

# The ASEAN



one vision  
one identity  
one community

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2023

## youth speak we act

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### THE INSIDE VIEW

Promoting Healthy  
Competition among  
the Youth

### VIEWPOINT

ASEAN Secretary-  
General  
Dr. Kao Kim Hourn

### CONVERSATIONS

Empower the  
Youth, Empower the  
Community





Ministerial Bodies

\* takes guidance from and reports to both AMCA and AMRI

**AMRI**-ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information

**AMCA**-ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts

**AMMY**-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth

**ASED**-ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting

**AMMS**-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Sports

**AMRDPE**-ASEAN Ministers on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication

**AMMSWD**-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development

**AMMW**-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women

**ALMM**-ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting

**ACCSM**-The Heads of Civil Service Meeting for ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters

**AHMM**-ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting

**AMMDM**-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management

**COP-AADMER**-Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response

**AMME**-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Environment

**COP to AATHP**-Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution

**SOMCA**-Senior Officials Meeting on Culture and Arts

**COCI**-The ASEAN Committee for Culture and Information

**SOMRI**-Senior Officials Meeting Responsible for Information

**SOMY**-Senior Officials Meeting on Youth

**SOMED**-Senior Officials Meeting on Education

**SOMS**-Senior Officials Meeting on Sports

**SOMRDPE**-Senior Officials Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication

**SOMSWD**-Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development

**ACWC**-ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children

**ACW**-ASEAN Committee on Women

**SLOM**-Senior Labour Officials Meeting

**SOM-ACCSM**-Senior Officials Meeting on ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters

**SOMHD**-Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development

**ASOEN**-ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment

**COM to AATHP**-Committee under the Conference of Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution





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# Note from the Editorial Team

This issue of *The ASEAN* is the third one to focus on the youth in three years. It tells of the youth's important role in the region's post-pandemic recovery, growth, and development.

The ASEAN Youth Work Plan for 2021-2025 focuses on five priority areas: education, health and well-being, future of work, participation and engagement, and ASEAN awareness. In this edition, we zero in on how ASEAN gives the younger generations a more prominent voice in shaping policies and building the Community.

Under its ASEAN chairmanship, Cambodia designated 2022 as the Year of ASEAN Youth and launched various activities that promoted interaction among the youth and strengthened their capacity in policy discourse. The 1st ASEAN Youth Dialogue was a meeting ground for Youth delegates

and Youth Ministers of the region to thresh out policy recommendations related to issues the youth are most concerned about—governance, climate change, education and employment, and digital skills and infrastructure.

ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, who took office in January 2023, gives his first interview with the magazine and spells out his priorities for the next five years, particularly for the youth. Dr. Kao explains how the region's young generation can have a more significant stake in shaping the region's future.

The ASEAN Secretariat's Education, Youth, and Sports Division takes stock of the past year's youth activities, and the volume of work ASEAN pours into youth-related initiatives. We also feature events pursued with partners, such as the ASEAN-EU Youth Summit and the ASEAN-India Youth Summit.

More of these activities, such as the 2nd ASEAN Youth Dialogue, will be undertaken in the coming months.

In our Conversations section, we hear from outstanding young people advocating for change in the fields of humanitarian work, climate change, workers' rights, the arts and music.

As ASEAN 2023 Chair, Indonesia takes over the reins of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). In February, Indonesia mapped out its priorities for this year, including strengthening the region's health architecture, rural development, mitigating impacts of climate change, labour protection, and disability-inclusive development.

In this issue, we also launch a regular series highlighting the recently published ASCC Policy Briefs and Trend Reports. We begin with the policy brief, "Common Resilience Challenges in ASEAN and Potential Areas of Collaboration in Disaster Management".

