR by considering the youth as one of their partners. Generally, youth involvement In assisting the national government, SDG has been underreported. However, there is evidence that some of the country’s National Youth Councils actually participated in the SDG process and dialogue process.

### **Civil Society Organisations in Malaysia and Their Roles in Localising the SDG**

Civil Society organisations have been involved in nation building and policy developments in Malaysia (Beh et al., 2020) with a significant influence toward the works and services that pin sustainable developments. This, affirmed further during the COVID-19, such that civil societies and social enterprises were considered as “crucial stakeholders' ' to the nation’s road to healing

(Saidi, 2021). Similarly, in the engagement of youths, youth-led organisations are voluntary organisations that serve young people aged 15 to 30. Youth organisations have served as the foundation of Malaysian youth policy since 1948, formalised within the Ministry of Youth and Sports. There are four major categories of associations: (1) uniform associations (e.g., Scouts and Girl Guides); (2) religious associations (e.g., Malaysian Hindu Youth Organization); (3) ordinary associations (e.g., 4B Youth Movement); and (4) student associations (e.g., Federation of Malay Student Unions) (Krauss et al., 2013). Although, Malaysian policy does not specify which programs or activities must be sponsored by youth organisations. However, all associations are required to emphasise three components in their programing. All activities undertaken by youth associations, in particular, must include education on the Rukun Negara (national principles), a focus on youth personality development, and opportunities for participation in community development programs.

There aren't many studies that have been done in Malaysia within the context of SDG localisation. Nevertheless, Malaysian authors had produced their review and empirical evidence by exploring the SDG localisation practice in Malaysia within the context of local government, local community, civil society organisations and youth (Ariffin & Ng, 2020; Ismail et al., 2022; Khoo & Tan, 2019; Mahadi, 2019; Rahman et al., 2022; Rahman & Yusof, 2020; Yusof, Ariffin, et al., 2022; Yusof, Harsono, et al., 2022; M. Yusof, Rahman, et al., 2022; Yusof & Ariffin, 2021; Yusof et al., 2022). From an examination of the literature, it can be inferred that Malaysian youth participated in the localisation of the SDGs through their involvement in the educational system and activities organised by CSOs and NGOs.

Even though there is limitation, few local governments in Malaysia have begun the process of localising the SDGs, and they have also incorporated youth from educational institutions and NGOs in their SDG-related programmes, suggesting the existence of youth-stakeholder partnerships (Yusof, Ariffin, et al., 2022; Yusof, Rahman, et al., 2022; Yusof, Yusof, et al., 2022). At the local level, youth were seen as partners or participants in SDG-related programmes. It was discovered that local governments place a greater emphasis on including the local community in the process of SDG localisation. Khoo and Tan (2019), emphasised the roles of Civil Society Organisations (CSO) in the SDG localisation process, concentrating on the human rights-based approach. It is a shifted viewpoint to look at the SDGs from a developmental approach, and there must be an effort to localise it by taking the values of human rights into consideration.

Although the empirical evidence in the Malaysian context is not exhaustive, it does show that the NGO, especially among the youth, is making efforts and taking initiative to localise the SDG. As stated in Khoo and Tan (2019), the civil society in Malaysia has taken the lead in advocating for the SDGs at the governmental level, as opposed to during the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). On a larger scale, Southeast Asian nations, including Malaysia, have engaged with youth organisations in their SDG localisation process. It was made a reality by diverse volunteer efforts in the nation's local communities, and for some countries, they established a strategic collaboration with various SDG players (Yusof & Ariffin, 2021). However, the extent to which the government acknowledges the youth's contributions to the localisation of the SDGs relies on the governmental system, structure and their political will.

Based on the abovementioned review, youth and SDG progression is inseparable. Therefore, it is necessary to report on the youth's contributions to the country's SDG advancement. According to statistics, Malaysia has more than 80,000 active organisations registered under the Register of Society (ROS) and 9,433 active youth organisations registered under the Registrar of Youth (ROY) (Jabatan Pendaftaran Pertubuhan Malaysia, 2022; Registrar of Youth, Malaysia, 2021). The data suggests that these organisations in engaging youths, may have made implicit or explicit contributions to the SDGs. Hence, this paper makes an attempt to address the issue by outlining the SDG localisation progress being pursued by Malaysian youth for the period of 2015 - 2022, the engagement of youths in the organisations through the mechanisms outlined, and the general view of organisations toward youths involvement in local and global developments. It will clarify the situation and provide an insightful understanding of how the SDGs were carried out by the younger generation.

## **Methodology**

Several data sources were analysed to compile this report: the literature, official SDG publications such as the SDG Voluntary National Review (VNR), an open-ended survey, and social media analysis. Initially, primary data were collected utilising an open-ended Google Form for input from the Malaysian CSOs and NGOs. Information on the engagement of youths from more than 50 CSO/NGOs were gathered. The sought information linked to their SDG-related programmes initiated between 2015 and 2022, indicating their SDG commitment, their mechanism of engaging youths in SDGs developments, and their view of youths in sustainable developments and national growth were analysed thematically. The selection of

NGOs is based on movements in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. The data was organised thematically in accordance with the qualitative analysis methodology. The integration of all these data sources could provide a comparison of the SDG localisation process and its development since its inception in 2022. It enables researchers to draw conclusions about the current status quo regarding youth contributions to the SDG localisation process in Malaysia.

## **Findings**

### **Finding 1: Mechanisms of CSOs/Organisations on Including Youths in SDGs Implementation**

CSOs/NGOs and SDGs oriented organisations are the drive for youths in aspects of the provision of the platform to exercise, educate and advocate the SDGs in respective localities, and represent themselves to the global platforms. The “how” (i.e., methodology or apparatus) by which organisations have actively engaged in is pivotal to the analysis of the findings, as representations of youth in SDGs is oriented toward the trends and concurrent developments of the world, where there ought to be a system of operation by which organisations engage the youths in, for SDGs implementation. Therefore, mechanisms that have been narrowed down by thematic analysis are represented in this report including a) knowledge learning, b) skills training, and c) advocacy, these are also oriented through support and empowerment of youth led initiatives in essence.

#### ***a) Education***

In line with the frame-of-work underlined in SDG 4.7, CSOs and initiatives with respect to youth involvement in the implementations and mobilisations of the SDGs curated activities and learning oriented initiatives for literacy in the SDGs and the movement toward sustainable living. As a result of workshops, collaborations, partnerships from like-minded organisations, these initiatives oriented themselves to the focal of learning and informational development. The “how” in invigorating active participation of youths in the SDGs begins with education of the said topic. Such that, only with an orientation of SDGs literacy, can the SDGs be advocated and accordingly implemented based on issue mappings in the relevant localities.

**To increase literacy on SDGs.** The findings indicate the agency of organisations in empowering the involvement of youths in SDGs. Such of the same are listed below:

1. Education through learning and development programmes, bootcamps, campaigns, webinars, and symposiums.
2. Education through podcast series and infoposts.
3. Education through event promotions and awareness.
4. Education through creative dialogues and sharing sessions.
5. Education through annual assemblies and forums.
6. Education through grants to promote youth SDG movements
7. Education through youth representatives for speaker series.

The impact of educational orientation for youths in SDG related themes initiated by organisations give are meant to give youths an edge to the perspectives of the issues that revolve around the SDGs addressed, hence, developing a ideological nourishment and direction to the youth in being mobilised for the sustainable development goals and competent for the future.

The channel of operation in the inclusion of youths in SDGs are evident from the activities and initiatives driven by organisations. Below are listed 3 excerpts from the data collection of the activities in the involvement of youths in SDGs through knowledge based education and learning.

- a) **Persatuan Promosi Pembangunan Matlamat Lestari:** The Malaysian Youth SDG Summit is a platform for youth leaders to share their experiences of localising the SDGs through their organisations and a place of learning and empowerment for youths to be mobilised in SDGs developments. The youth development arm of the organisation holds talks and speaker series on the orientation and introduction to the SDGs to youths; such an example included the orientation talk at Taylor's University on SDGs which aligns with the SDG 4.7.
- b) **Malaysian Olympism in Action Society:** The programs are sport-based education to the community conducted in person or virtually to create awareness on the spirit of Olympism and how Olympism is the way of healthy living. Certain initiatives also targeted primary school children (Show us your sport), secondary school children (Personal narrative on Olympism), and tertiary education students (National Youth and Sports Symposium) which addressed SDG 3.

