SDG Innovations & Impact:
Relational Approach in Enabling Innovative Solutions and Impact Creation at the Grassroots

Paniirselvam Jayaraman*

Abstract

SDG localisation is a primary goal of APPGM-SDG, and solution projects are the key component of this effort. Formed in 2019, mirroring the UK Parliament setup, the APPGM-SDG Malaysia has been the forefront organisation in localising SDGs in parliamentary constituencies. Despite Covid-19 and other practical challenges. The grounded research approach undertaken by APPGM-SDG paved the way for innovative grassroots solutions designed and undertaken by local organisations targeting vulnerable communities in their own localities. From 2020 to November 2023, APPGM-SDG has undertaken targeted solution projects at an unprecedented level, with 664 SDGs solution projects in 4 years and 364 solution providers around the country. These innovative solutions are developed through a unique relational approach between multiple stakeholders and engagements in multiple processes in the making. This approach has been the key framework in designing solution projects that have proven to have a much greater impact towards the community as a whole and personally on the livelihoods of the participants involved. This is also evident in our recent publication, *SDG Solution Projects: Best Practices Impacting the Grassroots*, which carries 35 best practices for solution projects and innovative stories from the ground that can be examples of model solutions for vulnerable communities. This paper will discuss the relational approach that brings out SDG innovations in finding solutions between the partners involved, the empowerment and participatory models in place, and the processes involved in curating suitable solutions. The lessons learnt from 2020 until now in crafting

* Paniirselvam Jayaraman is the Director of Policy Solution Unit, Constituency Coordination Department of the Secretariat of All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia for Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG). Email: paniirj@gmail.com

fine-tuned solutions will also be included in this paper, together with real-life case studies of SDG innovative solutions that have a greater relational approach between stakeholders.

Keywords: SDG innovation, Relational approach, APPGM-SDG, solution projects

Introduction

The All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG) was approved on 17 October 2019 and registered with the Secretary of Parliament. There are few APPGMs that were formed under the 14th Parliament Reform Agenda, and the idea originated from the UK Parliament APPGs, which consist of Members of both Houses of Parliament, academics, civil society members, professionals, and specialists coming together to share expertise and ideas as well as giving recommendations and inputs to the government on many disciplines.[1] The APPGM-SDG's noble intention and acceptability have survived a few government administration changes, and after GE15, it was reinstated in Parliament by the Speaker of Dewan Rakyat.

After the formation in 2019, grounded research and localising SDG work started in 2020 with government-provided funding. From 2020 to 2023, about 87 parliamentary constituencies were visited, and grounded research as well as localisation work was conducted. The process begins with research into local needs through focus group discussions with various groups of people. This is followed by the execution of solution projects to address the micro issues. Macro issues, on the other hand, will be highlighted to government agencies, and policy-related issues will be dealt with at policy-level discussions. The primary objective of micro-projects, known as solution projects, is to present the most effective solution and explore its potential for scaling up by agencies and other funders.

Apart from that, solution projects also serve as a tool to identify local champions to participate in national efforts and to build trust among communities at the grassroots. As of December 2023, a total of 664

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1 Danial Mohd Yusof and Zainal Abidin Sanusi, 'The APPGM-SDG (All Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals): Towards Mainstreaming SDG in Issues and Solution of Parliamentary Constituencies' (2021) Journal of the Malaysian Parliament I, 228-242 https://journalmp.parlimen.gov.my/jurnal/index.php/jmp/article/view/39/23.

solution projects were undertaken based on localising SDGs agenda targeting vulnerable communities around Malaysia. These projects target communities that need support and are conducted with proper follow-up and continuation to ensure sustainability. The delivery of the solution projects is the responsibility of the solution partners. APPGM-SDG solution partners are registered organisations, from the identified locality and are passionate about bringing sustainable change to community members. To date, we have 364 active partners championing the sustainability agenda.

