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on Southeast Asia

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Surrey University, Malaysia

 **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**
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THE POST-COVID WORLD



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN FRONT OF COLD WAR 2.0: WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

PROFESSOR WOO WING THYE

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A PROXY WAR broke out in Ukraine in early 2022 between US-NATO and Russia, with China usually branded as a Russian ally. Despite Ukraine being geographically far away, Cold War 2.0 is knocking at the door of ASEAN. On April 22, 2022, U.S. National Security Council Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific, Kurt Campbell, arrived helter-skelter in the Solomon Islands, immediately after the signing of a security pact between Solomon Islands and China. Honiara is 6,120 miles (or 16 flying hours) away from Los Angeles, and yet the increased presence of China there is seen as an immediate threat to US national security, in the same way that the potential NATO membership of Ukraine had been seen as a grave threat to the national security of Russia.

I will use the position paper by Kurt Campbell and Rush Doshi to organize my discussion about ASEAN options. Their article, *"How America Can Shore Up Asian Order: A Strategy for Restoring Balance and Legitimacy"* (*Foreign Affairs*, 12 January 2021), was written before they joined the Biden administration as the "Asia Tsar" and the Director for China in the National Security Council, respectively.

My framing of the discussion is not designed to criticize the US and overlook China's role in ramping up Cold War 2.0 but to (1) highlight common key elements in the mindsets of superpowers that had led to harmful actions on other nations, (2) draw five lessons for how fast-rising China should avoid committing the same hubristic mistakes as the U.S. did, (3) suggest how the US should handle its international engagements as the rise of China and India transforms the global strategic balance, and (4) identify the policy choices for ASEAN.

LESSONS FOR CHINA AND THE US FROM THE WEAKNESSES IN THE CAMPBELL-DOSHI POSITION

The crux of the Campbell-Doshi paper is that "[L]eft unchecked, Chinese behavior could end the [Indo-Pacific] region's long peace". They recommended that "the United States needs to make a conscious effort to deter Chinese adventurism" in order "to preserve the regional operating system that has generated peace and unprecedented prosperity". Their proposed US strategy is to "modernize and strengthen... the existing regional operating system" by mobilizing East Asian countries to link their military capabilities to those of Quad-AUKUS to prevent China from changing the status quo. This US approach would (presumably) "ensure that the Indo-Pacific's future is characterized by balance and twenty-first-century openness rather than hegemony and nineteenth-century spheres of influence".

Despite the repeated use of the word "balance" to depict the Indo-Pacific system, balance of power only ever existed in the military confrontation between US allies and

communist states in East Asia (like the standoff on the Korean peninsula). There was never a balance of power within the East Asian capitalist world, and order there took the form of hegemonic stability where the overwhelming force of the US economy and its military had entitled the US to design the global institutional architecture.¹

The first lesson for China is that it is very easy for a superpower to be blind to its own self-serving actions, and to behave as if it were not reaping significant benefits from the global public goods that it provides e.g. obtaining seigniorage by allowing the US dollar to serve as the international vehicle currency. The outcome from a superpower having this sense of entitlement is that it is susceptible to being blinded by belief in its own propaganda, and hence would often act in entirely self-serving ways that undermine its moral authority.

Campbell and Doshi's plea for the maintenance of the existing regional order rests on the proposition that because the current order had generated benefits for all in the past, it would continue to do so in the future. However, even non-Marxists can see that this linear projection of the past is valid only if the optimum institutional infrastructure is independent of the economic structure. This claim is logically unjustified because of the tremendous expansion and transformation of China's economy. In addition, one has to consider the expected technological innovations to come and their certain disruptions of present supply chains, plus climate change and loss of biodiversity. In short, defense of the status quo is defense of US interests and is not necessarily the defense of interests of East Asian countries.

For example, the current Indo-Pacific order is biased towards protecting and enhancing the profitability of large US and European corporations. A recent egregious example of using free trade principles selectively to benefit western corporations would be the US support for infant formula manufacturers by suppressing public health information campaigns by the World Health Organization (WHO) to promote breast feeding.

[At a WHO meeting in 2018,] American officials sought to water down the resolution by removing language that called on governments to 'protect, promote and support breast-feeding' and another passage that called on policymakers to restrict the promotion of food products that many experts say can have deleterious effects on young children.

[When the Ecuador moved to implement the WHO resolution, the US Ambassador to Ecuador, Todd Chapman, told Ecuador that if it] refused to drop the resolution, Washington would unleash punishing trade measures and withdraw crucial military aid. [The Ecuadorean government reversed its decision.]²

The second lesson for China in managing its rise is that it would undermine itself in global leadership if it were to configure its trade and investment relationships with US-style selective use of free market principles to benefit itself disproportionately. China should propose, and so should the US, that the gold standard of trade agreements in the 21st Century be the group-specific policy package that would maximize members' progress on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The fundamental flaw in the Campbell-Doshi proposal is that it ignores the fact that the current regional system was designed for the Age of the Hegemon and not for the emerging Age of Multipolar Powers. China should realize that the Age of the Hegemon would never appear again even if its total GDP were to be four times that of the US. This is because India is also rising, and its population would at least equal that of China within the next 60 years.

Thus, the Age of the Hegemon is over, and this is the third lesson for China and the US. China must accept the fact that it would not be able to dominate the world the way that the UK did in the 19th Century and the way that the US did in the 20th Century.

For the US political class, they have to stop using “America-primacy” foreign policies³ in order to generate political support for domestic elections. As in any normal relationship between two equals, US-China relationship will always be characterized by both competition and cooperation.

The ideal US-China relationship would limit competition to the economic and technology spheres, and promote cooperation in the supply of regional and global public goods (e.g. fight climate change, prevent nuclear proliferation, and stop pandemics).

The fourth lesson is to prevent the Age of the Hegemon from becoming the Age of Polar Disorders. It would be highly dangerous for the medium-run outcome to be bipolar disorder between China and US, and the long run outcome to be multipolar disorder involving China, USA, EU, and India.

Specifically, the new fast-emerging superpowers (notably China) should not adopt the US as its role model for a superpower. To do so would lead China to establish almost 800 military bases in over 70 countries⁴, an outcome that would maximize the probability of an accidental military conflict.

The fifth lesson is that the switch to a multipolar order is more likely to benefit Southeast Asia than not, and so it would be difficult for the US to motivate Southeast Asia to stick with the current regional operating system. And Southeast Asia would certainly abandon the present Indo-Pacific order earlier if China stops enlarging its military footprint in the South China Sea and uses its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to actively support Sustainable Development in Southeast Asia. One important implication from the fifth lesson is that it would be the maximisation of enlightened self-interests for both China and US if they would adopt the fulfilment of the 17 SDGs as their common overarching position in international diplomacy.

WHAT IS GOOD FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA?

Southeast Asia definitely does not want the expansion of the military pacts between USA and Northeast Asia (NEA) into the region because it would be just as provocative to China as the expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe was to Russia.

Campbell and Doshi claim that their proposed architecture is good for Southeast Asia, but they would have produced an even better proposal had they discussed the matter with ASEAN first. The Campbell-Doshi proposal is a supply-pushed widget and not a demand-pulled one. ASEAN would have demanded that the regional arrangements address the national security concerns of both China and the Quad without disadvantaging either. Freedom of navigation for their carrier groups in the South China Sea is fine but none should linger in the area. The US has military bases in the islands of Northeast Asia, and China has them in the islands of Southeast Asia, and East Asia demands the suspension of building more of them (or of expanding them) in these two locations. Only two Southeast Asian countries were members of SEATO in the Cold War, and none would join a revived SEATO today.

Southeast Asian nations want the software of the new Indo-Pacific order to incorporate circuit-breakers for dispute resolution in the form of compulsory dispute arbitration managed by neutral bodies like the World Court and the UN. They would want a regional order based on international laws and not on rules unilaterally set by either world power.

Many in Southeast Asia are watching events in the European Union closely to learn how obstacles to closer regional integration are overcome, and whether agency can thus be produced. The first signs are optimistic; both US and China have followed EU in accelerating the decarbonization of their societies.

This last observation allows me to end on an optimistic note about regional partnerships (SDG #17). If enlightened self-interests succeed in creating a cohesive ASEAN Union⁵, then Southeast Asia in the future will be able to return Campbell and Doshi the favour of their advice, first, by formulating a better regional operating system for the Americas based on consulting its entire membership about what it wants, and then, by setting an example for US-China engagement about how to reap mutual economic benefits and address national security concerns.

“SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS WOULD WANT A REGIONAL ORDER BASED ON INTERNATIONAL LAWS AND NOT ON RULES UNILATERALLY SET BY EITHER WORLD POWER.”

Fundamentally, effective global partnerships are the prerequisite for a safe and prosperous multipolar world. A world economy of a single unified market will be much richer and more dynamic than one with semi-segmented regional markets. The health of the Earth's physical systems and biological diversity requires a holistic approach to environmental stewardship. And there must be a freeze on an arms race, or better yet, a general disarmament of the superpowers.

It is therefore self-evident that what needs modernization and strengthening is not the Indo-Pacific operating system as proposed by Campbell and Doshi but the United Nations system. This is the historically responsible task which China and the US must undertake, each doing so out of its own long run self-interest.

1. For example, the US Dollar instead of John Maynard Keynes's Bancor was designated the linchpin of the Bretton Woods Monetary System, and Nixon closed the gold window in 1971 without consulting any of the closest allies of the US.
2. Andrew Jacobs, "Opposition to Breast-Feeding Resolution by U.S. Stuns World Health Officials," *New York Times*, 8 July 2018.
3. Examples are Robert D. Blackwill and Ashley Tellis, *Revising U.S. Grand Strategy Toward China*, Council for Foreign Relations, International Institutions and Global Governance Program, Council Special Report No. 72, March 2015; and Robert D. Blackwill and Kurt M. Campbell, *Xi Jinping on the Global Stage: Chinese Foreign Policy Under a Powerful but Exposed Leader*, Council on Foreign Relations, International Institutions and Global Governance Program, Council Special Report No. 74, February 2016.
4. David Vine, "Where in the World is the US Military," *Politico*, July/August 2015.
5. The population of ASEAN and the European Union in 2020 was 661.5 million and 447.3 million respectively.

OUR PROGRAMS

THE PROGRAMS at JCI, JSC, and SDSN-Asia have been supported by the Jeffrey Cheah Foundation (JCF) through two generous grants of USD 10 million each to the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), headed by Professor Jeffrey Sachs, adviser to three successive Secretary-Generals of the United Nations (Kofi Annan, Ban Ki-moon, and Antonio Guterres). SDSN currently has a worldwide membership of about 1,600 research organizations on Sustainable Development.