- c) I Culture Berhad: Programs conducted such as “I Culture Academy free online seminar platform” gives opportunities to learn and educate through the invitations from speakers from relevant fields related to entrepreneurial stories, local history and culture, and historical writing projects as efforts of awareness to preserve history and culture of individuals, societies, and institutions, to create a sustainable community through the preservation of historical records in the midst of modern development. This is to align with a sustainable community.

**b) *Skills training***

Proceeding the accumulation of knowledge and awareness, impact is curated from the orientation of action, however, action requires a structure of development and functioning, therefore, an instrumental priority of organisations is skills training, for impactful inclusion, engagement, and mobilisation of youths in SDGs. The focality of direction in this aspect is for the organisations to evoke the rigorous energy and grit of youthfulness to positively direct them into local, national, and global narratives of the goals.

**To build the competence of youths to live sustainable lives.** The findings are positive in its indication of the mechanism in training youths to be equipped with the skill sets needed in implementing the SDGs in the localities. Examples are followed as below:

1. Providing youths platforms to help scale, sustain, expand, and multiply impact.
2. Providing training, certification, assessments and awards for sustainable impact.
3. Providing workshops for practical training.
4. Providing capacity building initiatives.
5. Providing a support system for youths to stay motivated.

The initiatives oriented in skills training is defined in the context of the SDGs, in that youths receive mentorships and workshops to best integrate the SDGs in the different lifestyles and context they interact in. The impact of the programs initiated included that youths were mobilised to actively practise sustainable lifestyles. Not only so, but such that, the youth is empowered, supported, and trained to practical application through the organisation objectives and narratives. Hence, proving an active participation of youth in training, mentorship, personal, and professional development. Skills are also categorised as, soft skills and hard skills; where soft skills are such as leadership, communication, teamwork, and problem solving. On the other hand, hard skills would include those specific to the objectives and initiatives of

the activity, such as urban farming and entrepreneurship. Below are listed 3 examples of activities conducted by organisations that are oriented toward skills training indicated in the findings.

- a) **Malaysian Youth Diplomacy:** Conducts initiatives to build capacity, and train youths in diplomacy through initiatives such as “Diplomacy Lab” to equip and empower youths to understand and participate in the process of making Malaysian foreign policy inclusive with partnerships. Also, having “Ambassador Series” to have direct engagements with Heads of Missions to be inspired and empower change. This aligns with SDG 4 and SDG 17.
- b) **Majlis Belia Malaysia:** Involving in the SDGs through the dimensions of capacity building, community work, consultation awareness campaigns, network building, etc. Where among the projects or programs specifically related to SDGs are the Youth Ideas – Engaging Malaysian Youth Community for SDG Project Implementation Roundtable, SDG Literacy and Mapping Workshop, Local Agenda 21 Project Sacred Areas, Parallel Sessions in conjunction with the SDG Malaysia Summit 2019, the SDG MBM-Eco Tourism Program of the Orang Asli Youth Council and strategic partners of the Malaysia SDG Youth Summit on November 6, 2021, aligning the activities and initiatives with SDGs including SDG 3, 4, 10, 12, 13, and 17.
- c) **Pertubuhan Pemuda Gema Malaysia:** Curated activities and programmes including the aspects of enrichment and personal growth through skill based practical initiatives to both the beneficiary of their programmes and the benefactors of their programmes (i.e., youth volunteers). This includes Tuisyen Ikhlas (tuition classes for refugee kids); aiming to meet the educational needs of Rohingya kids in the local area, to produce youths who will utilise knowledge, time, energy and opportunities to be an agent of change and serve the community, and to provide exposure and cultivate an attitude of tolerance towards cultural differences among the youths and the Rohingya ethnic population of the local area. The organisation also curated initiatives with former drug addicts “Negative Heros: We Ride Together & Kisah Dari Lorong” with the reasoning to reduce stigma and discrimination against former drug addicts, to help and support former drug addicts to recover from their addiction and be free from drugs, and to empower self-esteem and confidence. The initiatives were oriented toward SDGs 4 and 10.

*c) Advocacy*

Advocacy brings to the action oriented impact that is curated by the confluence of the organisational initiatives and the active participation of youths in the same, for advocating on the goals through the various means that is provisioned by the organisations. The structure of organisations toward the orientation and engagement of youths in SDGs advocacy brings to account the narrative of their classifications of advocacy that the findings has indicated in actively engaging youths in sustainable development advocaton and lifestyle.

**To involve youths in effective implementations of the SDGs.** Organisations orient themselves to the sustainable impact that is curated from each initiative, especially with regard to SDGs, such that the indicators provide a guideline of assessment. Nonetheless, in the inclusive involvement of youths in advocacy, youths are given the hand to implement the SDGs. Examples of how the advocacy mechanism is utilised are listed below as per the findings:

1. Youth in policy advocacy
2. Youth in partnership and networking advocacy
3. Youth in project implementation

The context of advocacy is the involvement of the youths in putting practices into action from the prior learned knowledge, and training. As such, the findings indicate many activities and representations of youths in the local, state, national, and global levels in the advocacy for the specific goals that are respectively addressed by each parent organisation through the initiatives. 2 exerts of advocacy oriented activities conducted by the CSOs/Organisations are as below from 2015 onwards are:

**Boleh Space:** A platform of advocacy on issues under ableism and disability in Malaysia put together the effort in localising the SDGs through their initiatives and activities of advocacy. Such follows SDG 1, SDG 2, and SDG 3 to raise awareness and advocating for an increase of the minimum wage requirement for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) to be eligible for monthly assistance by means of protesting JKMPay implementation adding barriers to PwDs to access their monthly assistance; Equitable Access to COVID-19 Vaccine for PwDs. Further advocating SDGs 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, and 16 through awareness campaigns, webinars, capacity building, social media advocacy, and the Disability Data Portal Boleh Lab, to empower PwDs through the sharing of available disability data, articles, parliamentary data, lived experiences, and findings since 2021.



a) Higher Education Malaysia Association (HEYA): providing opportunities for participatory fieldwork, exposure of youths to global governance, and professional capacity building for the empowerment of youths to elite (HEYA, 2021). In localising the SDGs, HEYA conducted webinars exploring on SDGs 4, 8.3 and 13.3 correlating to how the various topics implicate the sustainable living of Malaysians, understanding and advocating for the action of stakeholders in SDGs implementation, and representing youths to policy makers through advocacy. Activities that were held with regard to the same include the webinar on “Exploring ESG: Climate Change and Youth Empowerment”, “Budget Townhall: Sustainable Economic Enhancement”, and a workshop on the “National Student Leadership Conference (NaCLeC).

### **Finding 2: View of organisations/CSOs on Youths in Malaysia for SDGs**

In engaging youths for communal developments and societal change in the implementations of the SDGs, organisations are driven by perceptions and apperceptions of the role of youth in the future and the role of them in creating a sustainable future. Nonetheless, this is a driving force of organisations in effective engagement, inclusion, and collaboration through the years in developing representations of youths in the SDGs. Findings show common themes to which organisations perceive youths to be in the face of the world in sustainability, such are a) youths as agents of change, b) youths as agents of partnership, and c) youths as agents of creativity and innovation. Excerpts of organisations include the understanding towards youths as given below:

1. Youth play an integral part in realising SDGs through awareness.
2. The present generation of youth is the most powerful generation in the whole human history, not because they are smarter, but because they start their lives with technology in their hands.
3. Youth are the leaders in sustainability for the country's social, environmental and economic development and their commitment for driving the vision for a better future are important.
4. Youths should be the ones who initiate, drive and be aware of social causes around them
5. Youth is at the forefront in connecting and collaborating within the communities driven by technology to accelerate the solutions in social, economic and political progress.
6. They are the vital disseminating agent of peace through various platforms, be it social media, mainstream media and even on the street organising speaker corners & gatherings. They come up with creative & unique approaches to get people to pay attention to their causes.

