Cross-Border Collaborations:

AMBASSADORS

Leading the Way in SDG Initiatives

Cross-Border Collaborations: Ambassadors Leading the Way in SDG Initiatives

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Our sincere gratitude goes to Universitas Bakrie for providing the academic foundation and institutional support that enabled this project to take shape. We also thank the International Office for its invaluable assistance in facilitating global connections and supporting meaningful international engagement throughout the development of this book.

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Editorial Team

Preface

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a journey no country can take alone. It requires vision, strong leadership, and meaningful collaboration across borders. Ambassadors play a crucial role in this mission by building bridges between nations, fostering partnerships, and championing initiatives that create real and lasting impact. Their efforts embody the spirit of global solidarity needed to address today's interconnected challenges, from poverty and inequality to climate change and food security.

This book was initiated in 2025 and completed in 2026. During this period, several diplomatic appointments changed, and some contributors featured here have since concluded their tenure as Ambassadors. The perspectives and experiences presented in this volume, however, reflect their valuable contributions during their respective terms of service.

Cross-Border Collaborations: Ambassadors Leading the Way in SDG Initiatives highlights the diplomatic leadership and collaborative programs that have successfully advanced the SDGs. This book showcases how international cooperation through policy engagement, joint initiatives, people-to-people diplomacy, and innovative development projects can accelerate progress toward a more sustainable and inclusive future. It also draws lessons learned from various countries, presenting real examples of impactful initiatives in areas such as education, health, environment, technology, and community empowerment.

The central theme of this publication is clear: cross-border collaboration is essential to achieving the SDGs. By sharing practical experiences and successful approaches, this book aims to inspire new ideas, strengthen partnerships, and encourage more stakeholders to work together in advancing sustainable development. This book is intended for policymakers, ambassadors, development agencies, academics, researchers, NGO leaders, students, and young changemakers who believe in the power of collaboration.

May this book serve as a reminder that global challenges require collective solutions and that through cooperation, innovation, and shared commitment, a better future is possible for all.

Jakarta, July 2026
On behalf of Editorial Team and Authors

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Introduction

Building Bridges for a Sustainable Future: The Power of Cross-Border Collaboration

Written by:
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Rektor Universitas Bakrie

It is with great honour and profound optimism that I write this prologue for "**Cross-Border Collaborations: Ambassadors Leading the Way in SDG Initiatives**." This remarkable volume represents far more than a collection of diplomatic insights, it embodies the spirit of partnership and shared responsibility that must define our collective journey toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Nowadays, humanity with an ambitious yet essential blueprint for peace and prosperity has been emphasised in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, The 17 Sustainable Development Goals, ranging from poverty eradication and quality education to climate action and sustainable cities, are not merely aspirational targets. They are urgent imperatives that demand coordinated action across borders, sectors, and societies.

The challenges articulated in the SDGs transcend national boundaries has long been recognized at Bakrie University and that of Climate change does not respect borders; economic inequality reverberates across regions; and innovations in healthcare, education, and technology must be shared globally to achieve meaningful impact. The interconnected nature of these challenges necessitates an equally interconnected response built on diplomacy, knowledge exchange, and genuine partnership.

The current state of global SDG progress presents us with both sobering realities and opportunities for renewed commitment. While significant strides have been made in areas such as poverty reduction and access to education, the COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted progress across multiple goals, pushing millions back into extreme poverty and widening educational gaps. Climate-related disasters have intensified, disproportionately affecting vulnerable communities. Gender inequality persists in many forms, and the digital divide continues to exclude millions from the benefits of technological advancement. The halfway point to 2030 finds us off-track on many targets, making cross-border collaboration not just beneficial, but absolutely critical.

This is the core reason why the initiative captured in this book is so vital. Ambassadors serve as the essential bridges between nations, facilitating dialogue, fostering mutual understanding, and creating pathways for practical cooperation. Their unique position enables them to translate global commitments into tangible partnerships, mobilize resources across borders, and champion innovative solutions that draw upon diverse perspectives and experiences.

The partnership between Bakrie University and our neighbours represents our institutional commitment to SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) which serves as the enabler for all other SDGs. We believe that universities must evolve beyond their traditional roles as centres of learning and research to become active agents of sustainable development and international cooperation. By bringing together academic excellence, diplomatic wisdom, and community engagement, we can create powerful synergies that accelerate progress toward our shared goals.

Our collaboration with neighbouring countries is rooted in both geographical proximity and shared aspirations. We face many common challenges, from environmental degradation and natural disaster resilience to inclusive economic growth and technological transformation. Yet we also possess complementary strengths, diverse knowledge systems, and rich cultural traditions that, when combined, offer powerful solutions. The ASEAN region, for instance, has demonstrated remarkable economic dynamism, but we must ensure this growth is sustainable, inclusive, and resilient.

The substance of SDG achievement lies in addressing interconnected challenges holistically. Consider SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), these cannot be achieved without simultaneously addressing SDG 13 (Climate Action), as changing weather patterns directly threaten food security and livelihoods. Similarly, SDG 4 (Quality Education) is intrinsically linked to SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). Cross-border collaboration allows us to address these interlinkages more effectively by pooling expertise, sharing best practices, and implementing coordinated strategies.

Furthermore, the financing gap for SDG implementation remains substantial, estimated at trillions of dollars annually for developing countries alone, particularly in areas such as climate action, food security, health systems, and sustainable infrastructure. No single nation can bridge this gap independently. Cross-border partnerships enable innovative financing mechanisms, blended finance, technology transfer, capacity building, and the mobilization of both public and private sector resources at scale, while also reducing risk and increasing investment confidence across regions.

This book chronicles how diplomatic leadership can transform these challenges into opportunities for collective progress. The ambassadors whose voices fill these pages bring decades of experience navigating complex international landscapes, building trust and consensus among diverse stakeholders, and turning political commitments into concrete action. Their insights on fostering cross-border collaboration for the SDGs offer valuable lessons for policymakers, academics, civil society organizations, and business leaders who seek practical pathways toward sustainable impact in an increasingly interdependent global order.

As we read their contributions, we are reminded that sustainable development is fundamentally about people, their dignity, their opportunities, and their futures. It is about ensuring that no one is left behind as we build more equitable, resilient, and sustainable societies. It is also about recognizing the interconnectedness of our challenges, from poverty and inequality to climate change and food security, and responding with empathy, solidarity, and shared purpose that transcends national borders and political cycles.

Bakrie University is proud to serve as a platform for this critical dialogue and to strengthen our bonds with neighboring nations in pursuit of the SDGs. We are committed to continuing this collaboration through joint research initiatives, student and faculty exchanges, community development projects, and policy advocacy that amplifies the voices and needs of our region on the global stage, while nurturing a new generation of scholars and leaders dedicated to inclusive and sustainable development and responsible global citizenship.

The decade of action for the SDGs is upon us, and we must accelerate our efforts with urgency, creativity, and unwavering commitment, guided by evidence, dialogue, and shared responsibility.

To the ambassadors who have contributed to this volume, I extend my deepest appreciation. Your leadership, foresight, and unwavering commitment to multilateral cooperation exemplify the spirit of international diplomacy at its finest. Through your insights and experiences, this book demonstrates how principled leadership and sustained dialogue can transform shared global challenges into opportunities for collective advancement. Your contributions will undoubtedly continue to inspire cooperation across regions and generations.

To our readers, this book is offered not only as a scholarly resource, but also as a call to responsible global citizenship. The Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals is well underway, and the urgency of our task has never been greater. Governments, academic institutions, civil society, and the private sector must now move beyond aspiration toward implementation, driven by evidence, innovation, and a shared sense of accountability for our common future.

May this volume stand as a testament to what can be achieved when nations choose partnership over division, dialogue over discord, and long-term collective prosperity over short-term national gain. The SDGs remind us that our destinies are deeply interconnected, and that sustainable development is not a zero-sum endeavor, but a shared investment in peace, stability, and human well-being.

The road ahead will not be without obstacles, as the world continues to confront economic uncertainty, climate risks, and social inequality. Yet, with the spirit of collaboration reflected in these pages, it is a journey we need not undertake alone. By strengthening cross-border partnerships and nurturing mutual trust, we can ensure that the promise of the 2030 Agenda becomes a lived reality for all.

A Tapestry of Ambition and Contrast: Introduction to SDGs Cooperation among Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Bulgaria, and Hungary

Written by:
Dr. Muhammad Badaruddin, S.Sos., M.Sc., M.A.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a global promise and a shared roadmap that connects prosperity with responsibility. Yet, beneath the inspiring rhetoric of universality lie vastly uneven realities. Every nation walks a different path toward 2030, influenced by its history, economy, politics, and people. This chapter examines a rare constellation of cooperation among five nations that rarely share the same table: Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines from Southeast Asia, and Bulgaria and Hungary from Central and Eastern Europe. Separated by continents yet united by the same 17 goals, they reflect both the promise and the paradox of global cooperation on sustainable development.

Unlike traditional development blocs, these five countries do not operate within a single formal framework. There is no treaty binding them, no secretariat coordinating joint projects, and no shared regional fund. Yet cooperation exists, woven through networks of diplomacy, education, trade, and policy dialogue. These subtle but persistent interactions tell a richer story about the SDGs, that progress often happens not with grand alliances, but with quieter exchanges of knowledge, empathy, and experience, gradually building trust, shared understanding, and practical solutions across very different political and social contexts, enabling local innovations to be adapted, scaled, and refined through continuous cross border learning and collaborative experimentation.

The Global Vision Meets Local Realities

The 2030 Agenda, adopted in 2015 by all United Nations Member States, was more than a list of targets and it was a reimagining of development as universal, indivisible, and deeply human. For Southeast Asian nations like Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, this translated into a promise to balance growth with inclusion. For European states such as Bulgaria and Hungary, it meant sustaining prosperity while repairing trust in institutions and addressing ecological limits. Each faces the same global goals but with a distinct historical and institutional lens.

Indonesia, with over 270 million people scattered across thousands of islands, stands as both a regional power and a complex governance experiment. Malaysia, once defined by its resource economy, has rebranded itself as a hub for green investment and digital innovation. The Philippines continues to blend resilience and vulnerability, facing natural disasters with remarkable social endurance. Across the world, Bulgaria and Hungary, newer EU members, navigate their dual identity: aligning with EU climate and social directives while grappling with domestic political polarization and environmental decline.

This mix makes them a fascinating study group. The cooperation among these five countries shows that the SDGs are less about uniformity and more about translation, how global principles are interpreted through local politics, regional cultures, national ambitions, and diverse development pathways shaped by history and geography, as well as by economic priorities, governance structures, and social realities.

Why Focusing on these Five Countries?

At first glance, the connection between these Southeast Asian and European nations may appear accidental. However, their cooperation reveals important lessons about global partnerships beyond the traditional North–South divide. Each of the five represents a bridge between regions, income levels, and governance systems.

Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, members of ASEAN, share a developmental trajectory shaped by rapid industrialization, social transformation, and an enduring struggle to ensure environmental sustainability. They embody the ambitions of emerging economies trying to turn growth into equity. Bulgaria and Hungary, on the other hand, embody the paradox of developed democracies, with economic advancement coexisting with declining institutional trust and environmental strain. Together, they represent both ends of the development spectrum, offering a laboratory of contrasts.

Studying this group underscores three analytical themes: asymmetry of capacity, institutional translation, and horizontal learning. ASEAN's flexible, consensus-based governance allows experimentation but sometimes lacks enforceability, while the EU's rigid regulatory frameworks ensure accountability but can stifle innovation. Cooperation across these regimes requires empathy and adaptability more than formal alignment.

National Snapshots and SDGs Progress

Each country brings unique strengths and vulnerabilities to the SDGs table. Indonesia has institutionalized SDGs planning through the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas), linking national and local development agendas. Malaysia's Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) emphasize public–private partnerships and data-driven implementation. The Philippines integrates SDGs into its National Development Plan via the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), focusing on resilience and equity. Bulgaria, through its 2020 VNRs, emphasizes water management and social inclusion, while Hungary highlights innovation, education, and climate policy within the EU Green Deal framework.

According to the 2023 Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Index, Indonesia and Malaysia rank among the more advanced Southeast Asian nations in SDGs progress, while the Philippines shows strong social participation but lags in environmental goals. Bulgaria and Hungary perform well in economic and health indicators but fall behind on environmental sustainability and institutional trust. These variations create fertile ground for exchange, where one region's strength complements another's weakness.

Pathways of Cooperation

Formal cooperation among the five may be limited, but multiple pathways link them through regional, bilateral, and thematic networks. The ASEAN–EU Dialogue Partnership serves as the most visible bridge. Initiatives such as the EU–ASEAN Policy Dialogue on Sustainable Development and the ASEAN SDGs Baseline Report create opportunities for officials, scholars, and private-sector actors to share experiences. Hungary's cooperation with Indonesia on water technology and Malaysia's engagement with European institutions on green energy showcase bilateral exchanges translating SDGs ideals into tangible projects.

Beyond formal diplomacy, cooperation flourishes in less visible forms. Universities across these nations participate in joint research on renewable energy, governance, and digital transformation. Civil-society organizations share advocacy strategies on climate adaptation and gender equity. These horizontal networks reflect the reality that sustainable development is as much about relationships as it is about indicators.

Tensions and Barriers

Despite encouraging signs, meaningful cooperation faces structural and political constraints. The first is the tension between ASEAN's voluntary model and the EU's binding one. In Southeast Asia, consensus remains the guiding principle, limiting collective enforcement. In Europe, integration requires compliance with common rules, which creates rigidity. Bridging these two logics is a challenge of political imagination.

Second, the development sustainability dilemma persists. For ASEAN countries, economic expansion remains the top priority. Policies that limit growth for environmental protection can be politically costly. Meanwhile, in EU member states, the political fatigue of green transitions has sparked domestic resistance. This shared, though differently manifested, tension highlights how sustainability politics often hinge on perceptions of fairness and equity, especially when communities feel that the burdens of transition are unevenly distributed and that the benefits of sustainability are not immediately visible or accessible to all.

Third, financing remains uneven. UNESCAP (2023) estimates that Southeast Asia faces an SDGs financing gap exceeding a trillion dollars annually. While EU states have access to structural and cohesion funds, ASEAN members rely heavily on blended finance and public–private mechanisms. The question is whether cooperation can move from symbolic exchanges to substantive resource mobilization.

The Human Dimension

Beyond statistics, SDGs cooperation is ultimately about people, the engineers designing flood resilient cities, the teachers integrating sustainability into classrooms, and the smallholder farmers experimenting with climate smart agriculture. Imagine a Filipino disaster-response officer learning from a Hungarian hydrologist about river basin management, or a Malaysian renewable-energy entrepreneur collaborating with a Bulgarian researcher on solar efficiency. These human connections turn policy into lived experience.

In every case, collaboration reveals a common desire: to reconcile progress with dignity. The SDGs serve as both mirror and map, reflecting national priorities while guiding collective ambition. In Indonesia and the Philippines, community led innovations in waste management have inspired EU municipalities seeking local empowerment. In turn, EU experiences in digital monitoring and transparency provide models for ASEAN governments grappling with data gaps. Cooperation becomes reciprocal, not hierarchical.

Emerging Opportunities

If cooperation is to evolve, it must pivot toward mutual learning rather than conditional assistance and more inclusive forms of partnership across regions. Several opportunities are emerging. First, the UN's Voluntary National Review process could be reimagined as a peer learning platform, pairing ASEAN and EU countries to exchange strategies on data management, stakeholder engagement, financing, and evidence based policymaking. Second, small issue based funds could encourage co designed pilots on renewable energy or sustainable cities that respond to local priorities. Third, academic and youth exchanges could nurture a generation fluent in cross regional problem solving and collaborative leadership.

Regional organizations also hold potential. ASEAN's integration frameworks, combined with EU technical expertise, could generate new hybrid platforms for knowledge exchange and collaborative policy innovation across diverse development contexts. The key is to institutionalize trust, to create channels where lessons flow in both directions among governments, institutions, and local communities.

Rethinking Global Cooperation: Lessons from the Five

This case study challenges several myths about global development. The first is that cooperation flows only from richer to poorer nations. In reality, ASEAN countries have pioneered social innovations and community engagement strategies that wealthier nations now study. The second myth is that development models can be transplanted wholesale; the experience of these five nations shows that success depends on contextual adaptation. The third is that SDG progress is purely technical, although in truth it is political and cultural, requiring negotiation among competing visions of the good life.

"Bulgaria and Hungary demonstrate the long-term discipline required to institutionalize sustainability within governance systems. Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines show how flexibility and social participation can drive transformation even with limited resources. The shared insight is clear: progress is not linear, and cooperation must be humble, adaptive, and people-centered."

Conclusion: Towards a Shared 2030

As we approach the halfway mark of the 2030 Agenda, these five countries stand as microcosms of global ambition and struggle. Their cooperation is still emerging, imperfect, and uneven—but it signals hope. The SDGs are not a checklist; they are a living conversation among nations about what kind of future humanity deserves. For Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, the agenda remains tied to inclusion and resilience. For Bulgaria and Hungary, it centers on governance and ecological responsibility. The bridge between them lies in shared learning.

