

**CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS'
ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

Denison Jayasooria

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For further information, please contact:

Prof. Dr. Ong Puay Liu

Chief Editor

UKM Ethnic Studies Paper Series

Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA)

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

Website: <http://www.nkita.my/>

email: pliu@ukm.edu.my; puayliu@yahoo.com

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List of Abbreviations

Alliance	CSO-SDG Alliance
ASEC/Ripess Asian	Asian Solidarity Economy Council
COMANGO	The Coalition of Malaysian NGOs in the Universal Periodical Review process
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
GMM	Global Movement of Moderates
ISIS Malaysia	Institute of Social & Strategic Studies, Malaysia
MENGO	The Malaysian Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations
PROHAM	Society for the Promotion of Human Rights
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SSE	Social Solidarity Economy
UN ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UPR	Universal Periodical Review Process

Introduction

The global community on September 25, 2015 agreed upon a global agenda for transformation with 17 goals and 169 targets. These 17 goals, which came to be known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is a 15-year agenda applied to all countries and not just the developing countries as was the case for Millennium Development Goals. This global agreement for the agenda and a voluntary review process provides an opportunity for civil society to play a role nationally, regionally and globally.

However, what is most exciting is how the SDGs are implemented at the local levels as there are 17 goals, 169 targets and 230 indicators especially when they are cross cutting and built on the comprehensive framework where economic, social and environmental concerns must be taken into account in a fair and balanced way including human rights commitments.

As one researching and working among the poor in Malaysian society, especially among the urban poor as well as forest based communities, the theme of sustainability was very attractive for adopting a human rights approach to development. In 2012 when the United Nations was hosting the Rio+20 meetings, we in Malaysia with the ASLI - Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS) hosted two roundtable discussions on June 4, 2012 prior to Rio and another on July 9, 2012 after the Rio meeting on this theme of sustainable development. These findings are documented in the book entitled "Malaysia: issues & concerns, some policy concerns" (2013).

I had the opportunity of being at the Rio+20 meetings in June 2012 and the High Level Political Forum in July 2016 at the UN in New York. These meetings at the global and at the regional UN ESCAP at Bangkok have given a good opportunity to learn as well as share my thoughts on SDGs. In my opinion, the 2030 SDG Transformational Agenda is the most significant global transformational agenda where the triple themes of profits (economy), people (social) and planet (environment) are taken up as a comprehensive inclusive development agenda with human rights themes like access to justice, access to information, people's direct participation in the decision making and holding the leaders accountable.

This book entitled *Civil Society Organisations' (CSOs) Active Engagement in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)* captures six of my most recent presentations on SDGs from a CSO perspective at national, regional and global meetings. The book is divided into two parts. Part One consists of three articles, which are about CSOs in Malaysia engaging in the national SDG process. Malaysia has been open and has created good participation opportunities.

Part Two is about applying the SDGs in three different contexts. The first context in part two is on social solidarity economy (SSE), which is about collective action for common good by the local community. The second is about tapping the potential of social workers as implementers of SDG goals and targets by adopting a SDG framework for their social work practice. The third is about the sustainability theme and my comments on Dr. Hezri Adnan's new book.

Earlier in 2016, two other related books in the UKM Ethnic Studies paper series were published. The first is on 'Sustainable development goals & Malaysian society: Civil society perspectives' (2016, number 45). This documents the first discussion hosted by CSOs in October 2015 after the UN had adopted the SDG global agenda. CSOs welcomed this global action and called on Malaysian government to ensure that "no one is left behind" in Malaysia too. The CSOs also called for opportunities for engagement in the SDG process.

The second document is entitled "Towards 2030: Malaysia's Development Agenda" (2016, number 46). Here was a reflective write up analysing the Malaysian development priorities from the perspective of four target groups who often feel that there are on the margins of development, namely flat dwellers, high risk urban youth, urban poor Indians and indigenous forest based communities.

While theoretically these groups are included in the development process, in reality they face many challenges in accessing the services and development agenda. It is therefore important to note that CSOs can play a key role in ensuring marginal groups are brought into the main stream. This volume highlights the challenges as well as the possibilities that have opened up for CSO engagement via the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) directly in the development process.

We are in exciting times as CSOs explore both the policy formulation process and the implementation of SDGs in a holistic and integrated way. My hope in compiling my six most recent articles in this KITA-UKM series is to awaken people's awareness of SDGs as a development framework to undertake policy advocacy,

enable effective delivery and monitor the impact of sustainability at the grassroots. This is an ongoing process in public advocacy to ensure that 'no one is left behind' in the development process. While there are different measurements and indicators to measure development and human progress such as the quality of life index, the happiness index, the human development index, however, the SDGs with the 17 goals, 169 targets and 230 indicators is the most comprehensive framework based on sustainability agenda and consistent with a human rights approach to development.

Only time will reveal as the SDGs are rolled out over the next few years till 2030 if these global targets brings about an overall improvement in the lives of people, namely the economic, social, cultural as well as civil and political rights. Therefore, the challenge is before us to ensure that we can play a role in sustaining the future not just for this generation but the next generation to come.

I take this opportunity to thank KITA-UKM for publishing my reflections in the UKM Ethnic Studies paper series and a special word of appreciation to Prof. Ong Puay Liu for reviewing this and ensuring its publication.

Denison Jayasooria
March 31, 2017

PART I SDGS & CSOS

BUILDING INCLUSIVE AND ENGAGING SOCIETIES

One major thrust of SDGs is the involvement of the stakeholders in the sustainable development process. As the major theme is “leaving no one behind” the policy thrust for involving all stakeholders is very significant. There is a need to build trust and a conducive environment for engagement. It is recognised that SDGs is a joint responsibility, although the State is the primary mandate holder. Therefore, States must facilitate and make resources available for meaningful engagement.

Malaysian Experience

On Oct 27, 2015, a number of CSO organisations hosted a discussion on SDGs and application to Malaysian society. We had a good cross section of CSOs participating. We drew together CSOs working in the service and development areas including youth and women-based CSOs, also those involved in human rights issues and those addressing environment concerns. We had a representative of the Malaysian government on this panel who related the SDGs to Malaysian policies such as the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020). A CSO report was published by KITA-UKM and a joint statement was handed over to the Minister in charge of the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) in Malaysia. The Minister responded positively and acknowledged this pro-active role and assured of CSO engagement in the SDG process.

The Malaysian government organised a National Symposium on SDGs on Feb 23, 2016 when they also released a review report on the MDGs noting the achievements and gaps. CSOs were invited as participants and a number were speakers on the panel. This is a healthy start. However, the Malaysian government is to announce the formal mechanism soon. We are hopeful that CSOs will be included at all levels such as planning, delivery, monitoring, impact assessment and evaluation.

Trends in the ASEAN region

At a sub-regional level, there are two trends observed on challenges facing CSOs. While the ASEAN countries are open to CSO participation at the global UN process, however, at the sub-regional level, there are differences both at the national and sub-regional process. Governments tend to be open to service and development-based CSOs whom they see as complementing the social development mandate. However, on human rights and environment issues especially when CSOs adopt a structural analysis approach, which is viewed as critical, confrontational and political, many countries close the access. Advocacy based on a rights framework is often not appreciated by certain state officials who see these as political action questioning their legitimacy. Therefore, we must recognise this problem and ensure there is access to all types of CSOs working from the UDHR framework including civil and political rights.

