Parliamentarians & Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships in Implementing SDGs: In 57 Parliamentary Constituencies (Between 2020 and 2022) during the 14th Parliamentary Session

Prof. Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria* and *Nur Rahmah Othman**

Abstract

Parliamentarians in Malaysia have been very active in localising Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) at the constituency level since the establishment of the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG). Between October 2019 (when the APPGM-SDG was established) and October 10, 2022 (when the Parliament was dissolved), the 14th Parliament launched a truly bipartisan initiative. It is a significant establishment of a formal structure and mechanism for engagement between parliamentarians and non-parliamentarians. It was the first of the APPGMs and remained very active in the 14th parliament. This article reviews these three years noting achievements, challenges, and the way forward for the 15th parliamentary session over the next four to five years. Through the localisation process, we have recognised the importance of partnerships between parliamentarians, civil society activists, and academicians from universities and policy think tank groups. This partnership has a direct impact at both the grassroots at the micro level through SDG micro solution projects and policy advocacy on the macro national and cross-cutting concerns. Both dimensions have good scope for citizens' participation in grassroots decentralised delivery of services on the one hand, as well as macro national level policy formulation. This process has definitive lessons for the global community.

Keywords: Multi-stakeholder partnerships, parliamentarians as SDG champions, localising SDGs, solving local problems, grassroots democracy, and policy advocacy.

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  * Prof. Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria is Head of The Secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG).

** Nur Rahmah Othman is a law graduate from Manchester University United Kingdom, has been a staff of the APPGM-SDG since Jan 2020 and has been a member of the secretariat leadership team.

Introduction

The 2018 General Elections ushered in a wave of parliamentary reforms by the Speaker of the 14th Parliament session in mid-2018. The attempt was to make Parliament accessible to the people for open discussion. The view was that there must be an active citizenry in a climate of democratic freedoms. After all, the new government in Putrajaya had brought down a 60-year coalition, which was previously thought impossible.

A people's parliament, which provides an open space for engagement, was envisioned, and this climate for democratic reform facilitated innovations for partnerships and cooperation.

This article highlights how a group of civil society convinced parliament of an innovation that had much impact in the 14th Parliamentary session and is hoped to would be replicated by the 15th Parliamentary Speaker and session.

Two earlier articles in the Parliament Journal (Vol 1: 2021) also capture the early beginnings of this action by parliamentarians in bringing development assistance to their parliamentary constituencies, including providing reasons why MPs were seen as local SDG champions.[1]

Parliamentarians, elected by the people, have a major role on behalf of their voters to convey their views in Parliament. In most cases, voters who are grassroots citizens also expect their MPs to solve many of their local concerns. Although there is confusion about the role of appointed counsellors in local government and state assembly representatives, as MPs are accessible to the people, they tend to see themselves as their representatives.

The Malaysian government accepted the SDGs in 2015 and has since incorporated the SDGs into development planning. Since then, Malaysia has benchmarked development progress with the SDGs, as reflected in its Voluntary National Review Report on the SDGs to the United Nations in 2017[2] and 2021.[3]

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1 Denison Jayasooria, 'Role of Parliamentarians in Localising SDGs in Malaysia' (2021) 1 (Journal of the Malaysian Parliament) https://journalmp.parlimen.gov.my/jurnal/index.php/jmp/article/view/34 accessed December 2022.

2 'Malaysia Sustainable Development Goals Voluntary National Review 2017' (Economic Planning Unit 2017) <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/15881Malaysia.pdf> accessed December 2022.

3 'Malaysia Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2021' (Economic Planning Unit 2021) <https://www.epu.gov.my/sites/default/files/2021-07/Malaysia_Voluntary_National_Review_%28VNR%29_2021.pdf> accessed December 2022.

The localisation of the SDG agenda provides an excellent opportunity for MPs to strengthen their role as effective champions of the SDGs. Policy advocacy has placed MPs at the heart of the SDGs, from the mapping exercise to local prioritisation to the identification of solution projects and providers. The theme of leaving no one behind also enables them to identify and address the concerns of people, not just their voters living in their constituencies.

Achievements

Much progress has been made over the past three years, as is documented here. Similarly, we recognise that we face numerous challenges, which have also been briefly stated. We also recognise that we face a significant challenge in 2023, and the 15th session of the Parliament affords us this opportunity.

Establishment of APPGM-SDG

The 14th Parliament Speaker, Tan Sri Dato' Mohamad Ariff Bin Mohd Yusof, started a series of Parliamentary reforms[4] in 2018, which included hosting public forums and discussions and opening up Parliament for the participation of non-parliamentarians in these forums. The vision was to enable the Parliament as an institution to be close to the people and to foster a thinking public. It was during one of these lecture series when there was a discussion on SDGs, that civil society leaders engaged with the Speaker. As a result, they managed to convince him to establish an APPGM on SDGs.[5] This was continued by the next Speaker, Tan Sri Azhar bin Azizan Harun, and during his tenure between 2020 and 2022, five different APPGMs were established before the dissolution of the 14th Parliament.[6]

Based on the parliamentary guidelines, the "All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia (APPGM) is a forum or platform for topics of common

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4 Denison Jayasooria, 'Monitoring and Review of SDG 16 plus in Malaysia (2015 -2020)' (2021) <https://ada2030.org/adda-admin/images/Malaysia-SDG-16-Plus-National-Case-Study.pdf> 18.