Ultimately, the future of SDGs cooperation will depend on whether nations see partnership as a moral commitment rather than a diplomatic formality. The real challenge is not aligning policies but aligning imaginations, envisioning sustainability as a collective and human journey. The next chapters of this book explore how these countries, in their own ways, are writing that story together.

Chapter 1

Diplomacy in the Era of SDGs

Roadmap of Indonesia SGDs

Written by:
Sellita, S.Sos, M.A

Conceptualizing the Roadmap of Indonesia's SDGs: Addressing Structural and Contextual Challenges in Implementation

Indonesia has consistently affirmed its commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The principles and objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are substantially aligned with Indonesia's national development agenda, particularly as articulated in the "Nawacita" vision, the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2005–2025, and the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2015–2019[1]. This commitment is not only normative but also reflected in concrete steps at the national and international levels. In 2017, Indonesia officially submitted its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) to the United Nations (UN)[2]. The submission of the VNR marked Indonesia's active role in the global reporting process and demonstrated transparency in conveying its capabilities and challenges.

In 2019, Indonesia submitted its second VNR after conducting a comprehensive review of its national development policies and agenda[3]. This process reflected the government's efforts to align domestic development with the universal principles of the SDGs, while strengthening international accountability mechanisms.

[1] SDGs Indonesia – Bappenas. (n.d.). VNR 2017: Indonesia's First Voluntary National Review, Eradicating Poverty and Promoting Prosperity in a Changing World.
[2] Ibid., 2.
[3] Wibowo, D. H. (n.d.). The political economy of sustainable development in Indonesia. Social Sciences Research Journal (SSR). Retrieved from https://journalssr.com

Furthermore, in facing the challenges of geopolitical issues in a multipolar world, Indonesia's involvement in international forums also affirms its strategic position as a developing country striving to bridge the interests of countries in the Global South along with the global context. Through active participation in the UN, regional cooperation, and multilateral partnerships, Indonesia positions itself not only as an implementer of the SDGs but also as an actor playing a role in shaping the discourse on sustainable development at the global level. Indonesia, through free and active foreign policy, under the leadership of President Prabowo Subianto, has sought to reaffirm its serious engagement with contemporary global issues[4].

However, Indonesia's commitment to the 2030 Agenda is not solely aimed at domestic interests within the framework of national development, but also reflects Indonesia's determination to strengthen its contribution to sustainable development governance at the global level. Indonesia's implementation of the 2030 Agenda is seen as an integral part of the international community's shared responsibility to address multidimensional challenges such as climate change, socio-economic disparities, food security, clean energy, and global peace and security[5]. In this way, Indonesia affirms its position not only as a developing country striving to accelerate national development achievements, but also as a key actor in a global architecture that continues to transform toward more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable governance patterns.

Although institutional and policy foundations are in place, several structural barriers continue to hinder Indonesia’s progress toward achieving the SDGs by 2025. One of the most critical challenges is the financing gap, as the resources required far exceed the government’s fiscal capacity, necessitating diversified financing mechanisms such as green bonds, green sukuk, public–private partnerships, and other innovative instruments. In addition, limitations in data availability and monitoring systems remain persistent challenges.

Not all SDG indicators can be measured consistently due to limitations in statistical systems, particularly at the regional level. As a result, it is difficult to accurately identify progress and shortcomings. As an effort to digitize monitoring, the SDGs e-Money system needs to be strengthened to encompass all stakeholders, including non-state actors.

[4] Susilawati, S., Yusuf, R., & Rachman, A. (2024). Indonesia’s free and active foreign policy is the basis for realizing world peace. Indonesian Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Science and Technology, 2(3), 309–318. https://doi.org/10.55927/marcopolo.v2i3.8528
[5] Bappenas, loc. cit.

Another challenge is regional issues that lead to disparities in achievement between developed and underdeveloped regions (urban and rural). Indonesia's SDGs remain focused on urban areas and regions with adequate infrastructure, while disadvantaged, frontier, and outermost (3T) regions still face serious obstacles in accessing education, healthcare, and basic services. This inequality has the potential to undermine the principle of "No One Left Behind." Finally, challenges stem from Resilience to Global Crises. The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and global geopolitical disruption emphasize the importance of strengthening national resilience. The fragility of supply chains, dependence on energy imports, and the vulnerability of the poor to economic shocks demand development policies that are more oriented toward long-term resilience.

To overcome those challenges, Indonesia needs to build strong cooperation (bilateral and multilateral) with several countries. As the world's largest archipelagic country and the fourth largest population in the world, Indonesia has great plans for SDGs, and it could be seen that some learning from the key successes of Indonesia. However, the government of Indonesia is committed to becoming one of the foremost pioneers and role models to achieve the SDGs goals. In the region, Indonesia has shown a strong institutional commitment through ASEAN by implementing strong leadership to cover issues such as poverty, health, and education. Other considerations still need to be addressed, including climate, inequality, and governance challenges, to consolidate its role as a regional model for SDG achievement. In the global context, Indonesia became a bridge between the Global South and Global North by offering a replicable governance model and advancing the SDG agenda through platforms like the UN, G20, and South-South Cooperation.

Learning from Indonesia: Pathways toward Strengthening International Cooperation

By the conclusion of 2015, Indonesia had successfully attained 49 out of 67 indicators of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)[6]. As the world's largest archipelagic state and the fourth most populous nation, characterized by vast cultural diversity and complex geographical conditions, Indonesia demonstrated significant progress in the implementation of nearly all MDG indicators, surpassing the performance of many countries within the Asia-Pacific region. Nevertheless, several targets that remained unmet under the MDG framework have been designated as an unfinished agenda, subsequently integrated into the broader scope of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[7].

1. Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP): Indonesia has a JETP partnership with several developed countries (including G7 countries) such as Canada, Italy, Japan, Denmark, and Norway to support a cleaner and more equitable energy transition.

[6] SDGs Indonesia – Bappenas. (n.d.). VNR 2019: Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality, 7-8.
[7] United Nations in Indonesia. (2025). Indonesia–UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2026–2030: Executive Summary. Retrieved from https://indonesia.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-08/CF%20-%20Executive%20Summary%20Final.pdf

2. Cooperation Framework between the Government of Indonesia and the United Nations (UN) – UNSDCF 2026–2030: A strategic partnership between Indonesia and 22 UN agencies to promote the achievement of the SDGs.

3. ASSIST Program (Accelerating Sustainable Development Goals Investment in Indonesia): A joint UN program (UNDP, UNEP, UNICEF, UNIDO) is also supported by donor countries such as member states of the European Union and several other European countries. The goal is to fill the funding gap for the SDGs through innovative financial instruments.

4. Collaboration with development agencies and international donors: For example, the revision of the 2023-2030 SDGs Roadmap was carried out by Bappenas and the SDGs Center of Padjadjaran University with support from the Asian Development Bank, KfW (Germany), and the European Union.

5. Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI-CFF): Indonesia collaborates with other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, such as Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Solomon Islands, and Timor-Leste, in regional initiatives for marine conservation, fisheries food security, and coastal marine biodiversity.

6. Multi-Stakeholder Forums and South-South/Triangular Cooperation: Indonesia is actively involved in South-South and triangular cooperation, including with countries in Southeast Asia, the Pacific, and Africa, in various knowledge transfer, training, advocacy, and capacity building activities. Forums such as the HLF-MSP (High-Level Forum – Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships) are examples of arenas where such collaboration is discussed and expanded.

Table 1: Indonesia's Cooperation Map in SDG Implementation (from 2015 – 2025)

SDGs Goals	Country and International Institutions	Program
SDG 1: No Poverty	Japan, Germany (GIZ), UNDP	Community empowerment programs, social protection, and MSME development.
SDG 2: Zero Hunger	FAO, Netherlands, Australia	Food security, sustainable agriculture, and improving community nutrition.
SDG 3: Healthy Lives and Well-Being	WHO, UNICEF, United States (USAID), Japan	Primary health care, controlling infectious diseases (TB, HIV/AIDS, malaria), and addressing stunting.
SDG 4: Quality Education	UNESCO, Australia, Germany, South Korea	Improving the quality of primary and tertiary education, digitizing learning, student exchanges, and scholarships.
SDG 5: Gender Equality	UN Women, Norway, Canada	Women's empowerment, protection from gender-based violence, women's political and economic participation.
SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	Netherlands, Denmark, UNICEF	Clean water infrastructure, rural sanitation, and urban water management.
SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	Japan, Germany (KfW), Norway, G7 (JETP), G20	Renewable energy transition, rural electrification, and energy efficiency.

SDGs Goals	Country and International Institutions	Program
SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	ILO, South Korea, European Union	Productivity improvement, workforce training, protection of migrant workers.
SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	Japan, South Korea, China, Germany	Infrastructure development, digital technology, green industry innovation.
SDG 10: Reduced Inequality	UNDP, World Bank, South-South Cooperation	Poverty alleviation, regional disparities, strengthening disadvantaged regions.
SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements	Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, UN-Habitat	Green transport, urban planning, public housing development.
SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	European Union, Japan, Switzerland	Sustainable supply chains, circular economy, plastic waste reduction.
SDG 13: Addressing Climate Change	Norway, Japan, the United States, the European Union	Emission reduction, forest rehabilitation, climate adaptation, JETP.
SDG 14: Marine Ecosystems	Coral Triangle Initiative (Malaysia, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, Solomon Islands), Australia	Marine conservation, fisheries, food security, and marine biodiversity protection.
SDG 15: Terrestrial Ecosystems	Norway, Brazil (tropical forest cooperation), Germany	Reforestation, curbing deforestation, and biodiversity protection.

SDGs Goals	Country and International Institutions	Program
SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	UNDP, Norway, Canada	Good governance, combating corruption, legal reform.
SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals	UN (22 agencies), G20, European Union, South-South Cooperation (Africa, Asia, and the Pacific), G7 countries (JETP)	Development financing, technology transfer, strengthening statistical data, and multilateral collaboration.

Source: Compiled from sources cited in this article

Strengthening Sustainable Development: Indonesia's Best Practices in SDG Implementation

Along with the action plan of the map, SDGs implementation has been completed through a lengthy process, including all stakeholders (countries and international organizations). Indonesia has an obligation to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030 **(SDG 1)**. In 2025, Indonesia has decreased the number of poverty there were 23.85 million poor people in Indonesia, a decrease of 0.21 million people compared to September 2024[8]. It is aligned with **SDG 2** (Zero Hunger), Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) program set by the Prabowo Subianto administration, which was helping to reach out to people in Indonesia, especially students from elementary school until high school, to have better nutrition. This is one of the goals of the Indonesian government to get a good quality of human capital.

The Indonesian Ministry of Health (MoH) has intensified its initiatives to enhance the governance of the health workforce and to contribute to the global monitoring of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) as well as Sustainable Development Goal **(SDG 3)**. This commitment was demonstrated through the timely submission of the National Health Workforce Account (NHWA) and the National Reporting Instrument (NRI) datasets to the World Health Organization (WHO) in December 2024[9]. The provision of these data offers valuable evidence regarding workforce distribution, professional competencies, and adherence to ethical recruitment standards, thereby supporting the advancement of equitable access to health services and the improvement of care quality both within Indonesia and in the broader international context[10].

[8] BPS-Statistics Indonesia. (2025, July 25). In March 2025, the percentage of the poor population decreased into 8.47 percent. Retrieved from https://www.bps.go.id/en/pressrelease/2025/07/25/2518/persentase-penduduk-miskin-maret-2025-turun-menjadi-8-47-persen-.html

[9] World Health Organization, From data to delivery: Indonesia strengthens health workforce governance, global UHC and SDG monitoring, 18 March 2025, https://www.who.int/indonesia/news/detail/18-03-2025-from-data-to-delivery--indonesia-strengthens-health-workforce-governance--global-uhc-and-sdg-monitoring?

[10] WHO, Ibid.

To improve the quality of education **(SDG 4)**, the government has a priority to ensure that every region has access to proper and equal education. Recently, the government established public schools, free, government-funded boarding schools, initiated by President Prabowo Subianto. This program aims at children from poor and extremely poor families to break the cycle of poverty. The program provides elementary, middle, and high school education with complete facilities, including accommodation and basic student needs, and focuses on character building and life skills.

SDG 5, Indonesia's Gender Inequality Index (GII) has consistently declined to 0.421, showing an improvement in gender equality[11]. Indonesia's female labor participation rate is comparatively low, around 53 percent in 2021, and has remained unchanged for over two decades despite structural changes to the economy, education, early marriage rates, and lower fertility[12].

[11] BPS-Statistics Indonesia. (2025). Indonesia's Economy Sustains Growth Amid Global Uncertainty. Retrieved from https://www.bps.go.id/en/news/2025/05/05/703/indonesia-s-economy-sustains-growth-amid-global-uncertainty.html

[12] World Bank. (2025). Indonesia Gender Equality Program. Retrieved from https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/indonesia/brief/gender-equality-for-growth-research-and-analytical-program-in-indonesia

Through the Ministry of Public Works (PU), Indonesia is committed to continuously improving the availability of clean water and drinking water that is equitable and suitable for all Indonesians **(SDG 6)**. To increase natural water reserves, the Ministry of PU has conserved water sources and revitalized natural water reservoirs, as well as revitalized dams through sediment dredging and the construction of new dams to assist the immigration process for food security. Furthermore, for sanitation of drinking water supply, the Ministry of PU has implemented governance transformation through the implementation of the Drinking Water Provision Acceleration Program (P3AM) to achieve the target of 100% access to piped drinking water for urban households (RPJPN 2025-2045), 43% of households with access to safe drinking water, and 40.2% of households with access to piped drinking water (RPJMN 2025-2029), as well as the Asta Cita mission related to water self-sufficiency. The programs implemented include the construction, improvement, expansion, optimization, and rehabilitation, as well as guidance and supervision of the development of the Drinking Water Supply System (SPAM) (Kementerian Pekerjaan Umum, 2025)[13]. Several stakeholders, including Telkom Indonesia, Water Guardian, Unilever Indonesia, and Nestlé Indonesia, actively support clean water and sanitation initiatives in Indonesia.

[13] Kementerian Pekerjaan Umum dan Perumahan Rakyat. (2025). Program percepatan penyediaan air minum (P3AM) dan target akses air minum nasional. Retrieved from https://www.pu.go.id

Indonesia is striving to achieve clean and affordable energy **(SDG 7)** through the utilization of New and Renewable Energy (NRE) potential, such as solar, wind, hydro, and geothermal energy, as well as energy efficiency and electrification programs, with a target of 23% by 2025. Furthermore, the government is moving towards the full implementation of B40 (biodiesel 30) by 2025 to reduce dependence on imported fuel and reduce emissions. The development of solar power plants and nuclear power plants is still in the planning stages. Indonesia is currently launching the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) with international funding support to accelerate the energy transition.

Indonesia needs to achieve economic growth of 6 to 7% per year by 2045 to become a high-income country **(SDG 8)**. This aligns with President Prabowo's goal of achieving 8% economic growth to become a developed economy. To increase economic activity, the government is promoting development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro, small, and medium enterprises, including through access to financial services. The Merah Putih Village Cooperative is one of the government's new programs designed to improve the economic welfare of rural communities through a people-centered economic approach based on the principles of cooperation, kinship, and mutual assistance. Furthermore, the government is also focusing on infrastructure development and domestic industry to support green industry innovation **(SDG 9)**. This is driven by various initiatives such as strengthening research and community service (P2M) programs for sustainable development in villages, as well as student research and innovation exhibitions that demonstrate collaboration and creativity in facing the challenges of modern industry.

Although not specifically mentioned, the Indonesian government continues to strive to achieve SGD 10 to reduce the gap that is the target of the 2030 SDGs. Some examples of programs that can support this goal include inclusive education programs and disability-friendly public services, as well as efforts to improve the quality of life of vulnerable groups such as the elderly. The Family Hope Program (PKH) for social assistance, the Healthy and Fit Community Movement (GERMAS) program as well and the development of integrated health services. In addition, the Indonesian government also created a social assistance program aimed at the poor.

The Indonesian government has issued several policies related to **SDG 11**, focusing on Sustainable Cities and Communities. Jakarta has been designated a global city following the enactment of Presidential Regulation No. 62, LN.2022/No.102. Large cities are focused on becoming inclusive, with investments in public transportation and the creation of public green spaces key to creating more sustainable and environmentally friendly cities. Furthermore, smaller cities are also being supported to grow in line with the SDG 11 goals.

Indonesia's program to achieve **SDG 12** by 2025 focuses on waste reduction and responsible waste management, with the main target of reducing waste by 30% and processing 70% of waste by 2025 through various initiatives such as awareness campaigns, developing waste management systems, and implementing circular economy practices in campus and community environments[14]. The development of a circular economy system is carried out by developing a "Zero Waste" system by integrating regulations, supply chains, and converting organic waste into value-added products such as smart planting media, supporting a circular economy.