In the Malaysian experience, the CSOs involved in the Universal Periodical Review Process (UPR) were declared illegal by the Malaysian Ministry for Home Affairs. However, the CSOs who did the shadow report

had access to the UN UPR review process. In the SDG partnership and CSO engagement, there must be a more open process so that member states must adopt the UN ECOSOC accreditation criteria for engagement at both sub-regional and national engagements. This approach could resolve the Malaysian UPR experience where the Home Affairs Ministry took a very restrictive view of CSO engagement in the UN process.

ASEAN has formal processes but they seem to differ on CSO engagements such as the ASEAN Peoples Forum. Some ASEAN chairs are open, while others are not and in the case of some, they would not want a CSO gathering during the ASEAN Summit while similar gatherings with the private sector are well organised, coordinated and even participated by national leaders and senior officials. In 2015, Malaysia provided good space and funding for the CSO process such as the CSO forum, however, this was more restrictive in Myanmar (2014) and in 2016 not permitted in Laos. SDG consultations at both national and sub-regional levels must be more engaging and open. UN ESCAP through the APFSD process could engage more formal spaces and monitor this as one specific indicator of engagement.

A second trend observed is the rise of right wing CSOs (religious, racial & ideological) using the democratic space to intimidate CSOs using the UDHR framework through verbal threats and acts of violence. These CSOs do not respect diversity of thought nor rights based approach on universal principles. Very often these groups seem to have the support of the political elites and enforcement seems to look the other side or act late in ensuring peace and order. The International

community especially UN organisations play a role in monitoring these and ensure compliance to UN policies and statues on CSO engagement.

Engagement possibilities

Four possibilities could be explored at the national level which will have a positive impact at the sub-regional and global levels.

One, there needs to be by-partisan parliamentary working group on SDGs at the national level. The SDG agenda could ensure close partnership and collaboration across the political divide. This parliamentary open process could also provide the space to CSOs for participation including presenting reports and reviews for policy analysis and formulation of new polices and allocation of resources.

Two, national governments could establish SDG Councils or Taskforce which must include CSOs along with representative from private sector, professional bodies and academicians. They could establish working groups that could be involved in planning, delivery, monitoring, impact assessment and evaluation.

Three, establishment of grievance mechanism at both national and sub-regional levels like ASEAN. The role of National Human Rights Commission is most important adopting the Paris principles for independence and compliance to human rights norms. This provides the inquiry approach, however, other community mediation mechanism must also be established so that community in conflict and dispute could resolve them through non judicial process too.

In the context of sub-regional issues such as the plight of Rohingya boat people, this needed a more dynamic role of the ASEAN Inter-governmental Human Rights Commission. Now its TOR does not provide them the powers to receive complaints, undertake fact finding visits or conduct a sub-regional inquiry especially it involved cross boarder issues. Many such issues now impact migrant workers and indigenous people. CSOs can play a major role in this especially in ensuring early excluded groups have access to the services and programs for their social mobility and empowerment.

Four, data gathering from the grassroots is a very important role. While governments undertake macro data gathering including the generation of disaggregated data, CSOs can provide a complementary qualitative data, for example, using a case study approach which is ethnographic. Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) based programs at the grassroots can best capture SDGs as they already undertake programs based on a number of key principles such as commitment to people development, profit generation for sustainability, care for the environment, good participatory governance, compliance to human rights and also adopting of good values such as dignity. Micro studies at the community based both rural and urban can complement statistical analysis.

Currently ASEC/Ripess Asian partners are already undertaking such projects throughout Asia. Formulating a template based on SDG indicators could capture the salient pointers including success stories, barriers to inclusion and can serve as a reality check from the grassroots. A grounded research approach and

methodology could be adopted and CSOs can play a major role in this regard.

Conclusion

CSOs today are highly motivated and have the vision for SDGs. They are a key player and if formal spaces and resources are made available, this will be in the best interest of B40 communities who feel excluded and isolated. CSOs can be instrumental for the quick realisation of the SDG targets and indicators.

Paper presented at Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2016 (UNESCAP) Panel Discussion (April 5, 2016; UN Centre, Bangkok)

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSO) & THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SDGS IN MALAYSIA

Malaysian CSOs thank the EPU for this invitation to be part of the November 2016 SDG multi-stakeholder conference. We were also part of the SDG February 2016 Symposium. EPU officials have also participated in CSO hosted discussions over the past months. This is positive and we can enhance this cooperation and partnership in the implementation of SDGs.

The Director General of EPU, in her presentation, highlighted the potential participation of CSOs at various dimensions such as planning, implementation, monitoring & evaluation. There was also the indication of inclusion of CSOs in the five working committees which are the five key SDG clusters adopted by Malaysia. These are commendable and is in the right way forward for an effective partnership and collaborative action at the grassroots.

In this paper there is an attempt to:

Firstly, reiterate the SDG framework which provides for the active participation, collaboration and partnership of government and CSOs in the implementation of SDGs.

Secondly, that Malaysian CSOs have a great potential for reaching out to the grassroots & is effective in delivery.

Thirdly, through a simple mapping process of Malaysian CSOs, it is possible to highlight the tremendous

diversity of services and programs undertaken by CSOs which are already in line with the SDGs.

Fourthly, there are some challenges & hurdles faced by CSOs which require intervention & support so as to ensure better impact & outcomes in line with SDG goals, targets and indicators.

Fifthly, there are some specific recommendations and proposals to further enhance this partnership by setting the way forward.

SDGs & CSOs: Reflections on the 2030 Document

The 2030 Agenda Document (UN 2015) makes a very strong statement on CSOs' role and partnership in SDGs alongside the public and private sectors. There are at least twelve direct references to CSOs. This is significant as CSOs are recognised as partners in the SDG agenda. Para 41 (pg. 10) includes civil society organisations and philanthropic organisations along with the private sector, while noting that each country has primary responsibility for SDG implementation. Likewise, in para 45 (pg. 11), there is a reference to philanthropic organisations and volunteer groups. In para 47 (pg. 11), there is reference to citizens' role in ensuring accountability. There is a repeat of this also in para 52 (pg. 12) where civil society is placed alongside a wide range of actors.

In the section on the means of implementation, there is direct reference to CSO alongside government, private sector and UN agencies (para 60, pg. 28). The reference to accountability in para 73 (pg. 31) is to citizens at large. Here too there is a very strong emphasis on a system which is "open, inclusive,

participatory and transparent for all people and will support reporting by all relevant stakeholders". There is clear commitment for inclusion of CSOs in the review process as indicated in para 79, pg. 33. Even at the high level political forum, CSOs have a place even during the voluntary review process as per para 84 pg. 34.

Within the specific targets of the SDGs too, there is specific reference to CSOs. SDG 17.16 calls for multi stakeholder partnerships to mobilise knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources. SDG 17.17 states "Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnership. Therefore, SDGs provide the space for stakeholder partnerships and engagements.

The UN mechanism at the High Level Political Forum in New York, as well at the Asia-Pacific level through ESCAP provides unique opportunities for CSOs' direct participation. CSOs could participate and provide inputs at both the international and regional mechanisms. The UN has developed modalities for this inclusive process.

SDGS & the Malaysian Alliance

The Malaysian CSO-SDG Alliance is an informal grouping of civil society organisations (CSO) committed to the effective implementation of the SDGs in Malaysia. They came together to form this loose alliance for networking, joint cooperation, action and liaison with government.