Innovative solutions

Solutions are the key to enabling communities to progress on a sustainable pathway. Crafting such solutions requires innovative methods as enablers. Innovative solutions have three major segments, namely local people & organisations, the solution partners, and the empowerment models.

Local people and organisations

The empowerment of local people and organisations is the key to moving the community towards sustainable, innovative solutions. The people we refer to here are the local leaders and organisations. Local leaders play a major role in mobilising the community towards sustainable solutions. Empowering them through capacity building[2] in various disciplines such as SDGs, inclusive communities, Social Solidarity Economy (SSE), gender mainstreaming, and more will enhance their capacity to effectively bring solutions to a community. We also must accept the fact that there are many dynamics in this process, as in many places, informal local leaders will also play a key role in community organising. Apart from that, multiple organisations in the locality, such as KRT and JPKK, also play a role in community leadership, apart from the appointed village head or the head of a resident association. These are the people who guarantee community participation in solution activities for the long term. Investing and empowering local people and organisations is the first component of innovative solutions.

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2 Nur Balqis Osman, 'Building Inclusive Community with High Impact Solution Providers' in Zoel Ng (ed), Volume 1 Local Communities Building Inclusive Communities: Proceedings from MySDG Conference (Persatuan Promosi Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, 2024) 145-147.

Then come the solution partners, who are local organisations that deliver empowerment programmes with the collaboration of experts and become reliable partners for the community in their growth. The role of solution partners in innovative solution delivery is explained below.

Trust building and local solution partners

The solution partners we are engaging consist of local organisations within the constituency we have visited. They are the changemakers and catalysts for bringing local solutions to local communities, especially the marginalised. The method is to identify local organisations that are passionate about bringing change in society and empower them as partners in our projects. The advantage of local partners is that they will have greater ground outreach and have built trust among the local people. Trust building is a key component of a successful project, and to build long-term trust, one must be from the locality, be a day-to-day person and understand the needs of the people and the right solution to undertake in addressing those needs. The people's acceptance is very strong towards local organisations, and delivery of the project can be achieved in line with the identified needs. With such high confidence developed among local community members, local solution providers are our vital segment in innovative solutions made for local communities. *Table 1* below illustrates the type of solution partners APPGM-SDG is engaging.

Table 1: Types of solution partners

No.	Type of Organisation	No.
1	NGOs registered with ROS	160
2	Companies and Social Enterprises registered with SSM	121
3	Universities	17
4	Youth organisations registered with ROY	26
5	JPKK / KRT / Resident Associations	15
6	Cooperatives	14
7	Foundations	5
8	Pusat Pemulihan Dalam Komuniti (PDKs)	4
9	MP / ADUN offices	2
10	**TOTAL**	**364**

Source: APPGM-SDG (28 Dec 2023)

These partners are the backbone of the community solutions that APPGM-SDG is delivering. NGOs are the biggest group, followed by companies and social enterprises. These companies have strong social motives that surplus their profits, enabling them to share their expertise to their project participants. Universities are partnering with us to exchange their expertise, technologies, and knowledge with the local communities. All the groups have a very strong sustainability element in their project delivery, and this is made possible by our relational approach.

Together, both the local leaders and organisations and the solution partners play a unique relational role in creating innovative solutions for the local community. This collaborative, innovative solution helps the community sustain long-term projects and programs. Based on our lessons on grassroots mobilisation, organising local communities, capacity building, long-term relationship and trust building, and empowerment of solution partners as catalysts of change, these are proven to be key enablers to bring about local solutions in the local communities.[3]

The layers of empowerment in building the relational approach in delivering innovative solutions

The third component of APPGM-SDG's innovative solution for local communities is the community development models that we have adopted. The very first layer of empowerment in championing the relational approach to community development is solution partner empowerment. Our 4 years of experience gave us many practical lessons and way-forward innovative ideas, and one of them was the role of solution partners as catalysts and enablers of localising sustainable development. They are the first layer that APPGM-SDG built as a changemaker in the community. This is done through continuous empowerment and hand-holding. To do this, APPGM-SDG adopted the three-tier empowerment model. This model was developed as innovations from lessons and as a journey of solution partners, which they will undergo while undertaking projects with us. Diagram 1 below refers to the 3-tier empowerment model.