The Indonesian government has initiated climate action to achieve net-zero carbon emissions. This climate action is aided by urban areas like Jakarta, which is one of the cities with the highest air pollution levels in the world. The Jakarta government has begun implementing a policy on the use of electric transportation (public and private vehicles). In addition, several high-rise buildings are also required to have green building certification to support the implementation of the green mission that aligns with addressing the issue of climate change **(SDG 13)**. Forest rehabilitation is carried out as a form of responsibility for several mining activities that cause damage to the ecosystem of the world's lungs.

As a maritime nation, it is imperative to support Sustainable Development Goal **(SDG 14)**, "Life below Water," focusing on preventing and significantly reducing marine pollution, particularly from land-based activities. Several environmental activist communities, such as Pandawa Lima, are actively advocating for coastal rehabilitation, including cleanups in tourist areas like Bali. Furthermore, at the central level, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (KKP) continues to collaborate to prevent illegal fishing practices (IUU) and activities that damage marine ecosystems, as well as to develop efficient and environmentally friendly fishing technologies.

[14] Halimatussadiah, A., et al. (2020). Thinking ahead: Indonesia's agenda on sustainable recovery from COVID-19 pandemic (1st ed.). Institute for Economic and Social Research, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Indonesia & Ministry of National Development Planning/National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas). ISBN 978-623-95702-0-0, 103.

Indonesia's main program to support Sustainable Development Goal **(SDG 15)** from 2025 onward is the Indonesian Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (IBSAP) 2025–2045. This document aligns national biodiversity efforts aimed at protecting, restoring, and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably managing forests, combating desertification, and halting and reversing land degradation and halting biodiversity loss.

As the world's most populous nation, Indonesia continues to push for global peace and security in line with the UN Charter **(SDG 16)**. In protecting human rights, organizations like the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) advocate for and monitor the implementation of human rights, which are integral to **SDG 16** and linked to international human rights instruments. Furthermore, the Indonesian government continues to collaborate with various international institutions to strengthen the resilience of domestic institutions.

Indonesia's partnership program **(SDG 17)** for 2025 reflects a commitment to strengthening domestic and international cooperation. The government is collaborating with various stakeholders, including the government, the private sector, civil society, and academia, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a whole. In the era of globalization and a multipolar world, the Indonesian government believes that collaboration and cooperation are key to successfully implementing the **17 SDG goals**.

Chapter 2

Lessons Learned From Several Countries

Malaysia at the Heart of Regional Sustainability- Leading Cross Border Partnerships for a Better Future

Written by
Dato' Syed Mohamad Hasrin Tengku Hussin

From Palm Oil to Education: How Malaysia and Indonesia are Working Together to Achieve the SDGs

The best example would be the collaboration through the Council of Palm Oil Producing Countries (CPOPC). The Council was founded by Malaysia and Indonesia in 2015, and it plays a significant role in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting sustainable practices, economic development, and regional cooperation among palm oil-producing countries, which together account for nearly 85% of global palm oil production.

SDG 1: NO POVERTY

CPOPC advocates for the welfare of over 3 million smallholders in Malaysia and Indonesia, helping them to obtain fair prices, better yields, and financial inclusion. The Council directly supports poverty reduction (SDG 1: No Poverty) by enhancing household incomes through sustainable palm oil cultivation, especially in rural and marginalized communities.

SDG 2: ZERO HUNGER

Palm oil contributes significantly to global food security by providing a substantial portion of the world's edible oil supply and supporting livelihoods, especially in developing countries (SDG 2: Zero Hunger). It is a cost-effective and versatile oil, widely used in food production, and a key ingredient in a variety of food products. CPOPC promotes responsible production to ensure an affordable and stable supply of vegetable oil globally, contributing to combating hunger and malnutrition.

SDG 12: RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

CPOPC continues to work toward promoting sustainable palm oil production and consumption, focusing on smallholder welfare and advocating for responsible trade practices (SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production). The Council supports national sustainability standards such as the Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO) and Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil (ISPO) that ensure environmentally friendly, socially responsible, and economically viable palm oil practices.

SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION

CPOPC also contributes to SDG 13: Climate Action by coordinating and supporting efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, promote sustainable land use, and enhance climate resilience in palm oil-producing countries, primarily Malaysia and Indonesia.

Malaysia and Indonesia's contributions to the SDGs through the CPOPC are broad and strategic, spanning economic development, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion.

SDG 4: QUALITY EDUCATION

In addition, educational cooperation is an important element in Malaysia-Indonesia bilateral relations. Such collaboration supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) by facilitating student and lecturer exchanges and joint academic program. Malaysia also provides opportunities for Indonesian civil servants to undertake various technical courses through the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Program (MTCP) and MTCP Scholarships for post-graduate studies in Malaysia.

The Secret to Success: Why the Malaysia-Indonesia Collaboration Works

The main factor of successful collaboration between Malaysia and Indonesia is having strong and cordial bilateral relations. Both countries share deep-rooted cultural, linguistic, and religious similarities, fostering mutual understanding and trust, which are crucial for sustainable collaboration. These ties reduce friction and foster cooperation in soft power areas.

The exchange of visits at the Leaders and Ministerial levels is a frequent activity year after year. In 2024, Indonesia welcomed 14 working visits from the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers, and Ministers of Malaysia. Meanwhile, in 2025, Indonesia welcomed three (3) working visits from the Prime Minister of Malaysia, and once from the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia. On the other hand, Malaysia welcomed five (5) visits from President Prabowo Subianto in 2025. These visits not only build friendship among leaders but also consistently reaffirm commitments to joint development, including SDG targets.

Regional cooperation through ASEAN and other international bodies has provided institutional support and continuity for successful collaboration. For instance, the ASEAN Vision 2025 closely aligns with the SDGs, allowing both countries to contribute to and benefit from regional blueprints on climate, education, and economic resilience.

Malaysia's Best Practices: Lessons Indonesia Can Apply to Fast-Track the SDGs

Malaysia has implemented several specific initiatives and best practices that could be adapted or scaled in Indonesia to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.

One of the initiatives is the **Malaysia-UN SDG Trust Fund**, which is a collaborative initiative between the Government of Malaysia, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Malaysia, and the MySDG Foundation. The Foundation was established in 2022 to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

The Fund operates as a pooled financing mechanism, combining contributions from various donors to maximize impact and efficiency. Each year, the Fund invites proposals for projects that align with its objectives. For instance, in 2023, the Fund allocated USD 3.6 million to support selected initiatives, with project sizes ranging from USD 100.000 to USD 500.000 and durations between 6 to 18 months.

Malaysia also developed **the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Roadmap** as a strategic framework in guiding the country to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The roadmap outlines Malaysia's approach to integrating the 17 SDGs into its national development plans, policies, and programs. The roadmap is structured into three phases, aligning with Malaysia's five-year development plans, and currently Malaysia is in phase II (2021-2025) that focuses on achieving the goals and objectives of the SDGs beyond 2020.

Malaysia also developed **the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Roadmap** as a strategic framework in guiding the country to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The roadmap outlines Malaysia's approach to integrating the 17 SDGs into its national development plans, policies, and programs. Structured into three phases aligned with Malaysia's five-year development plans, the country has now entered Phase III (2026–2030), which focuses on accelerating progress, closing remaining gaps, and ensuring that no one is left behind in the final stretch towards achieving the SDGs by 2030.

In September 2022, the government setup the **National SDG Centre (PSN)** to monitor the progress and implementation of all SDG-related programs. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Economy, the PSN also acts as the main secretariat to the national SDG governance.

The Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), on the other hand, is responsible for coordinating data collection and compilation from various line ministries and agencies. To disseminate and share data related to SDGs, the DOSM maintains the National SDG Progress Monitoring System (SDG Dashboard) and produces annual reports on the performance of SDG indicators. A dedicated ministry leads each goal to plan, implement, monitor, and report to the PSN. The ministry is empowered to coordinate multiple stakeholders'' initiatives in meeting the targets and indicators.

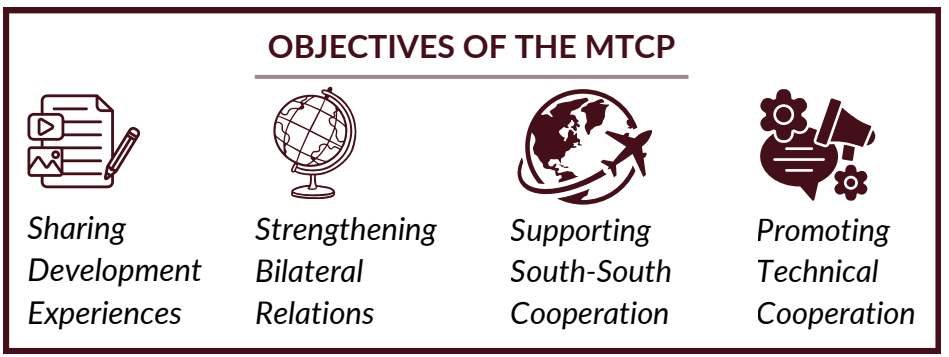
In 2019, the Parliament of Malaysia established the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia (APPGM) on SDGs. The Ministry of Finance provides a budget for the group for localizing SDGs at the district and local authority level. Funds will be utilized for undertaking a mapping of issues, awareness, and capacity building programs, direct implementation of solution driven projects, research and documentation, including policy advisory notes for parliamentarians on SDG-related matters.

Building Bridges Beyond Borders: How Malaysia Fosters Regional Partnerships for Sustainable Development

Malaysia actively fosters cross-border partnerships to enhance the effectiveness of SDG initiatives through regional cooperation, diplomacy, joint programs, and multi-stakeholder platforms. These efforts aim to promote shared prosperity, sustainable development, and resilience across Southeast Asia and beyond.

Malaysia plays an active role in ASEAN, which serves as a platform for regional cooperation on sustainable development. Some of the key initiatives are the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, which promotes sustainable development across economic, socio-cultural, and political-security pillars. Malaysia is also actively involved in the ASEAN Working Group on SDGs Indicators, which allows the exchange of best practices and data sharing to achieve SDG targets collectively.

Malaysia strongly supports South-South Cooperation (SSC), particularly through its Malaysian Technical Cooperation Program (MTCP). The MTCP, established in 1980, shares Malaysia's development experiences and offers technical training and advice in key areas such as agriculture, finance, and education. To date, 1751 Indonesians have participated in various MTCP courses, and around 38,000 have participated globally.



Source of illustration: https://mtcp.kln.gov.my

Overcoming Obstacles: How Malaysia Tackled Challenges in the SDGs Collaboration

Inadequate synergies and coordination for service delivery and infrastructure development, as well as incoherent policy between federal, state and local governments in SDG planning and implementation, are some of the challenges that Malaysia faced in collaborating on SDG projects and program.

Hence, Malaysia established the National SDG Council as part of the National Action Committee in December 2016 to provide leadership and coordination for the country's program on SDGs. The Prime Minister led the Council with the purpose of planning and monitoring SDG implementation, setting the national agenda and milestones for the SDGs. The Director General of Malaysia's Economic Planning Unit chaired the Steering Committee to report to the National SDG Council.

Furthermore, Malaysia created the SDG localization Framework to identify the enablers necessary to support the implementation of SDG localization strategies. Ultimately, the success of the process is measured by the ability of local governments to contextualize sustainable development targets, foster engaging partnerships with various stakeholders, extend beyond national SDG achievement, and attain due recognition.

In addition, DOSM has developed Malaysia's official SDG Dashboard to track the progress of SDG achievements in Malaysia. It is a comprehensive platform providing data on all 17 goals and information on the number of indicators available for each SDG, along with the status of data.

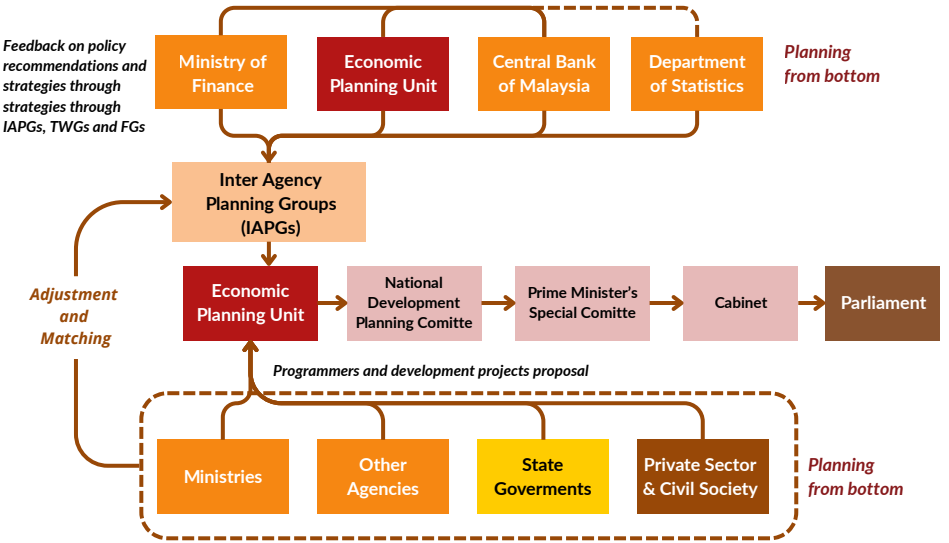
Ensuring the Future: How Malaysia Keeps its SDG Commitments on Track

Malaysia adopts a systemic and forward-looking approach to ensure the long-term sustainability of its SDG programs. This is achieved through integrated planning, institutional frameworks, financing mechanisms, and inclusive participation.

Malaysia embeds SDGs in its national and subnational development policies to ensure continuity across government terms. The 13th Malaysia Plan (2026–2030) explicitly aligns with the SDG targets across economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Thus, government agencies are required to map their strategies to the relevant SDGs. This ensures that SDGs are not treated as isolated projects but are integral to national policy frameworks.

The National SDG Council chaired by the Prime Minister, sets the overall direction and ensures multi-agency coordination, and the Ministry of Economy monitors progress and supports capacity building. These institutions provide stability, continuity, and coordination across political cycles.

Source image: https://ekonomi.gov.my/en/sustainable-development-goals



Road to Twelfth Plan

Source of illustration: https://rmke12.ekonomi.gov.my/en/information/about-twelfth-plan

Sharing the Journey: Lessons from Malaysia's SDG Experience for the Global Community

Malaysia recognizes that many sustainable development challenges, such as climate change, poverty and food security, are regional or global in nature. To address these issues collectively, Malaysia has prioritized cooperation with other developing countries, especially within ASEAN and the Global South.

Under the framework of South-South Cooperation, Malaysia continues to provide development assistance through the Malaysia Technical Cooperation Program (MTCP). The MTCP, established in 1980, shares Malaysia's development experiences and offers technical training and knowledge in key areas such as agriculture, finance, health, and education. Malaysia also actively participates in regional and international initiatives that promote SSC, such as the Malaysia-UNESCO Cooperation Program (MUCP).

The collaboration between Malaysia and Indonesia under the ambit of the Council of Palm Oil Producing Countries (CPOPC) shows that collaboration through international institutions can accelerate progress and be mutually beneficial, especially when countries share similar economic goals and political will. The CPOPC will continue to promote sustainable management, rural development, and carbon reduction as well as engage with international buyers and NGOs to counter misinformation and promote sustainable consumption.

Malaysia's use of regional and South-South cooperation demonstrates the power of horizontal partnerships, not based on donor-recipient models, but on solidarity, shared challenges, and mutual growth. This approach not only accelerates SDG progress regionally but also strengthens Malaysia's role as a knowledge partner in the Global South.

Stronger Together: How Malaysia and Indonesia Can Lead ASEAN's SDG Progress

Malaysia and Indonesia, as two of ASEAN's largest and most influential economies, have immense potential to lead regional SDG acceleration through joint action, shared resources, and strategic alignment. Both countries share common challenges and priorities, including climate change, sustainable agriculture, poverty reduction, and urbanization, making our collaboration both practical and impactful.

Both countries should monitor and ensure that the implementation of national SDG strategies is aligned with ASEAN's Community Vision 2045, adopted at the 46th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur on May 26, 2025, and the ASEAN SDG Indicators Framework.

As founding members of the CPOPC, both nations could jointly lead in sustainable commodities and promote responsible production within ASEAN and beyond. Malaysia and Indonesia could share innovations in regenerative agriculture and agri-technology following the success of the CPOPC collaboration.

Youth and civil society are critical for ensuring that SDG efforts are inclusive, innovative, and grassroots-driven. Thus, both countries should continue to promote youth and civil society engagement through SDG youth forums and hackathons to collaborate on various regional issues such as gender equality, climate change, and sustainable tourism.

Education for Change: The Role of Learning and Research in Malaysia's Sustainable Development

Education and research play a critical and strategic role in supporting Malaysia's SDG agenda by equipping individuals, institutions, and society with knowledge, skills, and innovation. Malaysia has taken steps to integrate sustainability into education at all levels and to foster research that supports evidence-based policymaking and solutions.

