Dynamic ASEAN (Sustainable Development)

Sustainable ASEAN (Environment Protection)

Resilient ASEAN (Disaster Management)
ASEAN Community Vision 2025

Report on the Second S Rajaratnam Endowment - ASEAN Community Forum
Focusing on Dynamic ASEAN (Sustainable Development), Sustainable ASEAN (Environment Protection), Resilient ASEAN (Disaster Management)
23 - 24 August 2017, Singapore

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“We are learning to collaborate with the governments as well as with other civil society organisations in our country. This is what the community forum is about: how could we work together instead of just doing it on our own? We are learning how to do it together under the ASEAN umbrella.”

Dr Khin Muang Win, Community Development Association, Myanmar

“This forum has taught me more about ASEAN Blueprint 2025 and about ASEAN Community Vision 2025. I feel like I am more aware of the existence of such things which can be brought back... tell people about it and make them more aware... these are the things that we can do with regards to ASEAN...”

Nazarah Binti Mohd. Noor, Green Brunei

“Besides knowing more about ASEAN and its processes, the most important thing I learnt from this forum is that although we come from different countries and cultures, we can think and feel as one.”

Savun Sam OL, ATSA Cambodia

“There are so many things to learn, to hear from the other organisations and CSOs. The strongest feeling for me, is that I have a strong feel with ASEAN. I feel like I’m a part of it, and I am in it. I think that is important because once you feel you belong to it, you will want to do more things for it, and more things with it.”

Nguyen Thi Kim Que, Vice Director of the Centre for Sustainable Development Studies, Vietnam

Nguyen along with the 42 Participants from 39 Civil Society Organisation (CSOs) representing all ten ASEAN member states attended the Second S Rajaratnam Endowment (SRE) – ASEAN Community Forum in Singapore from 23 to 24 August 2017. The forum was held to engage CSOs to bring ASEAN closer together and strengthen the ASEAN identity.

The Second SRE – ASEAN Community Forum aims to discuss ways to make the ASEAN Community Blueprints 2025 more relevant and responsive to improve lives of ASEAN citizens, specifically in sustainable development (Dynamic ASEAN), environment protection (Sustainable ASEAN), and disaster management (Resilient ASEAN).

The CSOs got acquainted with ASEAN processes and mechanisms to understand how they can better engage with ASEAN, and how the work of ASEAN can benefit the communities they work for.

Most of the participants had the chance to exchange views and strategies on how sustainable development, environment protection, and disaster management can better build the ASEAN community.
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<th>Country</th>
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<td>Brunei</td>
<td>Society for Community Outreach and Training</td>
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<td>Research Center for Community Development Initiatives</td>
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Mountain peaks at sunset in the early evening at the Khao Yai National Park in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand. The park is the third largest in Thailand and covers an area of 300 square kilometers.
Reflection of ASEAN 50 Years Anniversary, and UN Sustainable Development Goals on Environment and Disaster Management

H.E. Dr AKP Mochtan, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for Community and Corporate Affair

“ASEAN is only truly successful if cooperation and regional integration go beyond the government, policy circles and organisations, and that it also involves civil societies and individuals – students, young people, artists, professionals, vendors, migrant workers, men and women on the street... It is for each and every single one of these individuals that ASEAN must commit to work, and to ensure that the legacy of peace and diversity, a resilient, sustainable and dynamic ASEAN Community (as with today’s theme) lives on while we work towards celebrating another 50 good years and beyond for ASEAN.”

As ASEAN looks to the future, it is equally important that we reflect on where we came from.

50 years ago, it is against the backdrop of an uncertain world that ASEAN is formed. War raged in Indo-China. Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore while having averted a regional conflict (1965’s Konfrantasi), had also to contend with communist insurgencies that were spreading in the region. It was an uncertain world.

It is against this uncertainty, that ASEAN is formed. A short, simply-worded document containing five Articles spelt out the purpose of her existence which laid the foundation of ASEAN today.

In the words of Thanat Khoman, then Foreign Minister of Thailand, “the goal of ASEAN is to create, not to destroy.” Create, we have. Today, the peace and prosperity of the region we witness owed in no small part to ASEAN.

Over the past five decades, no “large scale” war has erupted between two member countries in the region. ASEAN has also played her part in resolving the long aftermath of Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia, and in ending peaceably Indonesia’s occupation of East Timor, as well as bringing Myanmar onboard despite international community’s concerns about the regime then, among others.

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May I remind you that our region is so diverse in values, culturally, historically, politically and economically that we were once labelled as the “Balkans” of Asia, a region that risked breaking up because of our differences and the fault lines.

While ASEAN is considered a more successful and enduring organization today, we must not forget that it was a region which was once at the risk of “balkanisation”, to borrow the words of S. Rajaratnam, a founding member of ASEAN in 1967. It is, in no small part, because of ASEAN that the region enjoys peace and prosperity in the past fifty years.

ASEAN, in and of itself, is the regional infrastructure for peace. But can this regional infrastructure of peace be “guaranteed” to exist for another good fifty years and more?

The simple answer is that only if we continue with our regional efforts. But deepening regional cooperation cannot be driven by the governments alone. Individual ASEAN citizens like yourself and the civil societies will need to play your part to safeguard the cherished peace and security we have today.

ASEAN is dedicated to delivering and fully realising human development, resiliency and sustainable development through Member States’ cooperation on a diverse range of areas, e.g.
education, youth, social welfare, women, rural development, poverty eradication, environment, disaster management, humanitarian assistance and health.

Tangible results of cooperation have already been achieved in various sectors such as in disaster management and humanitarian assistance, environment, education, labour, cultural exchanges, poverty alleviation and gender equality, good health and well-being, among others. Cooperation in these areas continue to deepen among ASEAN Member States.

An exemplary case in point is the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) and the ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN One Response: ASEAN Responding to Disasters as One in the Region and Outside the Region. The AADMER is the first and only agreement in the world that enables regional collaboration in managing disasters and has been the benchmark for other regional organisations in their attempt of pursuing the same. The AADMER was further accentuated with the adoption of the One ASEAN One Response Declaration at the 28th ASEAN Summit in September 2016 - laying out a solid political commitment to achieve a more collective, unified and swifter response towards disasters. This is the highest level of commitment that ASEAN has come thus far, and indeed an overarching framework, to harness the individual and collective strengths of different sectors and stakeholders in ASEAN to effectively respond to disasters within and outside the region.

Against this backdrop, we see the realisation of the One ASEAN One Response when the ASEAN Member States consented for the AHA Centre to deploy its relief items under the DELSA stockpile in support of the Philippine Government’s efforts in assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Marawi City and other localities in July this year. The relief items included 600 family tents, 600 family kits, 3000 personal hygiene kits, 600 kitchen sets and 4 water filtration units. Delivery of the relief items also garnered the support of the Malaysian Air Force as they facilitated the operation by mobilizing their military A400M aircraft for this particular delivery.