5 Denison Jayasooria, 'Role of Civil Society Organisations in Localising SDGs in Malaysia' (Alizan Mahadi and Nazran Zhafri eds, Institute of Strategic and International Studies 2021). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep29683.18#metadata_info_tab_contents> accessed December 2022.

6 Parliament of Malaysia, 'Kumpulan Rentas Parti Parlimen Malaysia (KRPPM)' (www.parlimen.gov.my) <https://www.parlimen.gov.my/kumpulan-rentas-parti-parlimen-malaysia-krppm.html?uweb=dr&lang=en> accessed December 2022.

interest among members of the House of Representatives and the Senate, as well as other parties, including academicians, professionals, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as partners to discuss, research and submit reports of recommendations to the Parliament or its committees".[7]

This engagement between parliamentarians and the general public, especially civil society and academicians, is very significant in the APPGM approach. Based on the parliamentary guidelines, five members of the lower house need to support the establishment of an APPGM. The chair must be from a government party and a backbencher. The deputy must be from an opposition party. Members of the upper house and the senate could also join as members. The quorum is three members. The secretariat could be a civil society or an academic institution.

This is the first time the Malaysian parliament has formally created a structure for a partnership model between parliamentarians and non-parliamentarians. In all existing structures, like the Parliamentary Select Committees, CSOs and academics are invited to share their views. However, in the APPGM system, they are part of the committee as members of the secretariat.

Based on the APPGM guidelines, each APPGM's Secretariat is responsible for raising funding and managing the activities. Parliament will not provide any resources. Furthermore, if they raise more than RM10,000.00, they must submit a report to parliament.

Public Funding Secured Since 2020

The APPGM on SDG was the first of the APPGMs approved in October 2019 and became operational in 2020 with a special allocation of RM2 million announced in the 2020 Budget. The secretariat team from the Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance met up with the Budget section of the Ministry of Finance (MOF) Malaysia with a proposal to undertake a pilot study of localising SDGs in ten parliamentary constituencies. This experience is well documented in the APPGM-SDG annual report 2020,[8] which was also circulated to members of parliament. MOF approved the second allocation of RM5 million in 2021 and RM10 million in 2022.

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7 Ibid.
8 All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia, 'APPGM-SDG Annual Report 2020' (APPGM-SDG 2020) <https://www.parlimen.gov.my/images/webuser/jkuasa/ LAPORAN%20KRPPM/APPGM-SDG%20ANNUAL%20REPORT%202020.pdf> accessed December 2022.

Published Annual Reports

Over the three years between 2020 and 2022, a total of 57 parliamentarians were enlisted in the localising of the SDGs programme. The 2021 Annual Report was also published and released to MPs. It is also uploaded to the Parliament website.[9] One could conclude that during the 14th parliamentary session, the APPGM approach has been consolidated, even with the changes in government between 2018 and 2022. Malaysia saw three Prime Ministers and two Parliament speakers; however, all of them supported the idea of APPGMs, as the initial one resulted in five[10] APPGMs by the time Parliament was dissolved in October 2022.

Therefore, the APPGM-SDG receives the recognition of parliament and the full support of the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) and the Ministry of Finance. When Malaysia presented the Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report 2021 at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) at the UN HQ in New York, a specific reference was made both to the localising agenda of APPGM-SDG[11] and the Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance.[12]

Bipartisan Nature

Civil society managed to secure the support of several Members of Parliament (MPs). Hon. Maria Chin Abdullah was elected as Chair and Hon. Dato' Nancy Shukri as a deputy in October 2019, with several other Members of Parliament (MPs) as members. With the fall of the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government and the establishment of the Perikatan Nasional (PN) coalition government, there was a change to the chair, with Hon. Dato' Seri Rohani Abdul Karim as Chair and Hon. Maria Chin Abdullah as the deputy, with several other MPs as members.

In the 14th Parliament session, between 2020 and 2022, a total of 57[13] MPs participated in the localising of SDGs. They were from both

  9 All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on the Sustainable Development Goals, 'APPGM-SDG Annual Report 2021' (APPGM-SDG 2022) <https://www.parlimen. gov.my/images/webuser/jkuasa/LAPORAN%20KRPPM/APPGM-SDG%202021%20 Annual%20Report%20.pdf> accessed December 2022.

 10 Parliament of Malaysia (n 8).

 11 Malaysia Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2021 (Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department 2021) 121.

 12 Ibid 122.

 13 All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on the Sustainable Development Goals, ('MPs & Constituencies – 14th Session (2018-2022)' (Google Drive 2022). <https:// drive.google.com/file/d/1aiXwoOS5vqfnrpdaw2qPFmaf1sbLfdTH/view> accessed December 2022.

the government and opposition parties. They were also from various states in both the peninsular and Sabah -Sarawak on Borneo Island, including rural, suburban, and urban constituencies.

Table 1: MPs by Party Affiliations (2020 to 2022)

	2020	**2021**	**2022**
Government party MPs	5	8	14
Opposition party MPs	5	12	13
Total	10	20	27

The MPs were from all the major political parties, such as PKR, DAP, PAS, GPS, Amanah, Warisan, UMNO, and MCA. These are political parties with different political ideologies and the histories of their political struggles. However, on the SDGs, there is a consensus on economic, social, and environmental concerns pertaining especially to people development and addressing grassroots concerns in the constituency. Each MP receives an allocation of RM120,00.00 for micro-SDG solution projects after the local mapping exercise is conducted.