7. Youth involvement in SDG is essential as they will be the change makers with the skills, knowledge, energy and ideas that we require to make that change.
8. Youths have strengths, unique creativity and capacity, and they know their generation better than others. They hold an important role to engage their peers and facilitate them to work alongside people of other generations in addressing the most pressing needs of the community, especially among the youngsters

Key concepts toward generating platforms and mechanisms for the involvement of youths in the SDGs include the adoption that youths are changemakers, innovators, futuristic, potential leaders, collaborators, creative oriented, and those with capacity.

### **Finding 3: Objectives, Activities, and Initiatives of Civil Society Organisations in Youth Engagement for SDGs**

Table 2 in appendix shows the findings that include SDG oriented objectives, activities, and initiatives undertaken by selected CSOs whether explicitly or implicitly, therein where these organisations actively engage the youths in their community in the works and services of sustainable advocacy and lifestyles. This shows such a strengthened macro development in SDGs localisation from 2015 to 2022, especially in the involvement of CSOs to garner content, initiatives, and communities to work toward the goals. There is an increase in awareness of the need for implementing the goals and involving youths as the frontiers to make changes for stability and positive sustainable living. The data does not represent the whole of activities and initiatives conducted by the organisations. However, it is meant to provide perspective of the works done for the SDGs from 2015 to 2022.

### **Discussion And Recommendation: Partnership And Dynamic Exposure To Approach Youths**

In curating initiatives that are oriented toward the SDGs for the cooperative involvement and engagement of youths toward the global goals, organisations and initiatives require impactful and influential partnerships, collaborations, and purpose driven narratives that have an influential impact to the growth of the youth with respect to the trends of the world. Nonetheless, partnership models are ecological in nature, such that a mechanism to sustainable partnership is important in its aspects of creating changemaking and long-lasting impact. Congruently, partnership is viewed not just as a collaboration for an activity or initiative, rather an alliance for ideology, responsibility, and influence garnered through the activity. Therefore,

in positive engagement of youths to implementations of the SDGs, and general developments of societies, and the nation, organisations can effectively encourage the participation and leadership of youths through:

1. Partnership to network. Organisations have the capability and resources to engage youths in positive networking. Given the narrative that the age of youths are fragile as it is the time of ideological shaping, it is pivotal for stakeholders to connect and network youths to positive prosocial communities, societies, and organisations.
2. Partnership to develop skills. Once there is a network curated and collaboration that is garnered to the networking, stakeholders should have the ideology, resources, and capability to nourish the skills and empower the youth in fields of sustainable living, community developments, and advocacy of the same.
3. Partnership to engage youths in the system. Once positive ideologies are aligned, networks are garnered, and skills are developed, as a chronological order, stakeholders and organisations encourage the collaboration and engagement of the youth in the next level of organisation growth, and advocacy, which is, to engage in the system, to take leaderships and to create sustaining impacts.

Recommendations are given to enable an orientation of perspective to organisations in order that youths may be actively engaged in the SDGs and the practise of sustainable living. Such as to answer the question of how organisations can actively engage youths in sustainable practices, advocacy, and national and global developments. Youths are the dynamic forefront of societies that are capable of making impactful change. To reach out to youths, organisations are recommended to be strategic oriented in creating interests in youths. Even as “youth” is a category of its own, there are different categories of youths at stake including, a) youths at high school, b) youths at tertiary levels, c) youths in urban areas, d) at-risk youths, and e) youths in rural areas. Therefore engaging youths in the different levels of societal growth ought to take into account the background and the category of youth that is approached.

1. Collaborate with the identity of the youth. This implies that every organisation that engages with youths needs to identify with the youth, the ideals of the youth and the background of the youth. This is an interactional process, and occurs vice versa.
2. Appreciation. Youths need to know and feel that their efforts are appreciated and valued, as such, organisations play a pivotal role to credit the work of the youth and

the impact curated, as it further encourages personal, professional, and organisational growth.

3. Finally is affiliation. This is the aspect that further into the engagement of the youth in the system of the organisation and the curated initiatives for sustainable changes, and lifestyles curated, youths need to have the motivation of affiliation, and that they can identify themselves with the change that they have made for the growth of the organisation and society.

Table 3 in appendix includes the list of CSOs that advocate the SDG localisation based on their respective capacity.

### **Reflection**

To sum up, Malaysian Civil Society Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations driven in the involvement of youths have significantly advanced the SDGs. Youth have participated in carrying out SDG-related activities on various platforms since 2015 up to the present. Youth, however, is one of the key SDG players, thus, their contribution must be recognised, acknowledged, and reported. Their participation in each SDG process is essential for a better future because they are the generation that will create the sustainable policies. Malaysia needs their active roles and only then can we achieve the SDG together with other SDG stakeholders. Collaborative efforts in sight with the impact that youths have in the SDGs implementation can be garnered to increase competence, and make ready the society for future trends and sustainable living.

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## Appendix

**Table 2: Objectives, Activities, and Initiatives oriented toward SDGs by CSOs**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Objectives, Activities, and Initiatives</b>
Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM)	ABIM, a national Muslim youth organization, one of the exco members for APPGM-SDG, works closely with the interreligious community under the coalition of Malaysian Interfaith Climate Change Network. In addition, ABIM has its own institutions/ agencies i.e. schools, college cooperative, companies, hospitals etc where they impose their own Green Policy and SDGs elements in practice.
Asian Youth Network Resources	Engages youths through various online programs related to SDG 16.
Boleh Space LLP	Advocates and raises awareness for youths with disabilities with the SDGs
Borneo Komrad	Provides education and economic empowerment to the stateless youth in Sabah in order to break their cycle of poverty.
Champs Education	The organisation teaches ChampSpeak, a communication collaboration and creation SDG problem-based program, connecting teenagers to volunteer with NGOs of their choice. Also, consistently guiding students in hosting livestream campaigns on YouTube and Facebook on SDG themes. The teenage students are given volunteering opportunities via ChampsAct community Initiative where Champs connect eager students to charities and NGOs who need volunteers.
Community Transformation Initiative Berhad	Engages youth as staff, volunteers and as participants / clients with the urban poor on SDGs 1 to 4
Green Hero	Green Hero organised programs to give people experience to be volunteers to pitch to F&Bs to join the organisation. Also, Green hero organised a program in which citizens were hired to be part of the food rescue movement by rescuing food and giving it to either those in need or those who ordered them. Green Hero also has a quarterly program where the public sponsors the food rescue program so that the NGO is able to receive the edible surplus food with no charges at all.
Hands of Hope	Projects and programs cater to at least a few of SDG goals. For the most part the goals that are showcased through the events and initiatives are SDGs 4 and 10. Initiatives include: volunteering program, sponsor a child project, charity musical night, sowing seeds of change campaign, my one day uni life, Anonymous Hope, and Hope Bazaar.
Higher Education Malaysia Association (HEYA)	Organises various types of events and sharing sessions to build youths into elite youths to face the future. Through projects HEYA practises SDGs 4, 8, 10, 16, and 18.

Hope Worldwide Malaysia	Organised a Sustainable Green Program. Urban farming (B40 community). 300 families and primary school (100 students)
I Culture Berhad	Allows creativity and awareness to flourish in order to discover and practise more sustainable communities through their initiatives
Junior Chamber International Malaysia (JCIM)	Providing a platform for youths to learn and create positive change, JCIM has a total of 73 local organisations throughout Malaysia, the organisation also has a school club named JCI Junior (11 club) and JCI Youth (5 club). JCIM advocates the SDGs through their platforms and provides a station for youths to represent themselves for SDG implementation, training, and advocacy.
Kumpulan Latihan Kelanasiswa Malaysia (Malaysian University Rovers Training Group)	Through scouting activities Scouts for SDGs is an unprecedented mobilisation of the Scout Movement that aims to see 50 million Scouts to make the world's largest coordinated youth contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.
Majlis Belia Malaysia (MBM)	MBM's involvement in the SDGs generally includes various aspects that cover all 5 dimensions including capacity building, community work, policy advocacy, consultation, awareness campaigns, public education, network building and so on.
Majlis Belia OKU Malaysia	Encouraged and empowered the Disability community to participate in translating the 2030 Agenda into local, national and regional policy.
Malaysian Indian Youth Council (MIYC)	Through youth based programmes from schools, locality and socioeconomic based programmes, MIYC promotes SDG based topics through online sessions besides conducting programmes or projects based on Socioeconomic Empowerment of youths.
Malaysian Olympism in Action	Organises educational webinars and other online programmes with sport and empowerment as the base and focus point.
Malaysian Youth Diplomacy	Initiated Belia4SDG campaign , which aims to promote SDG in Bahasa Melayu among youths via a series of podcast, infoposts and webinar to spread awareness on the SDGs
Penggerak Belia Selangor	Organises activities for youths based on the core thrusts which comprises of education and training, community, networking and volunteerism, culture and arts, youth and fitness, religion and spirituality, leadership and organisation, health and wellness, internationalisation, entrepreneurship and employment, as well as information and communication technology related to SDGs 3, 11, 13 to create awareness among the youths.
Persatuan Aktivistis Sahabat Alam - KUASA	Works with the forest-dependent community & the youth for five years, educating them on their environmental rights, strengthening the environmental democracy literacy amongst them and empowering them to be knowledgeable, proactive, progressive & able to mobilise their own action to achieve environmental protection & justice.