On environment, the environmental challenges that ASEAN are facing include the climate and global warming, rapid growth of urbanization, marine plastic debris, illegal wildlife trafficking as well as water resources management. ASEAN have put a strong focus in solving these environmental concerns through its designated Working Groups. Such steps also guide the environmental considerations in the action plans of other sectors to ensure that the goals of environmentally sustainable development are achieved in the ASEAN Vision 2025.

ASEAN is in the process of setting up the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Transboundary Haze Pollution Control. The Centre will facilitate and coordinate efforts in managing the impact of land and/or forest fires in particular haze pollution arising from such fires, to realise a Haze-Free region by 2020.

Southeast Asia is a rich biodiversity hotspot where it contains an exceptional concentration of species with 20% of the planet’s animal, plant and marine species, and the world’s third-largest tropical forest. Between 1997 and 2014, more than 2,216 new species were discovered in this region alone. To protect the rich biodiversity, ASEAN has designated 38 national protected areas in the region as ASEAN Heritage Parks of high conservation importance.

ASEAN has also rolled out numerous initiatives to promote the awareness and protection of our rich biodiversity and the environment. These initiatives include the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (as a dedicated regional centre of excellence on biodiversity conservation and sustainable use through policy support, networking, training, research, and database management).

In addition, efforts are stepped up to promote cultural diversity, tolerance, and mutual understanding in the Community. This is particularly important in the face of rising violent extremism and other forms of violence that can potentially disrupt social stability and divide the societies. To this end, ASEAN is working on fostering a ‘Culture of Prevention’ to prevent such harms and consequences of violence from taking root in the first place.

Overall, work plans/programmes of the sectoral bodies under the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community continue to enhance regional cooperation in pursuit of the objectives of the ASCC Blueprint 2025 which are to engage and benefit the people, and is inclusive, sustainable, resilient and dynamic, which are the themes that I understand will be discussed at this forum.

These work plans also complement and support the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDGs). Indeed, there are good complementarities between ASEAN Vision 2025 and the 17 goals under UN SDGs. ASEAN’s efforts on disaster management and environmental mitigation dovetail with various SGD goals including for example, Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being (where it makes reference to early warning, and risk reduction etc); Goal 14: Conserve
& sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development; Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

I would like to conclude my remarks by saying a few words on how we should all work together for a better tomorrow, for a brighter ASEAN.

If I may use the analogy of the jumbo 747 jet: one engine is the government; the other engine is the non-state actors. But at the heart – the main body of the plane – is the PEOPLE that makes the journey important and meaningful of all. ASEAN is about working for, and with, the peoples of the region. ASEAN is only truly successful if cooperation and regional integration go beyond the government, policy circles and organisations, and that it also involves civil societies and individuals – students, young people, artists, professionals, vendors, migrant works, men and women on the street.

It is for each and every single one of these individuals that ASEAN must commit to work, and to ensure that the legacy of peace and diversity, a resilient, sustainable and dynamic ASEAN Community (as with today’s theme) lives on while we work towards celebrating another 50 good years and beyond for ASEAN.

Residents participate in “Car Free Day” on the city’s main road in Jakarta, Indonesia. Thousands come out every Sunday to walk, jog, cycle and skate in the streets normally taken over by motorists.
Ms. Elaine Tan  
Executive Director, ASEAN Foundation  

“ASEAN has always been about people. This year we celebrate ASEAN’s 50th Anniversary and there is a greater call for ASEAN to engage people, to feel that they belong to the ASEAN Community.”

On behalf of the ASEAN Foundation, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all of you to the 2nd S Rajaratnam Endowment – ASEAN Community Forum.

We are very happy to have more than 40 participants from all ten ASEAN member states at today’s forum. One of the goals of the ASEAN Community Blueprints is to engage all ASEAN nationals through effective and innovative platforms. Moreover, the ASEAN Foundation has been mandated to perform as a platform to forge more people-to-people engagement outside the circles of inter-governmental institutions. Thus, the ASEAN Foundation together with the S Rajaratnam Endowment have partnered to organise the SRE – ASEAN Community Forum series, focusing on civil service organisations throughout ASEAN.

About the Forum

This is the second Forum in the series, and we have chosen to focus on environmental protection, disaster management, and sustainable development. The topics are named Sustainable ASEAN, Resilient ASEAN, and Dynamic ASEAN respectively. This second Forum is also special because we are commemorating the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN in August, a greater reason for us to come together, and work towards building a people-centred community.

Engaging Civil Society Organisations to build the ASEAN Community

The civil society organisations in ASEAN are doing great work for the communities that they work in. Thus, we hope to engage with them so that they can understand how being a part of the ASEAN Community can help them and the people they work for. Initiatives such as this also help to build a sense of belonging to ASEAN, and that we work together and grow together as one.

Environmental protection, disaster management, and sustainable development are key issues for ASEAN, and are crucial elements for ASEAN to develop and prosper. The ASEAN 2025 Blueprints have listed our goals as a region to address these issues, and we need to all work together to achieve these goals.

Through the forum, we hope to help the CSOs here today understand the impact of the ASEAN 2025 Blueprints, hear their honest thoughts towards the implementations of these blueprints, and what their suggestions on the way forward are.

Conclusion

I would like to thank the S Rajaratnam Endowment and our other partners once again who have made this event possible. I hope that the SRE – ASEAN Community Forum can be a conducive and effective platform to forge good relationships, build strong networks, and form fruitful discussions. We highly encourage more of such interactions between ASEAN and civil society organisations. I look forward to our discussions and learning over the next two days. Thank you.
A view of Kon Ka Kinh National Park in Dac Doa district, Gia Lai province, Vietnam. The park, a biological tourist site is located on Kon Tum Plateau.
Civil Society Engagement with ASEAN

Mr. Lee Yoong Yoong,
Director, Community Affairs,
ASEAN Secretariat

ASEAN’s story began in 1967 with five visionary members: Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Brunei joined in 1984, Vietnam in 1995, Myanmar and Laos in 1997, and Cambodia in 1999. Before 2000, ASEAN had 10 countries under one roof. Eventually Timor Leste would join ASEAN, meanwhile, she has been given observer status. Some of the informal Track Two events such as Southeast Asian Games have included Timor Leste; she is also a member of ASEAN Football Federation.

The five founding fathers, Narciso Ramos, Adam Malik, Thanat Khoman, Tun Abdul Razak and S Rajaratnam signed the Bangkok Declaration that created ASEAN. In fact, it was Thanat Khoman who pushed for the idea of its formation; the name, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, on other hand was Adam Malik’s idea.