Evolvement of an Effective Secretariat

We established a very effective secretariat. The Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance is a network of CSOs with economic, social, and environmental concerns, including human rights, gender, and indigenous people. As a network, it does not have a legal structure or bank account. It is more of a networking and advocacy-lobby group.

Legal Entity

Therefore, there was a need for a legal entity for the Secretariat, which could be one of the main organisations in the Alliance, such as the Society for the Promotion of Human Rights (PROHAM), WWF, ISIS Malaysia, the National Council for Women Organisations (NCWO), or even KITA-UKM (the Institute for Ethnic Studies-UKM). Members of these organisations were the prime movers behind the APPGM-SDG.

Members of these organisations as individuals collectively agreed to form a new society registered as the Society for the Promotion of SDGs in January 2020. The Society is now the legal organisation, with key members of the Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance as members.

The parliamentary guideline indicated that no parliamentary staff or budget should be allocated for the APPGM work. The committee and the Secretariat were responsible for raising funds for its operation and work.

Staffing

In the case of staffing, in the first year, we employed only two staff. The Secretariat relied on volunteers from the Alliance and local universities for the work of localisation of SDGs. By 2022, we had expanded our human resources to twelve staff. Therefore, the staff, contracted persons, and volunteers have played a major role.

This team is also multi-ethnic and multi-religious, and there is a good gender balance. We continue to have a large pool of resource persons and volunteers in the Secretariat. Each comes from different fields of expertise and disciplines, as the SDGs are very multi-dimensional.

Table 2: Personal Resources (2020 to 2022)

	2020	2021	2022
Staff	2	7	12
Contract Persons	2	9	6
Resource Persons / Volunteers	15	11	27
Total	18	28	45

Coordinating Office

We had no coordinating office for two years. We worked from parliament when there were formal meetings or different organisations, and even from Mamaks. We only rented an office space at Avenue 8, Petaling Jaya, from December 2021, from where we now coordinate the work and where the majority of staff and meetings are held. We recognise that the Covid period was challenging for the field visits and monitoring of SDG micro solution projects.

MPs generally support the secretariat staff and resource persons from civil society organisations or local universities and have some knowledge of addressing local issues.

Since receiving public funds in early 2020, we have submitted a monthly financial and activity report to Parliament, the Economic Planning Unit, the Ministry of Finance, and APPGM-SDG's Chairman and Deputy,

as well as the Treasurer. We also undertake external auditing of the accounts, and the audited report is submitted in our annual report for 2020 and 2021.

Methodology in Localising SDGs

As part of our localising SDGs, we undertake four dimensions of work, which serve as our methodology:

> The first is mapping local needs and prioritisation through a three-day field visit to each parliamentary constituency.

> Second is the SDG micro solutions project, where we allocate RM120,000.00 per constituency. These micro-projects secure between RM30,000 and RM40,000 per community project.

> The third is policy analysis through situation analysis, thematic and case studies arising from the mapping exercise.

> The fourth is SDG awareness and capacity-building programmes at the district level, especially with civil servants and local community leaders.

Members of Parliament are active in mapping local needs and issues in the parliamentary constituency as they provide pre-visit information on the parliamentary constituency, including a profile, a list of local needs and issues, as well as potential places to visit. The MP's office is very active in contacting local leaders, as well as district-level agencies. The secretariat also undertakes a search and conversation with CSOs and community groups to determine vulnerable communities and those who might be left behind.

Mapping – Analytical Framework

Over the past three years (2020-2022), the APPGM-SDG team perfected the analytical framework.[14] This framework consists of a set of six steps, as listed below:

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14 This was first developed by Alizan Mahadi of ISIS Malaysia in 2022 and utilised by the field researchers over the past three years.

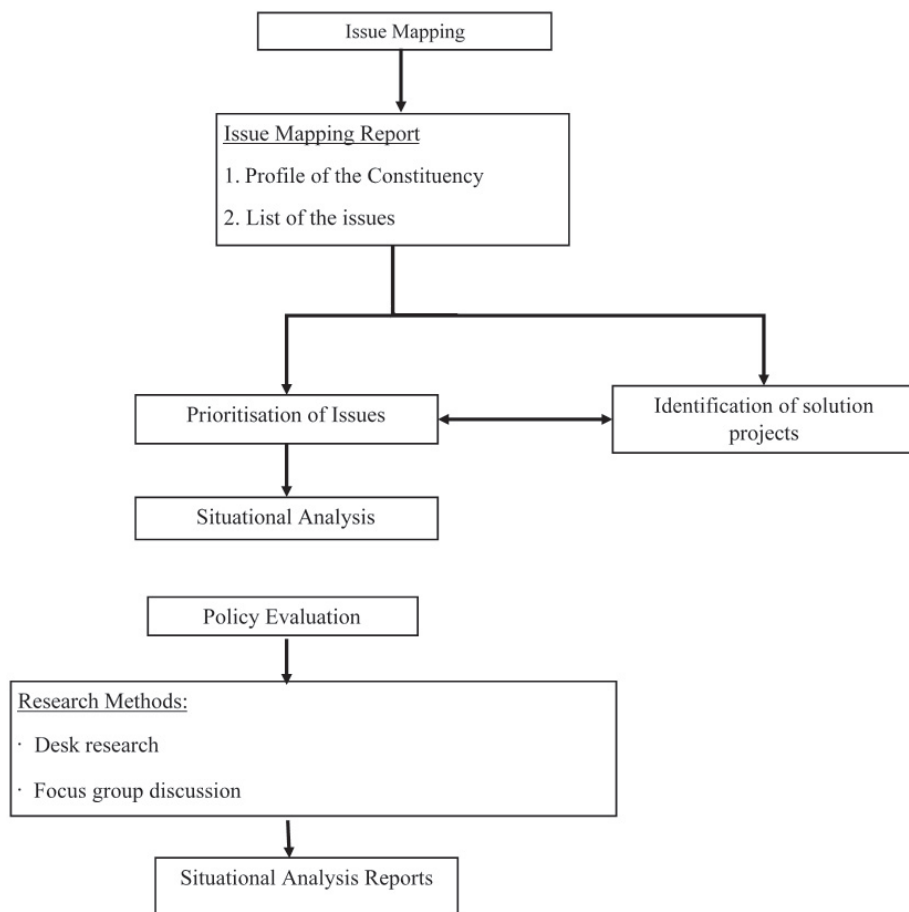**Table 3: Analytical Research Framework of the APPGM-SDG**