Among the notable outcomes of the first JCF grant (2017-2021) were:

1. The founding of the Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development at Sunway University to conduct research, teaching, and government policy-advising;
2. The establishment at Sunway University of two degree programs: the Master in Sustainable Development Management (MSDM), and the PhD in Sustainable Development (delivered via both online and in-person modes);
3. The development of a global state-of-the-art curriculum for the global Masters of Development Practice (MDP)

degree, offered by 37 partner universities; and

4. The creation of a global online program on Sustainable Development by the SDG Academy.

The objectives of the second JCF grant (2021-2025) were:

1. To set up the Asia HQ of SDSN at Sunway University to supplement the efforts of SDSN-Paris and SDSN-NYC in mobilising, initiating, implementing, and coordinating Sustainable Development practices;
2. To undertake the ASEAN Green Future project to evaluate the decarbonisation pathways for each ASEAN member, and to lower the individual costs of decarbonisation through regional cooperation;
3. To launch and serve as the Secretariat for the Mission 4.7 project to modernise academic curriculums at all levels with appropriate educational components on Sustainable Development, in partnership with Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, UNESCO, and the Ban Ki-moon Center for Global Citizenship; and
4. To establish the Asia office of the SDG Academy to expand its capacity to offer courses on education for Sustainable Development.



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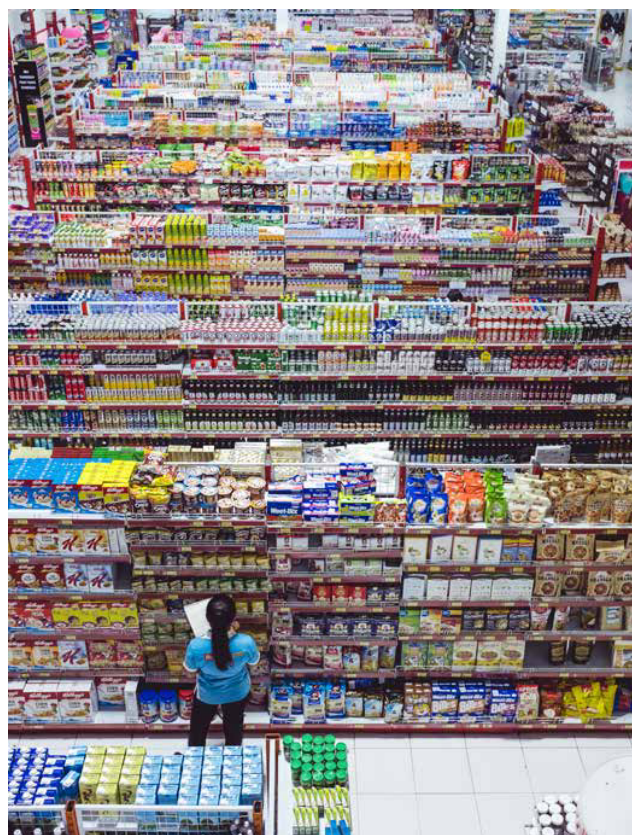
MALAYSIA'S RECOVERY BEYOND 2022 REQUIRES FUNDAMENTAL REFORMS

BEGINNING WITH the first few cases detected in late January 2020, the country was confronted with successive waves that were increasingly more severe with the last wave finally subsiding from October 2021 onwards, following the successful roll-out of the national vaccination programme. With the adult population fully vaccinated and severe cases falling sharply despite the spike in daily new cases due to the more infectious Omicron variant, the government proclaimed the transition to endemic phase beginning 1 April 2022. While still not completely out of the woods, the endemicy declaration marks the end of the 2-year long main battle with COVID-19 virus. It heralds the beginning of the economic rebuilding challenges and amelioration of the scars inflicted on the economy and the society where a total of 4.42 million or 13.5% of the country's population had contracted the disease and 35,482 (1,083 deaths per million) had perished as at end March 2022.

The shutdown of businesses, border closures, compliance with public health protocols, social and economic activity restrictions, and loss of consumer and business confidence created a combination of supply and demand shocks that were further propagated by income and employment losses. As in most countries, the supply, demand, trade and financial shocks caused by the global pandemic triggered a deep recession in Malaysia in 2020 followed by a weak recovery in 2021 as pandemic restrictions were tightened and then eased subsequently to deal with successive surges in COVID-19 infections in 2021. The -5.6% GDP contraction in 2020 is the country's second worst performance since the Asian Financial Crisis in 1998 (-7.4%).

The pandemic-induced downturn in 2020 was led by sharp declines in construction (-19.4%), mining output (-10.6%) and services (-5.5%) while the manufacturing and agriculture sectors recorded smaller declines of -2.6% and -2.2% respectively. The successive COVID-19 waves and ensuing lockdowns and pandemic restrictions resulted in a weak recovery in 2021 with the GDP growth outturn of 3.1% at half the initial expectations. The recovery was highly uneven with growth performance ranging from positive 9.5% for manufacturing and 1.9% for services to a contraction of -0.2% for agriculture and -5.2% for construction. The uneven and multi-speed recovery is evidenced by the wide dispersion in the growth rates across sectors as well as across industries within each sector.

The pandemic-triggered downturn and scarring could have been larger if not for the aggressive fiscal and monetary responses.



The country's COVID-19 fiscal response during the 2020-21 period comprised 8 discretionary fiscal packages that amounted to RM530 billion or 35.8% of the country's annual GDP (average of 2020 and 2021 GDP). The 'above the line' or 'on-budget' spending amounted to RM77 billion or 5.2% of GDP while the 'below the line' spending comprising revenue foregone, loans, guarantees and retirement savings withdrawal amounted to RM453 billion or 30.6% of GDP. A broad classification of the measures shows that people's welfare is the primary focus, receiving the largest share of 71.8% of the total amount in 2020 and 70.8% in 2021. The business sector is the second largest recipient, accounting for 23.2% of the total aid in 2020 and 22.5% in 2021. Measures aimed at supporting the economy accounted for 3.9% of the total amount in 2020 and 1.3% in 2021 while health spending rose from 1.0% in 2020 to 5.4% in 2021 due principally to the funding for the national vaccination programme that covers the local population of 32.8 million people and over two million foreign workers in the country.



Another significant factor moderating the negative economic impact of the pandemic is the strong recovery in commodity prices, particularly crude oil, natural gas, and rubber, that boosted revenue and export earnings in 2021 following the price slumps in 2020. The economy also benefited from an improvement in the terms of trade which rose by 6.0% in 2021 from a 0.5% increase in 2020. The surge in oil and natural gas exports, besides strengthening the coffers of the national oil company and alleviating hardships faced by supporting oil and gas industry players during the downturn in 2020, has also strengthened the government revenue position and averted a widening of the fiscal deficit. Palm oil earnings which sustain over 650,000 smallholders and over 2 million employed in the industry recorded strong price increases throughout 2020 and 2021. The implication is that the government's COVID-19 assistance packages for households would likely need to be enlarged without the surge in commodity prices in 2021.

Due to the pandemic-induced downturn, the federal government's fiscal position deteriorated sharply in 2020 as revenue fell by -14.9% while total expenditure including additional spending on COVID-19 assistance and stimulus packages, shrank marginally by -1.0%, causing the fiscal deficit to nearly double to -6.2% of GDP in 2020 from -3.4% in 2019. In 2021, despite a 2.5% rise in government revenue in line with the moderate economic recovery, expenditure expanded by 5.9%, causing the fiscal deficit to widen to an estimated -6.5%. The increase in deficit spending during the two pandemic years was funded largely by borrowings that resulted in the government debt expanding by 10.9% in 2020 and a further 11.4% in 2021. Correspondingly, the government debt-to-GDP jumped nearly 10 percentage points to 62.1% in 2020 and edged up to 63.5% in 2021.

During the pandemic-related economic downturn in 2020, the total number of unemployed persons peaked at 791,000 with the unemployment rate hitting 5.1% in the second quarter of 2020, up from 3.5% in the previous quarter. The unemployment rate averaged 4.5% in 2020 and 4.7% in 2021 compared to the pre-pandemic average of 3.3%. While trending down, the unemployment rate of 4.3% in the final quarter of 2021 is approximately 1 percentage point higher than the pre-pandemic level of 3.3% in 2018 and 2019.

The pandemic was less disruptive to financial markets partly due to the resilience of the banking system and the aggressive monetary policy response of the central bank which acted quickly in reducing its overnight policy rate by a cumulative 125 basis points to 1.75% by the third quarter of 2020. Despite lower interest rates, deposits in the banking system expanded by 4.4% in 2020 and 6.3% in 2021. Bank deposits by households grew at a steady pace of 6.6% in 2020 and 4.9% in 2021 while deposits by business was flat in 2020 but rose by 10.5% in 2021, pointing to business recovery. The less disruptive impact of the pandemic to the financial system is also evidenced by the continuing credit flows in 2020 and 2021. Business loans growth slowed to 1.0% in 2020 but recovered to 4.9% in 2021 while household loans grew at a steady pace of 5.0% and 4.3% respectively.

A COVID-19 fiscal policy response that could have long term negative consequences is the measure to lower the employees' contribution rate and allow the withdrawal of the mandatory retirement savings from the Employees Provident Fund. The four withdrawal schemes included in the COVID-19 packages have resulted in total withdrawals estimated at RM140 billion. This has reduced the national mandatory retirement savings pool by 15.1% (based on 2019 total assets of RM925 billion). Given that only 18% of EPF contributors are found to have adequate retirement savings, the government will have to provide for higher social spending and implement a more comprehensive social safety net to avert a looming old-aged poverty crisis arising from inadequate retirement savings.

The pandemic-related spending had raised the country's fiscal deficit and debt levels thereby reducing the fiscal space or flexibility to cope with future crises. Its fiscal buffer will need to be restored through deep structural and fiscal reforms in tandem with a gradual process of fiscal consolidation. It is commendable that the government has enacted a Fiscal Responsibility Act that include the adoption of a revised Medium Term Fiscal Framework to guide the fiscal consolidation process. It is also embarking on a National Recovery Plan to rebuild the economy on a stronger and more resilient foundation anchored on sustainability, inclusivity and digitalization. Deep structural reforms centered on achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030, restoring fiscal buffers, rebuilding social safety nets, and shifting to a higher value-added, digital and green economy need to be accelerated for the country's GDP growth to be sustained above 5% annually after 2022.





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IMPACT OF THE RCEP TO BALANCE THE TRADE AND PANDEMIC SHOCKS

THE IMPACT of the pandemic shock is very uneven within countries and also across countries and regions. In this short piece, we highlight the importance of trade and investment as a key impetus for recovery from the pandemic, in particular, the impact of the regional free trade agreements such as Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

1. UNEVEN IMPACT OF TRADE AND GLOBALIZATION

For the past decade, East Asia has been facing rising protectionism and anti-globalisation in regional and global trade, which will have a large impact on growth and development in the region. The United States (US)-China trade war tensions will have a significant impact on regional trade and investment in terms of the inward-looking policies and the decoupling effects of the Global Value Chains (GVC) to more developed countries away from China and East Asia.

In recent years, ASEAN Member States have also experienced a large decline in the share of semi-skilled jobs (mostly white-collar jobs) compared with unskilled and skilled jobs. This has a direct impact on the income and wealth of middle-income households. Within domestic economies, trade has a more direct impact on the income and wealth of tradable sectors in urban centres compared with rural centres, creating a rural-urban divide and growth tensions between rural and urban populations.