Where does ASEAN stand today?

Almost every nation wants to build ties with ASEAN. Its non-threatening, neutral and friendly approach makes it one of the best in advancing international relations. ASEAN has ten dialogue partners and each ASEAN member state is in charge of coordinating with one of them. Ten plus three (ASEAN + China, Korea and Japan) is important as ASEAN’s first regional architecture. It expanded to ten plus six to include India, Australia and New Zealand. Subsequently, in a changing world with geopolitical forces at play, it became ten plus eight adding USA and Russia. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership brought together 16 countries. The coverage and substance of cooperation is reflected in the types of partnership ranging from comprehensive ones covering political-security, economic, socio-cultural cooperation, to sector based and specific development issues. The East Asia Summit is one of bigger and more structured regional architecture that ASEAN is driving today, the only platform besides the United Nations (UN) where one can find the medium and strong powers. In addition, ASEAN has four sectorial partners – Pakistan, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey, and one developing partner, Germany.

ASEAN is truly unique as the only regional organisation today that brings together different and diverse political systems, religious beliefs and social fabric under one umbrella. It is a feat to be proud of. A word that is often used to describe ASEAN is diversity. Indeed, ASEAN is unlike the largely homogeneous European Union; it was colonised by different colonial masters and made up of different cultures, history and backgrounds with vast natural resources. Speaking of which, as a whole ASEAN has a forest area of 47%, better than China and USA.

Collectively, ASEAN’s GDP was $2.4 trillion, ranked sixth behind USA, China, Japan, Germany, South

Diagram: Forest Area in ASEAN

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<th>Country</th>
<th>Forest Area</th>
<th>Source: Data World bank</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>67.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>62%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
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<td>Malaysia</td>
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<td>Philippines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brunei</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
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<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
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<td>Australia</td>
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Korea and UK. ASEAN overtook France and may surpass United Kingdom in the next 15 years. With $120 billion, ASEAN was among top five performers for FDI inflows, even better performing than China. If ASEAN was a single entity, the region would be the third most populous nation; 10% of global population; Asia’s third largest workforce; world’s sixth largest economy; and fourth largest trading entity after European Union, USA and China. According to Asia Research Magazine, ASEAN will grow to 700 million people (by 2030), with almost 25% deemed to be in middle class (household with annual disposable income of more than US$3,000), an economy that will double, with nominal GDP increased from US$2.4 trillion in 2015 to US$4.8 trillion in 2020.

Free Trade Agreements (FTA) like the ASEAN-China FTA and the ASEAN-India FTA illustrated the benefits of collective action and ASEAN’s clout. The FTA with European Union was the biggest deal by far bringing together all ten ASEAN member states and 26 EU states. In fact, since 1967 ASEAN has provided that kind of leadership and continued to make itself relevant.

It was made clear that ASEAN was not “all talk”; where it mattered leaders took action. Case in point: because it was imperative to do it sooner, the leaders agreed to fast track the launch of ASEAN Community by five years to 2015. From the beginnings of an association, it was only logical and natural for ASEAN to progress towards the next level of integration as it matured. The rise of China, India and other emerging economies reinforced the importance of creating a stronger, more united and cohesive ASEAN. Leaders recognised the need to not only build resilience to cushion ASEAN from adverse impact of global shocks, but also to build sustainable growth. ASEAN Community was thus launched at the Kuala Lumpur Summit in 2015.

ASEAN Community comprises of three pillars: political and security cooperation (APSC), economic cooperation (AEC) and socio-cultural cooperation (ASCC). Briefly, the political and security pillar is concerned with ensuring that countries in the region live in peace with one another and with the world in a just, democratic and harmonious environment. The socio-cultural pillar promotes a community of caring societies and

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<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>POPULATION (MILLIONS)</th>
<th>NOMINAL GDP (MILLIONS USD)</th>
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<td>255.46</td>
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<td>Brunei</td>
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Diagram: ASEAN Population and GDP (source: IMF)
What were the respective ministerial and sectorial bodies under each of the pillar?

The Secretary-General of ASEAN is accorded ministerial level of courtesy and protocol; he acts like the Chief Executive Officer of ASEAN. Four Deputy Secretaries-General who must be of different nationalities support him. More than 300 staff at the ASEAN Secretariat is distributed across the pillars and Department of Community and Corporate Affairs.

ASEAN Charter is the other key source of reference for CSOs. It served as legal and institutional framework to achieve ASEAN Community; developed areas of competence of key ASEAN bodies and their relationships with one another; codified all ASEAN norms, rules, and values; and reaffirmed that all ASEAN agreements are legally binding, where appropriate.

Another crucial factor that bound and held ASEAN together was physical connectivity – huge plans for highways, open skies and maritime shipping cooperation were underway.

As a result, the economic pillar aims to establish a single market and production base, enabling free flow of goods, skilled labour, capital, investment and services.

CSOs were encouraged to study the publication ‘ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together’ the ten-year roadmap for ASEAN’s integration. It was important to remember that ASCC was the people’s community. The role of ASEAN Secretariat was to bring ASEAN closer to the people, all 628 million of them, by working with relevant stakeholders like CSOs, media, business leaders and policy makers. In moving towards one community, ASEAN strengthens its position in relative to other global economic strongholds like China and India, while maintaining a high degree of sustainable growth.

What were the respective ministerial and sectorial bodies under each of the pillar?

The Secretary-General of ASEAN is accorded ministerial level of courtesy and protocol; he acts like the Chief Executive Officer of ASEAN. Four Deputy Secretaries-
CSOs can better engage with ASEAN, make a difference and make their voices heard by the governments by becoming ASEAN’s associated entities. One such entity that earned the right to carry ASEAN’s logo was Air Asia, after showing that they operated in all ten ASEAN capitals, offering flights to all ten destinations. Within the ASEAN Community, CSOs are major actors, giving ASEAN the impetus to grant accreditation to prominent entities in the hope of building fruitful relationships. Engagement and accreditation governed by the Rules of Procedures and Criteria for Engagement for Entities associated with ASEAN and its guidelines are available in the ‘ASEAN Engagement with Entities’ booklet. Objectives of the accreditation includes:

- Drawing the entities into the mainstream of ASEAN activities; thereby giving them opportunity and privilege of participating in ASEAN activities;
- Ensuring sustainable interaction and fruitful relationships between the existing ASEAN sectorial bodies and the entities;
- Helping to promote a people-oriented, people-centered ASEAN Community.

ASEAN would continue to do what it had done for the last 50 years, progressing one step at a time, through consensus. For all of ASEAN’s successes, pressing challenges remain. Sustainability becomes an issue if the gaps in development and infrastructure between member states are too big and the region does not grow at a more equitable pace.