PROHAM - Society for the Promotion of Human Rights & the Global Movement of Moderates hosted the first CSO

- SDG discussion on Oct 27, 2015 about a month after the United Nations adopted the 2030 SDG Agenda entitled "Transforming the World". The findings of the discussion were published by KITA-UKM in a publication entitled "Sustainable Development Goals & Malaysia Society: Civil society perspectives". Currently PROHAM serves as the Secretariat for the Alliance and there is active participation of key CSO partners.

The Alliance continues to meet regularly and its major priority has been to undertake the mapping exercise. It has also brought CSO leaders together in preparation for the February SDG Symposium as well the November SDG conference. The Alliance will have to review its Secretariat including staffing and resources so as to ensure sustainability of the coordination work.

CSO Types

The Alliance is undertaking a mapping exercise of CSOs using a simple organisational profile form and a SDG involvement form. We have received feedback from four umbrella CSOs and 25 individual CSOs and institutions have thus far participated in the mapping exercise and Alliance discussions. This is a work in progress and one must recognise that over 200 CSOs are involved in this first phase of the mapping as some of the CSOs are umbrella bodies.

CSOs have different objectives, priorities and methods of implementation. The Alliance group is categorised into four types of CSOs.

The first type of CSOs are development & service-based CSOs who are working with the poor, women and youth, undertaking a range of services addressing

economic, social & cultural concerns. Two examples of CSOs in the Alliance are NCWO – National Council of Women Organisations which has 120 affiliate CSOs throughout the country. The other is MBM- Malaysian Youth Council which has 39 national bodies. Both these run a wide range of services and are located in all the states. NCWO has been very effective in policy advocacy from with government. Likewise, MBM on youth-related matters.

The second type are human rights-based CSOs who address civil and political rights including transparency, accountability & good governance. We have in the Alliance, COMANGO - the Coalition of Malaysian NGOs in the Universal Periodical Review process with 54 organisations. They have been very active in monitoring human rights and in the documentation of the shadow report. The COMANGO secretariat is EMPOWER for the UPR review process and recently they released a mid-term review report. They have been very active in both the UPR review process and have mobilised community interest in the UPR accountability process.

The third are environment-based CSOs which are committed to natural environment and conservation and balanced management of earth's resources. They are represented by MENGO – The Malaysian Environmental NGOs with 26 organisations. Many of MENGO members have adopted a strong rights-based framework towards enhancing the environment through conservation approaches as well as ensuring the people are not alienated from their forest.

The fourth are think tank organisations which are independent or associated with local universities

addressing SDG concerns. These include the Institute of Social & Strategic Studies (ISIS Malaysia), Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA-UKM), Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF), Perak Institute & Third World Network.

The CSO-SDG Alliance resolved early on in its discussion that it will not duplicate the work of other networks and council but will draw from their data collection and analysis for the SDG monitoring and review. Malaysian CSOs are also participating at regional (ESCAP) as well as international SDG events and programs.

CSO Services

In this mapping process, the Alliance recognised eight different areas of involvement at the grassroots which have direct relevance to SDG implementation in Malaysia. Different CSOs have different priorities and target groups for their services. However, each has its area of expertise and specialisation. They do well in their outreach role in Malaysian society.

The first is awareness raising work by CSOs. This could range from citizens' awareness on rights or on environment or on gender equality etc. The effort here is to mobilise public opinion and seek to bring some changes in society.

The second, service provision and projects. This is the most visible from day care and centre-based projects to assist and support a whole range of people in service. These projects could be short term or long term in perspective.

The third is community development. A number of CSOs are directly involved in community empowerment activities which are income generating including organic farms and social enterprises. Community organising and mobilising joint action and ownership is most essential.

The fourth is capacity building & training is a very important aspect. Programs range from basic leadership to training in business development and project management.

The fifth is financial/income generating /loans /grants. Financial literacy, grants and loans provision for economic activities are major undertakings by CSOs.

The sixth is data collection, research & monitoring. This is a major effort as some CSOs focus on these matters and provide alternative narratives from a disaggregated and micro studies methodology.

The seventh is policy advocacy. Women's organisations have been very effective in this matter. Championing some cause is one major strength of CSOs especially of a voiceless and powerless community. Many CSOs have made specific inputs during the Budget dialogues, five-year development planning process or on specially polices.

Finally, on societal watchdog & accountability role. Sometimes this is seen as controversial but very essential and a major contribution of CSOs in order to enhance democracy and good governance.

CSOS & SDGs – Goals, Targets & Activities

In the mapping exercise participated by 29 organisations, both umbrella bodies and individual organisations with a link to over 200 CSOs, we recognise the tremendous potential of link with the grassroots.

Each CSO identified the goals and targets closest to the type of activities they are carrying out. A quick reference indicates that CSOs are involved in all the 17 goals and can also to be linked to specific targets. We are not attempted to link with indicators. What has been done is just the first documentation based on activities carried out and future activities planned. A more detailed analysis will be released soon plotting CSOs to goals and targets. There are a number of observations.

CSOs are clearly directly involved alongside a wide range of target groups such as children, youth, women, indigenous people, disabled people, urban poor, undocumented people & migrant workers. Herein lies the potential to monitor specific target groups taking into account diversity based on religion, ethnicity, socio-economic and class educational achievement etc.

CSOs have the potential to undertake micro studies including ethnographic and in-depth social mobility studies. This could even translate into reviewing the impact of programs especially outcomes such as social cohesion and social mobility.

In this context there is a need for capability building of CSO workers and volunteers in data collection, writing alternative narratives and undertake micro case

studies. Building grass roots capacity of local communities is also an important step forward. These will complement with comprehensive data from the Statistics Department. This is also a need to link academic institutions with CSOs and grassroots projects so as to ensure there are longitudinal studies capturing the transformation taking place.

CSOs and the Federal Government

CSOs participated at the National SDG Symposium held on February 29, 2016 and the two day SDG Roadmap Conference (November 15 & 16, 2016) at Putrajaya, organised by the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) and UN Malaysia. A number of CSO leaders were on the different panels. At the Symposium, the CSOs presented a statement to the EPU Minister. At the November 2016 gathering, CSOs presented findings for their initial mapping exercise.

CSO SDG Alliance members indicate that they are ready and willing to contribute towards the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. Furthermore, CSOs' request is for a meaningful partnership with the government at all levels and sectors. We recognise that the SDGs is a critical and timely opportunity to initiate a goals-based partnership that can drive a concerted effort towards achieving Malaysia's own development goals as a shared responsibility among the various stakeholders. Listed below are some specific recommendations:

Formal Mechanism of Engagement & Involvement

CSOs call on the government for formal mechanism for this engagement through national, State and district level implementation committee. CSOs support the Government's effort to establish a National SDG Council, the SDG Steering Committee and the five working committees based on the clusters. Therefore, providing spaces for participation is most essential including access to information and data. A truly consultative approach as partners in development is most urgent to ensure success in implementation.

SDG Focal Points at the Ministry Level

CSOs call on government to appoint a SDG focal point person or team at every ministry so as to ensure effective cross sectoral coordination and information sharing. In a similar way, this needs to be translated to the State and local levels. At the moment, there is very little awareness of SDGs at the district levels and therefore the implementing teams are doing their work in the old mode.