The COVID-19 pandemic shock has increased and intensified the vulnerability of openness and induced more inward-looking policies, highlighted the emerging challenges for the global and regional pandemic recovery in terms of macroeconomic imbalances due to higher fiscal debt, supply chain bottlenecks, the widening skilled gap, the increase in poverty, and the importance of the resilience of the GVC.

2. IMPORTANCE OF OPENNESS, RCEP AND REGIONALISM FOR PANDEMIC AND POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), signed in 2020, is the largest free trade agreement (FTA) in the world. It comprises the 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Member States (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam) and five countries in the region with which ASEAN has FTAs – Australia, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea (henceforth, Korea), and New Zealand. The RCEP came into effect on 1 January 2022 with the ratification of

six ASEAN Member States (Brunei, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and Viet Nam) and four non-ASEAN member countries (Australia, China, Korea, Japan, and New Zealand).

The RCEP is the largest global trading bloc in the world, with a combined population of 2.2 billion (30% of the world population), total regional gross domestic product (GDP) of around \$38,813 billion (30% of global GDP in 2019), and nearly 28% of global trade.

The RCEP has the elements that will be crucial for the pandemic and post-pandemic recovery and regional transformation, such as (i) a single rule-of-origin framework for the 15 member countries, which could have an accelerating and enhancing impact on GVCs in the region; (ii) the key element of the China-Japan-Korea (CJK) effect, as the RCEP agreement is the first FTA for trade and investment amongst these countries; (iii) elements for digital transformation and services liberalisation in crucial services trade in e-commerce, financial, professional, and telecommunications services; (iv) ASEAN centrality, which is critical for the post-pandemic recovery and structural transformation of the region in terms of sustainable and inclusive growth, and (v) RCEP is a 'living' agreement as it will be able to address economic and social issues for sustainable and inclusive regional integration.

The impact of the RCEP will be significant for ASEAN and its Less Developed Countries. The dynamic Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) analysis by Itakura (2022) highlighted the positive impact of the RCEP on GDP for all RCEP members throughout the 2030s, particularly for the scenario with deeper trade and investment facilitation and addressing behind-the-border issues (S4: tariff reduction, services liberalisation, logistic improvements, and investment facilitation).

3. IMPACT OF THE RCEP TO BALANCE THE TRADE AND PANDEMIC SHOCKS

The impact of the RCEP on the East Asian region are significant as the largest global trading bloc. Its impact in the pandemic recovery will be important in terms of strengthening the GVC activities and creating structural transformation for ASEAN. As the RCEP is a 'living' agreement, it will be able to address current and key issues for sustainable regional integration.

The RCEP economic cooperation and institutional provision could address the following key issues for regional sustainable recovery from the pandemic shock.

- (i) There is a need to review the rising trade costs at the border and behind the border for the RCEP member countries. The rising trade and transaction costs will have a significant impact on the recovery of developing countries—particularly the recovery of the ASEAN LDCs. UNCTAD highlighted the rising cost of production from higher intermediate input and import prices directly affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of the regional and global value chain activities. Under technical and economic cooperation, there could be a coordinated effort to identify, monitor, and address the rising border and behind-the-border trade costs.
 - (ii) It is likely that the trade and transaction cost will differ across developing and less developed RCEP member countries, hence differential technical and economic cooperation is essential to balance the uneven effects of trade and the pandemic in the region. The differential treatment and support for ASEAN LDCs are a critical part of the RCEP framework to address countries at different stages of growth and the diversity of the RCEP members.
 - (iii) The unbalanced effects of the pandemic shock are also felt across sectors as labour-intensive and labour-movement sectors such as garment and textiles in the manufacturing sector and key services such as tourism, logistics, and aviation industries. It is important to review the uneven impact of the pandemic shock across these sectors
 - (iv) The post-pandemic impact will be significant on traditional services trade, which depends on the movement of people, such as through tourism, aviation, and logistics. These industries are not expected to recover in the short run until a framework for the movement of people in the region is established. The RCEP could provide a platform.
 - (v) The RCEP is a 'living' agreement, which allows it to address current key issues that affect regional integration in terms of trade and investment under the institutional provision
- (chapter 18). The following are the current important issues that the RCEP should address urgently for sustainable and inclusive integration of the region.
 - (a) The effect of the pandemic shock tends to be felt more by unskilled and older workers. It also has an uneven impact on gender and increases the vulnerability of females in the labour market and households. There could be more support under economic cooperation to increase the technical education and skills of vulnerable groups affected.
 - (b) The effects of the pandemic are also felt unevenly on larger firms and SMEs. There is a need to review the financial inclusiveness of SMEs.
 - (c) The RCEP framework allows member countries to address economic cooperation to develop the regional and domestic capacity to create a more resilient region against external shocks such as the pandemic. Under the RCEP economic cooperation framework, a regional platform for the consideration of mass testing and vaccination rollout against the COVID-19 virus could be an area of cooperation.
 - (d) Digital transformation will accelerate in the post-pandemic recovery and will have a direct impact on services activities and services trade in the region. The RCEP could provide the framework.
 - (e) The RCEP framework could also address key issues related to climate change and the environment, green transformation of the region in terms of trade and infrastructure, and the development of new urban centres to drive the next phase of economic growth in East Asia.
- The objectives of the RCEP are to develop a stronger regional integration framework in East Asia that is built on a strong foundation of open regionalism and supporting market and

rules-based principles. With rising anti-globalisation and protectionism in East Asia and globally, the market and rules-based trading framework under the RCEP will be important to have sustainable and strong regional integration and global trading framework. It is critical to emphasise a market and rules-based trading framework that will strengthen and deepen the regional integration of East Asia.

“THE RCEP IS A ‘LIVING’ AGREEMENT, ABLE TO ADDRESS CURRENT AND KEY ISSUES FOR SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL INTEGRATION.”



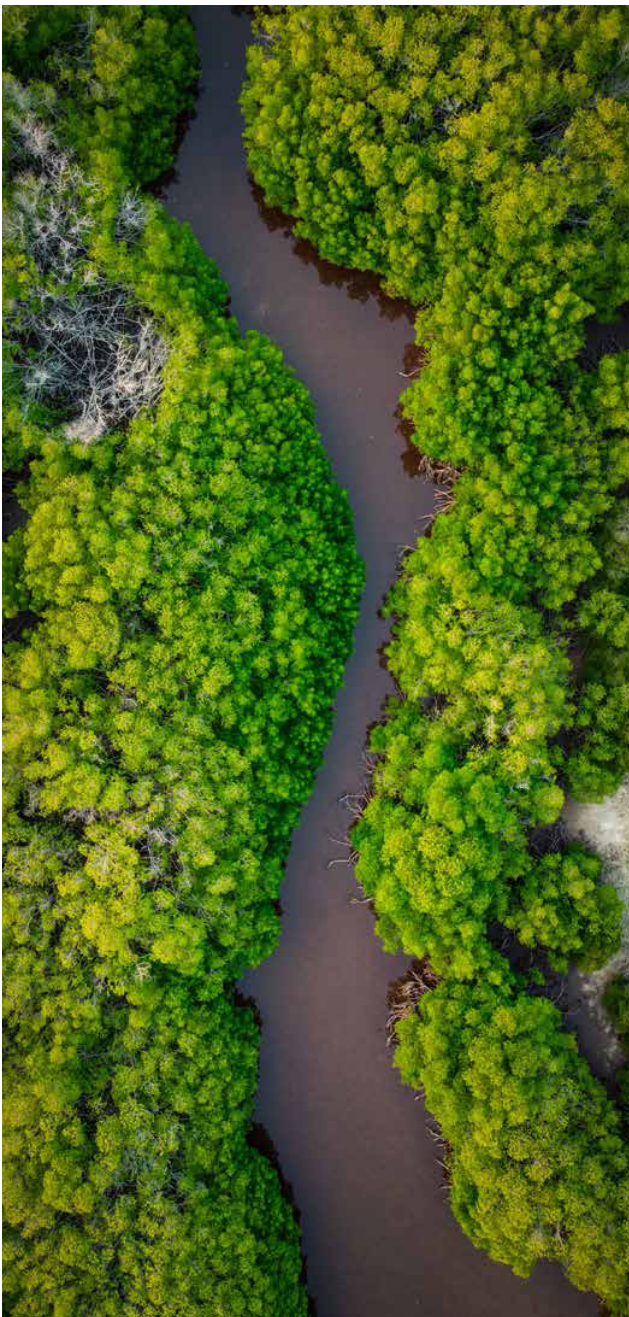


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CAN AN ECOSYSTEM BE TRANSPLANTED?



MANGROVE PLANTING became a focus for forestry departments and corporate social responsibility initiatives after the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004. Regrettably, many planted mangrove seedlings do not grow into healthy and resilient trees that count, but falter. This suggests that more needs to be understood about planting mangroves.

What kind of natural processes need to be restored for the planted mangroves to form the dense root systems, and allow the inter-tidal zones between the land and sea to evolve a range of habitats for a wide variety of wildlife? The principles discovered in restoring a vibrant mangrove ecosystem will be of great general interest.

Following this track of thought, we must then widen the definition of successful mangrove planting to include a focus on outputs, for example percentage of survival, comparison of vegetation density and species diversity with natural forest, which require long-term commitment. Media spotlight has often been on the inputs, such as area and number of seedlings planted, which are only a short-term commitment. Drawing attention to the restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem processes to the landscape shifts the thinking paradigm.

THE FALLACY OF REPLANTING AND ENGINEERING AFTER DEFORESTATION

Some parties destroy mature mangroves, beehives and kill monkeys when pursuing coastal development and replant mangroves elsewhere as a 'green' (greenwash) initiative. This is an inadequate substitute because mature mangroves hold the coastline in place and prevent erosion. This protects the land and the living beings from wind, waves and storms. It takes a long time for newly planted mangroves to develop complex and dense root systems. Places where mature mangroves have been cut down are far more vulnerable to destructive cyclones and tidal waves. China has come to this realisation and is shifting its mangroves management practices from afforestation to protection and restoration of ecosystems. Restoring a damaged ecosystem is more expensive and time consuming than securing an existing high-quality ecosystem.

Humans have resorted to engineering solutions like seawalls for coastal defence against rising sea levels and storm surges. Despite good intentions, seawalls contribute to coastal erosion



and hydrologic change, which are detrimental to the surrounding ecology, warns Dr. Ahmad Aldrie Amir from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. The adverse impacts rear their ugly heads as time goes by. Responsible governments and corporations that have a concern for future generations will read environmental signals, learn from mistakes, develop their own conservation ethics, and exercise self-control. This is a dynamic social learning process that has ensured the survival of species.

Large ecosystems themselves consist of interdependent subsystems that are themselves smaller ecosystems. For example, mangroves, seagrass and coral ecosystems work together as a larger ecosystem, and also contain within themselves smaller ecosystems, including for example bees and monkeys. Both bees and monkeys play an important role in pollination and dispersing seeds as they travel. This contributes to mangroves' genetic diversity – a building block for resilience.