One of the faster ways to grow and narrow the gaps was to undertake economic development, and for that investment played a crucial role. According to World Bank, Singapore ranked second in ease of doing business while other member states were outside the 100th mark. Investors did not just look at one or two countries, they deemed ASEAN as a whole and their investments were for the long term.

There is all the more reason for the members states to come together as one community. Without ASEAN there would be no bargaining power for some of the states. “ASEAN Community” is not merely a punch word; it is founded on the aspirations of shared prosperity, unity in diversity, one community full of opportunities that ensures that the benefits of regional integration could be equally shared. The need to help member states narrow their development gaps and contribute to acceleration of the regional integration process could not be overstated.

Without ASEAN the world dynamics would change. The ASEAN Regional Forum is one of the select key forums, which includes North Korea, the few international windows for engagement. As the second most successful regional cooperation in the world, ASEAN not only maintained peace within its region, it established patterns and habits of cooperation; fostered a solid reputation and network; and widened cooperation beyond South East Asia.

### ASEAN MEMBER STATES RANKING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASEAN Member States</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brunei Darussalam</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Philippines</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://www.doingbusiness.org/rankings](http://www.doingbusiness.org/rankings)

### Diagram: GDP per head of ASEAN Members at Purchasing Power Parity 2011 ($)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GDP per head 2011 ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>59,937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunei Darussalam</td>
<td>49,518</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>15,579</td>
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<td>9,693</td>
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<td>Thailand</td>
<td>4,668</td>
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<td>Philippines</td>
<td>4,111</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>3,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>2,659</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>2,286</td>
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<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>1,327</td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>48,147</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>8,394</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>5,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>3,327</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Source: US Census Bureau

### Diagram: Ease of Doing Business (June 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>1,343m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1,205m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>622m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>314m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://www.doingbusiness.org/rankings](http://www.doingbusiness.org/rankings)
View of the Cloud Forest and Flower Dome buildings in Singapore in the early evening. The buildings are attractions within the Gardens by the Bay, a major recreation site in the Marina Bay area adjacent to the Central Business District.
Overview of ASEAN 2025

Forging Ahead Together – Characteristics and Elements of Each ASEAN Community Blueprint 2025 relevant to Sustainable Development, Environmental Protection and Disaster Management

Ms. Moe Thuzar,
Lead Researcher, Socio-Cultural Affairs, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute

Mr. Jonathan Tan,
Assistant Director and Head of Culture and Information Division, ASEAN Secretariat

Mr. Saroj Srisai
Assistant Director and Head of Environment Division, ASEAN Secretariat

Mr. Chandra Putra,
Senior Officer of Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance Division, ASEAN Secretariat

Participants were invited to think about a sense of belonging, as peoples and citizens of Southeast Asia who wanted to contribute to important current issues. Participants were reminded that ASEAN was the process that represented all their interests at a regional level and with global partners; a process that helped them articulate their aspirations and what they wanted to do through different national levels all way up to the level of Summit.

The creation of a Sustainable Development Directorate was one such example – a direct result of discussions that took place in ASCC. A review of ASCC identified emerging priorities that were relevant to the SDGs and ASEAN's pillars and a need for a mechanism that could facilitate better coordination.

Dynamic ASEAN

Sustainable development was broadly defined as meeting the needs of present generation without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations. Although it was understood that sustainable development was more than disaster management and environmental protection, for the purpose of this forum, the topic was presented from the perspectives of disaster management and environmental protection, in the areas of information and media, as well as arts and culture.

One of the key mandate of ASCC was to raise the identity and awareness of ASEAN and fostering a human face to ASEAN's integration.

The presentation focused on firstly, the characteristic of strengthening ability to continuously innovate and be a proactive member of the global community, and secondly, its key result areas, which are:

- Towards an open and adaptive ASEAN
- Towards a creative, innovative and responsive ASEAN
- Engender a culture of entrepreneurship in ASEAN

Specifically, the ASEAN Culture and Information Division supports two sectors and their respective ministerial meetings, which alternate yearly: ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Culture and Arts (SOMCA) and ASEAN Senior Officials Responsible for Information (SOMRI). The ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information (COCI) is the arm that implements programmes that are endorsed by the member states.

Present and past initiatives in the areas of disaster management and environment protection included:

- ASEAN-Republic of Korea (ROK) Media Exchange on Climate Change Mainstreaming Green Growth for Sustainable Development
- Workshop on Disaster Risk Management for Cultural Heritage Sites in ASEAN Plus Three
- Production of Documentary of ASEAN-Japan Partnership in Disaster Management & Cultural Exchange
- Cultural Industry Programme to Support Restoration Efforts for Sites Hit by Typhoon Haiyan & Earthquake in the Visayas Islands of the Philippines
Effective communication was often overlooked. It should be a two-way street: it was not just about disseminating timely information during disasters or crises to people, it was equally important that information was fed back to relevant stakeholders so that targeted and effective relief aid was delivered to where it was needed.

Similarly, when it came to saving lives in an emergency, the process needed to be as efficient and effective as possible. This could be achieved through information technology, more so in this era of fourth industrial revolution or 4IR. When a disaster occurs, first and foremost access to reliable information must be established – big data could help in this way when reliable information may be lacking on the ground. In this age, the use of big data could not be more timely, given that more data out there were being collected and shared among different partners and data skills and capabilities had improved globally. However, challenges remained particularly for this region where there was a lack of data skills and technical capabilities to utilise this data effectively. Another concern was managing false data and avoiding misreading of risks or hazards so that the progress of harnessing the power of big data was not hampered.

How could ASEAN ensure adequate responses and resources to sudden shocks from natural, and human-induced disasters? Even before a disaster happens, how could ASEAN ensure sustainable support and resources in response to underlying causes and protracted symptoms and consequences of crises? Many of these causes and symptoms could be mitigated with upstream measures.

ASEAN is currently working on a declaration that would move away from a fire-fighting (reactive) mode to adopting a culture of prevention. (This direction is well aligned to United Nation’s Secretary-General’s statement on prevention.) Through this declaration on culture of prevention, ASEAN is trying to articulate very clearly and forcefully that a mindset change is needed throughout the organisation. Crosscutting and cross-sectorial contracts were also being looked into; there are plans for joint initiatives between the 15 sectorial bodies to develop this preventive mindset.

Take for example a natural disaster. It cannot be prevented but the community can certainly be more prepared. Being more prepared would require adopting a mindset change and valuing a culture of prevention amongst the people, to help them become more resilient before, during and after a disaster.