Step	Output / Activity
STEP 1: **What** are the most crucial cross-cutting issues across social, economic, and environmental within the parliamentary constituency?	Issue Mapping
STEP 2: **Who** is being left behind?	Issue Mapping
STEP 3: **Which** issues should be prioritised?	Prioritisation of Issues
STEP 4: Analysis of **why** these issues occur	Impact Assessment and Policy Evaluation
STEP 5: **How** should we resolve the issue sustainably?	Prioritisation of Solutions and Solutions Project Proposal
STEP 6: **Execution** and **Monitoring of** progress and impact	Solutions Project Execution and Monitoring

It is important to note that the APPGM-SDG has adopted a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) in operationalising the research framework. The HRBA is popular in various United Nations and international research. It is a useful programming tool that anchors international norms and standards.

The HRBA gives equal attention to the process and attainment of the SDGs. These two components align with the objectives of the APPGM-SDG to produce an impact assessment (goal attainment) and a policy evaluation on the development delivery (process). It is a methodology specifically for assessing the principle of "leaving no one behind" under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Mapping exercise, local needs prioritisation, and situational analysis is a grounded research methodology adopted by the APPGM-SDG research team in localising SDGs. The various stages are well illustrated in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1: An Overview of the Localisation of the SDGs by the APPGM-SDG

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                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │    Issue Mapping    │
                        └─────────────────────┘
                                  │
                                  ▼
        ┌────────────────────────────────────────┐
        │ Issue Mapping Report                    │
        │ 1. Profile of the Constituency          │
        │ 2. List of the issues                   │
        └────────────────────────────────────────┘

   ┌───────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────────┐
   │ Prioritisation of     │◄──────►│ Identification of solution│
   │ Issues                │        │         projects          │
   └───────────────────────┘        └──────────────────────────┘
              │
              ▼
   ┌───────────────────────┐
   │ Situational Analysis  │
   └───────────────────────┘


        ┌───────────────────────┐
        │   Policy Evaluation   │
        └───────────────────────┘

 ┌────────────────────────────────────────┐
 │ Research Methods:                       │
 │ · Desk research                         │
 │ · Focus group discussion                │
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        ┌───────────────────────────┐
        │ Situational Analysis Reports│
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Case Studies and Situational Analysis

The three day field study and mapping lead to the next phase of the research, which comprises of case studies and situational analysis. In this phase, the APPGM-SDG researchers identified common concerns across the parliamentary constituencies.

For 2020 and 2021, Alizan Mahadi was responsible for the research and policy work, and he provides a helpful summary of the 14 major concerns listed in Table 4.[15] Here are the key concerns across the

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15   Alizan Mahadi and Zainal Abdidin Sanusi (eds), Localising SDGs in 10 Parliamentary Constituencies (Persatuan Promosi Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari 2022).

parliamentary constituencies and how they apply to the SDGs. These concerns have direct policy implications at the national-macro level.

Among the 14 major concerns are poverty, social protection, land, drug-related crime, and food security. All these require further study, including the policy implications of short-term and long-term policy intervention in addressing them.

Table 4: Cross-cutting Situation Analysis from the APPGM-SDG issue mapping of ten parliamentary constituencies in 2020

No	Cross-Cutting Policy Issues	Locations	SDG	Number of Locations
1	Poverty and Imbalanced Development (Infrastructure)	Jeli, Kuching, Papar, Pendang, Pensiangan, Tanjung Piai, Petaling Jaya	SDG10, SDG11	7
2	Social Protection, Social Safety, and Welfare	Jeli, Selayang, Pendang, Kuching, Petaling Jaya	SDG1, SDG16	5
3	Land Tenure, Security, and Settlements	Bentong, Kuching, Pendang, Tanjung Piai, Petaling Jaya	SDG11, SDG16	5
4	Youth Development, Employment, and Drugs	Batang Sadong, Jeli, Kuching, Pensiangan, Petaling Jaya	SDG3, SDG4	4
5	Food Security and Agrofood Supply Chain	Batang Sadong, Bentong, Papar, Pendang	SDG2, SDG1, SDG8	4
6	Digital Connectivity	Batang Sadong, Petaling Jaya, Jeli, Papar	SDG 9	4
7	Health	Batang Sadong, Bentong, Pensiangan	SDG 3	3
8	Welfare and Rights of Single Mothers and Gender Mainstreaming	Jeli, Pensiangan, Petaling Jaya	SDG5, SDG1, SDG16	3
9	Environmental Governance (Pollution, Human-wildlife conflict, oceans, and river governance)	Papar, Selayang, Tanjung Piai	SDG6, SDG14, SDG12, SDG6, SDG15	3