Dr. Stefano Cannicci from the University of Hong Kong and Professor Joe Shing Yip Lee from the Chinese University of Hong Kong found that mangroves, when compared with other ecosystems, are among those with the lowest functional redundancy among resident faunae. A forest with a low functional redundancy has a low 'ecological insurance', i.e. if one species is lost, it is less likely that another can fulfil its function to sustain the viability of the ecosystem.

Humans also need to understand that the fragmentation and shrinking of protected areas constrain the movement of species, thus reducing their ability to adapt to climate change. Large and connected landscapes have inherent natural processes that create a variety of habitats that support species diversity, thus making species less dependent on human rescue. This is why we need to restore, in addition to conserve.

“RESTORING A DAMAGED ECOSYSTEM IS MORE EXPENSIVE AND TIME CONSUMING THAN SECURING AN EXISTING HIGH-QUALITY ECOSYSTEM.”

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Engaging local communities in mangrove ecosystem restoration is vital to success. “Ownership of a project has to start with the involvement of the community – restoration is a long-term commitment of land and resources and a deeply emotional process,” says Dr. Mike Maunder, Executive Director of the Cambridge Conservation Initiative.

The villagers in Nai Nang Village, Krabi, Thailand and the coastal farmers in the Da Loc commune in northern Viet Nam show good examples of living symbiotically with their mangrove forests. By developing new skills in apiculture, small-scale seasonal fishermen and farmers became competent in harvesting mangrove honey sustainably, producing wholesome value-added products and developing value chains into high end hotels. Through symbiotic and respectful relationships, coastal families deepen their understanding of the mangrove forests and reciprocate by becoming guardians of growth and expansion for the mangroves.

“OWNERSHIP OF A PROJECT HAS TO START WITH THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY – RESTORATION IS A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT OF LAND AND RESOURCES AND A DEEPLY EMOTIONAL PROCESS.” – DR. MIKE MAUNDER

On the other side of the globe, the 40-hectare Mankôté mangroves in the island state of St. Lucia in the Eastern Caribbean went through a phase of degradation after it transitioned from being part of an exclusive US military base during World War II to an open-access public land used for seasonal fishing, crabbing, bathing, animal grazing, source of wood for charcoal production and construction, and an unauthorised waste disposal site.

Professor Fikret Berkes at the University of Manitoba, Canada, studied the transformational change brought about by the initially economically marginalised rural charcoal producers over a quarter of a century. He observed three key success factors: (i) the evolution of a local knowledge base and community-based management system; (ii) recognition of the charcoal producers' resource use right; (iii) a non-governmental organisation helped organised the charcoal producers to carry out an integrated conservation-development project that was mutually beneficial to the people and the mangroves. Both the mangrove forest and the people became vibrant.

A MANGROVE FOREST IS FAR MORE THAN A COLLECTION OF MANGROVE TREES

The mangroves need the bees, monkeys and many other flora, fauna, fish, crustacean, mollusc, benthic etc. as necessary parts of the ecosystem that is generically called 'mangroves'. The analogy to 'moving' some mangrove plants would be if I sold you half a car—all the external bits that you can see but leaving out all the bits that you cannot see, like the engine. It might look good in your driveway, but do not expect to be able to drive around in it.

The bee-monkey example above quietly states what the totality of an ecosystem actually involves—all the bits you cannot see, or do not notice, as well as the bits you can. This nicely frames the deeper question: is it possible to actually 'move' something as complex as a whole ecosystem at all, or is it in fact always 'a con' to suggest (or to believe) that you can do so?

All living entities 'sense' not only the existence and presence of all other living entities, but also what those other entities do. Without this awareness, it would be impossible for living entities to collaborate to create higher level living entities, and also compete for survival. Hence, we might deduce that all the living entities that go together to create a mangrove ecosystem 'know' each other and live collaboratively or competitively within that ecosystem to 'be' that ecosystem.

COORDINATED COMPLEXITY OF LIFE

Getting people to understand the coordinated complexity of life that a total ecosystem is and respect it as that totality is important. Humans are part of a community of beings within an ecosystem.

In the UK, there are many ancient oak forests. The oak trees have over 500 species of animal, bird, plant, microflora, insects and microorganisms explicitly living with them. They only live in these oak forests, but are not parasitic on the oak trees. Together they co-create the oak forest. An oak forest is far, far more than just a collection of oak trees.

A monoculture plantation is not a forest. It is far, far less than a forest. If a government ministry counts rubber plantations as forest, the expansion of rubber plantation will be mis-represented as forest expansion.

As cooperation and competition occur at the smallest and earliest level of the development of living entities, there must be intercommunication at the basic level of radiation itself.

We are used to the idea of optic fibres, which can transmit a vast amount of information in modulated light waves. If we imagine that every created entity emits a signature radiation profile – rather like sending out its bar code pattern – that all other created entities can interpret, then they can also communicate via radiation and either coordinate doing things together and build higher level created entities, or compete for survival.

LISTENING TO THE DANCE OF LIFE

All of creation 'sings as it dances'. Life is never silent. Hence, one will always be able to 'hear' it. If we made microphones sensitive to the right high frequencies above the human audible range, and sensitive down to low levels of sound, it would be interesting to put them both above and below swamp level in a mangrove swamp and record the full range of sound energy at different frequencies.

One might have to plot the outcome on a log scale for energy intensity as the human audible range will dominate and obscure the higher frequency sound, but it will be there.

If we then did the same in a 'transplanted' mangrove swamp that was not becoming healthy, we ought to be able to 'hear' the absence of the detailed 'life' that makes up a truly vibrant and complete mangrove swamp. That difference would be very interesting to hear.

Measuring and recording life should happen, but it is in a way incidental and 'academic'. It is the coordinated—albeit almost invisibly slow—action such as those taken by the Mankôté mangroves community, that matters. How does one get not merely similar initiatives supported elsewhere, but the equivalent locals given the recognition they need and the 'right of ownership' of what is in fact 'their' ecosystem (their living environment)?

Change comes from action and social recognition. 'Science' is in fact incidental.

**KAREN CHAND**

Director of Strategy and Operations, JCI and JSC

BUILDING FUTURE GENERATIONS EQUIPPED WITH KNOWLEDGE AND COMMITTED TO ACTION

AT THE LAUNCH of Mission 4.7 in December 2021, the world was reminded that within Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) lies the means to which all the other SDGs can be achieved. Most education systems worldwide share the two-pronged objectives of preparing young people to contribute to their respective economies; and developing young people into respectful, caring individuals. However, Target 4.7 intends to create a transformational learning approach by bringing together previously unrelated themes of climate, sustainability, peace, justice, human rights, and cultural diversity into education systems for the larger aspiration of bettering the world.

In May 2021, at UNESCO's World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development, several first mover countries affirmed their countries' commitments to introducing new educational approaches to Education in Sustainable Development (ESD). While Malaysia has yet to meaningfully participate in global discussions on ESD, the Ministry of Education has made statements to commit to strengthening existing programmes in ESD and Global Citizenship Education (GCED) within national primary and secondary school curriculums.

In early 2022, a team at JSC and the SDG Academy at Sunway University completed a preliminary study on the Malaysian primary school curriculum in order to identify gaps in ESD and GCED implementation and devise options to support the Ministry of Education. This study reviewed existing education policy documents (e.g. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025), textbooks and curriculum frameworks, and interviewed with Malaysian schoolteachers and education experts. We found that:

- First, while there has been a recent push to incorporate elements of ESD in classrooms, teachers do not have access to materials to do so that have been created, selected and vetted for appropriateness, quality and accuracy. While there is a small number of local ESD champions made up of passionate teachers or local NGOs who curate ESD lessons on their own, the majority of teachers do not deviate from the textbook.
- Second, teachers themselves do not receive professional development in ESD to be able to effectively incorporate its elements into existing subjects. The current system of in-service teacher professional development is generally not rigorous, highly selective and inaccessible to many. Trained teachers are expected to cascade their learning to other teachers in their school, a system generally thought to be ineffective.

- Third, while the education system gives schools autonomy in teaching methods and lesson delivery, there is no incentive to incorporate ESD. Official KPIs are focused on national syllabus delivery and examinations. The general consensus is that there is little incentive by school leaders to do bold and different things. As such, school-led and school-wide approaches based on specific needs of the students and the local community are seldom seen.
- Fourth, the present focus on a subject-based curriculum does not allow for creativity at an interdisciplinary level as an effective ESD and GCED curriculum would require.

The next phase of the Malaysia 4.7 team's work will be focused on interventions that directly address these gaps. Three major tasks have been identified:

1. **Make available content** that is carefully designed, resonates with local learners, is of the highest quality, and is integrated within the learning of languages, math, science and the arts in the spirit of Target 4.7. This includes the correct use of data, which allows evidence-based understanding of problems and enables creative identification of solutions.
2. **Empower all teachers** with effective and adequate training on ESD concepts, issues, relationships, or pedagogies. Provide them with in-class support, creative space, and professional development opportunities. All teachers must be able to challenge their students to engage in critical thought and help them value their own experiences, expertise and potential. A key enabler is digital accessibility. We cannot deliver ESD curriculums or train teachers without learners and teachers having digital access.
3. **Make ESD intertwined** in school culture and every part of school-level activities. This includes schools determining goals for themselves and for their local communities. It also ensures that not just the immediate school community but also other community members are on board and moving towards the same goals.

To achieve the above, the Malaysia Mission 4.7 team needs to forge and leverage collaborative partnerships not just with education stakeholders, but also other policymakers in the environmental, economic and social spheres; as well as the private sector, academia and civil society. Education should be seen as the site where multiple sectors come together to "multi-solve" myriad issues. Such cross-sectoral collaboration signals the democratisation of knowledge systems, from the production to the transfer and use of knowledge; to eliminate silos across science, policy, and the wider society; and to bridge the gap between knowledge and action.



GOH CHUN SHENG
Research Fellow

MALAYSIA SHOULD TARGET RURAL AREAS FOR IR4.0



THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION, also called Industrial Revolution 4.0, has become a major policy focus in Malaysia. Digital and smart technologies are perceived as key modular-building blocks for sustainable development in the next few decades. In many cases, transformative efforts and initiatives have been made primarily for urban areas, with concepts like ‘smart cities’ or ‘digital cities’. It was in recent years that both public and private sectors have started to realise one thing: rural areas that traditionally rely heavily on agriculture and forestry are a key strategic area for digital transformation. This is especially important for regions that have undergone severe deforestation and forest degradation due to large-scale land development activities.

The digital revolution may enable various transformative strategies in the quest for more sustainable ways of development and conservation in these frontiers of environmental degradation. For example, applications of these technologies may further push farm productivity off the agro-ecological limits, reducing the needs for agricultural expansion at the expense of forests. Also, the digital revolution may allow a narrative of decentralised but well-coordinated small-scale, grassroots innovations owing to wide connectivity and low transaction costs, with tools like real-

time, spatially explicit forest monitoring or electronic financing and marketing platforms.