Funding CSOs

CSOs also call on the Federal Government to provide funding for the work of CSOs pertaining to SDGs especially in the areas of capacity building, coordination, mapping exercise for a comprehensive data collection and outreach to more challenging circumstances of delivery and SDG implementation. Some work can be contracted out as CSO delivery must be local in cost both to government and private sector.

Stronger Compliance to Human Rights, Ecological Sustainability, and good governance

CSOs call on government to also apply the full framework of the SDGs, namely economic, social and environmental including human rights and good governance. We note that in the government presentation, the human rights agenda seems to be under emphasised. Therefore, this needs some strengthening especially access to justice and the rights of citizens and accountability to citizens.

We now recognise while there is a policy thrust on people focus, however in many areas affecting the urban poor, women, youth and especially forest-based communities, the priorities set tends to be more pro-business and thereby alienating people especially forest-based communities including damage to the environment.

Adopting a strong commitment to a human rights & ecologically sustainable approach to development and local community empowerment is essential in this SDG approach. In this context CSOs call for greater transparency and openness for dialogue and discussion through some formal mechanism to mediate the issues when there are conflicts between “politics & big business interest” with that of the grassroots at the bottom. Formal mediation and conflict resolution mechanism are needed when faced with challenging situations. In this context the role of the Human Rights Commissions and other independent mechanisms can be strengthened to facilitated mediation and conflict resolution.

Greater Inter Agency Integration at the Grassroots

CSOs call for greater integration of delivery especially to the bottom 40%. We recognise the importance of the multi-dimensional approach to poverty measurement and overall improvement of the quality of life, however, at the delivery level, income indicators still dominate. Grassroots people empowerment is an essential component.

Strengthening Agenda 21 at all levels – Federal, State and Local

CSOs call on Government to strengthen the implementation of Agenda 21 and also Local Agenda 21 (Chapter 28) which involves the active participation of Local Authorities with their communities to implement Agenda 21. This is already an established national policy and has been since 2002 under the purview of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. This already existing network of Local Authorities and communities could be utilised to absorb the implementation of Agenda 2030 – the Sustainable Development Goals.

CSOs call on government to strengthen the Agenda 21 and the active participation of citizens in the local authority and grassroots urban governments. We recognise many challenges facing the B40 communities residing in high rise low cost flats with very minimum public facilities.

Potential of Social & Community-based Enterprises

CSOs recognise the potential of social enterprises and community-based social business as this intervention

strategy has a good potential to enlarge the income base of both the urban and rural B40 communities.

Extend Inclusive Agenda to our neighbours- adopt a humanitarian approach

CSOs call for extension of services and programs to the undocumented, refugees and migrant workers under the SDG theme of “no one left behind” especially for the improvement of the quality of life of children and women from these communities now in Malaysia. CSOs are active at the advocacy level as well as in providing basic services like community schools, health care and welfare services.

Engaging Faith-based Organisations

CSOs recognise that among the grouping there are also faith-based organisations. The dimension of faith or inner belief is an important concept for sustainability of interest, mind-set transformation and fostering a spirit of endurance. CSOs call on government to provide the space for faith-based CSOs and community groups to participate in the SDG implementation.

Grassroots Awareness Programs

CSOs can also be used for awareness building exercise at the grassroots especially among B40 communities. CSOs have the potential for grassroots awareness programs. Government can enlist CSOs to undertake this grassroots awareness raising and empowerment program.

The Alliance hosted on Sept 25, 2016 a dialogue with the key community leaders at the PPR Flats at Hang

Tuah in KL This was to commemorate one year after the UN Launch. The dialogue at the grassroots focused on SDG 10.

In a similar way the Alliance hosted a Human Rights Day (December 10, 2016), a SDG & Human Rights awareness gathering for young people at the PPR Flats (high rise-low cost flats) at Semarak, Kuala Lumpur.

Participating CSOs in the mapping exercise & in the Malaysian CSO-SDG Alliance

Development-Based CSOs

- 1 National Council of Women Organisations (NCWO)
- 2 Malaysian Youth Council (MBM)
- 3 Scope Group
- 4 COMMACT-Malaysia
- 5 Women Aid Society (WAO)
- 6 My WATCH – Malaysian women’s Action for Tobacco Control & Health
- 7 Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM)
- 8 Junior Chamber International Malaysia
- 9 YKPM – Foundation for Community Studies & Development
- 10 Malaysian Association of Social Workers (MASW)
- 11 Foreign Spouse Support Group
- 12 KMU- Komuniti Muslim Universal
- 13 Persatuan Asrama Belia Malaysia (MYHA)
- 14 Pusat Kebajikan Good Shepherd (PKGS)
- 15 Good Shepherd Services (GSS)
- 16 The National Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Malaysia

Human Rights-based CSOs

- 17 The Coalition of Malaysian NGOs in the UPR Process (COMANGO)
- 18 Empower – Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor
- 19 Pusat KOMAS
- 20 Fortify Rights
- 21 C4- The Centre to Combat Corruption and Cronyism
- 22 PROHAM- Society for the Promotion of Human Rights

Environmental-based CSOs

- 23 MENGO – Malaysian Environmental NGOs (MENGO)
- 24 Centre for Environment, Technology & Development (CETDEM Malaysia)
- 25 Environmental Protection Society Malaysia (EPSM)
- 26 WWF Malaysia
- 1. Think Tank Institutions
- 27 Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA), UKM
- 28 Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia
- 29 Third Work Network
- 30 Perak Institute

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Paper presented at the National SDG Roadmap conference organised by the UN and EPU among stakeholders from November 15 & 16, 2016 at Putrajaya.

Acknowledged with thanks all the CSOs listed above for their submission of inputs and also for all the CSOs who participated at the last Alliance meeting (November 10, 2016) to review the CSO SDG Mapping findings and recommendations.

MALAYSIAN CASE STUDY: REVIEW OF NATIONAL CSO ENGAGEMENT ON THE SDGS

Malaysia has a very good planning process namely the five-year development plans. The Government has had good consultations with civil society organisations (CSO), private sector and academic community through the development planning process. The annual budget dialogues have been another good opportunity for engagement and many CSOs have had a good level of interaction. The experience is the same in a number of other initiatives such as gender related policy discussions where women groups have had good success in policy advocacy.

However, this was not same for human rights-based CSOs involved in the Universal Periodic Review Process (UPR) when the Ministry of Home Affairs banned the coalition as an illegal group although they were the ones who prepared the CSO Shadow report and were engaged in the UPR review process with the Human Rights Council in Geneva on both the UPR reviews on Malaysia.

The SDG discussions post Rio plus 20 provided CSOs with opportunities to flag up the concerns. However, the first formal discussions on SDGs by CSOs was hosted on Oct 27, 2015 in Kuala Lumpur organised by the Society for promotion of Human Rights (PROHAM). They brought together CSO leaders from a cross section of concerns namely the development, environmental and human rights groups. This served as a platform for joint cooperation. A representative of the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) also participated and assured the CSOs partnership and inclusion in the SDG

national process. The CSOs resolved to organise themselves as a loose Alliance and provided some input to the SDG readiness report.

Various Stages of Engagement

The CSOs began organising themselves as an Alliance in three main groups namely the service and development; second, environmental; and thirdly, human rights. A series of meetings were hosted to undertake an initial mapping exercise to note which CSOs were undertaking services and programs related to the SDG goals and targets. The CSOs have organised themselves as a loose alliance, have a flat governance structure and an open door policy to all CSOs who are interested to participate. So far we have had a good working relationship with the major groups of CSOs such as environment, gender, youth and human rights including the UPR set of NGOs as well as a number of think tanks.