Malaysia embeds sustainable development themes such as environmental stewardship, responsible consumption, and civic responsibility into primary, secondary, and tertiary education. The Education Blueprint 2013–2025 emphasizes values-based education, critical thinking, and global citizenship.

Furthermore, universities in Malaysia are increasingly aligning their strategies with the SDGs through sustainability focused research centres, SDG courses and electives. Malaysian universities and agencies also play a central role in conducting applied research on climate change, food security, renewable energy, and public health.

In addition, universities and research institutes are collaborating with DOSM to contribute to SDG indicator development and data analytics, which helps in bridging data gaps, particularly for disaggregated poverty and gender data, environmental monitoring, and social impact assessments.

Looking Ahead: Malaysia's Vision for a Stronger Global SDG Collaboration

Malaysia has laid out strategic plans to strengthen international collaboration in achieving the SDGs by engaging in multilateral forums, regional cooperation, and South-South partnerships. The goal is to create a more integrated, inclusive, and globally connected approach to sustainable development.

As the Chair of ASEAN in 2025, Malaysia spearheaded the development of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, which is deeply interconnected with the SDGs. The vision aims to create a peaceful, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient region, and the framework serves as a blueprint to align regional development with global sustainability standards, effectively localizing and implementing the SDGs across Southeast Asia.

At the global stage, Malaysia presented three Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the UN High-Level Political Forum on 17 July 2017, 15 July 2021, and 18 July 2025. Malaysia reported all 17 SDGs in the 2025 VNR, with 43% of its SDG targets currently on track, which is significantly higher than the global average. The VNR's insights are fed directly into the 13th Malaysia Plan (2026-2030), aligned with the national Madani vision of inclusive development.

Dato' Syed Mohamad Hasrin Tengku Hussin

His Excellency Dato' Syed Mohamad Hasrin Tengku Hussin is a seasoned Malaysian diplomat currently serving as the Ambassador of Malaysia to the Republic of Indonesia since March 2023. His extensive diplomatic career, spanning over three decades, reflects his commitment to fostering strong bilateral relations, regionalism, and multilateralism.

His Excellency Dato' Syed Mohamad Hasrin began his diplomatic journey in June 1994, joining the Malaysian Administrative and Diplomatic Service. His early postings included roles as Second Secretary and Counsellor at Malaysia's Permanent Mission to the United Nations (2000-2004), Consul General in Dubai (2008-2010), and Deputy Chief of Mission at the Malaysian Embassy in Jakarta from 2010 to 2014. His international experience was further solidified when he served as Malaysia's Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates (2017-2019) and Malaysia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York (2019-2023).

As Ambassador to Indonesia, he has prioritized enhancing collaboration in sectors such as the economy and trade, tourism, education, and culture. Under his leadership, there has been a notable increase in air connectivity between the two nations, with the activation of new flight routes and the restoration of existing ones affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Both countries also flourished with strong people-to-people ties and economic cooperation.

His Excellency Dato' Syed Mohamad Hasrin has actively promoted sustainable practices within the palm oil industry in Indonesia. At the 2024 Palm Oil Insight Forum in Jakarta, he urged Malaysian government-linked companies and major businesses operating in Indonesia to leverage their expertise to drive sustainable development in the sector. He highlighted the industry's contributions to economic growth, poverty alleviation, rural development, food security, and alternative energy.

During his tenure as Malaysia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, he emphasized the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to bring awareness toward the global pandemic situation and cooperation to achieve SDGs despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strengthening Philippines–Indonesia Collaboration for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Written by
Mr. Gonaranao B. Musor

Philippines' Commitment to the SDGs and Multilateral Cooperation

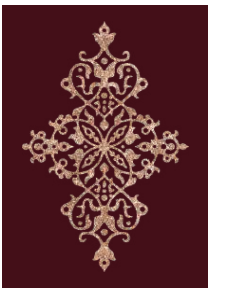
The Philippines is fully committed to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and will continue to work towards their realization in line with ASEAN and other multilateral cooperation platforms. The country looks forward to promoting synergies between ASEAN and the United Nations, particularly in accelerating progress on the SDGs during the final five years of the 2030 Agenda. The country emphasizes a "Whole-of-Nation PLUS" approach - was launched in 2024. This framework is a renewed partnership with the UN to support the Philippines' development priorities, ensuring national ownership and adaptability. This strategy integrates government, non-government actors, and international partners to accelerate SDG progress, focusing on inclusive economic growth, human development, and environmental sustainability. The 'PLUS' approach represents an integrative framework that incorporates a multi-sectoral perspective, extending beyond traditional governmental structures to include the contributions of non-state actors. This inclusive strategy acknowledges the added value contributed by stakeholders, including the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local communities, and academic institutions such as universities and think tanks. Moreover, the perspectives and aspirations of youth within these sectors are acknowledged as vital drivers in the collective effort to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

By the "PLUS" approach, it uses Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) to report progress, showcasing a commitment to multilateralism and shared global goals. The Voluntary National Review is a process where countries present their progress, challenges, and lessons learned in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Philippine government has submitted four VNRs since 2016, most recently for 2025, which highlight progress on the SDGs and are a key tool for accountability. Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) serve as platforms for countries to exchange experiences—highlighting achievements, challenges, and insights gained—to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It also aims to enhance governmental policies and institutional frameworks while fostering multi-stakeholder engagement and partnerships in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The platform also features an online review component designed to collect information from countries engaged in the Voluntary National Reviews conducted under the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

ASEAN's membership in the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) can be leveraged to achieve shared objectives, such as fully implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the region. Key focus areas include promoting sustainable agriculture practices, improving market access for smallholder farmers, and enhancing regional food security. Attaining these objectives requires strong regional collaboration and sustained multilateral efforts across Southeast Asia. To accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, both national and regional endeavours have to be coordinated. In Southeast Asia, regional bodies such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) play a critical role in fostering policy coherence, capacity-building, and cross-border collaboration among member states. In this context, ASEAN's engagement with multilateral organizations is increasingly recognized as vital for strengthening the region's collective response to sustainable development challenges.

ASEAN's membership in the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) presents a strategic opportunity to advance shared regional objectives, particularly in relation to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Through this partnership, ASEAN can strengthen collaboration with ESCAP and other regional stakeholders to address pressing development challenges. Among the key areas of focus are the promotion of sustainable and climate-resilient agricultural practices, the facilitation of improved market access and value chain integration for smallholder farmers, and the enhancement of regional food security mechanisms. By aligning efforts across member states and leveraging ESCAP's technical expertise and policy frameworks, ASEAN can contribute more effectively to inclusive and sustainable development outcomes across the Asia-Pacific region.

Such partnerships are essential not only for knowledge exchange and technical cooperation but also for harmonizing policy frameworks that support resilience, equity, and environmental sustainability. As ASEAN continues to position itself as a proactive regional actor, multilateral platforms like ESCAP offer a means to amplify its development agenda and to ensure that regional initiatives are aligned with global standards and commitments.



Regional and Multilateral Frameworks

The Complementarities Initiative between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the UN 2030 Agenda continues to serve as a valuable framework guiding inclusive and sustainable development. ASEAN has played an increasingly pivotal role in aligning regional development priorities with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Through frameworks such as the Complementarities Initiative between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda, member states have pursued coordinated efforts to address key challenges in areas such as poverty eradication, climate action, and inclusive economic growth. These efforts underscore the growing recognition that sustainable development in Southeast Asia is best achieved through collective action and policy coherence at the regional level. The Philippines anticipates even greater collaboration on SDG implementation under this new strategic vision, recognizing its potential to enhance coordination, scale up cross-border initiatives, and foster stronger partnerships with multilateral institutions. As a founding ASEAN member, the Philippines sees Vision 2045 as an opportunity to reinforce its national development agenda while contributing meaningfully to the region's collective progress toward the SDGs

The Philippines also recognizes the role of ASEAN in promoting sustainable tourism practices in the Asia-Pacific, leading initiatives to develop standards and guidelines that encourage environmental and social sustainability. These efforts aim to address shared challenges such as environmental degradation, overcrowding and over tourism, as well as "cultural erosion" and displacement. By fostering a common framework for sustainable tourism, ASEAN not only supports the protection of natural and cultural heritage but also contributes to broader socio-economic development goals—ensuring that tourism benefits are equitably distributed while minimizing long-term ecological harm. The Philippines' leadership in this domain highlights the importance of member-state initiative within a regional architecture, reinforcing the notion that effective sustainability outcomes require both top-down coordination and bottom-up commitment from national governments and local stakeholders.

In addition, the Philippines–United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2024–2028 serves as a strategic guide for collaboration between the Philippine Government and UN agencies. It complements and reinforces the Philippines' long-term development goals as outlined in AmBisyon Natin 2040 and the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023–2028. Signed on 24 October 2023, the UNSDCF ensures that the UN Development System provides coherent, coordinated, and targeted support to the country as it transitions toward upper-middle-income status. The framework upholds core principles of national ownership, consent, accountability, and transparency, reinforcing the country's leadership in setting its development priorities while drawing upon the technical expertise and resources of the UN system.

The Cooperation Framework (CF) was developed through an inclusive and participatory process involving key stakeholders such as the Government, civil society organizations, the private sector, development partners, and both resident and non-resident entities of the United Nations system. It draws upon the UN development system's comparative strengths, its normative mandate, and its capacity to mobilize diverse resources in support of national development. Anchored in the priorities outlined in the Philippine Development Plan (PDP), the CF supports the country's aspiration to attain upper middle-income status and accelerate progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As a longstanding and reliable partner of the Government, the United Nations in the Philippines is strategically positioned to contribute to the realization of the country's sustainable development objectives.

This cooperation framework not only reflects the Philippines' commitment to sustainable and inclusive growth but also illustrates how national development strategies can be effectively integrated with regional and global agendas. Through mechanisms such as the UNSDCF, the Philippines is better positioned to address complex development challenges—ranging from poverty and inequality to climate vulnerability—within a framework that promotes international solidarity and evidence-based policymaking.

As one of Southeast Asia's fastest-growing economies, the Philippines has made considerable progress in reducing poverty and enhancing the overall living standards of its population. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a significant economic downturn, leading to heightened poverty levels, rising unemployment, and a deepening of pre-existing inequalities—representing a major setback in the country's development progress. Despite these challenges, the Philippines is on a strong recovery trajectory, supported by its solid macroeconomic fundamentals, although it faced record-high inflation in the early months of 2023. The creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) marks a critical milestone toward achieving lasting peace, political stability, and sustained development in the southern region. While notable gains have been made in recent years, disparities remain, and several human development indicators continue to require targeted improvement across various areas of the country.

Source: https://bangsamoro.gov.ph

To achieve further progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), sustained efforts are needed, including accelerating economic recovery and transforming towards a more competitive, innovative, and resilient economy. This also includes enhancing transparent and accountable governance; strengthening peace and development in economically disadvantaged regions; implementing a human rights-based development approach; and evidence-based and participatory policymaking. Furthermore, it is crucial to deepen commitment to the principle of "**leaving no one behind**" by paying special attention to vulnerable groups, increasing investment in human resource development, and addressing the challenges of climate change, environmental management, and pollution. All of this must be implemented through inclusive and diverse partnerships and a more integrated and multidimensional development approach, in line with national priorities and ongoing public programs.

Bilateral Engagement: Philippines–Indonesia Cooperation

The partnership between the Philippines and Indonesia is rooted in a shared vision for transformative, inclusive, and sustainable peace and economic development. Anchored in their mutual commitments to the principles of the United Nations and ASEAN, both countries have demonstrated a strong alignment in their development agendas. They have adopted a whole-of-society approach to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, recognizing the importance of engaging not only governments but also civil society, the private sector, and local communities in the development process.

This collaborative model reflects a broader regional trend toward more integrated and participatory approaches to governance and development. Through joint initiatives in areas such as climate action, maritime cooperation, education, and disaster risk reduction, the Philippines and Indonesia exemplify how bilateral cooperation can complement regional and global strategies, reinforcing the collective ambition to "**leave no one behind.**"

This cooperation spans in multiple areas:

Capacity Building & Best Practices Exchange

Capacity Building & Best Practices Exchange in peace and order, food security, equitable access to health and education, environmental sustainability, livelihoods, and gender equality. Effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Southeast Asia relies not only on strong policy frameworks but also on the continuous enhancement of institutional capacities and the sharing of best practices among nations. Regional and bilateral platforms increasingly emphasize the importance of collaborative learning to address common challenges and strengthen development outcomes across diverse contexts.

In this regard, capacity building and the exchange of best practices have become central strategies in areas critical to sustainable development, including peace and order, food security, equitable access to health care and education, environmental sustainability, livelihood development, and gender equality. These exchanges allow countries to learn from one another's successes and failures, adapt innovative models to local conditions, and build more resilient systems across sectors.

Such collaborative efforts are particularly evident in partnerships like that of the Philippines and Indonesia, where joint programs and technical cooperation aim to reinforce shared priorities. These include improving governance in conflict-affected areas, ensuring food and nutritional security, expanding access to basic services, and advancing inclusive economic opportunities—especially for women and marginalized groups. These initiatives not only reflect the countries' shared commitment to the 2030 Agenda but also contribute to a more cohesive and resilient ASEAN community.

Higher Education Collaboration

Higher Education Collaboration, plays a pivotal role in fostering the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across Southeast Asia. Collaborative efforts between academic institutions and government agencies are increasingly recognized as essential mechanisms for building capacity, promoting innovation, and addressing sector-specific challenges that transcend national boundaries.

One notable example is the growing higher education collaboration between Indonesia and the Philippines, which highlights the role of academic partnerships in supporting sustainable economic and social development. Specifically, the partnership between Bakrie University and the Philippine Commission on Higher Education under the program titled "Halal Food Standard Compliance: From Concept to Implementation" (Jakarta, 10–19 November 2024) exemplifies this approach. This initiative successfully upskilled Filipino faculty members in critical areas such as halal standards, certification processes, supply chain management, assurance systems, food production, import regulations, and halal tourism.

By equipping academic professionals with specialized expertise, this collaboration not only enhances institutional capacity but also facilitates the transfer of knowledge and best practices relevant to emerging markets and cultural contexts. Moreover, it contributes to broader regional objectives by supporting sectors like halal food production and tourism, which are vital for inclusive economic growth, cultural sensitivity, and cross-border trade.

Such educational partnerships complement governmental and multilateral efforts, reinforcing the multi-dimensional nature of sustainable development and the importance of investing in human capital as a foundation for long-term progress.

Renewable Energy Development

Renewable Energy Development, as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding in the Field of Energy Cooperation, reflecting the shared commitment of both maritime nations to protect natural resources. The transition to renewable energy is a critical component of sustainable development strategies across Southeast Asia, particularly given the region's vulnerability to climate change and its rich but fragile natural resources. Recognizing the importance of clean and sustainable energy sources, ASEAN member states and bilateral partners have increasingly prioritized renewable energy development as a means to reduce carbon emissions, enhance energy security, and promote environmentally responsible economic growth.

In this context, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the Field of Energy Cooperation between the Philippines and Indonesia underscores the shared commitment of both maritime nations to advancing renewable energy development. This agreement reflects a mutual dedication to protecting natural resources while fostering collaborative initiatives in areas such as clean energy technologies, policy harmonization, and capacity building. Through such partnerships, both countries seek to leverage their geographic and technical complementarities to accelerate the adoption of renewable energy solutions.

This cooperation aligns with broader regional and global climate objectives, demonstrating how bilateral engagements can serve as catalysts for sustainable innovation and environmental stewardship. By integrating energy collaboration into their development agendas, the Philippines and Indonesia contribute to a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive regional energy future.

National Best Practice from the Philippines

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires not only national commitment but also regional collaboration that enables countries to learn from each other's successful initiatives. In Southeast Asia, addressing gender disparities remains a critical priority for inclusive and sustainable development. One notable example from the Philippines that offers valuable lessons for neighbouring countries, including Indonesia, is the institutionalization of Gender and Development (GAD) programs across all government agencies and units.

The Philippines systematically designed these programs to integrate the principles of equity, sustainability, and accessibility into development policies and practices, thereby ensuring that development outcomes benefit all individuals irrespective of gender. By embedding gender considerations into the fabric of government operations, the Philippines has created a robust framework that promotes accountability and continuous progress towards gender equality.

This approach forms part of the country's Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Plan and aligns with the Philippines' commitments under several key international and regional frameworks, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Goal 5 on Gender Equality. It also reflects the relevant declarations and action plans of ASEAN. Through formal education and targeted training on Gender and Development, the Philippine government fosters within society a shared perspective that transformative development must be equitable, sustainable, and accessible to all.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

A key challenge in achieving the SDGs is the effective implementation of national programs at the local and grassroots levels. Success requires continuous capacity building and sustained dialogue among stakeholders, ensuring that strategies are locally relevant and effective. Monitoring and evaluation are crucial components in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), providing insights into national progress and highlighting areas that require intensified efforts. According to the 2024 Sustainable Development Report, the Philippines has made measurable progress, improving its global ranking to 92nd out of 1667 countries, with its SDG index score increasing modestly from 67.14 to 67.47. This positive trend reflects some success in the country's development policies and programs aimed at advancing the SDGs.