Pertubuhan Kota Kita Sabah	Initiates youth advocacy for community-centric regional-city planning that is walkable, inclusive and sustainable.
Pertubuhan Pemuda Gema Malaysia	Organises activities and initiatives that are oriented toward the SDGs including MySaveFood at Ramadan, tuition classes for refugees kids, and program with former drug addicts
Projek57	Conducted campaigns such as the Unity Ride & Unity Ribbon, speaking engagements, workshops, projects with youths, mostly on SDG 16. Also engaging Orang Asli youths under SDG 4.
Selangor Youth Community (SAY)	Provides "Belia Juara" grants to promote other youth movements to do programmes in promoting the SDGs in their local community; this is not limited to Selangor.
Society for the Promotion of Human Rights Malaysia (PROHAM)	Provides capacity building programmes through PROHAM's youth wing; PROHAMuda.
Sustainable Business Network Association Malaysia (SusTNET)	Provides training, certification, assessment and awards for sustainability impact assessment on projects for youth and professionals. Also supporting youth in schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities, where most of the youth that the organisation are in touch with are driving sustainability projects and SusTNET is their assessor.
Teens4CAP (The Blue Ribbon Global)	Teens and youth trainers are trained on living a sustainable lifestyle at home and building a sustainable city and community by working together on transforming underutilised lands into edible garden, and sharing the surplus crops and starter kits with low income communities, primarily B40 families, and the underprivileged, such as forced migrants.
The Association of Family Support & Welfare Selangor & KL (Family Frontiers)	Family Frontier's approach is multi-pronged, consisting of engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, utilising parliamentary mechanisms, leveraging UN human rights mechanisms and treaty bodies and public outreach to highlight the impacts of gender-discriminatory nationality laws that stunt the nation's development. FF also participates as a promoter and enforcer of Overarching Legal Framework and Public Life, Violence Against Women, Employment and Economic Benefit, and Marriage and Family.
The Malaysian Hub	Promote events and increase exposure for events catered towards university students, including to increase literacy in the SDGs.
Women of Will (WOW)	Focuses on entrepreneurship development programs that aim to empower B40 women entrepreneurs by providing them with training on entrepreneurship skills, business coaching and interest free business capital.
Yayasan Usahawan Malaysia	Promotes development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage formalisation and growth of micro-, small-

	and medium-sized enterprises including through access to financial services towards the youths in Malaysia.
Youth Trust Foundation (myHarapan)	Empowering young Malaysians by supporting youth projects and initiatives that contribute to current nation-building efforts by providing various platforms and opportunities that help them scale, sustain, expand and multiply their impact.
YWILD Malaysia	Educating teenagers on 9 main SDGs through learning and development programmes; bootcamps, campaigns, webinars, symposium since 2019 May

**Table 3: List of Civil Society Organisations that advocate to localise the SDGs Civil Society**

Organisation
1. Adab Youth Garage
2. AIESEC Malaysia
3. Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM)
4. Asian Youth Network Resources
5. Batu Lanchang Vocational College
6. Boleh Space
7. Borneo Komrad
8. Community Transformation Initiative Berhad
9. Earth Rescuer
10. Girl Guides Association Malaysia
11. Green Hero
12. Greenpeace Malaysia
13. Hands of Hope
14. Higher Education Malaysia Association (HEYA)
15. Hope Worldwide Malaysia
16. I Culture Berhad
17. Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development
18. Junior Chamber International Malaysia (JCIM)
19. Kumpulan Latihan Kelanasiswa Malaysia (Malaysian University Rovers Training Group)
20. Majlis Belia Malaysia
21. Majlis Belia Negeri Selangor Daerah Klang
22. Majlis Belia OKU Malaysia
23. Malaysia Olympians Association
24. Malaysia Scout Federation
25. Malaysia Youth Delegation
26. Malaysian Indian Youth Council
27. Malaysian Olympism in Action Society
28. Malaysian Youth Diplomacy (MyDiplomacy)
29. MyBIM (Malaysian Sign Language and Deaf Studies Association)
30. myIMPACT
31. Penggerak Belia Selangor
32. Persatuan Aktivis Sahabat Alam - KUASA
33. Persatuan Promosi Pembangunan Matlamat Lestari
34. Pertubuhan Kota Kita Sabah
35. Pertubuhan Pemuda Gema Malaysia

36. Philandure Sdn Bhd
  37. Projek57
  38. Regional Centre for Expertise Greater Kuala Lumpur (RCE GKL)
  39. Regional Centre of Excellence
  40. Selangor Youth Community (SAY)
  41. Society for the Promotion of Human Rights Malaysia (PROHAM)
  42. Sustainable Business Network Association Malaysia (SusTNET)
  43. Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Youth
  44. Teens4CAP
  45. The Association of Family Support & Welfare Selangor & KL (Family Frontiers)
  46. The Blue Ribbon Global
  47. The Good Society IIUM
  48. The Malaysian Hub
  49. Trash Hero Malaysia
  50. United Nations Association Malaysia Youth
  51. Women of Will
  52. World Merit Malaysia
  53. World Merit University Chapter
  54. World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)
  55. Yayasan Usahawan Malaysia
  56. Youth Trust Foundation (myHarapan)
  57. YWILD Malaysia
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The whole of society approach

by

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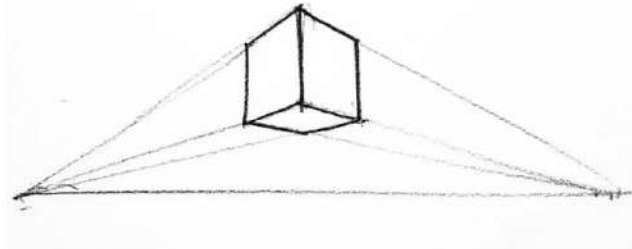