CSOs were formally invited to two national level government organised and sponsored events. The first was the National SDG Symposium in Feb 2016. CSOs were invited to participate and a number were speakers on the panels. This was a one-day event. The CSOs had prepared a statement which was handed over to the EPU Minister at this gathering. The findings of the October 27, 2015 discussions were also published and handed over to the EPU as CSO findings on SDGs.

A second, two day National SDG Roadmap workshop was hosted in Nov 2016. CSOs were also invited to participate and present reflections in a number of panels. Likewise, there were opportunities to ask questions from the floor. One aspect which was pointed

out was the weak or complete absence of reference to human rights in the discussions. Another aspect heightened was that CSOs wanted a partnership approach of being directly involved in the various formal mechanisms of the SDG when government establishes the implementation mechanisms rather than in ad hoc ways.

At both the EPU events in 2016, the EPU has presented the SDG implementation in three phases, in line with the five-year National Development Plans, where the current Eleventh Malaysia Plan is regarded as the first phase – 2016 to 2020. Here, themes such as inclusive development and an orientation towards a multi-dimensional approach to poverty eradication has been introduced with a focus on relative poverty and the Bottom 40% issues and concerns. Therefore, the second and third phases will target aspects of SDG priorities not addressed in the first and current stage.

By December 2016, the EPU has set up a National SDG Steering Committee with all the key government agencies, representatives from the private sector, academic community and CSOs. Initially three CSOs from the Alliance was invited for the first Steering committee meeting but later invitations were extended to two more. Therefore, the Alliance associated members now in the Steering committee are five and we have opportunity to speak and share our views as we did in the first meeting. This is a very good move and CSOs are now formally part of the main SDG governance group. EPU also informed that a National SDG Council will be set up with the Prime Minister as the Chair including Cabinet ministers of relevant

ministries and other prominent Malaysians. No announcement has been made on this matter as yet.

Between January and March 2017, the EPU has established five cluster working groups and 17 taskforces as per the SDGs. CSOs have been invited on both the cluster groups and the taskforce. There have been invitations by the EPU for CSO inputs to the kind of initiatives carried out which are related to SDG goals, targets and indicators. EPU has developed templates for reports towards both the National voluntary reporting as well as the formulation of the National SDG Roadmap. CSOs have been asked to identify current gaps and what needs to be done in due time to address them.

In the Malaysian experience, CSOs have now been incorporated into the formal mechanism of the government for SDG implementation at the National steering committee, cluster working groups and in the taskforce specific working. This is positive and have long term implications. In due time we can measure the quality of the engagement and the impact of it. But the start is a good one.

Challenges Experienced

CSOs are facing a number of challenges in this partnership and engagement. Only time will tell the quality of this engagement and the fruit of it for effective SDG implementation.

First, the CSOs are in need of getting their act together. Each CSO has its own work and therefore with limited personal and financial resources, participation in meetings and report writing is a time

consuming process. Additional staff and funding is needed for this but at this point the government has not allocated any funding to stakeholder groups. As the SDG networking and partnership is not a short term task but long term, there needs to be clear modalities for engagements as well as CSO funding for institutional and capacity building. The Alliance is now looking to formalise and institutionalise its operations.

Second, while CSOs are part of the five cluster working groups and 17 taskforces, many names and organisations submitted have not received invitations for participation. This could be merely an operational issue, however, some complaints are from human rights-based CSOs who have not received the invitations while their names have been submitted. Alliance secretariat has been engaging the EPU cultural group heads on this matter and currently taking stock of who is in which cluster group and taskforce. We see this for a moment as an initial teething process which will be ironed out soon as this is a fifteen-year process.

Third, many CSOs are keen in long-term policy and development concerns but the current priority among the agencies is to get the report completed as the dateline for report writing and submission is within March 2017. So the initial focus of the cluster working groups and taskforces is on the National Voluntary report preparation. However, we do recognise that this is the most urgent task for the moment as Malaysia will make a presentation at New York on July 2017. In this context one major concern is Malaysia's UN treaty body obligations, such as our commitment to the conventions Malaysia has ratified as well as the obligations under the UPR process. There seems to be

a neglect of these in the current discussions and CSOs are keen to address them.

Fourth, there seems to be very little public discussion nationally in Malaysia on the SDGs. Very few of the Ministers make reference and there is not a lot of public attention to Malaysia's commitment to the global community in September 2015. While the agencies are active internally, this process seems like an exercise for the international community as opposed to the empowerment of ordinary citizens. Neither is there a by-partisan working group in Parliament of the SDGs and Malaysia's global commitments. Likewise, beyond the borders of the national capital there are no SDG discussions or very little at the State and local government levels. In fact, these sections of the government are not even in the SDG discussions now.

Fifth, there are challenges in reviewing the SDGs from the cross cutting agenda. For example, gender is cross cutting and not just confined to SDG 5. CSOs working on gender concerns like to see gender mainstreaming as a key policy target. As mentioned before concerns in SDG 16 is a little weak especially pertaining to human rights and there needs to be further engagements in this aspect. Sometimes the focus is narrowed down to the SDG indicators and the comprehensive spirit of the interconnected nature of the SDGs are lost. Therefore, this is a challenge and hopefully can be addressed in the long run.

Sixth, is collection and access to data. The Statistics Department of Malaysia has been very progressive in this matter and is willing to share information as well as build capacity of all the agencies to collect new data that is relevant to SDGs. This is an ongoing process but

Malaysia has a good start in this matter. CSOs have indicated that their micro case studies will be useful to illustrate compliance or challenges especially from the B40 communities or in cross cutting themes.

Seventh, CSOs strongly feel that while they participate in these discussions, they want to continue an independent process of discussions and feedback which they like to document and release as independent opinions. They have become aware that working with government does also mean responsibility to confidentiality of data and information. Monitoring and policy advocacy is a key role of CSOs. In due time the Alliance hopes to establish a website and data base for easy public access on SDG matters.

Conclusion

The SDGs have ushered in a new phase of Government and CSO engagement in Malaysia. While there are challenges, nonetheless there is a major opening for partnership and engagement. This is not a short term process but long-term. The Malaysia CSO Alliance is positive towards these and will continue to strengthen stakeholder engagement with government, private sector, academic and think tank institutions including parliamentarians. In due time we hope to go to the grassroots especially at the local district and local government levels to create greater SDG awareness and ensure the buy in of ordinary citizens.

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PART II

APPLYING THE SDGs

SDGs AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

Mr. Moderator, Ministers, fellow panelists, ladies & gentlemen, I take this opportunity on behalf of RIPESS, an inter-continental grassroots movement with members working on social solidarity economy initiatives in every continent of the world, to share some reflections at this side event.

RIPESS is a network of continental networks that connects social solidarity economy networks throughout the world.

RIPESS believes in the importance of global solidarity in order to build and strengthen an economy that puts people and planet at the heart of development.

RIPESS's mission is to build and promote the social solidarity economy (SSE), which takes into account the social, ethical & environmental dimensions in all its economic activities from a human rights framework. Thus the SSE aims to produce, exchange and consume goods and services that answer the economic and social needs of the local and international communities.