No	Cross-Cutting Policy Issues	Locations	SDG	Number of Locations
10	Disaster Management (Floods) and Climate Change	Pendang, Tanjung Piai, Petaling Jaya	SDG6, SDG11, SDG13	3
11	Affordable Housing & Urban Poverty	Selayang, Petaling Jaya	SDG11, SDG1	2
12	Sustainable Tourism	Tanjung Piai, Pendang	SDG 12	2
13	Refugees, Migrants, and Stateless Rights	Selayang	SDG 16	1
14	Social Cohesion and Unity	Bentong	SDG 16	1

For 2022, Teo Sue Ann, the lead researcher, identified the situational analysis dimensions based on case studies and thematic concerns. These too, centre around the theme of "leaving no one behind". It is significant to note the specific target groups on the ground with whom we have been interacting.

On case studies, the APPGM-SDG researchers conducted the case study with a focus on a specific locality and target group that were identified from the issue mapping. As a result, six target groups have been identified, as per Table 5.

Table 5: Case studies identified from the APPGM-SDG issue mapping in 2022

Region	Target Groups/ Topics	Location
North	Fishing village & mangroves	Sungai Batang Tiga, Parit Buntar
Central	Urban Poor (B40), settlers & housing	Kampung Bunga Raya, Sungai Buloh
	Overdevelopment in Cheras	Taman Supreme, Cheras
East	Resettlement of the indigenous people	RPS Pasik, Gua Musang
Sabah	Infrastructure gaps & geographical challenges	Kg Pamgi, Tenom
Sarawak	Border Security	Kg Mongkos, Serian

In 2022, the situational analysis revolved around target groups and themes. Table 6 provides the list of situational analyses identified from the 27 parliamentary constituencies in 2022 by Teo Sue Ann.

Here are the concerns of flat dwellers, farmers, urban poor, single parents, and indigenous people (Orang Asal or Orang Asli) as the most vulnerable in Malaysian society and linked to the theme of leaving no one behind. The detailed analysis reveals a complex set of cross-cutting concerns impacting economic, social, and environmental concerns.

Table 6: Situational analysis -Target group & Themes (2022)

Themes	Locations
PPR residents	Jerlun, Kangar, Kuantan, Gua Musang,Tebrau, Sungai Buloh, Cheras, Kalabakan
Farmers	Parit Buntar, Jerlun, Kangar, Kuantan, Kuala Kerai, Tangga Batu, Tenom, Kalabakan
Fishermen	Parit Buntar, Kuantan, Tangga Batu, Tampin, Kuala Kerai, Gua Musang, Kangar, Jerlun, Merbok, Kalabakan
B40 (Urban Poor)	Tampin, Tenom, Tangga Batu, Tebrau, Merbok, Kalabakan, Beaufort, Keningau
Education and school (teachers and students)	Kuantan, Tangga Batu, Tebrau, Tenom, Kalabakan, Tanjung Manis, Gua Musang
Single parents	Parit Buntar, Kangar, Kuanta, Tangga Batu, Kuala Kerai, Tenom, Tebrau, Merbok, Kalabakan, Beaufort, Gua Musang
Orang Asli/Asal	Tampin, Tebrau, Gua Musang
Heritage	Jerlun, Merbok, Paya Besar
Senior Citizens	Tangga Batu, Kalabakan, Bukit Mertajam

It is, therefore, significant to note that this situational analysis undertaken by Alizan Mahadi or Teo Sue Ann has policy implications requiring long-term policy changes through the development planning process. This is the next phase for policy advocacy work, especially among parliamentarians.

SDG Micro Solution Projects[16]

A major activity of the APPGM-SDG is undertaking micro-SDG solution projects after mapping and prioritisation local needs. The approach is in the identification of local needs; we also try to address some of the short-term concerns through SDG micro solution projects, which are

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16   James Raj and Paniirselvam Jayaraman, 'Grassroots Participation through Solution Projects'.

implemented over 3 to 6 months by a local partner in partnership with local communities.

Status of Solution Projects

Table 7 provides an update on the current status of the solution projects between 2020 and 2022. This is not a complete list, as many constituencies in 2022 did not identify their community projects at the grassroots due to the dissolution of parliament in October 2022.

Table 7: Status of Solution Projects from 2020 – 2022

Year	2020		2021		2022	
	Ongoing	Completed	Ongoing	Completed	Ongoing	Completed
Status	0	34	0	87	111	4
Total by year		34		87		115
Grand Total						236

Over the past three years, a total of 236 micro-SDG solution projects have been approved by the committee. Of those approved, 121 have been undertaken.[17]

Currently, in 2022, a total of 115 projects have been approved, of which four have been completed, and the remaining 111 are being undertaken.[18] Due to Parliament being dissolved, some projects were not approved in several constituencies. These will be decided when the new APPGM-SDG committee is constituted.