WHOLE OF SOCIETY APPROACH



# HOW WE SEE SOCIETY

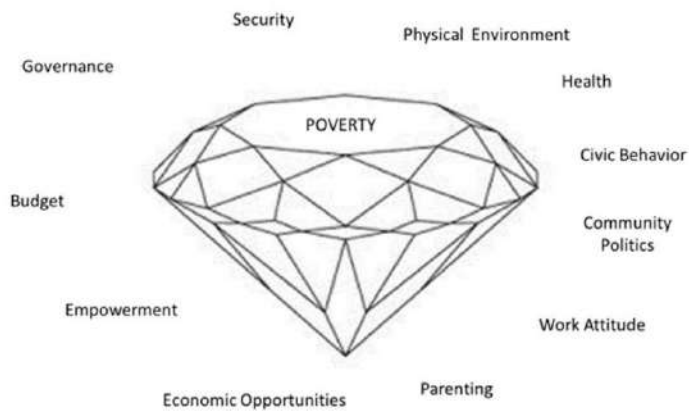
## MULTI-DIMENSIONAL



MULTI-LEVEL

MULTI-HORIZONTAL INTEGRATION

## MULTI-DIMENSION PERSPECTIVE

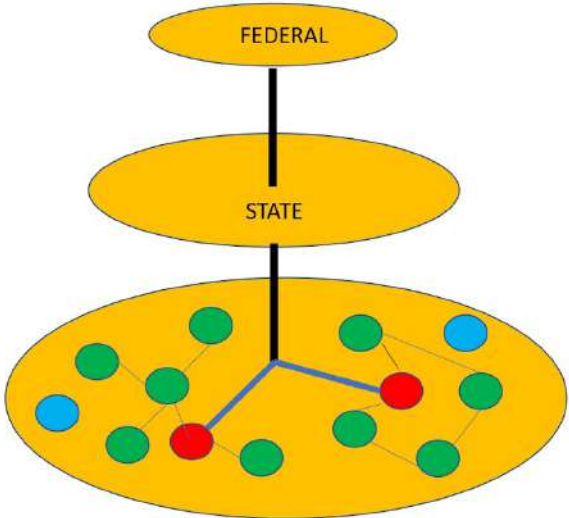
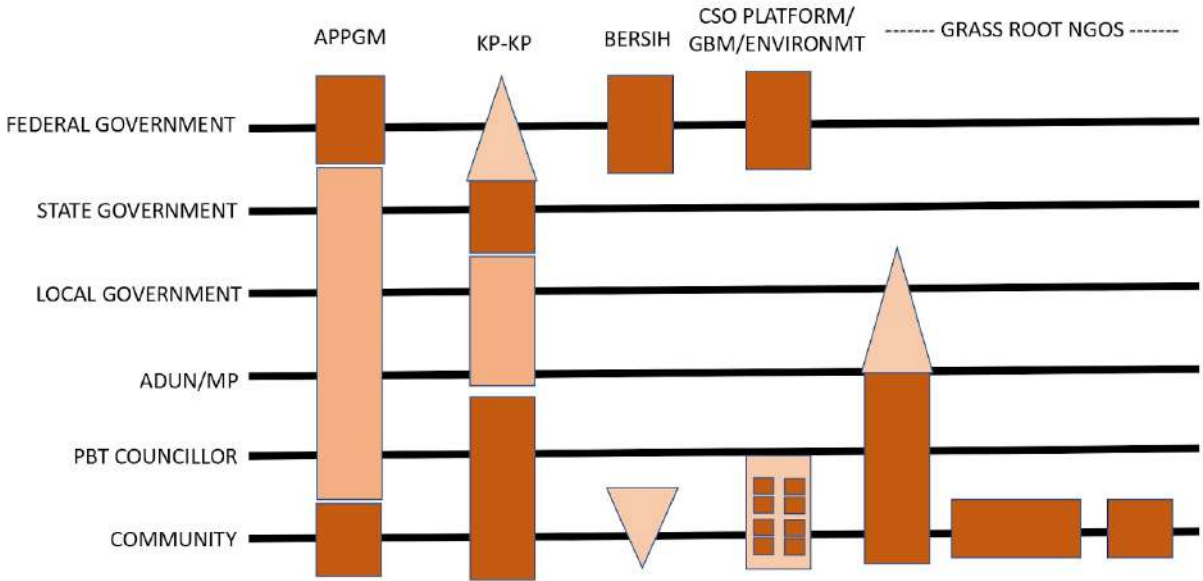


**Absolute Poverty**

(c) J/Rphang 2015

**Multi-Dimensional Poverty**

# MULTI-LEVEL PERSPECTIVE



MULTI-HORIZONTAL INTEGRATION



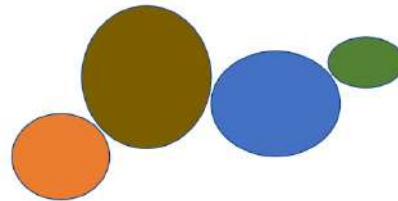
# KP-KP MODEL



KOMUNITI ♥ KERAJAAN  
**PRIHATIN**



**SILO  
WORKING** →



**INTEGRATED  
WORKING** →

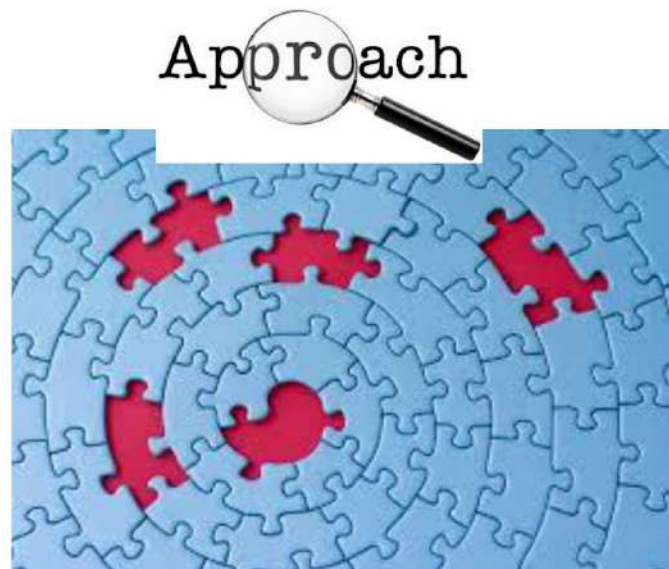




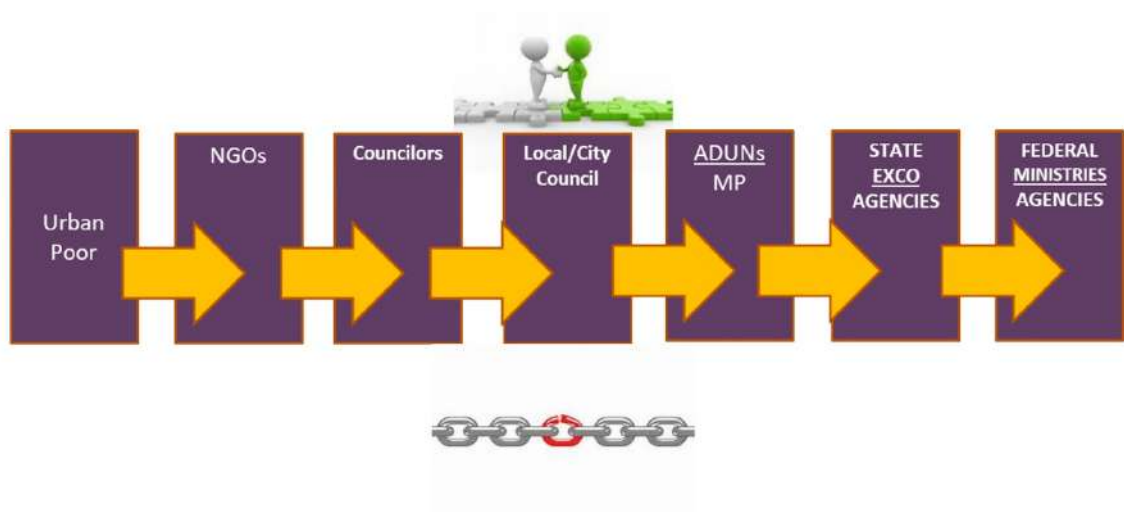
# HIS<sup>3</sup>

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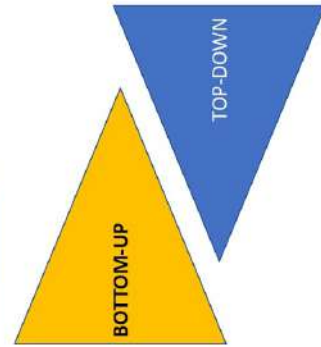
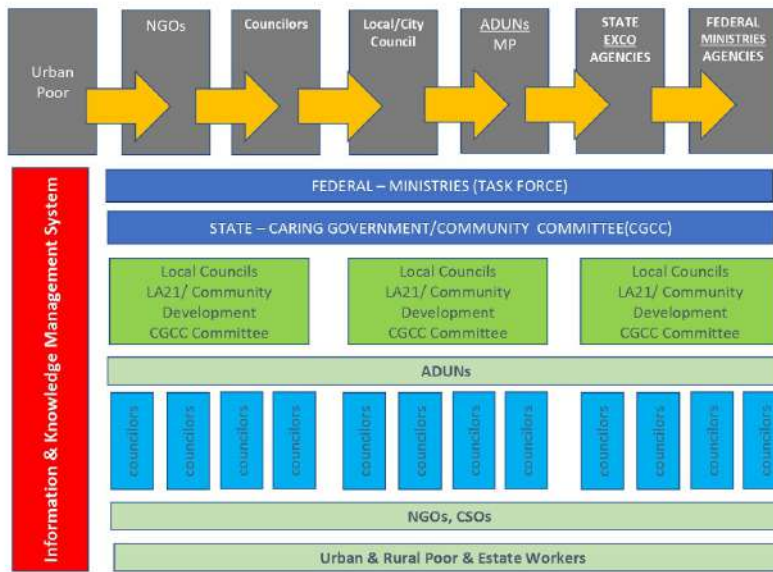
- **H**olistic
- **I**ntegrated
- **S**ystem
  - Structure
  - Synergy