However, the report also reveals significant disparities in progress across different goals. Out of the 17 SDGs, only eight exhibit moderate advancement, while eight have stagnated, and one has actually declined. This uneven performance underscores persistent structural and implementation challenges that impede holistic and balanced development. The stagnation and regression in certain goals raise critical questions regarding the effectiveness and inclusivity of current strategies, policy coherence, resource allocation, and governance mechanisms.

Effective localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is essential for translating national development priorities into meaningful actions that resonate at the grassroots level. In this context, local government units (LGUs) in the Philippines play a crucial role in advancing SDG implementation by fostering inclusive platforms that bring together diverse stakeholders.

Through capacity-building workshops, these LGUs actively engage representatives from national and local governments, academia, civil society, and youth organizations. These gatherings serve as vital spaces for sharing updates on progress, assessing challenges, and collaboratively identifying next steps toward achieving specific SDG targets. By promoting continuous learning and dialogue, such initiatives ensure that SDG strategies remain adaptive, contextually relevant, and responsive to community needs.

This multi-stakeholder approach exemplifies best practices in participatory governance, empowering local actors while strengthening coordination across different levels of government and sectors. As such, it contributes to building more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable communities aligned with the broader national and regional development frameworks.

The Role of Education, Research, and Innovation

Education and science-based research serve as the foundation of innovation, enabling the creation of efficient and effective solutions to sustainable development challenges. By instilling evidence-based thinking and critical analysis in students—the leaders of tomorrow—academic institutions help countries address complex SDG-related issues.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond policy formulation to encompass the development of human capital, the promotion of evidence-based solutions, and the fostering of innovative strategies tailored to both local and global challenges. Central to this effort is the investment in human resources, including the provision of scholarships and targeted skills enhancement programs that equip individuals with the knowledge and competencies necessary to drive sustainable development agendas.

Complementing capacity building, research aligned with sustainable development frameworks—such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Sustainable Development—plays a critical role in generating evidence-based solutions that inform policy and practice. By grounding development initiatives in robust data and scientific inquiry, governments and stakeholders can design more effective interventions that respond to evolving socio-economic and environmental dynamics.

Moreover, the creation and dissemination of innovative strategies are vital for addressing complex challenges in economic and social development. Innovation fosters adaptive and forward-looking approaches that can reconcile growth with sustainability, enhance resilience, and promote inclusivity. Together, these initiatives form a synergistic foundation for advancing sustainable development objectives at national and regional levels.

Opportunities for Future Collaboration

Looking ahead, there is significant potential for the Philippines and Indonesia to deepen their collaboration on the SDGs by building on their shared priorities and regional commitments.

SDGs 13 (Climate Action & Green Technology)

Climate resilience stands out as a key area for joint action, with opportunities to work together on renewable energy development, sustainable agriculture, and disaster preparedness programs that benefit both nations.

Joint initiatives in this domain present significant opportunities for shared progress. Collaboration on renewable energy development can reduce dependency on fossil fuels while promoting sustainable economic growth. Similarly, the adoption of sustainable agriculture practices enhances food security and environmental sustainability by reducing the sector's ecological footprint. Additionally, coordinated disaster preparedness programs can strengthen community resilience, reduce vulnerability to extreme weather events, and save lives.

By working together on these fronts, both nations not only advance their individual commitments to the 2030 Agenda but also contribute to a more resilient and sustainable Asia-Pacific region. Such partnerships underscore the importance of integrated, cross-sectoral approaches that leverage technology, knowledge exchange, and joint capacity building to tackle the complex challenges posed by climate change.

SDGs 4 (Quality Education)

Education is another promising sector, where strengthened partnerships between universities and research institutions could help integrate SDG concepts into curricula and foster innovation-driven solutions.

These collaborative efforts can also serve as catalysts for innovation-driven solutions, fostering interdisciplinary research and experiential learning that address local and global development challenges. By aligning educational programs with sustainability priorities, academic institutions play a critical role in nurturing responsible leadership, promoting social inclusion, and advancing evidence-based policymaking.

Such partnerships not only enhance educational quality but also reinforce regional cooperation in capacity building, knowledge exchange, and the co-creation of technologies and practices that support inclusive and resilient societies.

SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)

Public health initiatives also present valuable avenues for cooperation, particularly through joint capacity-building programs, knowledge exchange, and coordinated responses to emerging health challenges.

Bilateral and regional collaboration can be particularly impactful through joint capacity-building programs that enhance the skills and competencies of healthcare professionals and institutions. Furthermore, knowledge exchange enables countries to adopt best practices and innovative approaches in disease prevention, health promotion, and healthcare delivery. Coordinated responses to emerging health challenges, such as pandemics, antimicrobial resistance, and non-communicable diseases, are essential for minimizing risks and safeguarding public health across borders.

By working together on these fronts, countries like the Philippines and Indonesia can accelerate progress toward SDG 3, contributing to healthier populations and more resilient health systems in the region. Such cooperation exemplifies the broader principle of solidarity and collective action integral to sustainable development.

In the future, both countries would be able to further maximize their memberships in ASEAN and the United Nations by encouraging broad-based participation from government agencies, youth organizations, the private sector, and academia in regional SDG capacity-building activities. By doing so, the Philippines and Indonesia can transform these multilateral platforms into engines of inclusive and sustainable progress for their communities.

Mr. Gonaranao B. Musor

Mr. Gonaranao B. Musor currently serves as the Deputy Chief of Mission and Consul General of the Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines in Jakarta, Indonesia, where he has the mission in advancing the Philippines' national interests and strengthening bilateral relations with Indonesia. In this capacity, he ensures that all Embassy units work cohesively in pursuit of the Embassy's mandate, which encompasses the preservation and enhancement of national security, the promotion of economic security, and the protection of the welfare and interests of Filipinos overseas.

As the Embassy's Head of Mission, Mr. Musor plays a central role in articulating Philippine foreign policy in Indonesia, particularly its steadfast commitment to multilateralism as a means to achieve sustainable peace and economic prosperity. Recognizing the importance of global cooperation, he also champions the integration of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the Embassy's initiatives, fostering awareness among Embassy personnel of their responsibility in contributing to these goals.

In line with the Philippines' foreign policy on multilateralism, Mr. Musor represents the Philippine government in high-level engagements and dialogues with officials and counterparts from the United Nations, ASEAN, and other key multilateral platforms. His work spans critical areas such as maritime security, economic growth and development, and the protection of overseas Filipinos. Under his leadership, the Embassy actively participates in international and regional initiatives—including the United Nations, ASEAN, the Archipelagic Island States Forum, the World Water Forum, and the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security—that address pressing challenges to sustainable development.

Committed to maximizing diplomatic opportunities, Mr. Musor ensures that the events organized or attended by the Embassy serve as platforms for meaningful collaboration with the Indonesian government and the wider diplomatic community. Through these engagements, he has advanced cooperation on a wide range of SDG-related priorities, including education, food security, conservation of ocean and marine resources, renewable energy, access to clean water, enhanced connectivity, and the promotion of gender equality and empowerment. His work reflects not only the Philippines' foreign policy priorities but also a deep dedication to fostering inclusive and sustainable progress at both the bilateral and multilateral levels.

Bulgaria-Indonesia Cooperation On the Sustainable Development Goals (2025)

Written by
Dr Tanya Dimitrova

Bulgaria and Indonesia in Cooperation to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Bulgaria and Indonesia have each demonstrated a strong commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, individually and together working to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Our country has made significant improvements in reducing poverty and hunger, with the population living below the international poverty line decreasing fivefold since 2015. Bulgaria has also expanded investments in healthcare and education, promoted gender equality, strengthened institutional transparency, and developed a robust national monitoring system (Monitorstat) to support data-driven SDG implementation. It has emphasized inclusive development through programs targeting vulnerable groups and has actively engaged in European and international cooperation mechanisms to share best practices.

Indonesia, for its part, has mainstreamed the SDGs into its national development plans and has achieved 61.4% of SDG indicator targets as of 2023. The country has expanded primary healthcare services, empowered women in public and private sectors, invested in digital infrastructure, and mobilized innovative financing tools such as SDG Bonds and Blue Bonds. Indonesia has also institutionalized the implementation of the SDGs through national-subnational coordination and multi-stakeholder partnerships, and it plays a leadership role in South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

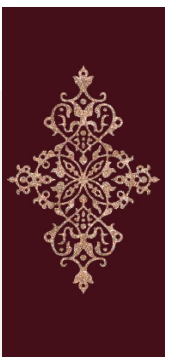
In 2025, both states presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) at the High-Level Political Forum – Bulgaria with its second VNR and Indonesia with its fourth. In preparation for these presentations, the Bulgarian Embassy and Indonesian government held an online seminar in June 2025 in Jakarta, which served as a platform for the exchange of lessons learned and good practices in the drafting of the VNRs. The discussions addressed ways to ensure the participation of all stakeholders, with particular emphasis on engaging young people, and explored approaches for regionalizing and localizing the SDGs to make them more relevant and actionable at the subnational level. Attention was also given to identifying follow-up actions after the 2025 VNR presentations to sustain momentum in implementing the SDGs.

In addition, the two countries need to cooperate closely during the HLPF, Bulgaria extended an invitation to Indonesia to participate in its side event dedicated to demographic resilience. In turn, Indonesia provided information about its own planned side event and the potential for Bulgarian participation. The exchange on demographic issues proved particularly relevant: Bulgaria, facing low fertility and higher mortality rates compared to the EU average, outlined its targeted policies for demographic recovery, while Indonesia, in the third phase of its demographic transition, presented its achievements in reducing maternal and infant mortality, lowering fertility rates, and expanding health coverage.

Ultimately, the seminar not only provided a substantive exchange of experiences but also strengthened bilateral ties, reaffirming both countries' determination to continue their cooperation on sustainable development at national, regional, and global levels.

Key Factors to Proceed a Successful Collaboration

The cooperation between Bulgaria and Indonesia on advancing the SDGs has been effective because it is built on shared values, complementary strengths, and active engagement in multilateral processes. Both countries demonstrate strong political commitment by integrating the SDGs into their national strategies – Bulgaria through the National Development Program BULGARIA 2030 and Indonesia through its National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN). This alignment ensures that sustainable development priorities are mainstreamed across all sectors and levels of governance.



In this regard, the shared emphasis on data-driven and evidence-based policymaking has also played a significant role in enhancing the quality and accountability of SDG initiatives. Bulgaria has developed a comprehensive national indicator system and digital monitoring tools, such as Monitorstat, to track progress. Indonesia has invested in digital infrastructure, geospatial mapping, and small-area data estimation to ensure policy reaches vulnerable and remote populations. These efforts not only improve national implementation but also support transparent reporting in global forums.

The recent 2025 VNR collaboration has further reinforced these factors, with both countries exchanging lessons learned, discussing regionalization and localization of SDGs, identifying follow-up actions post-HLPF, and addressing demographic challenges, despite being at different stages of their demographic transition. Moreover, their strong commitment to inclusivity and leaving no one behind further strengthens the coherence of their efforts. Both governments have prioritized marginalized groups in their SDG strategies, with particular attention to gender equality, social protection, and access to education and healthcare. This shared development vision creates a natural foundation for constructive engagement and mutual learning.

Bulgaria's Best Practices Tools to Applied in Indonesia

Bulgaria has developed a number of strategic tools, institutional mechanisms, and inclusive practices that could serve as valuable models for accelerating SDG implementation in Indonesia.

One notable initiative is the Monitorstat platform, Bulgaria's centralized digital system for monitoring SDG progress. Developed in cooperation with the National Statistical Institute and the Council of Ministers, this platform provides real-time access to over 200 national indicators aligned with the 17 SDGs. By promoting transparency, data accuracy, and public accessibility, Monitorstat enables evidence-based policymaking and enhances public accountability. A similar platform could support Indonesia's decentralized governance model by strengthening local data collection and aligning regional performance with national targets.

Another transferable best practice is Bulgaria's use of multi-level governance frameworks to integrate SDG targets across national, regional, and municipal levels. Through consultations with municipalities and the inclusion of local stakeholders in the Voluntary National Review process, Bulgaria ensures that subnational actors play an active role in both planning and implementation. Given Indonesia's vast geographical and demographic diversity, a structured multi-level coordination mechanism may help improve the coherence of SDG policies across provinces and accelerate delivery in remote or underserved areas.

Bulgaria has also institutionalized stakeholder engagement mechanisms, including thematic consultations, national competitions for SDG-related public administration practices, and public surveys to collect input on national priorities. These tools strengthen civic participation and ensure that the SDG agenda reflects diverse social needs. Indonesia, which already benefits from strong community-driven programs, may further enhance inclusion and innovation by adapting Bulgaria's formalized engagement frameworks at both national and local levels.

Furthermore, Bulgaria's emphasis on inclusive social policy, particularly in addressing the needs of marginalized groups such as the Roma community, persons with disabilities, and youth at risk, offers a range of replicable approaches. These include integrated social services, employment activation programs, and inclusive education reforms, all aligned with the principle of leaving no one behind. Indonesia's focus on vulnerable groups could benefit from Bulgaria's experience in designing integrated interventions supported by data, social workers, and targeted funding.

Enhancing Cross-border Partnerships

Bulgaria actively promotes cross-border partnerships as an integral part of its commitment to the 2030 Agenda, recognizing that sustainable development challenges require coordinated regional and international responses, involvement in global initiatives, and exchanging good practices.

Bulgaria, as a member of the European Union, contributes to regional cohesion and cross-border cooperation programs that align with SDG priorities, especially in areas such as climate action, infrastructure, energy efficiency, and social inclusion. The implementation of EU-funded programs and cross-border initiatives with other countries facilitates knowledge exchange, innovation transfer, and joint development strategies. These platforms allow Bulgaria to share policy approaches and technical expertise with other EU and non-EU member states.

Bulgaria also participates in Team Europe initiatives, which pool the resources of the EU and its Member States to support SDG-related projects globally. In 2022, Bulgaria contributed to initiatives promoting sustainable production in Vietnam, healthcare and education for Afghan refugees in Iran, and local vaccine manufacturing in Nigeria. While global in scope, these efforts illustrate Bulgaria's growing engagement in coordinated international development and its contribution to shared regional resilience.

Furthermore, in Southeast Europe, Bulgaria engages in structured cooperation through the Japanese Western Balkans Initiative, co-implementing projects aimed at SME development and disaster risk reduction. These actions support regional stability and directly contribute to SDG targets related to economic resilience, innovation, and climate adaptation.

In addition, in financial terms, Bulgaria has significantly scaled up its international development support. In 2022, the country provided USD 232.2 million in official development assistance, representing 0.27% of its gross national income (GNI), an increase of over 160% compared to the previous year. While still progressing toward the 2030 target of 0.33% ODA/GNI, Bulgaria's trend reflects a deepening commitment to international solidarity. Importantly, 100% of its ODA is delivered as grants, enhancing accessibility and impact, particularly for regional and lower-income partner countries.

SDG Projects Challenges

Our country has encountered several key challenges in cooperating on SDG projects, particularly in ensuring inclusive participation, accelerating innovation, securing adequate funding, and addressing the needs of vulnerable populations.

One persistent challenge has been the need for broader and more coordinated stakeholder involvement. Early implementation efforts revealed limited engagement from civil society, local governments, and the private sector. In response, Bulgaria established a national coordination mechanism for the SDGs in 2023 to strengthen institutional coordination and promote structured participation. This mechanism has enabled deeper involvement of municipalities, youth, academia, and NGOs in SDG planning and reporting processes.

A second challenge concerns the investment required to accelerate the green transition and digital innovation. Bulgaria identified gaps in funding and institutional capacity to scale up energy efficiency, low-carbon technologies, and sustainable infrastructure. These challenges are being addressed through EU cohesion funding and partnerships under Team Europe. Such resources are being directed toward renewable energy, digital governance, and sustainable mobility.

However, ensuring sustainable and predictable financing remains a crosscutting issue. While Bulgaria has increased its Official Development Assistance and leveraged EU funding mechanisms, long-term SDG financing still requires greater national budget alignment and private sector mobilization. Ongoing efforts to integrate the SDGs into Bulgaria's National Development Program BULGARIA 2030 are helping to ensure better planning and prioritization of resources.

Another challenge is the need to strengthen social protection systems to ensure no one is left behind. Vulnerable groups, such as the Roma community, persons with disabilities, and low-income households, have faced barriers in accessing education, healthcare, and employment. To overcome this, Bulgaria has developed integrated social services, inclusive education reforms, and targeted employment activation programs, supported by the MonitorStat platform for better data-informed policy.

Long-Term Sustainability SDG Programs

Our country ensures the long-term sustainability of its Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) programs through a combination of strategic planning, institutional continuity, data governance, and inclusive policymaking. We designed these measures to embed the SDGs into the core of national development, thereby safeguarding progress across political cycles and changing socio-economic conditions.