A culture of prevention towards a peaceful, inclusive, resilient, healthy and harmonious society could be promoted by focusing on:

- Understanding the root causes and consequences of violent extremism and other forms of violence and dysfunctional behaviours at individual, organisational and institutional levels through risk assessment, research, forecast, early warning and other evidence-based methods;
- Adopting a mindset change from a reactive to a preventive approach;
- Inculcating shared values such as trust, tolerance, respect, inclusiveness, social responsibility, peace, harmony, and intercultural understanding, the rule of law and good governance.
A technician performs a routine inspection at Gading Kencana Solar Farm in Ayer Keroh, Melaka, Malaysia.
Sustainable ASEAN

The work of the environment division falls mainly under the characteristic of ‘sustainable’ though its work is across multiple sectors. Under this characteristic, the key result areas are:

• Conservation and Sustainable Management of Biodiversity and Natural Resources
• Environmentally Sustainable Cities
• Sustainable Climate
• Sustainable Consumption and Production

Details of strategic measures for each area are in the ASEAN 2025 publication. In the institutional framework, there are two main sectorial bodies, at the top is ministerial level, the Ministerial Meeting on Environment which comprises of ministers of environment from all ten ASEAN member states. They meet every year. The next level is Senior Official Meeting which is also represented by all ten member states at senior official levels either civil servants or representatives of those countries. This group meets annually.

The subsidiary bodies are organised by area of work and some of the work of the CSOs will fall under one of the seven working groups as follows:

- ASEAN Working Group on Climate Change (AWGCC)
- ASEAN Working Group on Coastal and Marine Environment (AWGCME)
- ASEAN Working Group on Chemicals and Waste (AWGCW)
- ASEAN Working Group on Environmental Education (AWGEED)
- ASEAN Working Group on Environmentally Sustainable Cities (AWGESC)
- ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity (AWGNCB)
- ASEAN Working Group on Water Resources Management (AWGWRM)

Each of the working group has corresponding strategic priorities; all ten country focal points have different issues and come up with their own priorities. For better coordination, the ASEAN Strategic Plan on Environment or ASPEN was developed as guiding principles to direct the work of the various groups.

ASEAN Strategic Plan on Environment (ASPN) (under consideration)

| Strategic Priority 1: Nature Conservation and Biodiversity |
| Strategic Priority 2: Coastal and Marine Environment |
| Strategic Priority 3: Water Resources Management |
| Strategic Priority 4: Environmentally Sustainable Cities |
| Strategic Priority 5: Climate Change |
| Strategic Priority 6: Chemicals and Waste |
| Strategic Priority 7: Environmental Education & SCP |

The above diagram shows how the ASPEN complements the ASCC, at the same time aligns to global forums.

ASEAN has been working closely with various dialogue and development partners and various stakeholders in promoting environmental protection and sustainable development. These are multiyear programmatic partners. There are others who are not listed but they have done more or less one-time projects with ASEAN.

The ASPEN contains issues and priorities that the ten ASEAN countries would like to work on and states how ASEAN wants to engage with partners. The State of Environment Report, on the other hand, serves as a document that shows the trends and stage of ASEAN's environment at large. First produced in 1997, the fifth ASEAN State of the Environment Report has been endorsed by ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment, and will be recommended for adoption to the ASEAN Ministers on Environment. It will coincide with the commemoration of ASEAN's 50th anniversary.
Bokor Palace Hotel at the top of Bokor Mountain in Preah Monivong National Park, Kampot province, Cambodia. The national park is located in the Elephant Mountains and home to several threatened animals and a former French colonial hill station.
Resilient ASEAN

For CSOs which would like to engage with ASEAN in disaster management, the following three documents serve as good reference points:

• ASCC Blueprint 2025
• ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) on how to implement a people-centered, people oriented and network approach, more inclusiveness in disaster management by 2025,
• One ASEAN One Response Declaration which reaffirms readiness of the region to achieve a faster and more proactive response

A key objective in this area is to aim for a resilient community with enhanced capabilities and capacities to better respond to social and economic vulnerabilities to disasters, climate change as well as emerging threats and challenges. Resilience does not only apply to disasters, it also touches the political-security and economic pillars. Although resilient is one of five characteristics of ASCC, its key result areas (KRA) could cut across an entire spectrum of the socio-cultural pillar. Examples of its KRAs are:

- A disaster resilient ASEAN that is able to anticipate, respond, cope, adapt, and build back better, smarter, and faster.
- A safer ASEAN that is able to respond to all health-related hazards including biological, chemical, and radiological-nuclear, and emerging threats.
- A climate adaptive ASEAN with enhanced institutional and human capacities to adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- Strengthened social protection for women, children, youths, the elderly/older persons, persons with disabilities, ethnic minority groups, migrant workers, vulnerable and marginalised groups, and people living in at-risk areas.
- Endeavour towards a “Drug-Free” ASEAN.

AADMER, ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, was developed as the primary policy backbone of the region. The AADMER work programme 2016-2020 objectives and desired outputs are listed below:

### PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>PROGRAMME OUTPUTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. AWARE: RISK AWARE ASEAN COMMUNITY</td>
<td>• Strengthened ASEAN’s capacity in risk and vulnerability assessment; &lt;br&gt; • Improved the availability of data and information on regional risk and vulnerability; and &lt;br&gt; • Enhanced mechanism on risk data utilisation and information sharing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. BUILD SAFELY: BUILDING SAFE ASEAN INFRASTRUCTURES AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES</td>
<td>• Promoted equitable and high quality infrastructure and essential services; &lt;br&gt; • Scaled-up ASEAN Safe Schools Initiative; and &lt;br&gt; • Promoted innovative practices towards building resilient and climate adaptive cities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ADVANCE: A DISASTER RESILIENT AND CLIMATE ADAPTIVE ASEAN COMMUNITY</td>
<td>• Strengthened institutional capacity and policy frameworks for effective implementation of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA); &lt;br&gt; • Established ASEAN youth leadership in DRR and CCA; &lt;br&gt; • Increased replicable programmes and models of building community resilience; and &lt;br&gt; • Strengthened awareness building programmes on a disaster resilient and climate adaptive ASEAN Community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. PROTECT: PROTECTING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL GAINS OF ASEAN COMMUNITY INTEGRATION THROUGH RISK TRANSFER AND SOCIAL PROTECTION</td>
<td>• Established the Regional Risk Financing and Insurance Framework; &lt;br&gt; • Enhanced access to finance for private sector, which includes small and medium enterprises, micro-enterprises, and small holder producers; &lt;br&gt; • Strengthened evidence-based policy analysis and strategies on the linkage between disaster management and the economy to contribute to a more deeply-integrated and highly-cohesive ASEAN economy; &lt;br&gt; • Established resilient regional production and supply chains in ASEAN;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Similar to the other sectors, there are Senior Officials Meetings that supervise the implementation of the work programmes. Five working groups, co-chaired by ten member states who implement these work programmes. They come together based on their interests, as such, not all members are part of all the working groups.