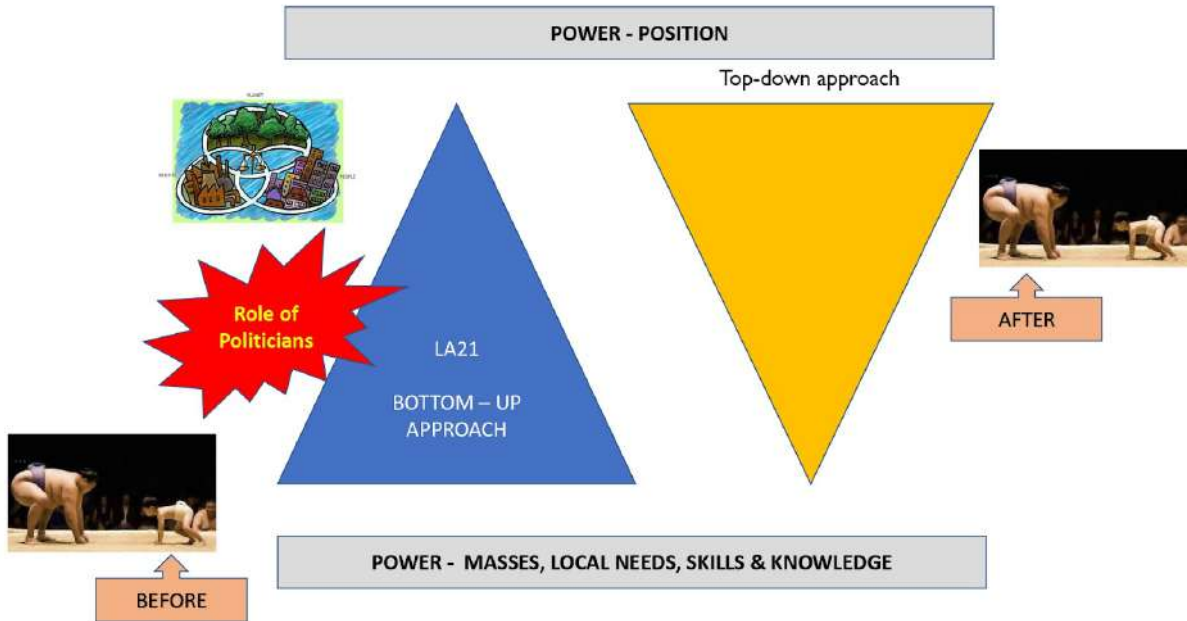
## SERVICE DELIVERY VALUE CHAIN

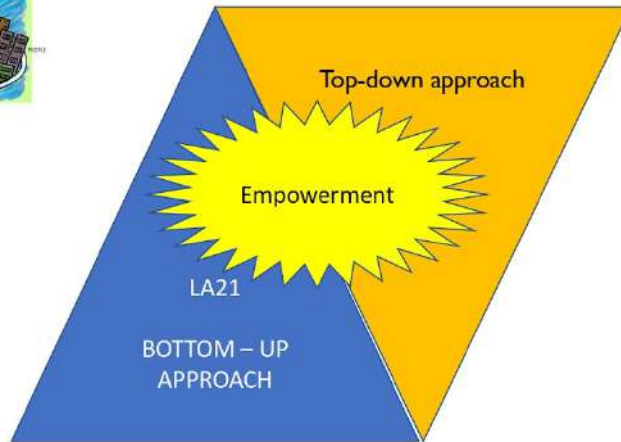


**URBAN AND RURAL POOR - Service Value Chain**  
**SIMULTANEOUS TOP DOWN & BOTTOM UP APPROACH**

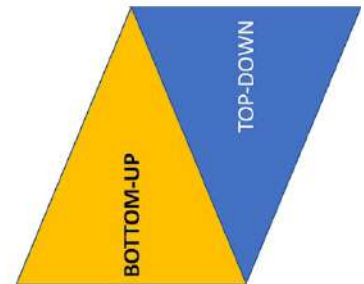
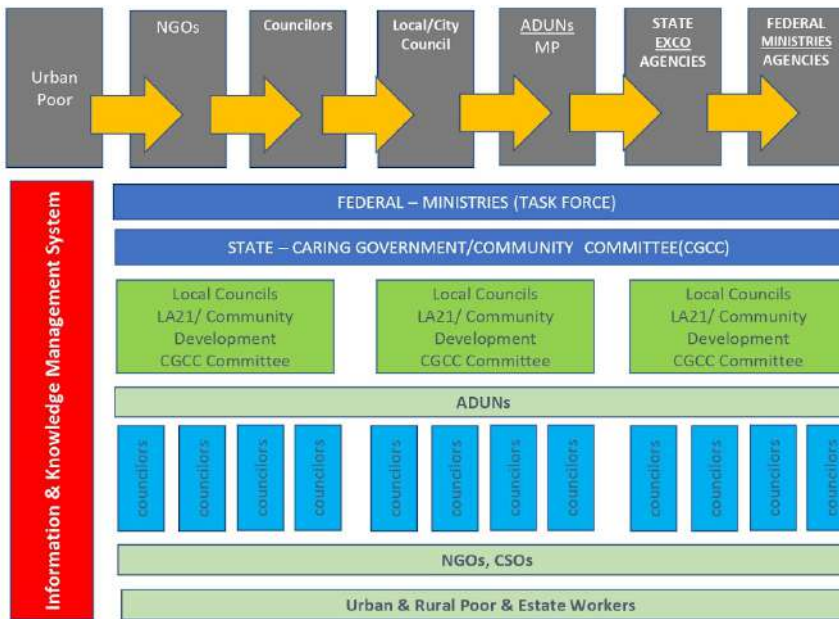


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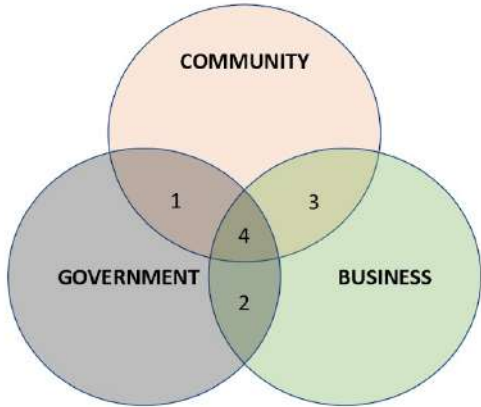