At the strategic level, Bulgaria has anchored the SDGs within the National Development Program BULGARIA 2030, which serves as the country's overarching framework for socio-economic and territorial development. This program aligns national priorities with the 2030 Agenda and outlines specific goals, sub-goals, financing instruments, and measurable indicators. By incorporating the SDGs into the highest-level planning document, Bulgaria ensures that sustainable development objectives remain central to long-term public policy.

Institutionally, Bulgaria has created a National Coordination Mechanism, which coordinates implementation across ministries and levels of government. Formal Mandates from Council of Ministers supported this mechanism; and a working group then reinforced this with monitoring progress and overseeing reporting processes. These structures are designed to function independently of short-term political dynamics and ensure continuity in SDG governance.

Bulgaria also prioritizes data-driven decision-making as a core component of sustainability. The development of a national list of 215 SDG indicators, combined with the operation of the Monitorstat platform, ensures that policymakers, civil society, and international partners have access to real-time, high-quality data. Regular updates and transparent public access to this data strengthen accountability and support evidence-based adjustments to programs over time.

To promote sustainability at the local level, Bulgaria actively involves municipalities and regional authorities in SDG implementation. Dedicated chapters in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process reflect regional perspectives, ensuring that SDG efforts are responsive to territorial needs and realities. This decentralization of ownership fosters resilience and adaptation across different governance contexts.

Furthermore, Bulgaria has institutionalized multi-stakeholder engagement, recognizing that lasting impact depends on the participation of civil society, academia, youth, and the private sector. National consultations, public feedback surveys, and competitions for good practices create channels for innovation and long-term commitment from across society.

Finally, the alignment of Bulgaria's SDG efforts with European Union policies and funding instruments provides an additional layer of sustainability. Participation in EU cohesion and recovery programs ensures access to long-term financing and technical support, while also embedding SDG priorities within broader regional development agendas.

SDGs Benefit Programs

Our country's experience with implementing and cooperating on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) projects has yielded several important lessons that may be of value to other countries pursuing the 2030 Agenda. These insights reflect Bulgaria's efforts to build institutional capacity, strengthen data systems, and promote inclusive, multilevel governance in support of sustainable development.

Our country's experience with implementing and cooperating on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) projects has yielded several important lessons that may be of value to other countries pursuing the 2030 Agenda. These insights reflect Bulgaria's efforts to build institutional capacity, strengthen data systems, and promote inclusive, multilevel governance in support of sustainable development.

Bulgaria has also recognized that inclusive stakeholder participation is essential for the legitimacy and long-term success of SDG implementation. By systematically involving civil society, academia, youth, and the private sector, through consultations, national surveys, and public competitions for best practices, Bulgaria has been able to strengthen the quality and responsiveness of its policies. This whole-of-society approach has not only improved implementation but also fostered public ownership of the SDGs, a practice that could be replicated across various national contexts.

Another key lesson is the central role of high-quality data in effective SDG monitoring and decision-making. The development of the Monitorstat platform and the adoption of a comprehensive national indicator list have enabled Bulgaria to better track its progress, identify gaps, and report transparently at both national and international levels. The integration of real-time, disaggregated data into policy planning has significantly increased efficiency and accountability, an experience that underscores the value of investing in national statistical capacity and digital infrastructure.

Furthermore, Bulgaria's Voluntary National Review process has demonstrated the importance of localizing the SDGs. Through the active participation of municipalities and the inclusion of subnational perspectives in national reporting, Bulgaria has learned that effective implementation must be adapted to local realities. Encouraging regional and municipal authorities to align their strategies with national and global targets has strengthened the inclusiveness and relevance of SDG programming across the country.

Lastly, Bulgaria's long-term approach to SDG implementation, grounded in the National Development Program BULGARIA 2030, has shown the value of embedding the Goals in national planning frameworks. This integration ensures continuity across political cycles and secures alignment between policy objectives and budgetary planning.

The role of Education and Research Play in Supporting Bulgaria's Efforts to Achieve the SDGs

Education and research play a central role in Bulgaria's national strategy for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), functioning both as key enablers of long-term progress and as tools for social inclusion, innovation, and resilience. Recognizing the transformative potential of knowledge, Bulgaria has integrated SDG-related priorities into its education and research systems to support evidence-based policymaking and sustainable development across sectors.

At the policy level, Bulgaria has aligned its educational objectives with SDG 4 (Quality Education) through the Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning (2021–2030) and the Strategy for the Development of Higher Education (2021–2030). These frameworks emphasize equitable access to lifelong learning, curriculum modernization, teacher training, and the integration of digital competencies, ensuring that education systems are aligned with the evolving needs of a green, inclusive, and knowledge-based economy.

Bulgaria has also prioritized research and innovation as crosscutting drivers of sustainable development. The country's Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization and the National Strategy for Scientific Research support the development of knowledge-based sectors, promote public-private-academic partnerships, and target funding toward areas such as green technologies, digital transformation, and health sciences, all directly contributing to multiple SDGs.

Higher education institutions play a growing role in SDG implementation by generating policy-relevant research, participating in international scientific cooperation, and engaging in public discourse on sustainability. Universities and research centers also contribute to capacity building for local governments, civil society, and the private sector through applied research and expert training.

In parallel, Bulgaria continues to invest in inclusive and equitable access to education as a means of reducing inequality (SDG 10) and promoting social mobility. Programs to prevent early school leaving increase access for children with disabilities, and support Roma and other vulnerable communities contribute to Bulgaria's broader commitment to the principle of leaving no one behind.

Education also plays a critical role in raising awareness and building public support for the SDGs. Formal and non-formal learning initiatives have been used to promote environmental stewardship, civic participation, gender equality, and digital literacy, empowering citizens to engage meaningfully in the country's sustainable development journey.

The Future of SDGs Collaboration

Bulgaria recognizes international cooperation as a critical pillar in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and remains committed to deepening its engagement through multilateral, regional, and bilateral channels. The country's plans in the future to strengthen international cooperation focus on enhancing institutional partnerships, contributing to global policy dialogue, and sharing national expertise in areas of comparative strength.

Bulgaria as a member of the European Union will continue to align its development cooperation efforts with the EU's global agenda. These frameworks offer opportunities for Bulgaria to contribute to international efforts in areas such as digital transformation, green energy, education, and health, especially in partner countries of the Eastern Partnership, the Western Balkans, and beyond.

At the multilateral level, Bulgaria plans to sustain its active participation in the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), as well as other UN-led processes, by contributing to Voluntary National Reviews and thematic reviews that facilitate peer learning and global accountability. Bulgaria also intends to enhance its involvement in working groups and expert panels focused on topics such as data governance, gender equality, and climate resilience.

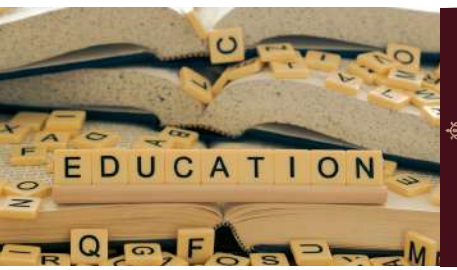
Bulgaria also plans to deepen academic and civil society cooperation through university partnerships, joint research projects, and capacity-building programs that support SDG-related knowledge sharing across borders. The growing involvement of Bulgarian universities and think tanks in international sustainability networks provides a strong foundation for expanding educational diplomacy and innovation collaboration.

Finally, to ensure the continuity of its engagement, Bulgaria is working to institutionalize SDG-related international cooperation within its national development planning. This includes the continued implementation of the National Development Program BULGARIA 2030, which provides the policy framework for long-term international alignment and cooperation.

Bulgaria and Indonesia in Cooperation to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Bulgaria and Indonesia have each demonstrated a strong commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, individually and together working to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Our country has made significant improvements in reducing poverty and hunger, with the population living below the international poverty line decreasing fivefold since 2015. Bulgaria has also expanded investments in healthcare and education, promoted gender equality, strengthened institutional transparency, and developed a robust national monitoring system (Monitorstat) to support data-driven SDG implementation. It has emphasized inclusive development through programs targeting vulnerable groups and has actively engaged in European and international cooperation mechanisms to share best practices.



Indonesia, for its part, has mainstreamed the SDGs into its national development plans and has achieved 61.4% of SDG indicator targets as of 2023. The country has expanded primary healthcare services, empowered women in public and private sectors, invested in digital infrastructure, and mobilized innovative financing tools such as SDG Bonds and Blue Bonds. Indonesia has also institutionalized the implementation of the SDGs through national-subnational coordination and multi-stakeholder partnerships, and it plays a leadership role in South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

In 2025, both states presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) at the High-Level Political Forum – Bulgaria with its second VNR and Indonesia with its fourth. In preparation for these presentations, the Bulgarian Embassy in Jakarta supported an online seminar held in June 2025, which served as a platform for the exchange of lessons learned and good practices in the drafting of the VNRs. The discussions addressed ways to ensure the participation of all stakeholders, with particular emphasis on engaging young people, and explored approaches for regionalizing and localizing the SDGs to make them more relevant and actionable at the subnational level. Attention was also given to identifying follow-up actions after the 2025 VNR presentations to sustain momentum in implementing the SDGs.

In addition, the two countries need to cooperate closely during the HLPF; Bulgaria extended an invitation to Indonesia to participate in its side event dedicated to demographic resilience. In turn, Indonesia provided information about its own planned side event and the potential for Bulgarian participation. The exchange on demographic issues proved particularly relevant: Bulgaria, facing low fertility and higher mortality rates compared to the EU average, outlined its targeted policies for demographic recovery, while Indonesia, in the third phase of its demographic transition, presented its achievements in reducing maternal and infant mortality, lowering fertility rates, and expanding health coverage.

Ultimately, the seminar not only provided a substantive exchange of experiences but also strengthened bilateral ties, reaffirming both countries' determination to continue their cooperation on sustainable development at national, regional, and global levels.

Key Factors to Proceed a Successful Collaboration

The cooperation between Bulgaria and Indonesia on advancing the SDGs has been effective because it is built on shared values, complementary strengths, and active engagement in multilateral processes. Both countries demonstrate strong political commitment by integrating the SDGs into their national strategies – Bulgaria through the National Development Program BULGARIA 2030 and Indonesia through its National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN). This alignment ensures that sustainable development priorities are mainstreamed across all sectors and levels of governance.

A key factor has been that both Bulgaria and Indonesia have adopted inclusive, multi-stakeholder approaches that actively involve civil society, academia, the private sector, and local authorities in the design and implementation of their SDG strategies. In Bulgaria, a formal national coordination mechanism and stakeholder engagement campaigns have supported whole-of-society participation. Similarly, Indonesia has institutionalized collaboration through the establishment of SDG Centers, aimed at strengthening stakeholders' capacity for scientific, data-driven, and measurable SDG implementation and promoting strong partnerships with local communities, civil society organizations, and businesses. This inclusive approach has created a solid foundation for international dialogue, knowledge sharing, and the exchange of best practices.

In this regard, the shared emphasis on data-driven and evidence-based policymaking has also played a significant role in enhancing the quality and accountability of SDG initiatives. Bulgaria has developed a comprehensive national indicator system and digital monitoring tools, such as Monitorstat, to track progress. Indonesia has invested in digital infrastructure, geospatial mapping, and small-area data estimation to ensure policy reaches vulnerable and remote populations. These efforts not only improve national implementation but also support transparent reporting in global forums.

The recent 2025 VNR collaboration has further reinforced these factors, with both countries exchanging lessons learned, discussing regionalization and localization of SDGs, identifying follow-up actions post-HLPF, and addressing demographic challenges, despite being at different stages of their demographic transition. Moreover, their strong commitment to inclusivity and leaving no one behind further strengthens the coherence of their efforts. Both governments have prioritized marginalized groups in their SDG strategies, with particular attention to gender equality, social protection, and access to education and healthcare. This shared development vision creates a natural foundation for constructive engagement and mutual learning.

Bulgaria's Best Practices Tools to Applied in Indonesia

Bulgaria has developed a number of strategic tools, institutional mechanisms, and inclusive practices that could serve as valuable models for accelerating SDG implementation in Indonesia.

One notable initiative is the Monitorstat platform, Bulgaria's centralized digital system for monitoring SDG progress. Developed in cooperation with the National Statistical Institute and the Council of Ministers, this platform provides real-time access to over 200 national indicators aligned with the 17 SDGs. By promoting transparency, data accuracy, and public accessibility, Monitorstat enables evidence-based policymaking and enhances public accountability. A similar platform could support Indonesia's decentralized governance model by strengthening local data collection and aligning regional performance with national targets.

Another transferable best practice is Bulgaria's use of multi-level governance frameworks to integrate SDG targets across national, regional, and municipal levels. Through consultations with municipalities and the inclusion of local stakeholders in the Voluntary National Review process, Bulgaria ensures that subnational actors play an active role in both planning and implementation. Given Indonesia's vast geographical and demographic diversity, a structured multi-level coordination mechanism may help improve the coherence of SDG policies across provinces and accelerate delivery in remote or underserved areas.

Bulgaria has also institutionalized stakeholder engagement mechanisms, including thematic consultations, national competitions for SDG-related public administration practices, and public surveys to collect input on national priorities. These tools strengthen civic participation and ensure that the SDG agenda reflects diverse social needs. Indonesia, which already benefits from strong community-driven programs, may further enhance inclusion and innovation by adapting Bulgaria's formalized engagement frameworks at both national and local levels.

Furthermore, Bulgaria's emphasis on inclusive social policy, particularly in addressing the needs of marginalized groups such as the Roma community, persons with disabilities, and youth at risk, offers a range of replicable approaches. These include integrated social services, employment activation programs, and inclusive education reforms, all aligned with the principle of leaving no one behind. Indonesia's focus on vulnerable groups could benefit from Bulgaria's experience in designing integrated interventions supported by data, social workers, and targeted funding.

Enhancing Cross-border Partnerships

Bulgaria actively promotes cross-border partnerships as an integral part of its commitment to the 2030 Agenda, recognizing that sustainable development challenges require coordinated regional and international responses, involvement in global initiatives, and exchanging good practices.

Bulgaria as a member of the European Union contributes to regional cohesion and cross-border cooperation programs that align with SDG priorities, especially in areas such as climate action, infrastructure, energy efficiency, and social inclusion. The implementation of EU-funded programs and cross-border initiatives with other countries facilitates knowledge exchange, innovation transfer, and joint development strategies. These platforms allow Bulgaria to share policy approaches and technical expertise with other EU and non-EU member states.

Bulgaria also participates in Team Europe initiatives, which pool the resources of the EU and its Member States to support SDG-related projects globally. In 2022, Bulgaria contributed to initiatives promoting sustainable production in Vietnam, healthcare and education for Afghan refugees in Iran, and local vaccine manufacturing in Nigeria. While global in scope, these efforts illustrate Bulgaria's growing engagement in coordinated international development and its contribution to shared regional resilience.

Furthermore, in Southeast Europe, Bulgaria engages in structured cooperation through the Japanese Western Balkans Initiative, co-implementing projects aimed at SME development and disaster risk reduction. These actions support regional stability and directly contribute to SDG targets related to economic resilience, innovation, and climate adaptation.

In addition, in financial terms, Bulgaria has significantly scaled up its international development support. In 2022, the country provided USD 232.2 million in official development assistance, representing 0.27% of its gross national income (GNI), an increase of over 160% compared to the previous year. While still progressing toward the 2030 target of 0.33% ODA/GNI, Bulgaria's trend reflects a deepening commitment to international solidarity. Importantly, 100% of its ODA is delivered as grants, enhancing accessibility and impact, particularly for regional and lower-income partner countries.

SDG Projects Challenges

Our country has encountered several key challenges in cooperating on SDG projects, particularly in ensuring inclusive participation, accelerating innovation, securing adequate funding, and addressing the needs of vulnerable populations.

One persistent challenge has been the need for broader and more coordinated stakeholder involvement. Early implementation efforts revealed limited engagement from civil society, local governments, and the private sector. In response, Bulgaria established a national coordination mechanism for the SDGs in 2023 to strengthen institutional coordination and promote structured participation. This mechanism has enabled deeper involvement of municipalities, youth, academia, and NGOs in SDG planning and reporting processes.

A second challenge concerns the investment required to accelerate the green transition and digital innovation. Bulgaria identified gaps in funding and institutional capacity to scale up energy efficiency, low-carbon technologies, and sustainable infrastructure. These challenges are being addressed through EU cohesion funding and partnerships under Team Europe. Such resources are being directed toward renewable energy, digital governance, and sustainable mobility.

However, ensuring sustainable and predictable financing remains a crosscutting issue. While Bulgaria has increased its Official Development Assistance and leveraged EU funding mechanisms, long-term SDG financing still requires greater national budget alignment and private sector mobilization. Ongoing efforts to integrate the SDGs into Bulgaria's National Development Program BULGARIA 2030 are helping to ensure better planning and prioritization of resources.