Detailed descriptions of the 236 solution projects are available by parliamentary constituency, with project description, project type, and who the solution provider is. These are decentralised projects identified by local communities. More such local community identified micro projects should be undertaken with active participation by local communities.

MPs are active in the finalisation of micro projects and allocations with the Secretariat and discuss with them when the solution projects and providers are short listed. All short listed projects are brought before

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17 All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on the Sustainable Development Goals, '121 SDG Solution Projects Undertaken between 2020 and 2021' (Google Drive) <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1BNDkX4Ff6KEXi7AlJqHCnaUG-ZDguIcE> accessed December 2022.

18 All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on the Sustainable Development Goals, '115 SDG Solution Projects Approved in 2022 and Still Being Undertaken' (Google Drive) <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PLj8TT4X4k6J-glIQJ1Yq6vXBm0Ra2xS> accessed December 2022.

the committee after due diligence is undertaken by the solution team in the Secretariat. A minimum of three MPs must review the projects before they receive the final green light for approval. Once decided, the Secretariat team prepares an MOU with the solution provider based on the project proposal, which is designed to address one of the identified issues from the mapping exercise.

It is also interesting to note that the solution projects can be classified into three major categories, as indicated in Table 8. Here, 66% or 156 projects are economy based or related to income generating. 28% or 67 projects are social-based projects, and only 6% or 13 are environmental-based. While this is a simplistic classification, many projects could be cross-cutting and multi-dimensional.

Table 8: Solution Projects by SDG Themes

Project Category	2020	2021	2022	Total	%
Economy	18	59	79	156	66
Social	14	23	30	67	28
Environment	2	5	6	13	6
Total	34	87	115	236	100

Solution projects are divided into eleven project types, as indicated in Table 9. Of these, 55% or 129 out of 236 is income generation.

Table 9: Solution Projects by project type

Classification	2020	2021	2022	Total	%
Income Generation	15	48	66	129	55
Education	6	8	6	20	8.5
Digitalization	1	6	4	11	4.7
Skills Development	5	6	10	21	8.9
Heritage	1	1	3	5	2.1
Fresh water, waste migrant & health	2	8	11	21	8.9
Mindfulness	0	0	3	3	1.0
Community Learning Center	0	2	5	7	2.9
Inter-agency	3	6	1	10	4.2
Basic infra & amenities	1	1	3	5	2.1
Drug Prevention	0	1	3	4	1.7
Total	34	87	115	236	100

In the case of target groups, especially on the theme of leaving no one behind, Table 10 provides the breakdown. The largest target group served are the indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak (57 projects, or 24%), followed by women (47 projects, or 20%), and then youth (42 projects, or 18%).

Table 10: Categories of target groups in solution projects

Target Group	2020	2021	2022	Total	%
Women	7	20	20	47	20.0
Youth	5	17	20	42	18.0
PWDs	0	0	4	4	1.7
Refugees	1	2	1	4	1.7
Orang Asli	3	1	3	7	3.0
Orang Asal Sabah & Sarawak	4	15	38	57	24.0
Farmers	1	5	2	8	3.4
Fisherman	2	5	3	10	4.2
Small traders	1	6	5	12	5.0
Villagers	5	11	10	26	11.0
PPR / Flat Dwellers	5	5	9	19	8.0
Total	34	87	115	236	100

Solution Providers

The existence of solution providers is one of the significant discoveries made in the localisation of the SDGs. As shown in Table 11, we have been assisted by 97 solution providers over the past three years. However, locating such providers, particularly in rural and interior areas, is increasingly challenging.

Table 11: Solution Providers (2020 – 2022)

Year	2020	2021	2022
Solution Providers	25	78	97

We also noted that the largest number of SDG solution providers are registered societies (47 out of 97, or 48%), followed by those registered under company registration (22 out of 97, or 23%). The remaining 28 solution providers fall into eight other categories, as indicated in Table 12. Universities, youth-based organisations, and social enterprises and cooperatives are among these.

Table 12: Category of Solution Providers

Solution Providers	2020	2021	2022
University	6	8	7
Society	11	40	47
Company Registration (SSM)	0	19	22
Youth Based Organisations	1	3	5
Foundation	4	1	2
Social Enterprises	3	3	4
Cooperatives	0	4	4
MPs office	0	0	3
Residents' association & Community safety group (KRT)	0	0	2
RCE-UCSI	0	0	1
Total	25	78	97

Effective monitoring of solution projects

A major area determining the success of the solution projects is the project management necessary to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of the intended objectives. In this context, early detection of issues and challenges, while the project is in progress, is vital. We also seek to find a solution and mitigate the potential shortfalls in the projects. There is a clear strategy for monitoring the progress. Regular capacity-building programmes are organised monthly with all the solution providers. This has resulted in the success of the projects and meeting the objectives and targets for achieving the SDG targets and indicators.

Independent impact evaluation on solution projects

In addition to effective monitoring, we undertake an independent impact evaluation, which is undertaken by the Social Science Society (PSSM)'s two key members, namely Prof. Dato' Dr. Rashila Ramli and Prof. Dr. Sity Daud. The impact evaluation has three components. The first is document review. The second is a focus group discussion with project beneficiaries, and the third is a project site visit. The findings will be compared with SDG goals, targets, and indicators, as well as correlated with the identified policy issues and the solution projects undertaken.