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3   James Ryan Raj, 'Collaborative Approaches in Creating Community-Based Solutions in Localising SDGs' in Md. Habibur Rahman (ed), Community Social Work Practice and Development Journal Vol. 02, No. 01&02, January-December 2023 (Community Social Work Practice and Development (CSWPD) Foundation, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2024) 107-124.

Diagram 1: Solution partners empowerment model

Grant Recipients → Solution Partners → SDG Project Owners

Source: APPGM-SDG

Grant recipients

The empowerment journey starts with organisations coming into our ecosystem as grant recipients and conducting solution projects. In this stage, they will undergo constant training and upgrading from various experts and at various events. This empowerment process starts with the application for the project itself. The solution partner proposal for solutions will be vetted and reviewed by an external expert panel, which will review the method, output and outcome, budgeting, SDG-based implementation, and sustainability elements after the project is complete. The applicant is required to upgrade his or her proposal based on the reviews and execute only the upgraded proposals. Apart from this, the partners will also be empowered while they work on the project. They are required to send in a monthly narrative and financial report based on the template and present it to us via slides on the solution project progress. These monthly presentations will be attended by all the solution partners, and they will be the best avenue for peer learning on the best practices from each other. In addition to all this, the partners will have to attend frequent capacity-building programmes throughout the year and learn from experts who came to share their expertise in various related fields. One of the main topics in this capacity is building social entrepreneurship, which empowers the solution partners to be self-sustaining via income-earning initiatives. Cooperative and AIM (Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia) models are also included in the capacity-building programme. All this process will transform the solution partner into a reliable and trustworthy delivery partner who works towards empowering the beneficiaries with innovative solutions.

Solution partners

The empowerment journey is continuous for the local organisations. Through their survival in the first 'grant recipient" stage, they will now be elevated to the solution partners stage. The main capacity building that will be undertaken here is to expose the partner to various co-funded and collaborative initiatives, in addition to the solution project

that they are undertaking with beneficiaries. They will be given the responsibility to conduct three major programmes for the community they are serving: a youth camp, a building inclusive communities (BIC) capacity-building programme and a neighbourhood programme. These programmes are an additional commitment to the solution partners and their ability to mobilise local communities at different segments, such as youth, community leaders, and women. The effort will strengthen their ability to make the community champion of innovative solutions for their problems. The community, on the other hand, will develop leadership qualities through these programmes, and one day, the solution partner might exit the community and allow them to independently manage their solutions.

Apart from additional projects, the solution partners will also be exposed to responsibilities related to APPGM-SDG. Tasks such as a panel for proposal review, training for SDG workshops and BIC programmes, becoming regional coordinators to monitor regional projects, and co-researchers for issue mapping exercises undertaken by APPGM-SDG will be passed on to the solution partners to increase their resilience in social work with communities. At this stage, the partner is not only a local organisation but a solution partner to a parliamentary body, and this will increase their visibility for other local, state, and national opportunities.

SDG project owners

The third stage is the SDG project owner, which is the platform where our partners have fully empowered themselves and are now undertaking projects and receiving grants from other organisations such as Yayasan Hasanah, Yayasan MySDG, and the UN SDG Fund. They are also empowered to take up bigger funding and long-term projects and become reliable partners in terms of nation-building for many funders.[4] Apart from funding, partners at this stage are high in resilience and project ownership, which enables them to become guides for the new grant recipients entering the ecosystem. Apart from that, they will also involve self-sustaining models to slowly move away from grant-receiving to forming social enterprises (SE) that will sustain income. Apart from the SE model, the cooperative model will also be adopted by