## Cover illustration by

Dorcas Tang Wen Yu, Singaporean artist, writer, and climate change activist

## Related Issues:



Issue 04  
August 2020

[https://bit.ly/TheASEAN\\_Youth\\_and\\_Skills](https://bit.ly/TheASEAN_Youth_and_Skills)



Issue 10-11  
February-March 2021

[https://bit.ly/TheASEAN\\_Youth](https://bit.ly/TheASEAN_Youth)







# THE INSIDE VIEW

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## Youth Engagement and Participation in ASEAN

- ASEAN Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn on why the youth need a larger stake in ASEAN Community building
- The 1st ASEAN Youth Dialogue Insights on fostering more meaningful conversations



## Viewpoint

# DR. KAO KIM HOURN

Secretary-General of ASEAN



Dr. Kao Kim Hourn began his five year-term as Secretary-General of ASEAN on 1 January 2023. He served two terms as Secretary of State of Cambodia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (2003-2013) and two terms as Minister Delegate attached to the Prime Minister of Cambodia (2013-2022). He is the author of dozens of books and articles on Cambodia and ASEAN. Dr. Kao established The University of Cambodia in 2003 to provide quality education to disadvantaged youth. He served as the university's president until he stepped down in October 2022.

Dr. Kao recently sat down for an interview with *The ASEAN* magazine's Editor-in-Chief and the ASEAN Secretariat's Corporate Affairs Director to discuss the region's most significant challenges and his priorities for the next five years. Dr. Kao also shared his views on how the youth can be more engaged in shaping their future and building a stronger and more resilient ASEAN community.



## **Secretary-General, what are your priorities for ASEAN in the next five years?**

**Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn:** As I take office as the 15th Secretary-General of ASEAN, I take pride in what has been achieved in the previous years. Together, we can look ahead to the work that must be done for the next five years, and I have identified important priorities or what I call “The Six Ps.” First, maintaining peace, stability, and security in the region remains vital to ASEAN. Second, building on prosperity that ASEAN, both collectively and individually, has achieved up to now remains important. Third, focusing on the priorities of the planet, especially the environment, climate change, and the green economy, remains necessary. Fourth, it is the people that we need to empower—especially the youth—to further strengthen ASEAN Community building, ASEAN integration, and people-to-people ties. Fifth, it is essential to further enhance partnerships within ASEAN and also with external partners. Sixth, certainly, transforming ASEAN’s various potentials into tangible benefits for the ASEAN Community is an important priority.

**You are coming in at a very challenging time. The pandemic is not over; there is a global economic downturn; there are increasing threats from major power rivalry for the region, climate change, and environmental degradation. What do you think are the biggest challenges and opportunities for ASEAN?**

**Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn:** We have to make sure that the prosperity agenda of ASEAN remains a top priority, and ensure economic development for our people. At the same time, we cannot take peace, stability, and security for granted.

ASEAN has to continue what it has been doing in the past 56 years, which has been the strong foundation for the region. A lot of countries, including external partners, whether the dialogue partners, sectoral partners or development partners, have a lot of confidence and trust in ASEAN, because they believe in what we are doing and in all of the achievements that we have made until now.

So moving forward, it is important that ASEAN maintains this important positive outlook—and, of course, optimism—and continues to manage the growing expectations of the people. People expect more from ASEAN, and that is why we have to make sure that we have a pragmatic, flexible, realistic approach to

what we are doing with regard to our ASEAN Community building.

For example, now there are expectations that ASEAN should be the one to resolve the Myanmar issue very quickly, very fast. They expect a quick fix to the Myanmar issue. But this is an ongoing issue and we have to give it time. Under Indonesia’s chairmanship this year, I am confident that the implementation of ASEAN’s five-point consensus will guide the work of the ASEAN Chair’s Special Envoy Office to continue to constructively engage with Myanmar, to help restore peace and stability in the country.

And then, of course, there are the ongoing geopolitical challenges. ASEAN must maintain its centrality and continue to foster strategic trust, mutual understanding and communication with all amidst the challenges. ASEAN has conducted its business through a habit of consultations and a culture of dialogue that embraces inclusiveness, openness, and transparency. That is why ASEAN has earned the confidence and trust of our dialogue partners and external partners.

I think we should continue to work on tension reduction and the enhancement of strategic trust within this region. At the end of the day, we see that those countries that are in tension, they are also friends and partners of ASEAN. It is important for us to continue to use all ASEAN-led mechanisms that we have to build bridges between and among those countries, whether through the East Asia Summit, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the ASEAN Plus Three, the ASEAN Plus One mechanism, and the ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM) Plus, among others. At the end of the day, we have to work to advance the shared interests of our region and the people of ASEAN.