**URBAN AND RURAL POOR - Service Value Chain**  
**SIMULTANEOUS TOP DOWN & BOTTOM UP APPROACH**



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# MULTI-SEKTORAL

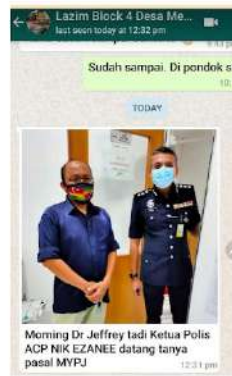
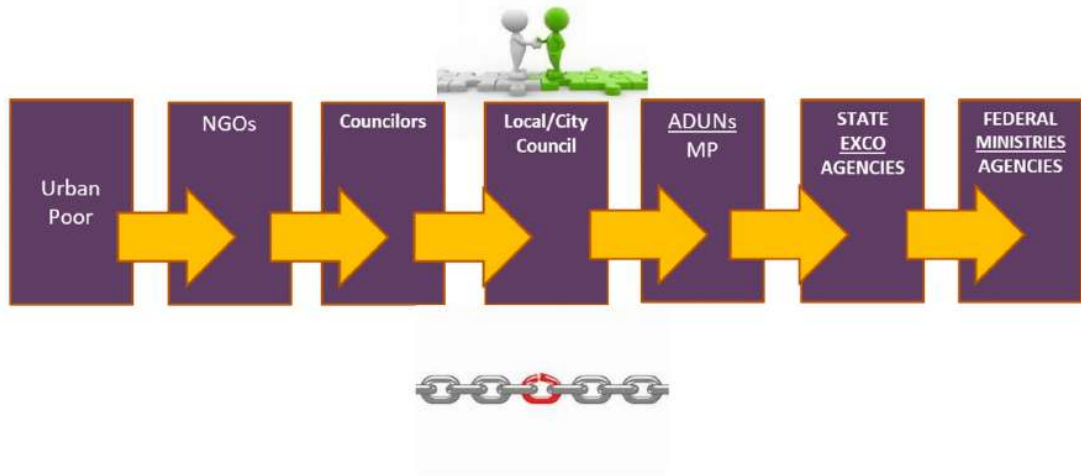


KEPENTINGAN KERJASAMA

Overcoming  
Resistance



# SERVICE DELIVERY VALUE CHAIN





INTER-  
GOVERNMENT  
AGENCY  
COOPERATION

- POLICE
- AADK
- PERPADUAN
- COMMUNITY







**LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND THROUGH "WHOLE OF SOCIETY" APPROACH**

**H.I.S**

- HOLISTIC
- INTEGRATED
- SYSTEMIC, STRUCTURAL, SYNERGISTIC

**KOMUNITI ♥ KERAJAAN  
PRIHATIN**

# Conclusion

Nur Rahmah Othman & Debbie Ann Loh



## Achievements

1. There is a very strong support from Parliament, EPU & MoF for an **institutional structure** (APPGM-SDG) in getting the buy-ins from Parliamentarians. APPGM-SDG acts as a mechanism to provide a space and platform for engagements and dialogues while upholding the bi-partisan spirit in localising SDGs.
2. There is an enabling environment to push the Agenda 2030 forward by the government through the **alignment of SDGs in National Plans**. This is a significant step in integrating universally accepted global goals and provides a strategic direction, development priorities and implementation strategies for Malaysia
3. **Localising of SDGs** is taking place progressively through grounded research (bottom-up approach), capacity building programs in creating awareness for civil servants and local community leaders and micro projects. This has opened doors for local cross-cutting issues to be brought up to a higher level, local SDG Champions and alternative communities.
4. **Partnership with the Corporate sector** has developed well through the ESG component.
5. **Increasing visibility of SDGs initiatives** at the regional and global level through the government, NGOs/CSOs, academia and corporate sector.

## Challenges

1. There is a concern on the **silos-approach** between the government institutions at the federal, state and local levels, federal-state relationship and political dynamics.
2. **Policy discord and imbalanced progress of SDGs** implementation affects the overall progress towards the goals.
3. **Policy agenda does not necessarily translate to policy change.**
4. **Lacking of disaggregated data** makes it harder to identify the targeted groups in making sure that no one is really left behind.
5. **Constrained and uncertain funding for SDG implementation.**

# Way Forward

## Short Term

1. **APPGM-SDG continues to act as a mechanism** to identify, highlight and follow-up on unresolved local issues and concerns, strengthen CSO-private sector partnerships and collaborations as well as build on-going awareness of SDGs with a top-down approach.
2. It is suggested that the **Parliament** play a role in amplifying the need to prioritise biodiversity conservation and advocate a rights-based approach for vulnerable and marginalised groups (reaching the further behind first).
3. It is suggested that the **government** utilise the quadruple helix model (government, academia, industry, communities), realign the MPs and ADUNs' allocations to be more SDG-centric, and enhance available and access to disaggregated data on vulnerable and marginalised groups.
4. Collectively, raise the awareness and strengthen the capacity of **grassroot communities**, empower them through innovation and creativity as well as strengthen the research methodology of local researchers (qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods).

## Long Term

1. It is suggested that the **Parliament** strengthen the bipartisan resolve towards achieving the SDG agenda.
2. There is a clear call for the **government** to bridge the Federal-State-Local Government relationship, strengthen the integration and implementation of policies including gender mainstreaming, consider institutionalising the third sector and prioritising a rights-based approach for vulnerable and marginalised groups.
3. In the push to localise SDGs, **the SDG key players and stakeholders** are encouraged to secure alternative funding and develop multi-faceted solutions that prioritise societal impact.
4. The needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups should be addressed through regional and global collaboration.

# Appendix 1

## Malaysia SDG Conference 2022 Program Tentative

Day 1 Friday Nov 25, 2022	
8.00-8.30 pm	<p>Welcoming by <b>Dato' Sri Rohani Abdul Karim</b> former chairman of APPGM-SDG</p> <p>Opening by <b>En. Che Kodir bin Baharum</b> on behalf of Director General of EPU</p>
8.30-9.30 pm	<p><b>Keynote Address: <i>A journey in advocacy for inclusive and sustainable development: the role of the Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance between 2015 and 2022.</i></b></p> <p>Prof Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria (SDG Society)</p>
9.30pm - 10.30pm	<p>Panel Discussion on the Keynote address, Q &amp; A Session:</p> <p>Discussants: Dr Lin Mui Kiang, Mr Alizan Mahadi, Prof. Dato' Dr Rashila Ramli, Ms Lavanya Rama Iyer</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Mr Kiu Jia Yaw (Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance)</p>
DAY 2 Saturday Nov 26, 2022	
<p><b>9.00am - 10.00am</b></p> <p><b>SESSION 1: SDG &amp; DEVELOPMENT - PAPER PRESENTATION</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Ms. Rahmah Othman (SDG Society)</p> <p><b>Rapporteur:</b> Dr. Eva K Larry (SDG Society)</p>	
1.	Government and CSO Collaboration in SDG Implementation - <b>Dr. Lin Mui Kiang</b> (PROHAM)
2.	Human Security & SDGs: Malaysia's Experience in Linking the Global to the Local - <b>Prof. Dato' Dr Rashila Ramli</b> (UNU & PSSM) & Prof. Dr Sity Daud (UKM)
3.	The Influence of the SDGs for Policy Change on Sustainable Development Integration - <b>Alizan Mahadi</b> (ISIS Malaysia)
4.	Addressing SDG Implementation Challenges: Can SDG Centre Solve the Problem? - <b>Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zainal Abidin</b> (Pusat Sejahtera, IIUM)
5.	Grounded Research in localising SDGs - <b>Dr. Teo Sue Ann</b> (SDG Society)

<p><b>10.15am - 11.15am</b></p> <p><b>SECTION 2 SDG &amp; PEOPLE (Poverty &amp; Gender) - PAPER PRESENTATION</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Dr. Wan Suzita binti Wan Ibrahim (SDG Society)</p> <p><b>Rapporteur:</b> Ms Nurul Fazlina (SDG Society)</p>	
1.	The Development State of Sabah: An Observation based on SDGs - <b>Dr. Wong Sing Yun</b> (UMS), Jain Yassin (UiTM) & Faerozh Madli (UMS)
2.	Risk Management System for Food Security - <b>Oswald Edward</b> (Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Johor), Dr. Firdausi Suffian ( Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA)
3.	SDG 5 and SDG 16 in Review: Relating the Convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and VNR 2021 through Feminist Governance - <b>Dr. Sharifah Syahirah Syed Sheikh</b> (Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA)
4.	Charting Orang Asli’s Progress and Sustainable Development Goals through the Lens of Land Rights Recognition (2015-2022) - <b>Kon Onn Sein</b> (YKPM)
<p><b>11.30am - 12.30pm</b></p> <p><b>SESSION 3 SDG &amp; PEOPLE (Education) - PAPER PRESENTATION</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Dr. Jain Yassin (UITM, Sabah)</p> <p><b>Rapporteur:</b> Dr Thanaaraj Murudi (SDG Society)</p>	
1.	Leave No One Behind: SDG 4 for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Malaysia - <b>Norani Abu Bakar</b> (UM & UCSI) & Assoc. Prof. Dr. Thirunaukarasu Subramaniam (UM)
2.	The Model of ‘Self-Sustainable’ Community - Journey to Reduce Education Debt Among Malaysian Indian Community - <b>Thanasegar Ramasamy</b> (Concerned UM Indian Graduates - CUMIG)
3.	The Learning Experiences through Engagement Activities of Environmental Awareness - <b>Ahmeema Luthfee</b> (School of Education and Sosial Sciences) & Ooi Boon Keat (Management and Science University)
4.	Using Digital Toolkits for Effective Learning in A Rural Primary School - <b>Asshadwi Paneerselvam</b> (Inspiring Bharathiyar Association - INBHA)
5.	Relationship between parenting style and the discipline problem among students in School - <b>Cecilia Susai</b> (Inspiring Bharathiyar Association - INBHA & UUM)