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4 James Ryan Raj and Paniirselvam (eds), *SDG Solution Projects: Best Practices Impacting the Grassroots* (Persatuan Promosi Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari, Petaling Jaya, 2023).

partners and beneficiaries to enable equity building among them. The cooperative model will be championed through the SSE Asia network with best practices from other countries based on the 5 principles of SSE: voluntary cooperation, mutual aid, democratic and participatory governance, autonomy and independence, primacy of people, and social purpose over capital.[5]

This long-term empowerment journey is all about communication, which is taking place between the APPGM-SDG ecosystem handlers consisting of staff, resource persons, and external experts towards solution partners. This relationship, which is being built gradually between the two, opens a doorway for empowerment, peer learning, SDG innovative solutions, and many other opportunities. This is fundamental to the relational approach adopted by APPGM-SDG, which champions solutions at the grassroots.

We strongly believe that this first layer of trust, trust-building, and empowerment is the baseline for the relational approach. It fosters the development of strong local champions in our project locations. Empowered solution partners will be able to deliver better projects and sustainable impacts are being created for the project beneficiaries. Our maiden book, SDG Solution Projects: Best Practices Impacting the Grassroots, provides a thorough explanation of this empowerment process. The book also records 35 impact stories from our solution projects that bring sustainable positive impact to the beneficiaries and the community around the project location. The book also stands as a testament to the empowerment, trust-building, and relational approach undertaken by APPGM-SDG.

The participatory model, the second layer of the relational approach

The journey of grassroots community empowerment, which begins with the empowerment of solution partners, has evolved in four years towards betterment and innovations, and APPGM-SDG was able to create many empowered neighbourhoods in all 85 parliamentary constituencies. This first layer opens the doorway for the second empowerment journey, which targets the project beneficiaries and the community leaders in the neighbourhood. This approach has been the desired destination for our localising SDG work, in which the "rakyat" on the ground understands

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5 International Labor Organization (ILO), 'Resolution concerning decent work and the social' (International Labor Organization (ILO), 10 June 2022) file:///C:/Users/meeting1/Downloads/wcms_848633.pdf accessed 29 April 2024.

the SDG concept, approach, innovative solutions, and sustainable living. The model we develop and adopt to achieve this at the neighbourhood level of relationship building is the participatory model. This model was designed based on learning and innovation from our own 664 project experience and developed by James Ryan Raj, Director of the Constituency Coordination Department in the APPGM-SDG. The model aims to help secure the community's ownership and commitment to the projects. The model also helps us and the solution partners move further to empower the community as a whole after successful penetration and relational building with the beneficiaries through the project. The participatory model is illustrated in *Diagram 2* below.

Diagram 2: Participatory model
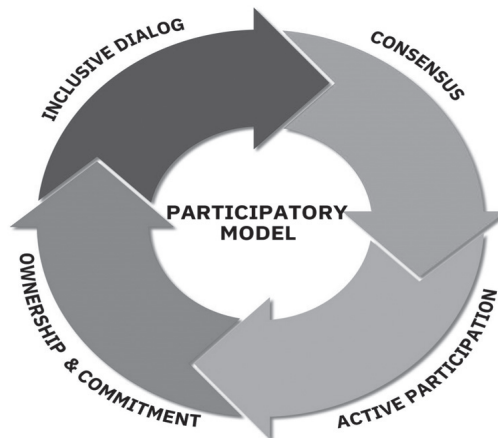
Source: APPGM-SDG (28 Dec 2023)

The model shows the process details involved in relationship building to penetrate the community and implement better solutions. It consists of four stages of participation and the required commitment by both solution enablers and the community.