RIPESS recognises that the Sustainable Development Goals – Agenda 2030 provides us with a unique opportunity for global engagement which will make a difference in the lives of ordinary people and communities around the world.

One key feature of the RIPPSS movement is that the solidarity-based economic units rest upon a model of democratic decision-making, a participatory and transparent management system, which aims at ensuring collective ownership and responsibility for the outcomes of economic activities, as well as ongoing mobilisation and contributions to ensure their success.

The five SDG guiding principles of people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships are parallel values in the SSE movement and a framework already in operation at the grassroots among our communities across all the continents.

Likewise, the 17 SDGs provide a holistic and integrated approach to development which challenges the prevailing ethos of the dominant economic oriented development of maximizing profits & financial gains at the expense of people and the environment.

Let me illustrate these from grassroots examples from Asia including ASEAN. While reference is made to a SDG goal in many ways these examples are more integrated impacting and illustrating a range of SDG goals.

One outstanding ASEAN example is the *Bina Swadaya* Movement or the self-reliance development foundation in Indonesia. Their approach was one of building self-reliance among rural farmers through self-help groups. They have trained over 10,000 community leaders with the formation of 12,000 self-help groups serving 3.5 million people. Its founder, Bambang Ismawan, adopted an enterprise model for financial sustainability.

Another Asian example is the ASSEFA or the Association for *Sarva Seva* Farms in Tamil Nadu, India with the aim of enabling former landless families to cultivate the land. This outreach program provides services to one million rural families in 10,000 villages. Their primary focus is economic development among marginal famers or the landless.

The Nepali Community based forest management best illustrates SDG 15. According to Bhola Bhattarai of the National Forum for Advocacy Nepal (NAFAN), "more than 1.2 million hectares of forest area handed over to more than 14,500 CFUGs, community forestry programme is one of the successful, innovative and future oriented participatory forest management programmes. In thirty years of its initiation, community forestry approach has evolved as a viable mechanism of handling forest to autonomous users' groups with legal status with perpetual succession and as a means to increase human, financial, social, natural and to some extent physical capital".

I have personally visited two of the user groups. I witnessed a very strong sense of collective ownership and decision making by local community. The Nepali experience reveals a very strong commitment both to environmental conservation and people's common stewardship of earth's resources.

In the case of SDG 12 where there is an emphasis on responsible production and consumption, solidarity economy-based short distribution chains, especially Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), are changing the way in which food is produced, distributed and consumed. In the case of the CSA network in the

Philippines, this has increased local resilience and food security as well as overcoming many of the issues of food insecurity caused by industrial agriculture and export-only based mono-cropping. Solidarity economy-based short distribution chains of all kinds also relocalise the economy.

In the case of SDG 13 which is on combating climate change, the 700 CSA groups in China as well as the 12 farmers' markets in China that operate back-to-back with these CSA groups. Their farming approach is a strong contributing factor to mitigating and fighting climate change as they are using agro-ecological approaches, low impact farming, crop diversity and no chemical inputs. In addition, these small-scale producers who sell their products on local markets greatly reduce the carbon footprint of agriculture and consumers buy locally produced food, again reducing carbon footprint. In addition, they also greatly contribute to SDG 2, to end hunger & SDG 1 to end poverty.

What is indicative and illustrative of these examples and links to the SDG is the tremendous potential of SSE as a strategic means of implementing the SDGs.

My three concluding points are:

First, we must utilise the full potential of the SSE movement for grassroots holistic and integrated approach to ensuring the 17 SDG goals are realised in an integrated way as opposed to piece meal. The SSE movements are revealing that economic, social and environment commitments can be realised with the active participation of the grassroots.

In this context, SDG 16 on partnership with stakeholders must not be just lip service but truly participatory at all levels including planning, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring and impact assessment as partners in development. There must be new modalities at the local, national, regional and international levels for meaningful participation and accountability.

Second, the SSE movement at the grassroots can contribute greatly towards data collection in measuring outputs and outcomes based on targets and indicators. It is really effective to do this also at the grassroots at a disaggregated level. The case study and qualitative aspects will complement the macro data analysis by national statistics departments. Access to data and information is most crucial for independent review and analysis.

Third, the SSE movement can have valuable input to local, national and international policies especially in reaching out to ethnic, religious, class, gender-based disadvantaged and marginal groups and communities. This community and solidarity dimension also has a direct impact upon social mobility ensuring equality access to resources and outcomes on the one hand and at the same time on social cohesion in terms of fostering solidarity with other communities and groups in society.

Presented at a side event entitled Social & Solidarity Economy as a strategic means of implementation of the

SDG organised by the French Government and the UN SSE Taskforce (UNRISD). This was held during the High level Political Forum on SDGs on July 20, 2016 at the UN in New York

SDGs, SOCIAL WORK AND ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES

Introduction

The global community in September 2015 collectively agreed to a global transformation agenda with 17 goals and 169 targets. Subsequently they agreed to 230 indicators. This is the first time such a comprehensive policy has been agreed encompassing economic, social and environmental concerns including human rights and good governance. The theme of 'leaving no one behind' is indeed relevant now to both developed and developing countries as there are the poor around us. This comprehensive policy definitely has implications for social workers and we too can use the SDGs as useful tools to enhance social work practice in addressing root causes through effective social work intervention strategies.

Focus on SDG 10 in addressing inequalities

While poverty eradication is the focus of SDG 1 and 2, the issues pertaining to rising inequalities in our world is addressed in SDG 10. Here the thrust is upon inclusive development and empowerment. In addition, the focus is in reducing inequalities. It is not just in providing access through equal opportunities but also in addressing inequality of outcomes.

In this context four major themes are relevant for our discussion. First, the emphasis must be on increasing income as referred to in SDG 10:1. Second, there is the need to eliminate discrimination (SDG 10:3); Third, there is some focus on social protection as in SDG 10:4

and fourth, it is people's participation and voice (SDG 10.6).

These are significant in addressing SDG 10 concerns but we cannot do this in isolation of other SDGs which are also relevant such as health goals (SDG 3), education (SDG 4) and gender related targets (SDG 5), economic growth (SDG 8), living in cities (SDG 11) and SDG 16 on access to justice. So we must recognise the inter-connected nature of social intervention.

Issues and Challenges

We are faced with a global phenomenon of unprecedented rural-urban migration. In ASEAN cities whether at Manila, Jakarta, Bangkok or Kuala Lumpur, we see people moving to the cities and town in search for a better quality of life. This impacts community living and social cohesion as many are displaced in the cities, even facing tremendous hardships due to inadequate public facilities. In many contexts, there is a breakdown of both social support and informal social control systems which create a new set of problems with the rise of crime, violence, drugs, alcohol abuse, domestic violence etc.

In Malaysia, rural people from the rural villages especially Malay Muslim families and Indians, largely Tamil Hindus from the plantation sector, migrated to urban squatters and slums in the 1970s. In the early 2000s, a majority were housed in high rise low cost flats, which is densely populated with very little public facilities. There is tremendous demand for the very limited public facilities. Communities which were isolated in the rural are now in the urban context living

side by side which can be challenging due to ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic differences. As there are limited public provisions, there is some contestation for these resulting a lack of social cohesion thereby proving us new opportunities for building and community network.