The potential changes brought by the digital revolutions may be unpacked through the four technology vectors. One is **Internet-of-Things (IoT)** which can greatly improve the capability of monitoring, on both the farm and landscape scale. IoT represents a complex network of interconnected systems consisting of sensors and computing devices that permit flows of data without human-machine interactions. The most foreseeable is the application of inexpensive wireless network sensors in farm management to allow real-time adaptive operation. This can be further enhanced with an intelligent automation system that can react promptly to changes in temperature, moisture, etc., as well as detection of abnormality and diseases.

Information systematically collected through digitization and virtual connection of land-based activities leads to the formation of **Big Data**, i.e., huge, ever-growing, comprehensive databases. Examples range from digital libraries of crop growth cycles under various conditions, biodiversity, and genetic information to large-scale biogeochemical processes. These form the basis to generate

“CAN THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION PROVIDE A BREAKTHROUGH FOR THIS TRILEMMA OF BALANCING ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION?”

knowledge for a holistic understanding of the entire system. The availability of and access to this knowledge has important global implications for optimising production, conservation, and supply chains in the increasingly connected world.

The most intriguing domain is probably **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** which grows with ‘nutrients’ from big data. The key feature is its ability to solve problems without human interventions. Pairing with IoT and Big Data, it can continuously learn to make decisions without explicitly being programmed. At the farm level, it can analyse, predict, design, and optimise operation and maintenance. This is not limited to direct numerical inputs but also digitized visual information (e.g., real-time images of trees or land cover). At the landscape level, it can monitor and operate management of the entire land-use system, not only based on information on the ground but also connected to the larger climatic system with complex mathematic models.

Finally, through digital platforms and cloud computing, communication between rural and urban areas will be greatly enhanced. **Cloud Technologies** provide on-demand data storage, exchange, and much larger computing power without the need for physical possession and management of massive, advanced computer system resources by the users. These open a new door to small-scale, highly dispersed smallholdings by providing lower-cost access to and exchange of information, knowledge, services, and applications which were very difficult or expensive in the past. It potentially relieves rural farmers from information opacity and physical connectivity barriers, allowing them to acquire various services, subsidies, market information, and

consultancy much faster. It also relieves governments from the need to invest heavily in building a costly and inefficient physical governance system – a foreseeable example is much faster paperless communication through various digital platforms like emails between mobile devices and various mobile apps.

While Malaysia has tried to spur investment and encourage innovation in these areas, not all in the country could have appreciated the implications of the digital revolution until the spread of COVID-19 all over the country. In Sabah, the story of a young university student who stayed overnight on top of a tree to ensure better connectivity for her online examination during the movement control order (MCO) period has gone viral on YouTube. Incidents like this have somehow accelerated the progress of digitalisation in the rural areas. For example, Sarawak has made its move with its ‘digital economy’ policy framework (CMO, 2020). One of the plans is to extensively introduce electronic banking in rural areas via mobile phones as a permanent solution to overcome the limitation in physical access.

Developing countries like Malaysia often fall into a trilemma – it is very challenging to find a balance between economic growth, environmental protection, and social participation, especially when in the rural areas that rely on land-based activities for economic development. Can the digital revolution provide a breakthrough for this trilemma? While the idea of introducing advanced, futuristic technologies in relatively under-developed regions like the interior areas of Sabah remains speculative, exploring the opportunities and impacts can have important implications for steering the transformation.





CHONG KOK BOON
Senior Fellow

PRIORITISING THE REDUCTION OF LEARNING GAPS IN MALAYSIA

AFTER A LENGTHY two years of disruption in education delivery, Malaysian schools resumed full-scale face-to-face teaching and learning on 17th April 2022. This move effected an abolishment of a pandemic-induced rotational system, which split classes into two groups and physical attendance on alternate days or weeks. This cumbersome system placed greater burden on all stakeholders, i.e., teachers and pupils' experiences were demotivating: the repetition of teaching and learning of same content over weeks, pupils not able to have "human-touch" interactions with all other classmates, difficulties for parents in arranging work schedules, and not to mention many other hefty inconveniences.

The school closures and moving all teaching to online classes are disproportionate measures in containing the pandemic, as most of the Covid-19 positive children infected stayed at home. Furthermore, the Covid-19 Case Fatality Rate for youth (18 years old and below) is extremely low in Malaysia and worldwide, around 0.02%.

The school closures are a heavy cost to society. These costs are not only limited to the economy, but also more importantly educative losses, which harm pupils in learning cognitive, emotional and mental health, and to some extent might mean a 'Lost Generation'.

As a developing society, public tends to prioritise economic cost as a key performance indicator. According to a study carried by Center for Market Education, the school closures could cost RM 80 billion per year in terms of GDP lost. The projected losses are also yet to account for the future earning potential losses for affected students, when they join the labour market. Moreover, losses in education will impart a hefty future cost as it would create a structural mismatch between demand and supply in both skilled and unskilled jobs, hence Malaysia's future economics and wellbeing.

While online teaching and learning arguably are effective somewhat as substitute for conventional face-to-face teaching model at the tertiary level, it puts a significant price on learners, especially at the psychological level. The widely reported incident of Veveonah Mosibin, a Sabahan girl who documented herself climbing up trees to get better internet connection for her online examination still reverberates in Malaysian society. Furthermore, online education discriminates against those in rural areas and



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amongst disadvantaged social-economic status. The digital divide also victimised students from middle class families, as Malaysian residential homes were not setup for learning and working, lacking a conducive environment for students. Meanwhile, middle- and high-income families can afford to send their children to private tuition/enrichment classes, with the end result of widening the existing inequality of education access across society.

For those in the national benchmarking examination grades like Form 5 or Form 6, the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) had better arrangements for ensuring minimal impact on pupils' learning. The Level-1 (Primary 1-3), Level-2 (Primary 4-6) and Level-3 (Form 1 to 3) were the less fortunate students, victimised by the remote study policy.

According to research, an eight-week school closure could cost level-1 pupils significant learning shortfalls, particularly comprehension skills. Malaysian schools were shut for more than 200 days since March 2020, with the academic year only consisting 198 days. Thus far, MOE remains silent on the issues surrounding the two lost years on young learners, especially their mastery of the 3'R's, namely Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. The over-crowded size of class in many gigantic schools, which are usually located in urban areas serves as another challenge

for the assessment of learning gaps, let alone introducing targeted remedial action plans. As elementary education is heavily structured hierarchically, and if the learning loss is not remediated as soon as possible, it may cause an avalanche-style of accumulation after schools reopen, which can possibly cause the amount of learning loss to be at a far greater scale than missed school times due to the school closures or remote learning. This disastrous incident will happen in not just the far future, especially when schools are just carrying the planned curriculum as usual, without remedial efforts and adjusting according to lower-level students' cognitive and competency.

The pupils, parents and publics have a right to know these missing MOE public data and plans; whilst our less developed neighbouring countries like Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam had conveyed the data and introduced remedial actions. The failure of MOE in this circumstance again revealed the lack of leadership and accountability.

Malaysian education is one of the most centralised systems of education. It serves the needs of the economy of the 1950s and 60s, in ensuring equalities and quality assurance across the nation. However, the centralisation of education turned MOE into a mammoth, and our education systems have already been damaged by outdated practices, even pre-pandemic. Schools have lost their original function as education institutions, but exist rather as entity purely directed by MOE's bureaucratic practices

and focus on examination results, often ignoring enculturation of curiosity and inquisitiveness. The school closures and the two-year period of remote learning exacerbate these pertinent issues and inequalities of education, and most of the teaching professions do not dare to introduce targeted remedial action to pupils.

Perhaps, now is the time to decentralise the entire Malaysian education system by re-instating school autonomy, thus allowing each school to assess the learning gaps caused by the two-year long disruption and subsequently to introduce targeted remedial action plans for the academic year. With transparency in communication, parents and pupils will be aware of the amount of remedial efforts needed; they will be induced to take active part, as they will have a greater sense of belonging and of not being left out. Given the huge amount of work ahead, the government should introduce some incentives to facilitate involvement by publics, especially retired teachers, professionals and parents to engage in the remedial action plan, ensuring fair workload by currently serving teachers.

Crises always serve as a golden opportunity to revamp and improve defective systems. I hope Malaysians can move in unity to tackle this issue, turning the risk of a 'Lost Generation' into civilly-engaged societal development. At the end of the day, MOE should reform the entire education system for the sake of Malaysia's future generations.

“NOW IS THE TIME TO DECENTRALISE THE ENTIRE MALAYSIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM BY RE-INSTATING SCHOOL AUTONOMY... AND SUBSEQUENTLY INTRODUCE TARGETED REMEDIAL ACTION PLANS FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR.”

Malaysian school kids in paddy field
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BY HO YI JIAN
Research Associate

LESSONS FROM THE “SDGS FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PROJECT” IN MALAYSIA

CONDUCTING SOCIAL research among indigenous communities is difficult and one must be constantly aware of local sensitivities. Here are some of the key lessons we learnt for those who wish to among the Mah Meri in Selangor. Kampung Sungai Bumbun is one of a handful of Mah Meri villages scattered along the coast of Selangor. While we found the village chairman warm and highly informed, the villagers had mixed reactions. While we respected the privacy of their homes and were happy to talk to those who would receive us, other residents in the village were distrustful and avoidant. We were reminded that even though the headman chairman could vouch for us, we were still outsiders to the community.

KNOW THE INTERNATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The main international instrument in outlining Indigenous Rights is the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007 (UNDRIP), which took years to finally table due to extensive consultation with indigenous groups around the world. The UNDRIP outlines the minimum standards for realising the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, given their special relationship with the land or sea. The SDGs also improves on the MDGs with greater consultation and feedback from interest groups during the formulation of the SDGs, and The Indigenous Peoples Major Group are the primary interest group which engages with the UN SDGs at a high level. However, only two targets specifically mention Indigenous Peoples as a section—

others issues have to be read as an implied interpretation in other targets/indicators or disaggregated as indicated by SDG 17.18. Other noteworthy groups or efforts include the Indigenous Navigator (a surveying mechanism focusing on indigenous wellbeing) and the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (an umbrella regional organisation for indigenous rights).

KNOW THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

Different states in West Malaysia and East Malaysia are very different. Some may attribute poorer outcomes in Peninsular Malaysia because to the miniscule demographic size of Orang Asli compared to their East Malaysian counterparts, who in turn appear more politically more developed with their own party system. In West Malaysia, JAKOA (established under the Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954) has a very strong hand and long arm in Orang Asli land matters, education, culture and health, which in turn leads to accusations of paternalism (especially in light of principles of UNDRIP) and a lack of representation. In East Malaysia, the state government takes on these functions as whole, customary law is integrated into the legal system and Indigenous Peoples have good representation in government, but at the same time corruption chips away at delivery of outcomes to improving lives. Sabah and Sarawak have a strong and active civil society network, while in West Malaysia, Indigenous rights are being shored up by Center for Orang Asli Concerns (a research-oriented NGO), and Jaringan Kampung Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia (JKOASM) and Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia (POASM) (both indigenous umbrella non-government organisations). The national human rights commission, SUHAKAM, has been an ally of indigenous rights, although its federal mandate can only go so far in government.