Another challenge is the need to strengthen social protection systems to ensure no one is left behind. Vulnerable groups, such as the Roma community, persons with disabilities, and low-income households, have faced barriers in accessing education, healthcare, and employment. To overcome this, Bulgaria has developed integrated social services, inclusive education reforms, and targeted employment activation programs, supported by the MonitorStat platform for better data-informed policy.

Long-Term Sustainability SDG Programs

Our country ensures the long-term sustainability of its Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) programs through a combination of strategic planning, institutional continuity, data governance, and inclusive policymaking. These measures are designed to embed the SDGs into the core of national development, thereby safeguarding progress across political cycles and changing socio-economic conditions.

At the strategic level, Bulgaria has anchored the SDGs within the National Development Program BULGARIA 2030, which serves as the country's overarching framework for socio-economic and territorial development. This program aligns national priorities with the 2030 Agenda and outlines specific goals, sub-goals, financing instruments, and measurable indicators. By incorporating the SDGs into the highest-level planning document, Bulgaria ensures that sustainable development objectives remain central to long-term public policy.

Institutionally, Bulgaria has created a National Coordination Mechanism, which coordinates implementation across ministries and levels of government. Formal mandates from the Council of Ministers supported this mechanism and reinforced by a working group tasked with monitoring progress and overseeing reporting processes. These structures are designed to function independently of short-term political dynamics and ensure continuity in SDG governance.

Bulgaria also prioritizes data-driven decision-making as a core component of sustainability. The development of a national list of 215 SDG indicators, combined with the operation of the Monitorstat platform, ensures that policymakers, civil society, and international partners have access to real-time, high-quality data. Regular updates and transparent public access to this data strengthen accountability and support evidence-based adjustments to programs over time.

To promote sustainability at the local level, Bulgaria actively involves municipalities and regional authorities in SDG implementation. Dedicated chapters in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process reflect regional perspectives, ensuring that SDG efforts are responsive to territorial needs and realities. This decentralization of ownership fosters resilience and adaptation across different governance contexts.

Furthermore, Bulgaria has institutionalized multi-stakeholder engagement, recognizing that lasting impact depends on the participation of civil society, academia, youth, and the private sector. National consultations, public feedback surveys, and competitions for good practices create channels for innovation and long-term commitment from across society.

Finally, the alignment of Bulgaria's SDG efforts with European Union policies and funding instruments provides an additional layer of sustainability. Participation in EU cohesion and recovery programs ensures access to long-term financing and technical support, while also embedding SDG priorities within broader regional development agendas

SDGs Benefit Programs

Our country's experience with implementing and cooperating on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) projects has yielded several important lessons that may be of value to other countries pursuing the 2030 Agenda. These insights reflect Bulgaria's efforts to build institutional capacity, strengthen data systems, and promote inclusive, multilevel governance in support of sustainable development.

One of the most significant lessons learned is the importance of establishing an integrated and well-coordinated governance structure. Early challenges related to institutional fragmentation and limited horizontal coordination were addressed through the establishment of a formal National Coordination Mechanism in 2023. This structure has helped ensure coherence across national strategies, ministries, and sectors, while also enhancing Bulgaria's capacity to engage in structured international cooperation. Other countries may benefit from adopting similar coordination mechanisms to align domestic efforts with global commitments.

Bulgaria has also recognized that inclusive stakeholder participation is essential for the legitimacy and long-term success of SDG implementation. By systematically involving civil society, academia, youth, and the private sector, through consultations, national surveys, and public competitions for best practices, Bulgaria has been able to strengthen the quality and responsiveness of its policies. This whole-of-society approach has not only improved implementation but also fostered public ownership of the SDGs, a practice that could be replicated across various national contexts.

Another key lesson is the central role of high-quality data in effective SDG monitoring and decision-making. The development of the Monitorstat platform and the adoption of a comprehensive national indicator list have enabled Bulgaria to better track its progress, identify gaps, and report transparently at both national and international levels. The integration of real-time, disaggregated data into policy planning has significantly increased efficiency and accountability, an experience that underscores the value of investing in national statistical capacity and digital infrastructure.

Furthermore, Bulgaria's Voluntary National Review process has demonstrated the importance of localizing the SDGs. Through the active participation of municipalities and the inclusion of subnational perspectives in national reporting, Bulgaria has learned that effective implementation must be adapted to local realities. Encouraging regional and municipal authorities to align their strategies with national and global targets has strengthened the inclusiveness and relevance of SDG programming across the country.

Lastly, Bulgaria's long-term approach to SDG implementation, grounded in the National Development Program BULGARIA 2030, has shown the value of embedding the Goals in national planning frameworks. This integration ensures continuity across political cycles and secures alignment between policy objectives and budgetary planning.

Bulgaria, Indonesia, and ASEAN

Although Bulgaria is not a member of ASEAN, it has expressed a strong commitment to international cooperation and peer learning in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As such, Bulgaria and Indonesia can strengthen collaboration by leveraging their respective comparative advantages, institutional experience, and engagement in multilateral platforms to support SDG acceleration across the ASEAN region.

One key area of potential cooperation lies in data systems and monitoring infrastructure. Bulgaria's experience in developing the Monitorstat platform and adopting a national SDG indicator list aligned with EU standards could provide a valuable model for improving data governance and harmonized reporting across ASEAN countries. By sharing technical expertise, Bulgaria can support Indonesia and its regional partners in enhancing transparency, comparability, and accessibility of SDG data, particularly in local and hard-to-reach areas.

Another opportunity exists in the realm of inclusive social policy and public service delivery. Bulgaria has developed targeted programs for marginalized communities, including integrated services for the Roma population and youth-at-risk. These models, in areas such as inclusive education, healthcare access, and community-based employment support, could be adapted and piloted in Southeast Asian contexts, where socio-economic disparities and regional inequalities remain a challenge.

In addition, both countries can collaborate in promoting innovation and green transitions. Bulgaria's emphasis on sustainable energy, circular economy policies, and public sector innovation aligns well with Indonesia's aspirations under its Asta Cita development agenda. By participating in ASEAN–EU cooperation dialogues, academic exchanges, and multistakeholder forums, Bulgaria and Indonesia can jointly contribute to policy dialogues on climate action, digitalization, and resilient infrastructure.

To ensure sustained cooperation, both countries can invest in knowledge-sharing platforms and institutional linkages. Opportunities include organizing regional policy workshops, secondments of technical experts, and university partnerships that focus on SDG-related capacity building. Bulgaria's academic institutions and Indonesia's network of SDG Centers at over 60 universities could serve as natural partners in this effort.

Crucially, Bulgaria's role as an EU member state positions it as a potential bridge between ASEAN and the European Union, enabling triangular cooperation frameworks that bring together resources, policy tools, and institutional expertise. Through enhanced collaboration with Indonesia, ASEAN's largest member and a regional leader in SDG implementation, Bulgaria can support broader ASEAN progress while strengthening its bilateral relationship with Indonesia.

The role of Education and Research Play in Supporting Bulgaria's Efforts to Achieve the SDGs

Education and research play a central role in Bulgaria's national strategy for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), functioning both as key enablers of long-term progress and as tools for social inclusion, innovation, and resilience. Recognizing the transformative potential of knowledge, Bulgaria has integrated SDG-related priorities into its education and research systems to support evidence-based policymaking and sustainable development across sectors.

At the policy level, Bulgaria has aligned its educational objectives with SDG 4 (Quality Education) through the Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning (2021–2030) and the Strategy for the Development of Higher Education (2021–2030). These frameworks emphasize equitable access to lifelong learning, curriculum modernization, teacher training, and the integration of digital competencies, ensuring that education systems are aligned with the evolving needs of a green, inclusive, and knowledge-based economy.

Bulgaria has also prioritized research and innovation as crosscutting drivers of sustainable development. The country's Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization and the National Strategy for Scientific Research support the development of knowledge-based sectors, promote public-private-academic partnerships, and target funding toward areas such as green technologies, digital transformation, and health sciences, all directly contributing to multiple SDGs.

Higher education institutions play a growing role in SDG implementation by generating policy-relevant research, participating in international scientific cooperation, and engaging in public discourse on sustainability. Universities and research centers also contribute to capacity building for local governments, civil society, and the private sector through applied research and expert training.

In parallel, Bulgaria continues to invest in inclusive and equitable access to education as a means of reducing inequality (SDG 10) and promoting social mobility. Programs to prevent early school leaving increase access for children with disabilities, and support Roma and other vulnerable communities contribute to Bulgaria's broader commitment to the principle of leaving no one behind.

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Dr. Tanya Dimitrova

Dr. Tanya Dimitrova is ambassador of Bulgaria to Indonesia, Singapore, Timor-Leste, ASEAN. She was a Bulgarian diplomat based in Jakarta, before her appointment in Indonesia.

Dr. Tanya Dimitrova was appointed as a Bulgarian ambassador to the Republic of Croatia in 2012 and as a Consul General in Milan in 2018; her last posting was as a Director of the Crisis Centre at the MFA (2022-2024). Under her leadership, Bulgaria made evacuations from Sudan, Niger, and Gaza; humanitarian outputs from Israel; and she was dealing with Bulgarian hijacked boats in the Red Sea, this action related to Peace, Justice, and Strong Institution point.

Ambassador Tanya Dimitrova gained her educational qualification with various deep subjects and specializations. Dr. Tanya Dimitrova is highly aware of the importance of education. She is also a professor at two Bulgarian Universities and one Croatian University in “diplomatic protocol and etiquette”. In line with the importance of good education, the Ambassador Dimitrova actively teaches at some universities across Indonesia as a guest lecturer regarding her experiences and global issues, to increase the quality of education in rural area by providing a global perspective based on real experiences. On the other hand, Dr. Tanya Dimitrova is keen on cultural and heritage places to learn about old traditions and meet various people from a vibrant background.

Bridging Borders for a Greener Future: Hungary and Indonesia's Collaboration on Sustainable Development

Written by
H.E. Ms. Lilla Karsay

Turning Vision into Action: Hungary–Indonesia Collaborations Driving Sustainable Development

Hungary and Indonesia have cultivated a dynamic partnership that actively supports multiple Sustainable Development Goals through concrete infrastructure, environmental, and financing projects.

Hungary became an active donor to the World Bank Group in 2014 through the establishment of a USD 20 million Trust Fund with the International Finance Corporation (IFC), managed via Exim bank and supported by the Hungarian government. This partnership has enabled a series of impactful SDG-aligned projects in Indonesia between 2015 and 2020, including the Indonesia Green Buildings Promotion and EAP Green Buildings EDGE program, which advanced energy-efficient construction standards and private sector capacity building. It also supported the Jatiluhur Hydropower advisory project and the Java 3 Gas-Fired Independent Power Producer (IPP) development, both of which facilitated cleaner energy production and improved public-private infrastructure delivery. Together, these collaborative efforts illustrate how Hungary and Indonesia have leveraged financial tools, technological exchange, and institutional trust to deliver meaningful progress toward sustainable development.

In 2016-2019, a key initiative was the **IKK Wastewater Treatment Project in collaboration between the Budapest Water Works and the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing,** financed through Hungary's tied-aid loan scheme, which contributes to **SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)** by expanding access to safe, modern wastewater systems in underserved areas for more than 500.000 Indonesian people.

In the energy sector, a significant milestone was the 2016 cooperation between General Electric and PLN, Indonesia's state-owned electricity company, to implement a gas turbine power generation project. The turbines were manufactured in Hungary, and the project was partially financed by the Hungarian Eximbank, supporting SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG 9 by boosting grid capacity with a more efficient, lower-emission transitional energy source. The cooperation will also demonstrate how strategic partnerships involving state-owned enterprises, global technology providers, and export financing institutions can accelerate infrastructure development while balancing economic growth with environmental responsibility.

Another important collaboration is the ongoing Multi-Lane Free Flow (MLFF) e-tolling system, which addresses SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by introducing a digital, congestion-reducing toll system that improves urban mobility while lowering emissions. MLFF is the newest toll payment technology based on the Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS). This project makes Indonesia a country using the most advanced toll payment technology in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, MLFF helps Indonesia reduce traffic congestion in Jakarta, which causes economic losses of over USD 4 billion annually. The Hungarian government designated the MLFF as a national strategic project contributing to economic development and accelerating Indonesia's efforts to become the fourth largest economy by 2045.

The Hungarian company, GreeHill has also partnered with Indonesian institutions on an Urban Forest project in Bandung, scanning more than 20.000 trees in the city, it will directly contributing to SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) by enhancing urban biodiversity, promoting nature-based solutions, and increasing access to green public spaces.

The Secret Ingredients of Success: Trust, Shared, Values, and Innovation

The success of Hungary's SDG-related projects stems from a combination of strategic alignment and shared developmental values. A defining feature of these partnerships is the focus on people-centered outcomes: improving quality of life, reducing environmental impact, and building resilient, inclusive infrastructure. These projects directly address local needs, whether it is clean water access in rural areas, reduced traffic congestion in urban centers, or the preservation of green spaces in fast-growing cities, while also aligning with global sustainability goals. Through the development cooperation itself, both countries shared a beneficial mutual partnership. Hungary's expertise is in areas such as sustainable infrastructure, waste management, and the circular economy, helping Indonesia to approach the SDGs goals.

Hungary's best practices: ideas to inspire Indonesia's SDG acceleration

Hungary has developed a range of government-led initiatives that could offer valuable models for Indonesia, particularly in the areas of sustainable urban development, water management, and energy efficiency, all of which are central to achieving the SDGs.

One such initiative is Hungary's national regulation on energy-efficient buildings, which mandates minimum performance standards for new constructions and renovations. This is closely tied to the promotion of the EU-recognized Excellence in Design for Greater Efficiencies (EDGE) certification, already piloted in Indonesia through the IFC–Hungarian Trust Fund. Hungary's experience in combining regulatory reform with financial incentives, such as green loans, targeted subsidies, and tax breaks for sustainable construction, could support Indonesia's efforts on sustainable cities and communities, and the climate actions by encouraging energy-efficient real estate development at scale.

In the field of water and wastewater management, Hungary has implemented integrated regional water utility models, which consolidate operations across municipalities to improve service efficiency, reduce costs, and ensure professional asset management. These models, coupled with strong environmental regulations on water discharge and quality control, could be adapted in Indonesia, especially in peri-urban and secondary city contexts, where municipal water utilities face resource and expertise constraints. Through Hungary's water management model, government authorities are responsible from the center to the local authority. The central government level includes the following : development and approval of water legislation, preparation and approval of the national RBMP and FRMP, implementation of the relevant measures, including coordination of entities involved, monitoring of groundwater and surface water, enforcement of certain water-related regulations, participation and the implementation of international agreements concerning the Danube international RBD and related sub-basins, setting of prices and tariffs for water use, implementation the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and regulation of drinking water quality. On the other hand, regional and local authorities were responsible for implementing, supporting, enforcing, and preventing (European Committee of the Regions).

Waste Reduction

Circular Economy

Hungary also offers policy models in the area of waste reduction and circular economy development, in line with responsible consumption and production. These include national strategies for single-use plastic bags, extended producer responsibility (EPR) for packaging and mandatory recycling quotas for local governments. As Indonesia tackles growing waste-management challenges, these frameworks could inspire scalable and community-based circular economy interventions. The EPR system promotes a circular economy by incentivizing manufacturers to create more recyclable and sustainable products. In addition, it ensures that waste producers, rather than taxpayers, pay the costs of handling garbage. The obligation of registration and take-back included the online retailers in this system.

Finally, Hungary's government-supported tied-aid and concessional financing tools, used to co-finance infrastructure projects in strategic SDG sectors, offer a replicable mechanism for creating public–private collaboration platforms that are both financially sustainable and aligned with long-term development goals. When combined with technical diplomacy and regulatory support, these tools not only deliver infrastructure but also transfer institutional know-how.

These best practices, rooted in a combination of strong regulation, financial innovation, and local capacity building, can meaningfully support Indonesia's SDG roadmap and regional leadership ambitions in ASEAN.

Challenges along the Way: How Hungary and Indonesia Overcame Barriers Together

Hungary's collaborations in Indonesia often confront two structural hurdles: an underdeveloped legal and regulatory framework for innovative infrastructure projects and the high transaction cost of operating in a time- and capital-intensive environment where even small-scale pilots demand inconsistent resources. To navigate these obstacles, Hungarian actors have adopted a "flexible localization" approach, tailoring technical designs and contractual structures to Indonesia's evolving rules while building strong relationships within the responsible ministries and local governments. Whenever a legal gap slows progress, such as unclear tariff rules for e-tolling or green-building incentives, projects advance through memorandum of understanding, pilot exemptions, or phased regulatory road maps negotiated jointly with Indonesian counterparts.

Equally important is a minimum-viable-scale policy: Hungary now prioritizes projects large enough to justify the administrative burden, bundling smaller interventions into multi-site programs (e.g., the IFC green-building portfolio) so that due-diligence costs remain proportionate. Throughout, transparent communication channels and clear mutual expectations have proved indispensable for sustaining momentum and investor confidence.