Consensus stage

Consensus is the first and most important stage of the journey. In the trust-building process, especially with grassroots communities, this first introduction and impression are very important. It will determine the cooperation for the follow-up processes and the way forward. Most of the communities on the ground, especially the B40 to B10 communities, are not so welcoming of new initiatives by new organisations. This situation

necessitates the involvement of established partners who already hold significant value within the community. The resistance to the new idea can be communicated to get consensus and can be easily moderated and facilitated. Getting a consensus with the community is like signing an agreement with them, and we must keep the values up and adhere to the agreed terms of engagement. Breaking this consensus means, we would not be able to build back the confidence and have a high chance of losing the community.

In this stage, one will be meeting the formal and informal leaders of a particular community, and it is vital to maintain trustworthiness with both leaders. Ground communities are always in this leadership divide, and we as incoming organisations must be able to understand the dynamic and work with both for the successful delivery of a project.

Another good practice at this stage is getting women wing leaders involved in the meetings. Women wing leaders have good coordination in neighbourhoods and getting them involved will have a positive impact on the initiative. Men's outside work prevents them from fully committing to the initiative, but women leaders can make up for this by coordinating and managing it. Our lesson also proves that mobilising women for poverty elevation is an important part of project delivery, as they are committed to their success and have high resilience in achieving betterment.

Active participation

Upon reaching a consensus, the first layer of relationship building is complete, and the other four processes are to strengthen the relationship. Active participation is the immediate next process and this can be enabled by involving the local community in the project management. For example, in one of our Orang Asli projects on chilli fertigation training, our solution partner, Arunan Giri from *Beringin Natural Farm*, who is our resource person and already at the project owner stage with 3 years of project experience with APPGM-SDG, appointed one of the women participants as a leader with the task of making sure all participants attended all the training classes. For this commitment, she gets some allowance and ensures participants turn up for the training sessions. This approach is one example of the active participation and involvement of the community in project management. Apart from that, our solution partner also requested another male participant, who is also an informal leader of the community, to lead the setup of individual

farms at the Orang Asli village with the help of other participants. He was able to get participants to help each other set up their farms, and through this exercise, unity among them was achieved.[6]

Active participation also involves giving the community members who are involved in the initiative some commitments to fulfil, such as the programme hall, which can be the *Persatuan Penduduk Hall* and is utilised with a rental fee; the food catering services for the programme can be given to local community members; and also other services that they can fulfil, which will open some opportunity for the community or the association to earn. Apart from that, such practices also increase their confidence and leadership level when undertaking bigger projects later on. We also have such stories recorded, for example, in Kampung Song-Song, Kota Belud Sabah, where our project partner, Nadhirah, from *Reef Check Malaysia,* developed a community learning centre in this isolated village and formed a women's association to manage the centre. The members of the association were given training for the past 2 years on organisational leadership and community building, and now they can take up solution projects directly with APPGM-SDG.

Active participation is vital in creating resilient and dynamic community leaders who can independently contribute to nation-building via empowerment programmes soon.

Ownership and commitment

Ownership and commitment are the ultimate results of the relational approach, which uses both the solution provider empowerment model and the participatory model. It is also an affirmation that the community is ready to accept challenges, be involved in continuous empowerment programmes and be ready to reshape towards betterment. Ownership can be created when the right people come together with the right intention and work towards collective goals. The active participation section above explains some of the many methods to achieve ownership and commitment.

Apart from that, ownership can be created through the creation of leadership attributes among local leaders and participants as well as acceptance of the social solidarity economy (SSE) agenda. SSE advocates for shared values and collective empowerment, mainly economic

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6 Paniirselvam Jayaraman, Facebook post (20 November 2023) https://www.facebook.com/share/gN9DZU3nCEKHPVpV/?mibextid=WC7FNe accessed 29 April 2024.

empowerment. In Malaysia, the concept of SSE refers to the formation of cooperatives that enable community members to exercise their leadership qualities and gain the ability to participate in many initiatives. Cooperatives serve as playgrounds for local communities to come together and prosper through collective initiatives. Such development, like the Kampung Song-Song Women Association initiative, can bring better community ownership to any initiative, collective economic returns, and instil resilient leadership among them.