KNOW THE ISSUES

The primary issue is always land. It is established at almost a definitional level that indigenous people have a special relationship to the land that is not only pragmatic, but spiritual; it is keenly tied to indigenous economic, health and mental well-being. Sarawak has very instructional indigenous categories of land use: there is land that is used for economic reasons, forest land that reserved for foraging, sacred land, and buffer zones between two pieces of ancestral land. However, in West Malaysia, land is becoming a premium and the land that is currently allocated to Orang Asli villages under the APA amounts to only a few hectares a person—other land, that could have been foraging or sacred land, are ring-fenced by the government as protected



“RESEARCHERS NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND NORMATIVE ASSUMPTIONS OF BOTH SDG-ORIENTED RESEARCH AND INDIGENOUS STUDIES.”



forests or sold by the state to (extractive industry) developers. In Sabah and Sarawak, the government justifies dispossession through the narrative of balancing narrow interests with the holistic development of the state: *we need to build a dam to supply water or electricity*. Courts in Malaysia have established that Indigenous Peoples do have usufructuary (usage) rights over land, but it is often too little, too late as there's no immediate provision for the wider ownership and protection of Indigenous lands. This also means that Indigenous Peoples can be wary of state and businesses, which researchers need to be aware of.

SHAPING YOUR RESEARCH

Researchers need to understand the epistemological and normative assumptions of both SDG-oriented research and Indigenous Studies. SDG-oriented research tends to be aggregative and qualitative, with an interest in allowing the state to demonstrate their progress. However, Indigenous Studies tends to orient themselves to the deep and emergent ethnographic and anthropological methods, with the goal of legitimising indigeneity against colonialist stereotypes. Both methods are valid and SDG-oriented researchers should leverage on the deep experience of Indigenous anthropologists. It is vital to put indigenous interests and voices at the heart of SDG-oriented research, as a poor reputation can create resistance to the SDGs as another neo-colonialist project.

Ideally, researchers should have Indigenous representation directing the research team. The project should really aim to develop a long-term relationship with the community. If a long, protracted visit is not possible, several short visits over a longer period may allow a level of longitudinal observation, and builds

trust with the community and as a result, better quality data or insight can be gathered. However, it is also important to bear in mind specific timings for seasonal and personal events so as not to inconvenience or burden indigenous individuals or communities. Additionally, the notion of representation of indigenous interest should be framed within a constant conversation with those communities in mind. Finally, if the timeframe will be longer than convenient—not only are some Indigenous communities more remote, but it may take time to build trust, allies and understanding. Selection of site or community to study may need to be a process rather than decisive if there are many gatekeeping authorities or circumstantial constraints like the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION: HAVE THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

The stereotype of Indigenous Peoples in Malaysia is often outdated. UNDRIP and indigenous activists are both trying to fight the negative stereotype that Indigeneity is not part of modern Malaysia. Instead, Indigeneity, in all its heterogeneous experience and forms, needs to truly part of the Malaysian identity, especially with sustainability in mind. Sustainability is also the sustenance of cultural forms and an intangible heritage. Sustainability and indigenous interests can and do intersect: by protecting Indigenous lands, we are also preventing overdevelopment and economic well-being; by allowing self-determination, we are ensuring that these communities thrive on their own terms.

Ultimately, researchers need to bear the big picture in mind: we are working hand-in-hand with indigenous people, if not with indigenous peoples upfront; and that the SDGs are there to improve the lives of people and uplift a multifaceted understanding of wellbeing, and not the other way around.

EVENTS LISTINGS AND HIGHLIGHTS

3

APRIL 2021

Launch of Shrink that BigFoot Project

Outreach program (in collaboration with Rotary Club of Bukit Kiara Sunrise).

PRESENTERS:

Professor Leong Choon Heng, Deputy Director, Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development, Sunway University **Kong Phui Yi**, Outreach and Education Executive, Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development, Sunway University.

6

APRIL 2021

Education for Sustainable Development: The Role of Higher Education

Side event at the UN Youth Forum

PANELLISTS:

Professor Dato' Dr Woo Wing Thye, Distinguished Professor of Economics, University of California, Davis, Vice President, SDSN Asia, President, Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia, Sunway University and Director, JSC, Sunway University; **Patrick Paul Walsh**, University College Dublin & Senior Advisor SDSN; **Chandrika Bahadur**, Vice President of Education SDSN & Director of the SDG Academy; **Ramu Damodaran**, Chief, United Nations Academic Impact.

14

JUNE 2021

Navigating Malaysia's Policy Challenges of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the High-Income Hurdle: Optimising trade-offs and harnessing complementarities

Online Webinar co-organised with Malaysian Economic Association.

Professor Dato' Dr Woo Wing Thye, President, Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia, Sunway University; **Professor Noor Azlan Ghazali**, former Vice-Chancellor Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Head of Economics and Management Cluster National Council of Professors; **Professor Yeah Kim Leng**, Director, Economics Studies, Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia, Sunway University.

MODERATOR:

Datuk Dr Norma Mansor, President, Malaysian Economic Association.

17

JUNE 2021

Malaysia SDG Webinar: Building Back Better: Eradicating Poverty and Promoting Inclusive Growth in Response to Covid-19

Online Webinar, co-organised by JSC and ASLI, in collaboration with Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia.

WELCOME REMARKS:

YB Dato' Sri Mustapa Mohamed, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Economy).

SESSION 1:

Abdul Halim Bin Abdul Aziz, Deputy Director General (Policy), Economic Planning Unit; **Associate Professor Madya Dr Azwan Abdullah**, Head of Networking and Big Data Division, Institute for Poverty Research and Management (InsPeK), Universiti Malaysia Kelantan; moderated by **Professor Dato' Dr Rashila Ramli**, Principal Fellow/Professor of Political Science, Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS).

SESSION 2:

Professor Dato' Dr Woo Wing Thye, Director, Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development, Sunway University; **Professor Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria**, Malaysia CSO-SDG Alliance; moderated by Assoc. **Professor Dr Rusmawati Said**, Head of Economics Programme, School of Business & Economics, Universiti Putra Malaysia.

7

JULY 2021

SDG Webinar Series: Should the Parliament be a Fulltime Institution?

Online Webinar, co-organised by JSC and ASLI.

YB Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said, Deputy Speaker, Dewan Rakyat; **YB Dr Kelvin Yii Lee Wuen**, Special Select Committee on Health, Science and Innovation, Dewan Rakyat; **Datuk Dr Mazuki Mohamad**, Principal Private Secretary, Prime Minister's Office; **Maha Balakrishnan**, Parliamentary and Legal consultant. Moderated by **Professor Wong Chin Huat**, Professor of Governance Studies, Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development, Sunway University.

14

JULY 2021

SDG Webinar Series: Political Stability Despite Minority Governments: The New Zealand Experience

Online Webinar, co-organised by JSC and ASLI.

Wendy McGuinness, Chief Executive, McGuinness Institute; **Jahabar Sadiq**, Founder and Editor, The Malaysian Insight; **Sharaad Kuttan**, Senior Anchor, Astro Awani; **Philip Golingai**, News Editor, the Star Media Group. Moderated by **Professor Wong Chin Huat**, Professor of Governance Studies, Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development, Sunway University.

17

AUGUST 2021

SDG Webinar Series: Spurring Malaysia's Economic Recovery to End Hunger and Malnutrition

Online webinar in collaboration with Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia.

OPENING REMARKS:

Datuk Saiful Anuar bin Lebal Hussien, Director General, Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia.

PANELLISTS:

Zalma Abdul Razak, Director, Nutrition Division, Ministry of Health Malaysia; **Derek Kok**, Research Analyst, Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development, Sunway University; **Dr Shaufique F. Sidique**, Professor of Agricultural Economics, Universiti Putra Malaysia.

MODERATOR:

Dr Gary Theseira, Technical Advisor, Malaysian Green Technology and Climate Change Centre.

26

AUGUST 2021

A Roadmap for Parliamentary Reform For and Beyond The Pandemic

Special Lecture co-organised with ASLI.

YB Azalina Othman Said, MP for Pengerang (P157).

MODERATOR:

Professor Wong Chin Huat, Professor, Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development, Sunway University.

13

SEPTEMBER 2021

Beyond COVID-19: Fighting Infectious Diseases Symposium

Online Webinar, co-organised by JCI, JSC, and ASLI; in collaboration with Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Malaysia.

Datuk Dr Hishamshah Mohd Ibrahim, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Health Malaysia; **Dato' Professor Dr Adeeba Kamarulzaman**, Professor of Infectious Diseases, Universiti Malaya; **Professor Dr Wu Zunyou**, Chief Epidemiologist, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention; **Professor Dr Sibrandes Poppema**, President, Sunway University; **Professor Dr Abhi Veerakumarasivam**, Dean, School of Medical and Life Sciences, Sunway University.

MODERATOR:

Professor Dato' Dr Woo Wing Thy, President, Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia.

24

SEPTEMBER 2021

EAEA-JCI International Webinar: Pandemic Recovery and East Asian Economic Resilience

Online Webinar, co-organised by JCI and the East Asian Economic Association (EAEA).

Professor Dato' Dr Woo Wing Thy, President, Jeffrey Cheah Institute for Southeast Asia and Director, Jeffrey Sachs Center for Sustainable Development, Sunway University; **Professor Hal Hill**, H.W. Arndt Professor Emeritus of Southeast Asian Economies, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific; President, East Asian Economic Association (EAEA); **Joe Zveglic**, Acting Chief Economist, Asian Development Bank; **Professor Fukunari Kimura**, Keio University and Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA); **Professor Shujiro Urata**, Waseda University and vice-President, EAEA; **Arsenio Balisacan**, Chair of the Philippine Competition Commission; **Professor Shandre Mugan Thangavelu**, Vice President, Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia, Sunway University.

11

OCTOBER 2021

Change of Tides? Germany's 2021 Election Explained

Online Webinar, co-organised by JCI and JSC.

Marc Saxer, Head of Asia Department, FES Berlin; **HE Peter Blomeyer**, Ambassador of Germany to Malaysia.

MODERATOR:

Professor Wong Chin Huat, Professor of Governance Studies, Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development.

15

OCTOBER 2021

Road to Glasgow - Kunming: What to Expect from the 26th UNFCCC and the 15th CBD COP

Online Webinar, organised by WWF and the EU Delegation to Malaysia, and supported by JSC.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

Senator Tengku Datuk Seri Utama, Zafrul bin Tengku Abdul Aziz, Minister of Finance for Malaysia; **Datuk Zurinah binti Pawanteh**, Secretary General for the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources Malaysia.

OPENING REMARKS:

H.H. Tunku Ali Redhaudhin Ibni Tuanku Muhriz, Chairman of WWF-Malaysia.