ASEAN, after studying sectors responsible for disaster management and other sectors such as social protection and environment, realised that disaster management at most times was concerned with managing the consequences of mismanagement in other sectors. As a result, the One ASEAN One Response Declaration, based on the principle of harnessing collective strengths of different sectors and stakeholders in ASEAN, was put forth for endorsement from the heads of states. Operationally, an institution called ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management was formed under AADMER. They play an integral part by coordinating assistance among member states. ASEAN's commitment to disaster management could be seen from declarations on enhancing cooperation on disaster management, social protection, and institutionalising resilience of ASEAN. Under the new chairmanship ASEAN's resiliency is a high priority theme. Even before the One ASEAN One Response Declaration there was synergy with other organisations such as UN and Red Cross organisations.

In order to see more CSOs' participation in AADMER, ASEAN started the AADMER Partnership Group (APG), a consortium of international NGOs that agreed to cooperate with ASEAN. They include:

- Oxfam UK
- Save the Children UK
- Plan International
- World Vision
- Child Fund
- Help Age
- Mercy Malaysia

One of APG's programmes was the ASEAN Safe School Initiative (ASSI). Spearheaded by four of the APG NGOs, its vision was to create a safe and secure learning environment for children. This programme falls under AADMER Work Programme – Priority Programme 2: Build Safely. The expected outputs are:

- Identified schools using the ASSI common indicators for school safety
- Retrofitted schools
- Showcase of models of ASEAN safe schools

5. RESPOND AS ONE: TRANSFORMING MECHANISMS FOR ASEAN’S LEADERSHIP IN RESPONSE

Transform the regional humanitarian landscape demonstrating ASEAN increased preparedness and leadership in joint response.

6. EQUIP: ENHANCED CAPACITIES FOR ONE ASEAN ONE RESPONSE

Intensify ASEAN’s human, institutional and logistics capacity to deliver fast, collective and reliable regional response.

- Enhanced the implementation of the Disaster Emergency Logistics System of ASEAN (DELSA); and
- Enhanced the capacity of the ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT).

7. RECOVERY: ASEAN RESILIENT RECOVERY

Capacitate ASEAN to undertake swift recovery that is locally-driven and with sufficient resources.

- Harmonised standards and guidelines on recovery;
- Developed the Resilient Recovery Toolbox;
- Enhanced regional capacities and expertise in recovery;
- Built network for local leadership in recovery; and
- Secured adequate resources for recovery.

8. LEAD: ASEAN LEADERSHIP FOR EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Strengthen ASEAN’s regional knowledge management system and mechanism, and professionalism to enable ASEAN to become the global leader and centre for excellence and innovations in disaster management.

- Established an integrated regional disaster management knowledge hub;
- Built professionalism in disaster management through standardisation and certification; and
- Creating innovations that transform the way disasters are managed.
Pools of ASEAN practitioners and professionals for promoting, building, and retrofitting safe schools. Since it was launched in 2013, it has achieved several milestones including development and endorsement of the ASEAN Common Framework for Comprehensive School Safety; development and implementation of ASSI Programme Strategy; and opening of the Second ASEAN Regional Forum on School Safety. The forum convened last July in Manila was a good way to link up the CSOs, private sector and governments. They were working in silos without realising that through collaboration the impact would be more effective. When ASSI was introduced, the private sector had immense interest in retrofitting schools, doing something for the children, and getting involved in education sector. Meanwhile the NGOs were looking for means to scale up their operations in the region. The forum thus offered a timely platform for discussion and demonstrated that soft commitments can lead to tangible outcomes.

Another activity that would require the involvement of CSOs was the Enhanced Racer (Regional Alliance for Collective Emergency Response) Framework. To avoid duplication of efforts in the already limited resources in humanitarian assistance, CSOs were encouraged to get involved in the ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan which established contingency plans in member states on ways to respond to disasters, to ensure that responses were scalable, swift and accountable. There were plans to restart the process for consultation because firstly, cooperation of CSOs was indispensable in regional responses; secondly, it has been mandated in the work programmes. The ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA) was responsible for developing the framework, however the process would be switched around as it was believed that CSOs may be in a better position to lead the process given their knowledge on the ground.

Q&A Session

Query 1: Addressed the problem of knowledge management and information dissemination in the context of inclusiveness and cooperation between the ASEAN member states in disaster management. Secondly, enquired about the function of the APG. Also, reflected on the lack of local action, compared to the regional and global players, and limited attempts of governments to reach out to local levels.

Audience was reminded that the key to effective cooperation was communication. Discussing the current state of affairs with APG, ASEAN noted that one challenge was that APG was part of one of five groups working on prevention and mitigation. The main reason why APG members were not participating in the other group meetings was that they were doing more than negotiation and mitigation – response and recovery were also within their areas of focus. It was emphasized, that the views on inclusiveness in disaster management were changing: according to UN, disaster response should be as local as possible.

Query 2: How close was big data in effective monitoring of ASEAN failures when it came to the environment management? ASEAN reported that until now it has not introduced any complex programmes using big data, not even for environment protection. He emphasized that from the ASEAN perspective, big data had a huge potential. Not all the data was going to be published, due to privacy issues. National regulations ought to be taken into
consideration. Other issues included issues of protocols and standardization of data. Use of platforms as well as the means of linking variety of data formats and conversion into tools useful for disaster management.

**Query 3:** How each thematic section articulated inclusiveness and how CSOs can incorporate that, in light of "no one is left behind"? How did ASEAN intend to tackle the problem of duplication?

Current environment is dynamically changing. The role of ASEAN is to supplement the efforts of national organisations. External action constitutes only of 20%, leaving the question of how to empower the remaining 80%. ASEAN also pointed to a shift in perception of locals: from beneficiaries to responders. Finally, a distinction between national and local action was made in terms of how sustainable connectivity between government and organisation were pursued in order to achieve sustainable goals.

**Query 4:** Mentioned that ASEAN was an inter-governmental organisation, which was inherently opposed to community actions, with national governments reluctantly working with the impoverished individuals. Enquired how could ASEAN facilitate this complicated balance of dependencies, also in terms of financing since ASEAN’s mechanisms assumed that the workflow should start with the governments, that the CSOs would be able to implement their solutions at the grassroots level without effectively communicating with the governments.

ASEAN pointed to the trend of going global. ASEAN Secretariat’s function was to serve governments, at the same time it could encourage governments to act local. It did require CSOs to familiarize themselves with their mandate. Speaking about community engagement, ASEAN stressed that there were mechanisms in place, a hierarchy of response deeply embedded in the operation of ASEAN and that process took time. It was suggested that if all the hands were tight it was possible that some of the ASEAN bodies could be affiliated with the entities already working with specific governmental departments, and educating them. There was a possibility of conducting consultations before the ASEAN meetings. It was highlighted that knowing the ASEAN focal points was very important.