Inclusive dialogue

The ultimate fruit of the empowerment-based relational approach is the acceptance of the inclusive ideology by the community members. As mentioned before, grassroots communities are very fragile when it comes to unity, and building them requires highly noble relationship-building. Collective ideas such as cooperatives and their confidence in the ideas form a more inclusive and resilient community, which deters disunity approaches by some quarters. Such inclusive communities are already being created through our solution projects.

The community, which is reached by the APPGM-SDG with the phase 1 project by our solution partner, will move into phase 2 in the second year and into phase 3 projects in the third year. The continuous empowerment method will eventually build a resilient community. Such continuous empowerment work will also foster greater local leadership among the community members, and they tend to have their own organisations and can organise themselves with little guidance from solution partners. Apart from that, with additional funding support from APPGM-SDG for programmes such as neighbourhood building projects, youth resilience camps, and community learning centre projects, the community moves further towards being better organised and inclusive of all the community members. Other funders with common goals will be able to penetrate the community through the existing leaders and conduct empowerment programmes.

What started with grant recipients and consensus has moved way into local leadership development and can lead to many more agencies coming together and collaborating. All these are possible because of the empowerment-based relational approach that is undertaken by APPGM-SDG in its journey towards building resilient and inclusive communities around Malaysia.

Case Study 1

Community empowerment journey: From beneficiaries to local champions in PKNS Flats, Petaling Jaya Selangor

Flat PKNS, Taman Dato Harun, Petaling Jaya, is in the heart of Petaling Jaya and surrounded by packed housing. Residents here are mainly urban poor, and it is a mixed community consisting of multi-ethnic groups. The mosque in Taman Dato Harun, located a 2-minute drive from the flat, was involved in an incident in 2010. A pig head was thrown at the gate of the mosque, creating huge disunity among the multi-ethnic communities living there.[7] The government has been actively engaged in community rebuilding effort ever since. APPGM-SDG started our income generation programme in Flat PKNS in 2022. Our partner, Impactlution Sdn Bhd, a social enterprise, was conducting a recycled glass craft programme in the locality, with women from needy households participating as beneficiaries.

The project was ongoing for a year, and one performing participant, Farah, was appointed by Impactlution as their staff member to manage their outlet in PJ Eco Plaza. This appointment significantly impacted the project's progress. Previously, Farah was responsible for creating glass craft products and promoting them through booth sales. Her move motivated other participants to be actively involved in the project, and this year, Farah is identified as one of the principal trainers of Impactlution. She conducts training for school students and adults on upcycling and other environmental-related programmes under Impactlution. The beneficiaries at Flat PKNS formed their own women's association and produced glass craft products for corporate orders, mainly from the PJ municipal council and huge orders from the Member of Parliament himself.[8]

The empowerment journey started with the grant, which builds better resilience and leadership among the local community and brings in more opportunities from additional partners. Not stopping with that, the women's group, our beneficiaries, have now been involved in independently organising one of our signature neighbourhood-building programme and they were chosen as the first community to conduct such

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7   Malaysiakini, 'Kepala Babi dilontar dalam Perkarangan Dua Masjid' (27 January 2010) https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/122975 accessed 29 April 2024.

8   Lee Chean Chung, Facebook post (30 October 2023) https://www.facebook.com/share/ARQ9HA9pFdCZUqLL/?mibextid=WC7FNe accessed 29 April 2024.

a programme in Petaling Jaya. In the meeting, they were confident that they could independently deliver the programme with initial guidance from our solution partner. They stand proud that they, the beneficiaries, are now the local champions of Flat PKNS Taman Dato Harun.

This case study is a testament to the relational approach that APPGM-SDG has been pursuing through the two models above.