In this context the Malaysian government through the Eleventh Malaysia Plan has introduced an inclusive socio economic development agenda between 2016 and 2020 in line with the SDGs as a first phase for implementation. They have also introduced a multi-dimensional understanding of poverty especially urban poverty and inequality moving beyond the income measurements. The government has welcomed civil society organisations to partner them in the SDG process.

While this is positive and good, however, the social work professional community is small and social workers are not formally recognised as a profession. However, both at the government agency level and also in civil society organisations, many have been recruited and there are efforts to improve the competency and practice level. The Malaysian Association of Social Workers (MASW) is trying their best and it is hopeful that a new social workers act to be introduced soon might boost up the arm of grassroots workers.

Social Work Intervention

SDGs provide an excellent opportunity for social workers to develop an integrated intervention programs at the grassroots. Social workers have the

knowledge, competencies and skills as well as the social work values in working with people at the individual, family, group and community levels. Let us explore five key possibilities:

First, we can undertake with the local community leaders a community profile of the neighbourhood identifying local issues and concerns. This can be undertaken in a collaborative way with locals so as to address the trust deficit in many local communities. The local stock taking will enable us to capture the local needs and concerns. Focus group discussions at the local community hall can further enhance a sense of ownership as the identification of needs and issues is not 'top down' nor 'authority defined' but coming from the views of grassroots.

Second, it is of utmost importance that we work with all local leaders recognising the kind of group and neighbourhood we are in. We need to recognise the local leadership structure if it is ethnic, religious, class divide or base. Working with these leaders including those in the informal sector is necessary to have access to local communities, as well as undertaking some local capacity building and awareness program. In Malaysia, we are working with 30 neighbourhood groups and engaging with them has become very necessary for effective action.

Third, while case work is necessary depending upon the circumstance, what is more effective is group work and community work where the neighbours as fellow peers can support each other in addressing local concerns. In Malaysia, we are working with the women and young people in B40 neighbourhoods as we see them as being

most vulnerable and at risk to crime & violence, drugs and alcohol abuse, unemployment and underemployment.

Fourth, we recognise that in many places, local grassroots communities are alienated from delivery agencies and therefore social workers can be “bridge builders” between grassroots communities and the government agencies. SDGs provide good opportunities for agencies to also work closely with local people and among themselves in addressing complex problems in a cross cutting way. Confidence building along with the hand holding process is very necessary to integrate alienated communities who feel that the agencies are not for them. Social workers can play this essential role of being go between these two groups.

Fifth and finally, social workers with the local neighbourhood profile can work on disaggregated data on the local population which might differ with the national average data. One example in the Malaysian context is that while an ethnic community namely Malaysian Indians are about 7% of the national population, however in a number of districts in Malaysia they form between 10 to 20%. This figure might differ in specific neighbourhoods. Ground realities will make or break effective delivery as communication, cultural appreciation and specific targeting is essential to solve local issues and concern.

Conclusion

In this write up, we have noted the potential of the SDGs with its comprehensive development agenda encompassing economic, social and environmental

concerns. We noted the challenges faced by urban poor communities, especially the socio-economic category referred to as the bottom 40%, and the multiple dimension of urban poverty and inequalities. We recognised that we need a comprehensive intervention plan which addresses the inter-connected nature of social problems and solutions. In so doing, we are hopeful that all people will experience social mobility and a better quality of life.

Selected references

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Summary of thoughts presented by video at 2017 World Social Work Day at the UN in Geneva and UNRISD on March 22, 2017

**Discussant's comments on Dr. Hezri Adnan's book
"The Sustainability Shift: Refashioning Malaysia's
future" (2016)**

I count it a great honour and privilege to make some discussant's comments on this book by Dr. Hezri whom I regard as an environmental academic cum activist. I take this opportunity to congratulate him for this fine piece of scholarly work. I also thank him and ISIS Malaysia for inviting me to make these interventions.

I bring my analysis as a sociologist who has been working on ethnicity, urban poverty and inequality, human rights and minority concerns to this discussion on environmental sustainability. The SDGs provide this linkage to shift from silo thinking to an interdisciplinary outlook. I hope I can do justice by my reflections and comments.

I must confess that this is a major academic work on this theme of sustainability in Malaysia as well as the first major work on the sustainability theme especially after the UN had adopted the 2030 SDG global agenda. The book draws a balance between environmental protection and economic growth, a much needed public policy agenda today.

In reading this book, I asked myself what is new in this book. I must say this publication is an academic, scientific work on sustainability related concerns which also has a strong policy advocacy component. Most often academic works tend to be weak on policy and the policy works tend to be weak on academic analysis. Dr. Hezri has very skilfully blended both aspects in this work.

Key Theme of the Book

A key theme of this book centred on a term used by Dr. Hezri namely the "logic of sustainability" (pg. 3). He calls for a rethink of concepts like the ecosystem, development and social progress. He makes reference to three trajectories, namely, environment to sustainability, organisation approach to institutional change and finally from aspirations to policy and program implementation (pg. 3).

Dr Hezri in his book calls for "a new way of looking at development issues - one that views the social and environmental externalities in an integrative manner" (pg175). He goes on further to describe his major thesis and analysis namely by stating that "while Malaysia's impressive economic achievement has advanced human development and reduced poverty, the pursuit of socio-economic progress has been accompanied by an unprecedented rate of change in the natural environment and the country's ecological footprint. Malaysia is no exception in its inability to implement development via a holistic framework - which is the essence of sustainability. Reversing further environmental degradation requires nothing short of an institutional change, which forms the core message..." (pg. 175).

Six major shifts

Dr Hezri draws out six major shifts that are required. He justifies these from a review of the current situation with academic integrity and calls for a shift in gear. These are also listed out as key chapters of the book namely from chapters three to eight out of the nine chapters in this book. They are:

Firstly, on nature protection calling for a shift towards the ecosystem;

Secondly, on pollution control making a shift from treatment of pollutant downstream to cleaner production;

Thirdly, on resource nexus towards a governance structure;

Fourthly, is climate crisis and the shift is towards global warming;

Fifthly, is on a sustainable society with a shift towards equity and participation. Here Dr. Hezri introduces the term "environmental citizenship" (pg. 11).

Finally, it is on the green economy and the shift is towards "green capitalism" (pg. 11). In this context, Dr. Hezri notes "the social aspects of the green economy need to be factored prominently in its definition in order to move beyond a sole focus on quantitative growth" (pg. 174).

Policy Recommendations

The book provides a very strong policy advocacy discourse in the final chapter entitled '*Powering the Shift*'. Here he makes ten policy recommendations which are divided into three parts, namely, hardware, software and finally, heart ware. His punchline is that "effective implementation and policy integration are hence crucial for the sustainability shift to occur" (pg. 179).

These policy recommendations are well thought out and is highly relevant. Two major recommendations are the appointment of a Commissioner for Environment & Sustainable Development and the establishment of a Council. What is significant here is, such an officer be not based at the Environmental Ministry but at the Ministry of Finance. Furthermore, it is recommended that the Commissioner be appointed as a Senator in order to have greater recognition. The second is the establishment of a Council for Sustainability Development. On the national council, the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) recently announced at the SDG Roadmap Conference (Nov 15 & 16, 2016), that the Cabinet had agreed to the establishment of a National level council to be chaired by the Prime Minister.