**Query 5:** Addressed the issue of how locals (at the community level) were prioritised in the ASEAN strategy, compared to the big entities. Despite attempts to provide certain degree of priority at the community level, ASEAN acknowledged that it was about “who shouts the loudest”, which was why bigger organisations or sectors were able to achieve more through the ASEAN strategy. CSOs were encouraged to cluster and work together to advance their common interests.

**Query 6:** Addressed the problem of lack of sufficient representation of CSOs in high-level meetings vis-à-vis the business community. In response, ASEAN affirmed that CSOs were present at so called
“interface sessions”, where they presented recommendations to the heads of states. The question ahead of CSOs was whether they believed that it was necessary to wait for the summits to happen in order to receive attention.

Query 7: Asked for clarification on the partnership issue.

While explaining how civil societies were recognised within various initiatives, ASEAN explained that there were mechanisms and initiatives enabling partnerships.

Query 8: What was ASEAN’s stance on the wildlife protection? Representing a heritage park in Sumatra’s conservation site in Indonesia, it was felt that the heritage parks were rarely mentioned in EHP (Environment and Heritage Protection) and Heritage Parks (HP).

Audience was informed that it was an ongoing process, and the issue was soon to be addressed. ASEAN has designated HP committee and working groups. Unfortunately, efforts could not address all the projects as the scope was too broad. The Environment Division of ASEAN Secretariat invited CSOs for further discussions – the next meeting would be held in Indonesia. The ASEAN Secretariat also provided insight into the meeting’s mechanisms.

Query 9: Reflected on the need for continuous cooperation – how can a CSO be a part of that? How about implementation of disaster response on ASEAN’s side? Asked about the issue of migrant worker protection. Finally, highlighted the need for government’s recognition of CSOs.

ASEAN gave the assurance that the Philippines as the current chair of ASEAN, was working a lot in the area of migrant worker’s protection.
Students work together to clean up and improve the grounds at Dubinan Elementary School, Santiago City, Isabela Province, the Philippines. The school is a recipient of the 2nd ASEAN Eco-schools Award 2015 for the primary school category.
Dynamic ASEAN

The participants of the Sustainable Development Workshop opened with a brief discussion of the ASEAN identity and how a united ASEAN was important where sustainable development was concerned.

They highlighted the challenges facing sustainable development efforts in ASEAN:

- Poverty
- Access to education
- Land tenure security/rights
- Corruption
- Access to affordable financing

In their recommendations, they advocated for better alignment of priorities on the part of ASEAN and CSOs. They cited UN’s exiting model, in which focus areas were changed annually, and made clear to participating CSOs. The group also pushed for the creation of an ASEAN Sustainability Development Asset Map – an online directory of existing CSOs with focus areas and contacts for more efficient collaborative efforts.

Another suggestion was the creation of an ASEAN Monitoring System for sustainable development goals, particularly one with a greater degree of alignment with goals set by UN. To that end, they proposed a centralised website (or an online dashboard) for participating CSOs to access and provide updates on their progress, as well as feedback where applicable.

Next on their list was the need to inspire CSOs within ASEAN. Borne out of a belief that current efforts were fragmented and not used to their potential, the participants agreed that a portal for submitting and sharing success stories across ASEAN could help encourage greater efforts from CSOs across the region, as well as physical forums to recognise outstanding accomplishments. At the same time, the participants were eager to see ASEAN establish a funding template so organisations like theirs could gain a deeper understanding of what worked for past projects, and possibly provide a base for them to build on.

The presenters also proposed increasing visibility of CSOs to ASEAN and vice versa. They recommended a general increase in recognition of their efforts, including but not restricted to: videos on ASEAN’s website, internships/job exchange programmes across ASEAN, the publication of an ASEAN e-newsletter with information like funding opportunities for civil organisations, and the presence of ASEAN publicity collateral in the offices of civil organisations.

Finally, the group acknowledged how capacity building was an integral part of improving CSOs. Annual training on topics like technical knowledge, content development, proposal writing, communication, and distance-learning were offered as possible areas of development. They also urged ASEAN to develop an online repository of ASEAN-centric content for research purposes.

**Additional Notes**

The audience was invited to ask questions and comment on the presentation; the following points were made:

- ASEAN’s efforts to counteract climate change in a sustainable manner was noted. It was also pointed out that CSOs had plenty to contribute, making them vital partners.
- The discussions surrounding sustainable development could be broader in scope, expanded to include disaster management. She proposed clearer definitions of the scope of discussion, as well as increased clarity on the role of the ASEAN foundation where sustainability was concerned.
- The final comment was regarding the relative lack of integration between CSOs and the institutional levels of ASEAN. The lack of coordination could be the reason for CSOs feeling isolated and ineffective.
Farmers gather weeds for floating tomato gardens at Inle Lake Wildlife Sanctuary in Myanmar.
Sustainable ASEAN

The informative presentation summarised the key recommendations and possible outcomes on:

- Need for ASEAN as the coordinator to foster discussions among all the stakeholders to achieve environmental peace
- Need for CSOs with common goals to work together and act on those goals. At times this could be handled outside the institution of ASEAN considering the limitations.

Accreditation and affiliation with ASEAN was greatly beneficial to CSOs. It also facilitated communication with policy makers. Among the successes of ASEAN has been the securitisation of HIV AIDS. Through dialogues and discussions, commitment to combat AIDS in Asia has grown. Hence, as long as discussions were taking place, there would be steady progress.

The need for information sharing was emphasised. This event created an opportunity for each organisation to find and interact with one another. There were many International non-governmental organisations (INGOs) in Asia which garnered more support over local NGOs. This dominance of INGOs over local CSOs limited the scope of growth despite local CSOs having better knowledge of the landscape and issues.

Participants acknowledged the drawbacks in ASEAN’s ability to work with communities since it was confined to working with other governments. But there were organisations that were opening up to collaborate with CSOs, such as initiatives like the Global Youth Biodiversity Group Southeast Asia. In the programme, youths were encouraged to draft proposals, which must first be reviewed by the biodiversity working group, followed by the ASEAN secretariat before it was approved by various ministers and governments of all ten member states. The amount of bureaucracy could be frustrating although through the right contact points the group was able to gain funding from the European Union. ASEAN could further make clear, the contact points necessary within the organisations, which will ease processes for further engagement between CSOs and ASEAN.

They were in agreement that a number of small agencies in Myanmar had less support. Funders were more stringent on evaluations of projects, yet they were experimental on the projects they passed. Giving money to organisations means that NGOs must be equally responsible for providing diligent reports to accredit their work and assure funders that their donations were spent wisely.