**12.30pm - 2.00 pm LUNCH**

**2.00pm - 3.00pm**

**SESSION 4 SDG & PLANET (Environment) - PAPER PRESENTION**

**Moderator:** Mr Anthony Tan (SDG Society)

**Rapporteur:** Dr Nur Farhana Che Awang (SDG Society)

1. Our Planet in Crisis – How is Malaysia doing on this “P” of the SDGs?(SDG 13, 14, 15) – **Lavanya Rama Iyer** (Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance & WWF Malaysia)
2. Coral reefs: the embodiment of the 5 P’s of the SDGs: people, planet, profit, peace and prosperity- **Julian Hyde** (Reef Check Malaysia )
3. Community Level Capacity Building For Biomass-Based Product Development Towards Socio-Economic Empowerment And Sustainability - **Palsan Sannasi Abdullah** (Universiti Malaysia Kelantan - UMK), Siti Nuurul Huda Mohammad Azmin, Ahmad Saufi Mohd Naw, Ch'ng Huck Ywih, Mardawani Mohamad & Zul Ariff Abdul Latiff
4. Safeguard Our Survival, Shall We?: “We Are Not As Resilient As We Thought” - **Joyien Chiew Rou Yin** (AHA Moments), Ling Kim Lin & Low Zin Rui

**3.15pm - 4.30pm**

**SESSION 5 SDG & LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND - MODERATED SESSION**

**Moderator:** Mr James Raj (SDG Society)

**Rapporteur :** Ms Malar

1. Personal and organizational journey in localizing SDG - **Stephen Chow Chee Kheong** (Persatuan Perkhidmatan Komuniti Taiping - ESDA)
2. Empowering the community thru skills training - **KS.Pakyalakshmi A/P Subramanian** (Pertubuhan Pembangunan Wanita Tamarai Pulau Pinang)
3. Analyzing the intersection between SDG and SOGIESC - **Thilaga Sulathireh** (Justice for Sisters)
4. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the eyes of a refugee in Malaysia - **Zahid Alam Dil Mohamad** (Community Worker at Penang Refugee Network/Persatuan Komuniti Berdikari)

5.	Realiti Kehidupan Kumpulan - Kumpulan di dalam Masyarakat yang Masih Tertinggal dan KMM Bersama Menjayakan Matlamat Pembangunan Mampan - <b>Faizzul Amri</b> (Pertubuhan Kebajikan Masyarakat Marhaen Taiping)
6.	SDG Straight from the Heart, will go far. - <b>Johnek Henry</b> (Research and Development Movement of Singai - REDEEMS)
<b>8.00pm - 10.00pm DINNER AND APPRECIATION NIGHT</b>	
<b>DAY 3 Sunday Nov 27, 2022</b>	
<b>9.00am - 10.00am</b> <b>SESSION 6 SDG &amp; PEOPLE (Health) - PAPER PRESENTATION</b>  <b>Moderator:</b> Dr Teo Sue Ann (SDG Society) <b>Rapporteur:</b> Ms Nurul Syaza (SDG Society)	
1.	Coverage and Reception of Healthcare Services for Refugees in Klang Valley, Malaysia - A Qualitative Study - <b>Philiya Mary Thomas &amp; Nur Emylia Farhana binti Syaharudin</b>
2.	Recommendations for Encouraging Mental Health Help-Seeking in Malaysian Youth for SDGs Mobilisation: A Review - <b>Dr. Iffah Suraya binti Jasni</b> (Counselor Cum Lecturer, Perdana University) & Philus George Thomas
3.	Health in All, All in Health: Contextualising SDG3 and its cross-sectionality within the SDG Framework - <b>Dr. Murallitharan Munisamy</b> (National Cancer Society, Malaysia)
<b>10.15 - 11.15am</b> <b>SESSION 7 SDG &amp; PROSPERITY (Economy) - MODERATED SESSION</b>  <b>Moderator:</b> Mr Paniirselvam Jayaraman (SDG Society) <b>Rapporteur:</b> Ms Afiqah Abdul Malik (SDG Society)	
1.	Leveraging SDGs with Masala Wheels - <b>Aishwaryaa Gobi</b> (Pepper Labs - Masala Wheels)
2.	A model of Green Entrepreneur Fertigation for the Flood-Affected Cash-Crop Community in Telaga Papan, Setiu, Terengganu - <b>Dr. Roslina Ismail</b> (Universiti Malaysia Terengganu) & Noor Zatul Iffah Hussin
3.	Mukadimah Sri Lovely - <b>Tashrul Talib</b> (Sri Lovely)

4.	Assessment of Livelihood Vulnerability Index among Smallholder Farmers Living in Flood Prone Area: Case Study in Kota Bharu, Kelantan - <b>Nurul Atikah Zulkepli</b> (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) & Nor Diana Mohd Idris
5.	Ekonomi Penanaman Cili Padi Bara Secara Teknologi Fertigasi Terbuka - <b>Sadang Anak Paing</b> (Syarikat Permata Umang)
<b>11.30am - 12.15pm</b> <b>SESSION 8 SDG &amp; PEACE (SDG 16) - PAPER PRESENTATION</b>  <b>Moderator:</b> Assoc Prof Dr Zaimuariffudin (UNIMAS) <b>Rapporteur:</b> Harries Mohamad (SDG Society)	
	Looking Back: Ascribing Malaysia's Progress towards Achieving Agenda 2030 - <b>Prof.Dr Khairul Wahidin Awang</b> (Universiti Malaysia Kelantan), Assoc Prof Mazlina Mustapha (UPM) & Nur Syuhada (UMK)
	The Progress of Publicly Available Information in Malaysia - <b>Ho Yi Jian</b> (SDSN- Sustainable Development Solutions Network)
	Data disaggregation to make indigenous people visible in SDGs- <b>Prof Wong Chin Huat</b> (SDSN-Asia)
	Rethinking the Role of Education in Preventing Violent Extremism in Malaysia - <b>Thomas Koruth Samuel</b> (University of Malaya)
<b>2.00pm - 3.00pm</b> <b>SESSION 9 SDG 17 - MODERATED SESSION</b>  <b>Moderator:</b> Ms Omna Sreeni Ong (ENGENDER Consultancy) <b>Rapporteur:</b> Dr Siti Nur Ain (SDG Society)	
	CSOs As Solution Providers - Opportunities and Challenges - <b>K. Eruthairaj</b> (SDG Society)
	Realizing SDGs 16 and 17 through Impact Evaluation of SDG projects in Malaysia - <b>Prof Dr Sity Daud</b> (PSSM) & Prof. Dato' Dr Rashila Ramli
	A Mid-Term Review of Malaysia Civil Society Organization in Engaging Youths in SDG Implementation - <b>Zoel Ng</b> & Philus George (SDG Society) Mohd Idham Mohd Yusof (Universiti Teknologi MARA-UiTM)
	The whole of society approach - <b>Jeffery FK Phang</b> (MyPJ)



**3.00 – 4.00pm**  
**FINAL CLOSING SESSION**


**Session Moderator:** Prof Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria  
(SDG Society)


**Findings Presentation**

**Critical Review of the Past & Present:** Puan Rahmah Othman (SDG Society)

**Emerging Policy Concerns for the future:** Ms Debbie Ann Loh (SDG Society)

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