Case Study 2

Studio Jahitan Ana, from sewing shop to women's one-stop support centre, in Baling Kedah

Studio Jahitan Ana is owned by Norfarhana Ismail and is located in Kampung Charuk Bemban, Baling Kedah. Baling is located far north and consists of hardcore poor communities, especially women, who are mostly housewives. APPGM-SDG started a sewing project with Studio Jahitan Ana in 2021. The first batch of beneficiaries are hardcore poor housewives who have no experience being tailors. They undergo months-long training with Norfarhana, known as Ana, and can gain the skills. Ana put in effort to get sewing corporate orders for beneficiaries to earn, and Ana also allowed them to use her sewing machines to do their sewing. They were also using her machines to complete their own sewing orders. While they were undergoing training, they used to bring their children to Studio Jahitan Ana. Housewives bring along their children for training since there is no one in the house to take care of them. So, Ana created a study and play area for the children in her shop. She put in effort to accommodate their additional needs, and they were able to perform well in their skill development. In 2022, Ana got funding to train a second batch of tailors, and the first batch became trainers for this new project. Both batches were able to earn through corporate sewing orders, and during Hari Raya season, each of them was earning nearly RM10,000 through *baju raya* sewing. Some of them are even buying gold jewellery for the first time.[9]

It is unbelievable that someone from Baling, Kedah, who had undergone sewing training, and with continuous support from the solution partner, was able to earn up to RM10,000 a month. Apart from economic development, the place also becomes a "hangout place" for

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9 K. Eruthaiaraj, 'Solution Providers as Grassroots Mobilisers in Localising SDGs' in Teo Lee Ken & Debbie Loh (eds), SDG Policies and Practices in Malaysia (Persatuan Promosi Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari, Petaling Jaya, 2023), pp. 383-385.

women to come and share their problems and talk things out among themselves. *Studio Jahitan Ana*, from being the skills development and earning centre, has become a one-stop psychosocial support centre for the women in Baling. The solution partner, Ana, has won the 2022 National SDG Icon Awards for her inspiring work.

In 2023, APPGM-SDG will take Ana further as an external export person to review our project proposals. Ana is also involved in our building inclusive communities' programme as a trainer and conducting the inclusive modules in training. She was also awarded the APPGM-SDG Special Grant, which serves as an elevation capacity building for Ana, and she will be conducting the "Mesin Jahit Bergerak" mobile sewing machine programme to bring sewing skills into needy villages in Baling. This year, she was also given the challenge to conduct a sewing programme for the Siamese community in Baling, and with language and cultural barriers, she was able to complete the project, and the participants are conducting online marketing to attract sales. With a few batches of women in her training, she is now en-route to form a cooperative, Koperasi Wanita Berjaya Baling, to build a fully resilient and collectively earning community in her far-reaching locality.

Nor Farhana @ Ana stands as a testament that developing local leadership will have a snowball impact on the effort, and fitting her story into both our models, she is one of the best examples APPGM-SDG can share as a testament to the relational approach undertaken in building resilient and empowered local communities with innovative solutions. Her story was also featured in our best practices book.[10]

Conclusion

The relational approach to delivering innovative solutions is a journey that APPGM-SDG undertakes together with its solution partners and programme beneficiaries. The approach was supported by two main models: the solution partner empowerment model and the participatory model, which spell out steps in the approach. The case studies and the published book of best practices serve as success stories for the approach we have undertaken since 2020. The journey has also taught many lessons to all the stakeholders involved and opened a doorway

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10 James Ryan Raj & Paniirselvam (eds), SDG Solution Projects: Best Practices Impacting the Grassroots (Persatuan Promosi Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari, Petaling Jaya, 2023), 'Sewing Skills Training: A Gateway to Alleviate Poverty among Baling's Poor Communities', pp. 73-77.

for many innovations in designing solutions for future programs. Many success stories and impacts were created through these innovations, which upgraded all the stakeholders, especially the solution partners and beneficiaries. Positive relationships formed with noble intentions by enthusiastic stakeholders working together for the common good are the best combination for producing highly effective and resilient communities with strong autonomous leadership characteristics.

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