The minimum-viable-scale policy aims to increase competitiveness and improve human capital, support innovation, create business models, and develop a circular economy. On the level of social sustainability, it is essential to reduce poverty by increasing education quality to establish a sustainable workplace. By 2050, Hungary will adopt the European Green Deal, focusing on carbon neutrality in renewable energy and sustainable transport.

Building for the Long Haul: Ensuring the Lasting Impact and Sustainability

Long-term viability rests on **knowledge transfer, capacity building, and a conscious hand-over strategy.** Every Hungarian-supported project includes on-the-job training, workshops, and, where relevant, scholarships that equip Indonesian engineers, regulators, and operators to run the asset independently after commissioning. The knowledge transfer is intended to strengthen diplomatic ties existing for 70 years between Hungary and Indonesia that influences economic development, innovation, institutional governance, and disaster risk mitigation. In terms of sustainable development, this is crucial, especially to support the 17 goals of the SDGs.

Monitoring-and-evaluation clauses—funded either through tied-aid budgets or the IFC Trust Fund—track performance over five- to ten-year horizons, allowing mid-course corrections. Crucially, Hungary targets sectors where it already has a positive record of accomplishment and respected local partners, leveraging previous references (IKK water, MLFF green-building technical assistance) to deepen credibility and keep maintenance networks in place. By anchoring new initiatives in this ecosystem of proven relationships and shared success stories, the programs retain political support, local ownership, and access to follow-up financing: three pillars of durability.

Lessons from the Field: How Hungary's SDG Journey Offers Insights for the World

1. **Flexibility is not a luxury but a pre-condition:** adapting project timelines, financing structures and technical specs to local realities markedly increases success rates.

2. **Co-design with host-country partners unlocks genuine ownership**, a lesson reinforced by Indonesia's demonstrated ability to absorb and deploy sophisticated technologies far faster than outsiders sometimes expect.

3. **High-level political engagement matters;** reciprocal ministerial and ambassadorial visits have repeatedly broken deadlocks, signaling mutual respect and accelerating regulatory approvals.

4. **Affordability and accessible financing determine uptake:** Hungary's use of concessional tied-aid loans and the IFC Trust Fund lowered entry barriers for green buildings and cleaner power, proving that well-structured financing can catalyze private investment.

5. **Clear, transparent communication—anchored in agreed performance metrics—ensures that expectations stay aligned** from the feasibility study to the operation , fostering trust that endures beyond individual projects.

Stronger Together: Unlocking the Potential of the Hungary–Indonesia Collaboration for ASEAN's Future

Hungary and Indonesia can scale up their collaboration by jointly **developing regional pilot projects,** such as smart water systems or low-emission urban zones and then replicating them across ASEAN. Engaging **Indonesian universities, municipalities, wand private sector actors** in trilateral or regional frameworks will further accelerate implementation through the Stipendium Hungaricum higher education full-degree scholarship programs. Regular bilateral and regional **SDG-focused forums** could help align strategies and resources.

Stipendium Hungaricum higher education full-degree scholarship programs

Investing in Minds: How Education and Research Fuel Sustainable Development

Hungary offers generous scholarship programs, such as the Stipendium Hungaricum (almost 1000 scholarships to the ASEAN and 110 scholarships to Indonesian students), enabling hundreds of Indonesian students to pursue higher education in fields critical to SDG advancement, such as environmental engineering, urban planning, and public health. These educational links foster a new generation of SDG champions who understand both Hungarian innovation and Indonesian needs.

In 2017, Izotóp Ltd., a Hungarian company in cooperation with the National Atomic Energy Agency (BATAN), established the first **gamma irradiation facility** in Indonesia, primarily used for the sterilization of medical devices and food, and built another facility for research and education purposes at **Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta.**

Looking Ahead: Hungary's Vision for Global Partnerships and the SDGs

Hungary aims to deepen its regional engagement in Southeast Asia by expanding its aid programs, increasing the number of technology diplomacy missions, and supporting climate-smart urban development. New areas such as digital health, AI in education, and smart agriculture are under consideration for future collaboration, alongside a continued emphasis on sustainable water and infrastructure solutions.

H.E. Ms. Lilla Karsay

H.E. Ms. Lilla Karsay serves as Hungary's Ambassador to Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and ASEAN, a role she has held since October 2021. As the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Lilla Karsay leads Hungary's diplomatic mission in Jakarta, where she works to build stronger connections between Hungary and Southeast Asia in politics, business, culture,
education, and technology.

Having lived in Indonesia since 2016, Lilla Karsay has developed a deep appreciation for the country and has been at the forefront of key partnerships that support sustainable development. She has played a vital role in Hungary's flagship projects aimed at achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including the introduction of a smart electronic tolling system to ease traffic congestion and cut emissions, as well as a clean water initiative that has improved the lives of more than half a million people. Her efforts extend beyond infrastructure, as she also actively promotes environmental innovation and green technology solutions.

Education is another area close to Lilla Karsay's heart. She has been a strong advocate for scholarship programs that give Indonesian students the chance to study in Hungary, helping to nurture the next generation of leaders in fields such as environmental engineering, urban development, and public health.

Through her leadership, Hungary has become a valued partner in supporting Indonesia's and the region's journey toward a greener, more sustainable future. Ambassador Lilla Karsay's dedication reflects the growing importance of diplomacy in solving today's shared global challenges—one partnership at a time.

Chapter 3
University for SDGs

Bakrie University and Its Role in Promoting Sustainable Development Goals

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As we reflect on the profound truth that has emerged from distinguished ambassadors, it becomes clear that the Sustainable Development Goals are not merely a diplomatic framework or a set of international commitments—they are a reflection of our shared humanity and our collective responsibility to one another and to the planet we call home. This understanding forms the foundation of Bakrie University's approach to sustainable development, where academic excellence meets social responsibility and global engagement.

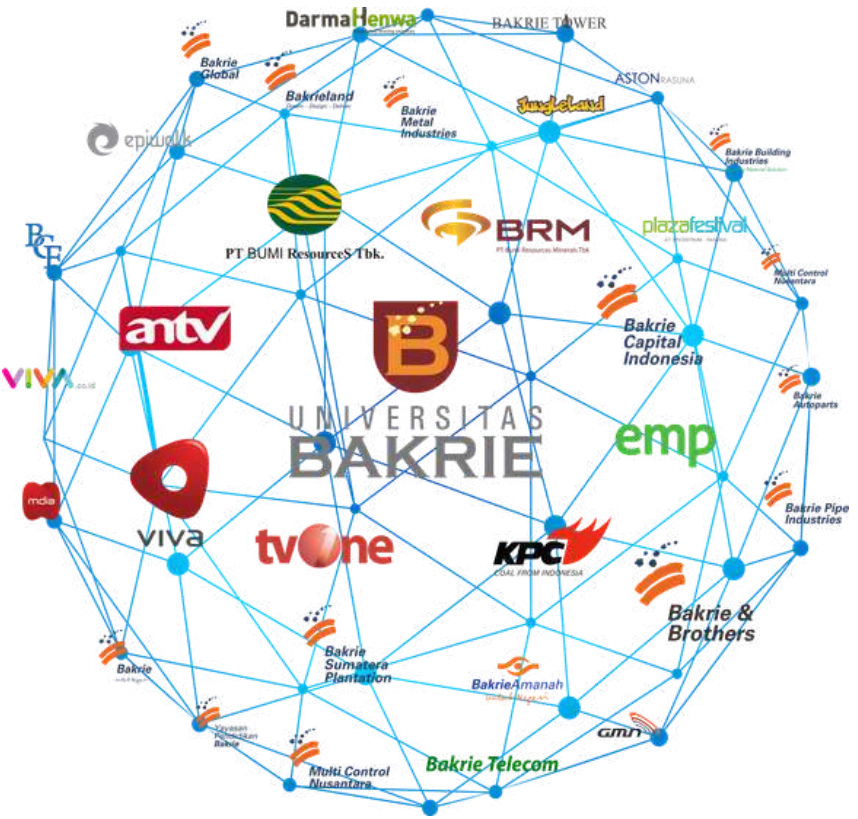
A Vision for Global Recognition Through Engagement

Bakrie University stands as a beacon of transformative education in Indonesia, guided by its vision to become ***"A Globally Recognized University Through Engagement with Industries and Experiential Learning Method."*** This forward-thinking institution has positioned itself not merely as a center for academic excellence, but as an active catalyst for sustainable development, working tirelessly to address pressing societal challenges while preparing students for the complexities of the modern world.

As an academic and research institution, Bakrie University has had the privilege of witnessing firsthand how cross-border collaborations transform abstract global agendas into concrete local impacts. The university recognizes that sustainable development is inherently collaborative, transcending borders, ideologies, and national interests.

Strategic Collaboration for Social Impact

At the heart of Bakrie University's approach to sustainable development lies a powerful partnership with the Bakrie Group industries. This collaboration represents more than a conventional university-industry relationship; it embodies a shared commitment to creating meaningful impact across Indonesian society. Through this synergy, the university has developed comprehensive programs that touch multiple facets of community development.



The partnership has yielded tangible results in three critical areas. First, through scholarship programs that open doors of opportunity for talented students who might otherwise be unable to pursue higher education. These scholarships represent an investment in human capital and a commitment to educational equity—addressing one of the fundamental challenges in bridging the SDG financing gap. Second, by actively participating in job creation initiatives, the collaboration helps address unemployment challenges while ensuring that graduates transition smoothly into productive careers. Third, the partnership nurtures entrepreneurial activities, fostering a culture of innovation and self-reliance that extends beyond campus boundaries into local communities.

Empowering Communities Through Capacity Building

Bakrie University has demonstrated its commitment to sustainable development through targeted capacity building programs that address specific community needs. These initiatives reflect a deep understanding that sustainable development requires empowering people with knowledge and skills a principle that aligns with the Fourth Industrial Revolution's demands for digital literacy and adaptable human capital.

In South Jakarta, the university has launched financial literacy programs designed to strengthen economic resilience among community members. In an era where financial decisions have increasingly complex implications, these programs equip individuals with the knowledge to make informed choices about savings, investments, and financial planning. By improving financial literacy, the university contributes to poverty reduction and economic stability at the grassroots level, while also addressing the broader challenge of mobilizing domestic resources for sustainable development.

The institution has also turned its attention to Indonesia's rich geological and cultural heritage through human resource development programs focused on Geopark tourism. Indonesia's diverse geological landscapes offer tremendous potential for sustainable tourism, and Bakrie University's programs ensure that local communities can effectively manage and benefit from these natural assets. By developing the capacity of tourism professionals and community members, the university helps create sustainable livelihoods while promoting environmental conservation.

Furthermore, recognizing the vital role cooperatives play in community economic development, Bakrie University has implemented programs to advance cooperative economies. These initiatives strengthen local economic structures, promote collective prosperity, and demonstrate how traditional community organizations can thrive in modern economic contexts exemplifying the kind of innovative public-private partnerships necessary to bridge the SDG financing gap.

Global Partnerships for Sustainable Solutions

Bakrie University's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals extends beyond Indonesia's borders through strategic collaborations with friendly nations. Currently, the university is working with embassies from Malaysia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and the Philippines to identify and document best practices in SDG implementation across these diverse contexts.

The voices of ambassadors from these nations—each representing diverse geographical, economic, and cultural contexts—have illuminated how cross-border collaboration offers unique opportunities to mobilize resources at scale. These partnerships represent the new generation of diplomatic leadership that recognizes 21st-century diplomacy extends far beyond traditional state-to-state relations. Modern ambassadors are conveners, facilitators, advocates, and bridge-builders who engage not only with government officials but also with civil society, private sector, academia, and grassroots communities.

This international collaboration serves multiple purposes. It allows for cross-cultural learning and the exchange of innovative approaches to common challenges. By studying how different nations address sustainability issues within their unique cultural, economic, and political contexts, Bakrie University creates a repository of knowledge that can inspire both Indonesian and global audiences. These partnerships also position the university as a hub for international dialogue on sustainable development, raising its profile while contributing to global efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

The ambassadors whose insights inform this collaboration represent a critical understanding: the SDGs have elevated sustainable development to a central pillar of foreign policy. Climate diplomacy, economic diplomacy, health diplomacy, and cultural diplomacy now all intersect with the pursuit of the 2030 Agenda. Ambassadors serve as the critical nodes in the network of global cooperation, translating international commitments into bilateral and multilateral partnerships, mobilizing resources, sharing best practices, and holding governments accountable to their pledges.

Technology, Innovation, and Academic Responsibility

The Fourth Industrial Revolution characterized by artificial intelligence, biotechnology, renewable energy innovations, and digital connectivity presents both opportunities and risks for sustainable development. Bakrie University recognizes that cross-border collaborations in technology transfer and capacity building are essential to ensure that all nations can harness these innovations for SDG progress rather than being left further behind.

While the digital divide remains stark, with billions of people still lacking internet access and digital literacy, there are remarkable examples of technological leapfrogging, where developing nations have adopted mobile banking, telemedicine, and renewable energy microgrids at scales that bypass traditional infrastructure entirely. Regional cooperation in research and development, joint innovation hubs, and open-source technology platforms can democratize access to transformative solutions.

Universities have a particular responsibility here. As institutions at the nexus of research, education, and community engagement, academic institutions must foster interdisciplinary collaboration that brings together engineers, social scientists, policymakers, and community practitioners to co-create contextually appropriate innovations. Bakrie University's partnerships with regional universities and research institutions exemplify this approach, demonstrating how educational institutions can serve as powerful engines for sustainable development when they commit to meaningful engagement with society.

A Model for Engaged Education and Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

What distinguishes Bakrie University's approach is its integration of experiential learning with sustainable development objectives. Students don't simply study sustainability in classrooms; they engage directly with communities, industries, and international partners in addressing real-world challenges. This pedagogical approach ensures that graduates emerge not only with theoretical knowledge but with practical experience in creating positive change.

This model aligns perfectly with the principles of SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), which call for multi-stakeholder collaboration that brings together diverse actors in new configurations. The university's work demonstrates that effective partnerships leverage the comparative advantages of different sectors while maintaining clear accountability mechanisms. By working with the private sector through Bakrie Group, engaging communities through capacity building programs, and collaborating internationally through embassy partnerships, the university creates coalitions for change that transcend traditional boundaries.

Bridging the Financing Gap Through Innovation

The financing gap for SDG implementation remains one of the most formidable barriers to progress. Estimates suggest that developing countries face an annual SDG financing gap of several trillion dollars. Traditional development assistance, while important, cannot bridge this chasm alone. The private sector, impact investment, blended finance mechanisms, green bonds, and innovative public-private partnerships must all play expanded roles.

Bakrie University's industry partnership model offers insights into how educational institutions can contribute to addressing this challenge. By leveraging industry resources for scholarships, job creation, and entrepreneurship development, the university demonstrates creative approaches to resource mobilization. Regional development banks, South-South cooperation frameworks, triangular partnerships, and diaspora engagement can unlock new financing streams—approaches that the university's international collaborations help to identify and promote.

Looking Forward: A Collective Journey

As the world continues to grapple with complex sustainability challenges, from climate change to economic inequality, the role of universities in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals becomes increasingly critical. Bakrie University's multi-faceted approach shows that when institutions combine educational excellence with social responsibility and global perspective, they can make substantial contributions toward building a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

Yet the university recognizes that diplomacy and academic engagement alone cannot achieve the SDGs. Success requires continued collaboration with non-state actors—businesses, foundations, civil society organizations, universities, and citizen movements. The most impactful partnerships are those that remain adaptive, innovative, and accountable, while never losing sight of the fundamental truth: the SDGs reflect our shared humanity and our collective responsibility to one another and to the planet we call home.

By leveraging industry partnerships, focusing on community needs, fostering international collaboration, and embracing technological innovation, Bakrie University offers a model that other institutions might emulate. As we work toward the 2030 Agenda, such engaged, collaborative, and innovative approaches will be essential in transforming the ambitious vision of the Sustainable Development Goals into concrete reality for communities across Indonesia and around the world.

Cross-Border Collaborations: Ambassadors Leading the Way in SDG Initiatives examines how international cooperation and diplomatic leadership contribute to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in an increasingly interconnected world. Grounded in the understanding that no country can achieve the SDGs alone, the book highlights the role of ambassadors and cross-border partnerships in translating global commitments into practical, inclusive, and impactful development actions.

Through thematic discussions and country-based case studies involving Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Bulgaria, and Hungary, the book showcases diverse approaches to SDG implementation across diplomacy, policy engagement, education, environmental sustainability, and people-to-people cooperation. These chapters illustrate how bilateral and regional collaborations help bridge global agendas with national and local priorities, while also addressing the importance of sustaining momentum beyond formal frameworks such as the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

The book also emphasizes the role of universities as key actors in advancing the SDGs, positioning higher education institutions as hubs of knowledge, innovation, and leadership development. By bringing together diplomatic, regional, and academic perspectives, this volume offers practical insights and shared lessons for policymakers, diplomats, academics, development practitioners, and young changemakers committed to strengthening partnerships and building a more sustainable future for all.

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