Finally, there was a lack of transparency in the process, which left CSOs ‘blinded’. It was not necessarily about getting funding from ASEAN; rather take into account the recommendations or advice of the CSOs and provide windows for them to engage.
Overview of a location in the Nam Ha National Protected Area in Luang Namtha, Lao PDR.
Resilient ASEAN

The presentation included participants’ insights on the role of ASEAN Community in the process of building a resilient ASEAN, drawn from their organisations’ experiences in areas of disaster management as well as humanitarian relief. The following section represented a collective effort and joint perspective from a variety of cultures, religions and backgrounds.

1. Identify, interpret and understand the characteristics and elements of community pillars of ASEAN 2025 in relation to disaster management.

Each of the blueprints was a subject for further research and analysis. The participants found that the following pillars relate to elements crucial for the disaster management:

ASCC:
- Enhanced capacity
- Capability to adapt
- Resilient community

AEC:
- Risk Financing
- Resilient Infrastructures

APSC:
- Resilience through regional cooperation
- Local capacities of government and communities

2. How ASEAN’s plans and strategies impacted disaster management.

The participants highlighted six aspects or areas in which ASEAN’s plans and strategies made a footprint on disaster management:
- Paradigm shift (reactive to proactive)
- Good practices: ASEAN Safe School Initiatives
- Multi-sectoral approach
- Cross-sector collaboration
- Integration of climate change with DRR
- Recognition of One ASEAN, One Response

3. Identify challenges and essential requirements to build an ASEAN communal identity.

In order to ease the restrictions (classified as security issues, for example, Aceh response), mechanisms to facilitate clearance for ASEAN actors could be set up. Lack of coordination between CSOs and AHA Centre should be tackled by establishing communication channels between CSOs and AHA Centre. Since not all CSOs were aware of ASEAN initiatives and processes (they were more aware of the UN agenda), ASEAN should increase the amount of activities to raise the awareness of ASEAN initiatives and processes for CSOs. Co-development of operational guidelines and standards with CSOs could possibly help to alleviate lack of operational guidelines and standards at the ASEAN level. Limited engagements with and endorsements from ASEAN should be addressed by strengthening outreach and encouragement on the use of ASEAN flags and emblems, where appropriate.

4. Recommend how the CSOs could integrate ASEAN’s strategies into their organizational plans and activities; obtain feedback on how challenges mentioned above can be addressed.

Participants highlighted two main areas of challenge:

- Implementation of ASEAN’s strategies and plans, and the CSOs themselves.

5. On implementation of ASEAN strategies and plans

Lack of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms for ASEAN strategies and plans, for example, AADMER could be improved by installing a feedback mechanism and developing operational tools for M&E. Organising consortiums at national levels for localization and encouraging participation by local CSOs as well as the revival of APG/ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) mechanisms (as ASEAN focal point for CSOs) could be possible solutions for bridging gaps at the local level.
6. On CSOs

- Due to the limited capacity of local CSOs, capacity building measures (organisational development; skills training; resource mobilisation) should be encouraged; and skills and resource mapping for CSOs (database) implemented. Lack of access to available funding mechanisms by local CSOs could be facilitated by increased donor education. To make matters worse, donors and national governments lack confidence in local CSOs. ASEAN’s endorsement and backing on programmes implemented by CSOs would lend credibility and legitimacy.

- Institutional support for CSOs could be a solution to mitigate competition between INGOs’ national offices and local CSOs. Limited coordination and collaboration between CSOs and national governments was also recognized as a problem. By establishing national platforms for CSO coordination, ASEAN could bridge relationships between its national counterparts and CSOs, in addition to conducting interface meetings for government ASEAN focal points and CSOs.

7. Others

Humanitarian and development actors were working in silos – their collaboration should be improved and coordinated with different sectors (with sustainable development, climate change and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), etc.). Inclusivity issues and mainstreaming of vulnerable sectors must be tackled by ASEAN. Promotion and facilitation of resource mobilization for programmes on inclusivity should be considered. Furthermore, ASEAN could advocate for linking relief rehabilitation and development as currently disaster financing was more focused on response phase.

A researcher is cataloging and identifying different types of coral in a laboratory at the Marine Biodiversity and Conservation Center in Meragang in the north of Brunei Darussalam.
ASEAN Foundation has a mandate to promote greater ASEAN awareness and identity to strengthen the sense of “Think, Feel and be ASEAN”. Established by the ASEAN Leaders in December 1997 during ASEAN’s 30th Commemorative Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the Foundation is an ASEAN Body under article 15 of the ASEAN Charter.

Their vision is to build a cohesive and prosperous ASEAN Community. Their mission: is to commit to promoting ASEAN awareness through people-to-people interaction and collaboration with ASEAN stakeholders to help ASEAN build a caring, cohesive, equitable and peaceful ASEAN Community.

ASEAN Foundation works in four thematic areas, initiatives in which are outlined below:

Education:
- ASEAN Data Science Explorers (ADSE) – SAP to build ICT capacity for youths in the region and prepare them for the Digital Economy, supporting the human capital development strategic thrust of the ASEAN ICT Masterplan 2020.
- Scholarships to increase ASEAN awareness, think, feel and be ASEAN by studying a living in ASEAN and promote people-to-people interaction

Culture:
- The ASEAN Puppet Exchange Programme (APEX) promotes cultural understanding between ASEAN nations, and protects the distinctiveness of Southeast Asian culture.
- 2017 Philippine Textile Research Institute TELA (Textiles Empowering Lives Anew) ASEAN Conference to showcase the potentials of our natural textiles and dyes – highlighting the importance of harnessing sustainable natural materials as key not just to sustainable economic growth but also as a mitigation for concerns for ecological balance

Media:
- ASEAN Youth Media Contest to encourage the youth to be more enthusiastic towards ASEAN and support the ASEAN Community.
- ASEAN Youth Citizen Journalism to exchange of ideas, to shape ASEAN identity, and boost national and regional responses on transboundary issues.
- Reporting ASEAN to address the lack of consistent, in-depth and well-versed reportage of ASEAN’s relevance and ASEAN integration, despite the improved recall of ASEAN, and the need to strengthen the capacity of journalists to follow the ASEAN story after the ASEAN Community and big events around ASEAN’s 50th anniversary.

Lastly, to encourage more home-grown initiatives to strengthen the ASEAN identity and enhance competitiveness, the Foundation has these programmes:
- ASEAN Community Forum
- ASEAN Social Entrepreneurship Conference
- ASEAN Farmers’ Organisations Support Programme (AFOSP)
The peak of Mt. Kinabalu is seen from Kundasang, Sabah, Malaysia, on July 1, 2015. The mountain is the main attraction of Kinabalu National Park, an ASEAN Heritage Park.