Capacity Building and SDG Awareness Programmes[19]

The secretariat has established a mySDG Academy and developed several training modules. Four modules were developed as per Table 13.

Table 13: SDG Training Programs by mySDG Academy

Training Days	Programme Name
2 full Days f2f training	Building Inclusive Communities in partnership with UNDP
1 full Day f2f training	SDG & Community Transformation (BM) in partnership with Sejahtera Centre, IIUM
1 full Day f2f training	SDG Project Management (BM, English, Chinese)
Hybrid mode	SDGs and Human Rights

Ground-level awareness and training were undertaken firstly by Zainal Abidin of the Sejahtera Centre at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and later by Zoel Ng through the mySDG Academy. The IIUM team conducted 13 awareness workshops on SDGs in 13 different locations. These were largely attended by district-level civil servants. Details can be found in Table 14.

Table 14: Capacity building programs by IIUM team

No.	Location	Date	No of Participants
1	Batu Kawan	15 Nov 2021	27
2	Permatang Pauh	16 Nov 2021	27
3	Jeli	16 Jan 2022	15
4	Pasir Mas	8 Feb 2022	24
5	Tumpat	9 Feb 2022	33
6	Sik	22 March 2022	22
7	Kubang Pasu	13 Apr 2022	18
8	Libaran	9 May 2022	21
9	Pendang	24 May 2022	21
10	Pontian	19 June 2022	25
11	Baling	26 June 2022	22
12	Ipoh Barat	6 July 2022	24
13	Kota Belud	23 July 2022	49

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19 Zoel Ng, 'SDG Society Report' (2022).

The mySDG Academy hosted 10 capacity-building programmes around the country focusing on civil society and community leaders in creating awareness of SDGs. A unique feature here is that the secretariat identified a local partner who provides the hosting and ensures that about 20 to 30 participants attend the session, especially people living in that location. Details are in Table 15.

Table 15: SDG Awareness & Training programs by mySDG Academy

No.	Location	Date	Local Partner	No of Participants
1	Sabah	28 Aug 2022	Borneo Comrad	31
2	Penang	12 Sept 2022	Penang State Government	31
3	Sarawak	19 Oct 2022	UPEN Sarawak	69
4	Sabah	22 Oct 2022	Sabah State Government	47
5	Cheras	23 Oct 2022	Pudipang Enterprise	17
6	Johor	29 Oct 2022	Global Peace	49
7	Bukit Mertajam	20 Nov 2022	ASWIP	39
8	Indera Mahkota	10 Dec 2022	MIYC Kuantan	41
9	Kuantan	11 Dec 2022	MIYC Kuantan	37
10	Petaling Jaya	17 Dec 2022	MyPJ	25

We recognise that SDG awareness and training are lacking at the grassroots, and more needs to be done to equip civil servants, CSO and local community leaders.

Grooming Youths as Partners in Localising SDGs[20]

Zoel Ng has been working on reaching out to young people about the SDGs with the aim of providing youths between the ages of 15 and 30 with the skills, knowledge, attitude, network, and resources they need to become partners in localising the SDGs.

This participatory approach enables youths to contribute their perspectives on achieving the goals in their respective communities, while also aiding in creating awareness and building capacity among local actors. It is especially pertinent given that youths comprise a large proportion of the population in many countries, and their potential

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20 Zoel Ng is leading this youth section and has a good team of young people in SDGs

to contribute to social and economic development should not be overlooked.

In November 2021 and June 2022, the secretariat organised the Malaysian Youth SDG Summit with the support of more than 30 youth organisations, the UN Resident Coordinator in Malaysia, and the Malaysian Ministry of Youth and Sports. In August 2022, we launched the Youth SDG Agent with 10 prominent national youth groups.

The Youth Section in the Secretariat now offers three different youth SDG engagement programmes, as indicated in Table 16.

Table 16: Youth engagement programs

Mechanism	Programme Name
1-day program to feature the high-impact projects led by youth in building a sustainable community	Youth SDG Summit
One-year program to groom local youths to be the champion in localising SDGs. They will have the chance to be involved in policy round table discussions, SDG micro-projects and capacity-building programmes	Youth SDG Agent
Continuously review youth engagement and participation in localising SDGs	Conferences & journal writing

Challenges

While the APPGM-SDG team has achieved much over the past three years, we have noted four key challenges. These are:

Firstly, the cross-cutting nature of SDGs concerns as opposed to the silo approach. Most agencies and organisations have adopted a silo approach due to their agency mandates or funding. However, in the SDGs, we see the multi-dimensional nature of problems as well as the need for a more holistic approach to problem-solving and interventions.

Second, we recognise the complex nature of development concerns at the grassroots, especially in the context where decentralisation is weak. Malaysia adopts top-down approaches, with most planning and decision-making occurring at the Federal or State government levels.

Local communities could make their requests or voice their needs, but they do not have the powers to execute the decisions as both the budget and the approval authority are at the top and undertaken during the development planning process, which occurs once every five years, or as a request through annual national budgets. Thirdly, while we have been successful at the micro solution projects, many of the concerns identified need greater intervention to see lasting solutions. As we have undertaken the mapping exercise in 57 parliamentary constituencies, we note that there are about 10 to 15 unresolved issues and concerns in every local that are projecting a negative impact on the people.