PANEL SESSION 1:

Datu Dr Muhammad Abdullah, Director, Economic Planning Unit Sarawak; **Datuk Fazlur Rahman bin Zainuddin**, Chief Strategy and Venture of Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB); **Pierluca Merola**, Directorate General for Energy, European Commission.

MODERATOR:

Dr Hezri Adnan, Executive Director of Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER).

PANEL SESSION 2:

Nazlan Mohammad, Senior Sustainability Manager, Sawit Kinabalu; **Dr Mark Rayan**, Country Director, Wildlife Conservation Society Malaysia Program (WCS Malaysia); **Dr Humberto Delgado Rosa**, Director for Natural Capital, DG for Environment, European Commission.

MODERATOR:

Frederick Kugan, Chief Conservator of Forest for Sabah Forestry Department.

PANEL SESSION 3:

Jacqueline Chang, Country Coordinator for IURC Asia-Australasia; **Asih Budiati**, Team Leader for Global Covenant of Mayors; **Carlos Mendes**, Director General of Maia Municipality, Portugal; **Datuk Hj Rozali Mohamud**, Mayor of Seberang Perai City Council; **Datuk Ismail Ibrahim**, Chief Executive of Iskandar Regional Development Authority (IRDA).

MODERATOR:

Pablo Gandara, Team Leader for International Urban and Regional Cooperation (IURC) Asia-Australasia.

21 - 8

OCTOBER -
NOVEMBER 2021

ASEAN Future Leaders SDG Workshop

In collaboration with undergraduate students from 8 ASEAN nations.

PRESENTERS:

Professor Leong Choon Heng, Deputy Director, Jeffrey Sachs Center, Sunway University; **Dr Chen Jit Ern**, Research Fellow, Jeffrey Sachs Center, Sunway University; **Dr Goh Chun Seng**, Research Fellow, Jeffrey Sachs Center, Sunway University; **Professor Gopalasamy Reuben Clements**, Senior Fellow, Jeffrey Sachs Center, Sunway University.

11

NOVEMBER 2021

SDG Webinar Series: Enhancing the Healthcare Delivery System in the Twelfth Plan Through a Whole-Of-Nation Approach

Online Webinar in collaboration with Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia.

Suraiya Syed Mohamed, Director of Health Education Division, Ministry of Health, Malaysia; **Professor Datuk Dr Hj Rohaizat bin Hj Yon**, Consultant Public Health Physician & Public Health Expert, Management and Science University (Former Deputy Director-General of Health (Medical), MOH); **Professor Dato' Dr Adeeba Kamarulzaman**, Department of Medicine, Universiti Malaya.

MODERATOR:

Professor Dr Abhi Veerakumarasivam, Dean of the School of Medical and Life Sciences, Sunway University.

13 – 14
JANUARY 2022

Sustainable Development for Indigenous Peoples Advocacy Roundtable

Two Day Online Roundtable.

OPENING REMARKS:

Sophia Lim, CEO, WWF Malaysia; **Professor Wong Chin Huat**, Professor of Governance Studies, Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development, Sunway University.

SESSION 1:

Justin Liew, Research Associate, Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development, Sunway University; **Professor James Alin**, Senior Lecturer, Universiti Malaysia Sabah; **Reita Rahim**, Founder, Gerai OA.

SESSION 2:

Kong Phui Yi, Executive – Outreach and Education, Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development, Sunway University; **Danesh P. Chacko**, Research Analyst, Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development, Sunway University; **Maslah Rompado**, Secretary General Assistant, Jaringan Orang Asal Se-Malaysia; **Tan Sri Lee Oi Hian**, KLK Berhad; **Professor Fadzillah Majid Cooke**, Independent Research Fellow.

SESSION 3:

Ho Yi Jian, Research Associate, Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development, Sunway University; **Anne Lasimbang**, Executive Director, PACOS Trust; **Norya Abas**, President, Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia.

CLOSING REFLECTION SESSION:

Karen Chand, Director of Strategy and Operations, Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development, Sunway University; **Zara Phang**, Green Economy Analyst, WWF Malaysia.

■ JSC events ■ JCI events ■ Mixed events

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Jeffrey Cheah Institute:
<https://www.youtube.com/JeffreyCheahInst/>

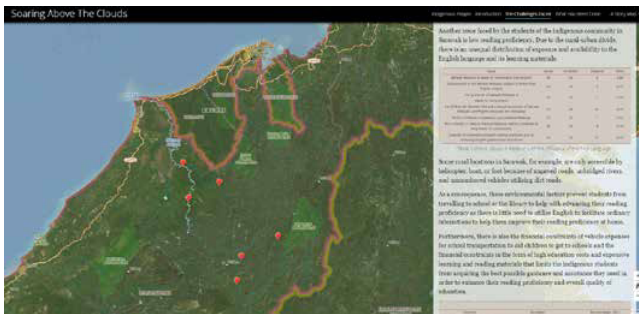
Jeffrey Sachs Center: http://bit.ly/JSC_Youtube



RESEARCH AWARDS & GOALS ACHIEVED



▲ Dr Chen Jit Ern received an industrial grant of 200,000 MYR to work on the Ecology and Hydrology of the Sunway South Quay lake in 2021, to run for two years.



▲ Prof Leong Choon Heng, with the assistance of Danesh Chacko, Shannon Kobran and Imran Rasid, designed and developed MPU 3312 "Sustainable Development in Malaysia", an undergraduate-level course for Sunway University, which was delivered in Jan-Feb 2022. Students created storymaps using ArcGIS for sustainability issues in Malaysia.



▲ Prof Koh Hock Lye, Dr Chen Jit Ern and Andrew Fans' work on a Value at Risk (VaR) assessment of Sunway REIT properties was mentioned in the Sunway REIT Annual Report 2022.



◀ The SDG Academy course, "How to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals?" course is now available in Bahasa Melayu, thanks to a translation project by SDSN Malaysia, led by Kong Phui Yi. We convened over 40 researchers from three SDSN member institutions (Universiti Utara Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, and Sunway University).

▲ One more item: KarenChand_SDGwebinarseries.png"Since August 2020, JSC has partnered with the Malaysian government to deliver a series of SDG webinars to deliberate on themes of contemporary concern. To date, 9 webinars have been delivered under this series."

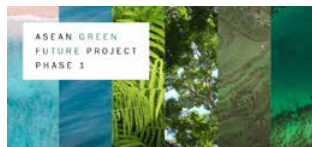


◀ The SDG for Indigenous Peoples project has been completed with a draft manuscript of an advocacy report sent to the funders, WWF Malaysia. Prof Wong Chin Huat, together with Karen Chand, Danesh P. Chacko, Kong Phui Yi, Justin Liew and Ho Yi Jian, and some earlier research work by Jeremy Lim and Nur Amirah Abdul Majid. Advocacy follow-up aimed at the public and policy-makers is planned in 2022.





▲ The public can examine more granular sub-national SDG performance of the 16 individual States and Federal Territories in Malaysia on an online dashboard since late March 2022, thanks to the "SDG for Malaysian States" project as led by Danesh P. Chacko. It presents data from consultations with experts from JSC, SDSN, and others across Malaysia and was constructed with input from a Paris-based SDG Index team. To find out more: <https://sdg-for-malaysian-states-sdsn.hub.arcgis.com/>



▲ The ASEAN Green Future project, led by Prof. Leong Yuen Yoong, presents the publication of "Options for Decarbonizing Malaysia". With Phase I completed, Phase 2 commences with detailed quantitative assessments of the different options for decarbonizing ASEAN economies, and work alongside governments to develop country-specific decarbonization modeling and pathways. For more, see <https://www.unsdsn.org/asean-green-future-project-further-faster-together>



▲ Prof Shandre M. Thangavelu has been appointed Trade Advisor to the Minister of Commerce of Cambodia. The honorary appointment is to support the Cambodian government in the structural transformation of the Cambodian economy for the next phase of development and growth of Cambodia in ASEAN and East Asia.

New Appointments



Prof Peh Suat Cheng
Professor



Shannon Kobran
Lead, SDG Academy Office, Kuala Lumpur



Mohd Imran Rasid
Executive – Programmes



Justin Liew
Research Associate, SDSN Asia



Subbatra Kanesan
Education and Outreach Executive



Zayd Shaukat Ali
Executive – Administration, Office of Graduate Studies



Muhammad Afiq Ismaizam
Senior Executive – Network Management, SDSN Asia

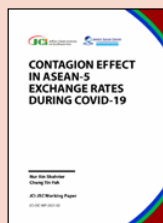


Wo Changxi
Research Associate, SDSN Asia

JCI-JSC WORKING PAPER SERIES 2021



"Minimizing COVID-19 Transmission Cases: Do Policies and Institutions Matter?"
By Dessie Tarko Ambaw, Vutha Hing, Patrick Osakwe, Shandre M Thangavelu.



"Contagion Effect in ASEAN-5 Exchange Rates during COVID-19"
By Nur Ain Shahrier and Chung Tin Fah.



"Options for Decarbonizing Malaysia"
By Leong Yuen Yoong, Michael James Platts, Amran Sofiyan, Fun Woh Peng, Teh Ah Kau, Andrew Fan, Low Wai Sern, Agamutu Pariatamby, Chen Jit Ern, and Gopalasamy Reuben Clements.



"Financial Development and Inclusion on Saving Behavior in ASEAN LDC: Case of Cambodia"
By Chea Serey and Shandre M Thangavelu.

NOTABLE PUBLICATIONS



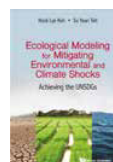
"Options for Decarbonizing Malaysia" in 'ASEAN Green Future' (United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2021). By Leong Yuen Yoong, Michael James Platts, Amran Sofiyan, Fun Woh Peng, Teh Ah Kau, Andrew Fan, Low Wai Sern, Agamutu Pariatamby, Chen Jit Ern, and Gopalasamy Reuben Clements.



"Roadmap to 2050: The Land-Water-Energy Nexus of Biofuels" (UN SDSN and Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei, 2021). By Maurizio Masi, Emanuele Oddo, Maria Cristina Rulli, Joaquim E. A. Seabra and Goh Chun Sheng.



"Extended Producer Responsibility Policy Review Report 2021" (WWF Malaysia, 2021). By Agamutu Pariatamby, Mehran Bhatti, and Dr. Jayanthi Barasath.



"Ecological Modeling for Mitigating Environmental and Climate Shocks" (World Scientific, 2021). By Koh Hock Lye and Teh Su Yearn.