Civil Society Participation (CSO) Partnership

Dr. Hezri devotes some attention to the place of CSOs in both his analysis and recommendations. This is very relevant especially since the SDGs agenda 2030 places a very strong priority to stakeholder engagement between the public sector and the two other sectors namely private and civil society. Dr Hezri does give some focus to this theme of the CSOs interfacing with the government.

Dr. Hezri acknowledges the “unprecedented environmental protest” (pg. 147) and the rise of public resentment due to environmental degradation (pg. 147). This has facilitated the rise of CSO coalitions. He notes two second generation CSOs, the coalition of 24 NGOs releasing the Eco-Manifesto and the emergence of the Malaysian CSO-SDG Alliance (pg. 147). He also coins the term “sustainability citizenship” which

provides the space for a shift from the nation-state citizenship to a more global one of shared common aspirations for a better global eco system based on sustainability.

Dr. Hezri advocates for CSOs' active participation in public governance. He writes "civil society must be given a voice in environmental governance, to allow the government to see issues through 'different eyes'." (pg. 189). He goes on further to justify saying that "by engaging civil society leadership in government decision-making, the populace can also understand the challenges and constraints faced by the government in deciding on issues of environment and development" (pg. 189). He does emphasise the need for engaging with 'faith leaders' in developing a 'conservation ethics within the religious and ethnic-based worldview and belief systems (pg. 190).

Illustrative Examples – Sustainability in Practice

The book has an interesting feature in the special write up like case studies in boxes and often in colourful form. These serve to illustrate some best practices or to highlight issues or policies. In Dr. Hezri's book, there are nine boxed items. All are significant but let me highlight two to illustrate the thrust of the case studies or special write ups.

One is the write up on the social impact of Tasik Chini ecosystem degradation (pg. 56 & 57). This highlights that although Tasik Chini has been listed as an UNESCO Bio-diversity Sphere Reserve (2009), there is a major negative impact due to economic activities such as mining and logging. What is even more shocking is the

inaction of the state government and federal agencies to protect not just the environment but also the interest of the six Orang Asli villages living surrounding the lake.

The second is about the best practices of a local government namely Petaling Jaya as a low-carbon and sustainable city (pg. 124 & 125). The effective implementation of Agenda 21 and citizens' engagement are dimensions other local authorities could emulate from.

In this context, I would say that Dr. Hezri could have added two more boxes of also very significant development in the sustainability area in Malaysian society. Maybe in the second edition he could add on.

The first additional case could be on the 'SUHAKAM National Inquiry to the Land Rights of Indigenous People'. The Human Rights Commission between December 2010 and June 2012 undertook this national inquiry, the first of its kind in Malaysia. A total of 892 statements were recorded of infringements to the land rights in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. Based on human rights indicators, these were violations of human rights on the rights of these people largely by big business and political interest. While the Federal government received the record and set up a task force to restudy the recommendations and eventually establish a Cabinet Committee to monitor the implementations, however, none of the major recommendations have been accepted nor any of the cases resolved. This matter serves as an excellent case study as the environment issues, business development and economic growth aspects together with people's

concerns are clashing and in direct conflict. This has great relevance to the theme of sustainability including the role of government, private sector, civil society and grassroots forest-based communities. Finding an effective solution and resolution is most crucial and urgent.

Another potential case study that can be added is the positive note in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan, in its chapter on Green Economy. Here the Government has recognised the need for community's direct involvement and role in managing the forest especially that of indigenous and local communities. Reference is made to the Kelawat Forest Reserve in Sabah where 24 families have been roped in this new initiative.

I am also aware of another example from Sabah namely the Guomantong hill, a forest reserve of about 1,300 acres at Matunggong in Kudat district in Sabah. Here the 13 villages which are located at the foot of the hill have been enlisted into this conservation project. They have jointly formed the local heritage committee entitled 'Jawatankuasa Perlindungan Warisan'. There is no access to the hill, except via one of the 13 villages. Each of the villages are developing community-based enterprises such as birds nest, honey making & bee harvesting, eco-tourism such as hiking up the hill and home stay program. The aspect of community managed forest is key to enhance local knowledge and participation. This community-based conservation project is well documented by environmental anthropologist, Dr. Paul Porodong of Universiti Malaysia Sabah.

Conclusion

This indeed is a timely book and a must read by all policy makers. It is a commendable work and a major contribution to the literature on sustainability. Especially during the time of the SDGs, there is the need for more similar studies of drawing a healthy and holistic balance between economic, social and environmental dimensions. The SDGs with its 17 goals, the 165 targets and 230 indicators, provide the policy framework for our effective implementation.

This book by Dr. Hezri definitely set the research and policy agenda for not just effective implementation but for the next generation to do more similar works in due time. All the best and happy reading.

Discussant's Comments shared at the Launch of Dr. Hezri Adnan's book the "Sustainability Shift" on November 29, 2016 at Putrajaya.

Photo Gallery



With participants at the Asian Development Alliance Meeting on SDGs, February 2017, Bangkok



With Prof. Dr. Jeffery Sachs, global SDG expert



With EPU DG & DDG, National SDG Steering Committee meeting, December 2016



Panel for SDG National Roadmap Workshop November 2016



At the UN General Assembly main hall, July 2016



Speaking at the UN Panel on SDG & SSE,
July 2016, New York



Panel at the National SDG Symposium, February 2016 and hosted by the EPU and UN Malaysia



With the EPU Minister at the February 2016 SDG Symposium

About the Author

Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria (PJN, Ph.D) is a Principal Research Fellow at the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA), National University of Malaysia - University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) since Sept 2008. Appointment Adjunct Professor (Social Development), College of Arts & Social Science, Northern University of Malaysia (UUM) (2015-2017). He serves as Co-Chair of the Malaysian CSO-SDG Alliance. Recently appointed as member of the National Sustainable Development Goals Steering Committee at the Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department.

About KITA

The Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA) was officially established on 8 October 2007 by Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) to undertake academic research on subjects pertaining to ethnic studies in Malaysia. This research institute is 'only one of its kind' in Malaysia, focusing specifically on 'ethnic studies' with thematic studies orientation. The Institute emerged out of the need to maintain at home the present peaceful inter- and intra-ethnic existence against worldwide problematic, and sometimes violent ethnic situations.

Organisationally, KITA has six research clusters, each being led by a prominent scholar or a highly experienced professional person. The six research clusters are: Social Theory and Ethnic Studies; Ethnicity and Religion; Ethnicity at Workplace; Ethnicity and Consumerism; The Arts and Social Integration; Ethnicity and Food. KITA's postgraduate programme (PhD and Masters) was launched in December 2009.

Mengenai KITA

Institut Kajian Etnik (KITA) ditubuhkan secara rasmi oleh Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia pada 8 Oktober 2007. KITA merupakan satu-satunya institut penyelidikan di Malaysia yang memberi tumpuan sepenuhnya kepada segala kajian berkaitan dengan 'etnik' dan 'etnisiti'.

Dari segi organisasi, KITA mempunyai enam rumpun penyelidikan. Setiap satu rumpun diketuai oleh seorang sarjana atau ahli profesional yang mempunyai rekod prestasi cemerlang. Enam rumpun penyelidikan berkenaan adalah: Teori Sosial dan Kajian Etnik; Etnisiti dan Agama; Etnisiti di Tempat Kerja; Etnisiti dan Konsumerisme; Kesenian dan Integrasi Sosial; Etnisiti dan Makanan. Mulai Disember 2009, KITA menawarkan program siswazah (PhD dan Sarjana).