Therefore, more attention to macro policy advocacy concerns is necessary to monitor issues identified and their policy interventions, which might require short-term or long-term policy solutions.

Lastly, one of the weaknesses of the past three years is our inability to secure the full support of the district agencies; however, in recent times, we have been able to secure the support of District Officers. We see the value of engaging with agencies early. We will do this before undertaking the field visit. This early encounter enables a better working relationship.

Way forward

The 15th Parliament had its first session on December 19, 2022. We are in discussion with the new Speaker about reactivating the APPGMs and waiting for his formal endorsement and parliamentary procedure. We have already secured the support of eight MPs from the lower house and one from the Senate for the re-establishment of the APPGM-SDG. We have written a letter to the Speaker and hope to meet him in early January 2023 for the activation of APPGM-SDG in the 15th Parliament session.

Update on the MPs in the 15th Parliament Session

Based on the General Election 15 results, we can see a change in the MPs in our 57 parliamentary constituencies. Of the 57 constituencies, only 26 are from the GE14 batch, and 31 are new MPs.[21] This is a major new task for the secretariat to create awareness among the 31 new MPs and win their confidence and partnership.

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21 All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on the Sustainable Development Goals, '57 Parliamentary Constituencies' (appgm-sdg.com) <https://appgm-sdg.com/BI/Constituencies/> accessed December 2022.

For 2023, we will reach out to another 26 new constituencies, of which 13 will be from government parties and another 13 from opposition parties.

Five Focus Areas in 2023

In reviewing the agenda for 2023 and beyond, we recognise that there are five major areas we need to focus on in the coming year.

First, strengthening decentralised ways for planning and delivering services and programmes as well as policies, legislation, and resource allocation for SDGs.

In localising the SDGs, a key is a decentralised approach of working at the grassroots with district and local government agencies and local communities. Malaysia has very good development plans formulated at the top levels; however, we need to strengthen grassroots democracy and the participation of ordinary people in determining local needs, concerns, and agendas.

Second, district-level SDG working groups or local Multi Stakeholder Taskforce.

There has been much discussion on setting up a mechanism at the district and local government level for multi-stakeholder participation. This was discussed during the preparation of the 2021 Voluntary National Review (VNR), organised by the EPU. This was added to the VNR report as a recommendation for the way forward.

> In localising SDGs, in addition to working with local authorities, efforts are being made to engage with the district offices. This is to ensure an inter-agency SDG delivery taskforce is organised at the district level to enhance the role of all agencies including a multi-stakeholder group (civil society, private sector, and academic networks) in addressing economic, social, and environmental concerns at the grassroots level.[22]

Over the past three years in the localising of SDGs, the APPGM-SDG team has felt that this multi-stakeholder group was most needed in mapping local needs and finding the solutions that required a multi-agency intervention due to the cross-cutting nature of the local development concerns.

Currently, at the district level, many working groups address security matters, poverty, and natural disasters, but none on SDG concerns.

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22 Malaysia Voluntary National Review (VNR) (n 13) 120.

Local government might have a committee, but this might not involve Federal agencies, which are largely responsible for most of the SDG targets and indicators on poverty eradication, education, health, and the environment, to name a few of the 17 goals. We will work with EPU and seek the support of the State secretaries to ensure that the district-level officers will work closely with our teams.

Third, capacity-building programmes for government staff, CSO-NGO, local community leaders, and the business community on the SDGs.

The Secretariat has established the mySDG Academy, a training arm and a social enterprise to ensure the sustainability of the efforts. In 2022, under the leadership of Zoel Ng, the academy has been undertaking many capacity-building programmes including the development of different training modules for the training of civil servants, CSO, and community leaders. These will be intensified in 2023 and beyond.

Fourth, there is a need to increase the parliamentary discussions and workings in small groups with government agencies in discussing root causes and finding solutions.

This approach is critical to resolving many ground issues identified during the mapping exercise that have remained unresolved over the past three years. The situation analysis reports have documented these, including the case studies, but there is an urgent need to discuss them.

In 2023, the secretariat will set up the Centre for Social Inclusion with the specific objective of documenting the local issues and seeking local solutions through dialogue with the relevant agencies for long-term changes. We plan to undertake this, with MPs leading the policy discussions. There is a need to systematically address these concerns, including ensuring no one is left behind as well as addressing the cross-cutting nature of policy interventions.

Conclusion

The past three years have seen the foundational work of localising SDGs at the parliamentary level and the opportunity for MPs to be local champions. This is a unique role for parliamentarians. While MPs have a key role as policymakers in parliament, they also play a role in understanding and addressing grassroots concerns at the ground level. The 17 SDGs, a comprehensive development agenda, provide the MPs with a range of intervention strategies, targets, and indicators at the ground level, as well as pointers for their parliamentary debates.

The APPGM-SDG approach provides this avenue to work at the grassroots and macro policy levels. Furthermore, it is key to note that a secretariat of academics and civil society activists supports the MPs.

The 12th Malaysia Plan advocated a whole of nation approach similar to SDG 17:17 on multi-stakeholder engagement. Therefore, the APPGM SDG example is unique, and Malaysia has much to share with the world on localising SDGs.

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