SELECTED STAFF PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

2022 Highlights

PROF WOO WING THYE

President, JCI; Director, JSC

- With Xiaosong Wang, Huan Wu, and Shenxian Xie, 'OFDI and Stock Returns: Evidence from Manufacturing Firms Listed on the Chinese A-shares Market', *Journal of Asian Economies*, 7(C), 4 June 2021.
- With Wang Xiaosong and Liu Tao [in Mandarin Chinese], '*Rénmínbi guóji shìyòng de yíngxiǎng yīnsù – jīyú quánqiú shìjiào de lǐlùn jí jīngyàn yánjiū*', *Jingji Yanjiu*, <'The Determinants on the International Use of RMB: Theory and Evidence from Global Perspective', *Economic Research Journal*>, April 2021, Issue 4, 126-142.
- **OPINION:** 'Budget 2022 and Emergency Room economics', *The Edge Markets*, 28 September 2021.
- **OPINION:** 'Sustainable Development Instead of Great Power Competition', in Ben Scott (ed.), *The Indo Pacific Operating System: How Can America Shore Up the Regional Order?*, The Lowy Institute, November 2021.
- **PRESENTATION:** 'Chasing Southeast Asia's Green Future', *The Briefing Room*, ClimateWorks Australia, 26 October 2021.

PROF SHANDRE M. THANGAVELU

Vice-President, JCI;
Senior Fellow, JSC.

- With Fukunari Kimura and Dionisius Narjoko (Eds.), *Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership: Implications, Challenges, and Future Growth of East Asia and ASEAN* (Indonesia: Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, 2022).
- With Wenxiao Wang and Faqin Lin, 'Global Value Chains, Firms and Wage Inequality: Evidence from China', *China Economic Review*, 66, 101585.
- With Wenxiao Wang and Christopher Findlay, 'Trade, Technology and Labour Market', *The Asian Pacific Literature Review*, 35(1), 19-35.
- With V. Anbumozhi, 'Global financial crisis and firm activities in global value chain: case of Vietnamese firms', *Journal of Social and Economic Development*, 23(3), 505-520.

PROF JAMES CHIN

Director, Governance Studies
Programme

- **BOOK CHAPTER:** 'Malaysia: Identity politics, the rise of political Islam and Ketuanan Melayu Islam', in Mathews Mathew and Melvin Tay (Eds.), *Religion and identity politics: Global trends and local realities* (Singapore: World Scientific), 75-95.
- 'Papua New Guinea in 2020: China Rising and Bougainville Independence', *Asian Survey*, 61(1), 160-165.
- **OPINION:** 'Much ado about nothing', S'poreans, shouldn't worry too much about M'sia's change of PMs", *Mothership.sg*, August 2021.
- **OPINION:** 'Malaysian FM's 'Big Brother' China Gaffe: Faux Pas or Freudian Slip?', *The Diplomat*, April 2021.
- **PRESENTATION:** 'Malaysia's Back to the Future: The pandemic crisis, a new prime minister from UMNO, and a repudiation of the historic 2018 elections?', Sydney Southeast Asia Centre, University of Sydney, 16 September 2021.
- **PRESENTATION:** 'The "Other" Malaysia: Sabah and Sarawak and the Politics of Secession', Centre for Southeast Asia Research, University of British Columbia (UBC), 22 June 2021.

PROF YEAH KIM LENG

Director, Economic
Studies Programme

- **OPINION:** 'Digital banks and the transformation of Malaysia's financial landscape', *East Asia Forum*, 30 September 2021.
- **PRESENTATION:** 'Development of Strategies – Post-Pandemic Future Outlook', at *Virtual Palm and Lauric Oils Price Outlook Conference*, Bursa Malaysia, 23 March 2021.
- **PRESENTATION:** 'Post-Pandemic 2022: Boom or Bust?', at *Sunway Leader Speaker Series 2021*, 28 September 2021.
- **PRESENTATION:** 'Special Paper: The Global Economy Post-Pandemic', at *MAICSA Annual Conference*, The Malaysian Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators, 7 October 2021.
- **PANELIST:** 'Navigating Resilient Recovery through Statistics', plenary speaker, at *Persidangan Statistik Malaysia Ke-8* <'The 8th Malaysia Statistics Conference'>, Department of Statistics Malaysia, 20 October 2021.

**PROF AGAMUTU
PARIATAMBY**

Professor

- **REPORT:** With various authors, 'Options for Decarbonizing Malaysia', in 'ASEAN Green Future' (United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network).
- **REPORT:** With Mehran Bhatti, Dr. Jayanthi Barasarath, 'Extended Producer Responsibility Policy Review Report 2021' (WWF Malaysia, 2021).
- With Auwalu Hassan, 'Bioaugmentation assisted bioremediation and kinetics modelling of heavy metal polluted landfill soil', *International Journal of Environmental Science and Technology*, August 2021.
- With Paul Selvan Devadoss, Agamuthu P., Mehran S., Santha C and Fauziah S H., 'Implications of Municipal Solid Waste Management on Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Malaysia and the Way Forward', *Waste Management*, 119, 135-144.
- With Jayanthi B., 'Clinical waste management under Covid-19 scenario in Malaysia', *Waste Management & Research* 39(1), Supplement 18-26.
- With Dwi Hantoko, Xiaodong Li, Kunio Yoshikawa Mika Horttanainen, Mi Yana, 'Challenges and practices on waste management and disposal during COVID-19 pandemic', *Journal of Environmental Management*, May 2021, 286, 112140.
- 'Is plastic Circular Economy, The Solution?', *Waste Monitor*, 4(1): 47-48.

DR CHEN JIT ERN

Research Fellow

- **REPORT:** With various authors, 'Options for Decarbonizing Malaysia', in 'ASEAN Green Future' (United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network).
- With Marcela Herrera, Shannon G Klein, Sara Campana, Arun Prasanna, Carlos M Duarte, Manuel Aranda, 'Temperature transcends partner specificity in the symbiosis establishment of a cnidarian', *The ISME Journal*, 15(1), 141-53.
- With Cheng-Yau Tan, Ian Charles Dodd, Siew-Moi Phang, Chiew Foan Chin, Yoon-Yen Yow, Shyamala Ratnayeke, 'Regulation of algal and cyanobacterial auxin production, physiology and application in agriculture: an overview', *Journal of Applied Phycology*, Phycology, October 2021, 3(5), 2995-3023.
- With T Tong, WL Lim, J Chew, A Veerakumarasivam, 'Evaluating perceived effectiveness of online learning among Biological Sciences undergraduates during the COVID-19 pandemic', Seminar on Internal-External Quality Assurance. Kuala Lumpur." *Higher Education as an Enterprise-Embedding the Quality Assurance Culture* (2021): 107.

**DR CHONG
KOK BOON**

Senior Fellow

- With Christelle Pau Ping Wong, Chin Wei Lai, Kian Mun Lee, Guan Ting Pan, Mohd Rafie Johan, Joon Ching Juan, and Thomas Chung Kuang Yang, 'A high-capacity of oxygen induced SrTiO₃ cathode material for rechargeable Alkaline Zinc battery', *Material Science in Semiconductor Processing*, August 2021, 130-105802.

DANESH P. CHACKO

Research Analyst

- **OPINION:** With Fork Yow Leong, 'Root cause of problems or solutions for electoral boundaries', *Malaysiakini*, 1 September 2021.
- **OPINION:** 'Direct democracy options for Malaysia', *The Malaysian Insight*, 6 July 2021.
- **OPINION:** Financing women representation in politics – best way forward', *Malaysiakini*, 9 April 2021.
- **OPINION:** With SV Singam, 'Updating your voting address is your responsibility', *Malaysiakini*, 3 June 2021.
- **OPINION:** With Fork Yow Leong, 'Improving disclosure for election costs', *Malaysiakini*, 26 February 2021.

DEREK KOK

Research Analyst

- With Woo Wing Thye, 'Saving Lives and Livelihoods in the COVID-19 Pandemic: What Have We Learned, Particularly from Asia?', *Asian Economic Papers*. 20 (1): 1–29.
- With Woo Wing Thye, 'The wide range of national reactions to the common COVID-19 shock: observations on causes and effects', *Journal of Chinese Economic and Business Studies*, January 2021, 18(4), 379–383.

ANDREW FAN

Research Fellow

- **REPORT:** With various authors, 'Options for Decarbonizing Malaysia', in 'ASEAN Green Future' (United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network).
- **OPINION:** With GR Clements, 'Climate and environmental Governance: Building cooler cities for a cooler future', *The Edge Weekly*, 20 February 2021.
- With Woo Wing Thye, 'Achieving net zero carbon emissions at the firm level', *The Edge Weekly*, 15 December 2021.

**PROF FUN
WOH PENG**

Research Fellow

- **REPORT:** With various authors, 'Options for Decarbonizing Malaysia', in 'ASEAN Green Future' (United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network).

**DR GOH
CHUN SHENG**

Research Fellow

- **REPORT:** With Maurizio Masi, Emanuele Oddo, Maria Cristina Rulli, Joaquim E. A. Seabra, 'Roadmap to 2050: The Land-Water-Energy Nexus of Biofuels' (UN SDSN and Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei, 2021), <https://www.Roadmap2050.report>
- With Mohd Hanafiah K, Abd Mutalib AH, Miard P, Mohd Sah SA, and Ruppert N, 'Impact of Malaysian palm oil on sustainable development goals: co-benefits and trade-offs across mitigation strategies', *Sustainability Science*, October 2021, 1–23.
- With Ahl A and Woo Wing Thye, 'Sustainable Transformation of Land-Based Economic Development in the Era of Digital Revolution', *Trends in Biotechnology*, January 2021, 17, 192–200.

**PROF GOPALASAMY
REUBEN CLEMENTS**

XXXXXXXX

- **REPORT:** With various authors, 'Options for Decarbonizing Malaysia', in 'ASEAN Green Future' (United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network).
- With Thor-Seng Liew and Junn-Kitt Foon, 'Conservation of Limestone Ecosystems of Malaysia', [series of 7 eBooks] <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.14907846.v5>
- With Susana Rostro-García, Jan F. Kamler, Song Horng Liang, Abdul Kadir bin Abu Hashim, 'Conservation status of large mammals in protected and logged forests of the greater Taman Negara Landscape, Peninsular Malaysia', *Biodiversitas*, January 2021, 22(1). 272–277
- With Roshan Gusharajan, Azlan Mohamed, Seth T. Wong, Jurgen Niedballa, Azrie Petrus, Jaffly Jubili, Robin Lietz, Wai-Ming Wong, Johnny Kissing, Peter Lagan, and Andreas Wilting, 'Sustainable forest management is vital for the persistence of sun bear *Helarctos malayanus* populations in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo', *Forest Ecology and Management*, August 2021, 493, 119270.
- With Lain E. Pardo, William Edwards, Mason J Campbell, Bibiana Gomez-Valencia, & William F. Laurance, 'Effects of oil palm and human presence on the activity patterns of terrestrial mammals in the Colombian Llanos', *Mammalian Biology*, July 2021, 101(6), 775–789.

HO YI JIAN

Research Associate

- **BOOK CHAPTER:** With Benjamin YH Loh, 'Don't Jump, Time to Work: The Political Maturity of Sabahan Digital Spaces Through the 2020 State Elections', in Bridget Welsh, Vilashini Somiah, and Benjamin YH Loh (Eds.), *Sabah from the Ground: the 2020 Elections & the Politics of Survival* (Petaling Jaya: SIRD, 2021).

PROF KOH HOCK LYE

Senior Fellow

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PROF LEONG YUEN YOONG

Professor

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