**The youth have many expectations, a lot of concerns and anxieties for the future, and they also want a larger part in shaping their future. What do you think should be the youth’s role in ASEAN Community building?**

**Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn:** Youth are the future leaders, the future belongs to them, and what we have to do is, of course, to make sure what we are doing today is a long-term investment for them. We have to prepare for their constructive contributions to the long-term future

of our region. This means that they have to be better educated, better trained, and have better skills so that they are prepared for the challenges ahead.

No doubt, the challenges are many. And that is why it is important for us to continue to invest in our youth, and make sure that all the resources that we have today are sustainable for tomorrow, the planet, and the environment. Also, our youth need to get to know each other in the region. While there is increasing connectivity, the youth are not well-connected at the moment. They need to know each other more.

ASEAN is for all of our youth. At the same time, they also need to support ASEAN. They will be the drivers and they will also help set the ASEAN agenda. And that is why it is important for them to embark on getting to know more about ASEAN, support what ASEAN is doing, and get to know our region better. The youth’s participation would be the key. By participating in the various activities, programmes, and projects of ASEAN, they will learn more, know more, and appreciate why ASEAN matters to them.

ASEAN continues to move forward with the building of the ASEAN Economic Community where the future is expected to be a single market and production base. At the moment, we are able to attract a lot of investments. We also are able to increase trade and investment with various partners and countries. With 667 million people, ASEAN is third in the world today in terms of population size. We are primed for growth. It is important for us to continue our economic integration, and make sure that ASEAN will be for all, including the governments, private sector, and especially for our youth, among other stakeholders. Our youth have a big role to play from now on. And their participation in the ASEAN Community building is important for the future of ASEAN.

**Last year, the first ASEAN Youth Dialogue was held, and the second one is coming up this year. Youth representatives came up with policy recommendations and presented them to the leaders. The question often asked is, are their voices being heard? What are the leaders doing about the recommendations that are given to them? What can ASEAN do to institutionalise the youth’s participation?**

**Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn:** Well, of course, the ASEAN leaders are very much aware of this. And that is why the leaders have an annual dialogue and interface meeting with our

youth. That is one mechanism that has been established for some time already, where every year, the ASEAN leaders meet with the ASEAN youth representatives in order for the leaders to engage, to hear their voices, and to listen to their needs, concerns, interests, and recommendations. At the same time, there are also ASEAN youth camp programmes where youth can learn from one another, and share their experiences.

For our ASEAN youth, there are all kinds of other activities, not only within ASEAN but also with our dialogue partners like China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the United States of America, Australia, India, and the European Union. We have the Ship for Southeast Asian and Japanese Youth Program (SSEAYP) where they share their lives onboard a ship, introduce each other about their countries, and participate in discussions and various exchange activities as they travel together. There are also regular youth summits with our partners such as India, the Republic of Korea, Australia, and the European Union.

These activities go a long way to promote the aspirations, interests, and priorities of our youth. Of course, more can be done to encourage them to realise their great potential. For example, right now, we are raising awareness by asking our dialogue partners to provide ASEAN scholarship opportunities for our youth, so that more scholarships could be offered to the young citizens, and they are able to benefit from these kinds of programmes, and at the same time it is an investment in the relationships between ASEAN and the respective external partners.

Hopefully, in the future, each ASEAN Member State will also offer scholarships for our youth under the ASEAN programme. This would be one way to promote youth development within ASEAN. We should learn from one another as much as possible through school programmes, university exchange programmes, and so forth.

**The ASEAN Youth Work Plan 2021-2025 is based on five areas, education, health and well-being, employment and opportunity, participation and engagement, ASEAN awareness, value, and identity. What do you think still needs to be done in terms of meeting those goals of the youth plan right now, especially in dealing with the setbacks of the pandemic?**

**Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn:**

I think the most important thing is how to prepare our youth better so that they can be in a better position to address future challenges. The most important thing is how to train them, and get them involved, particularly in the ASEAN Community-building process as early as possible. We also need to make sure that they have sufficient experience and exposure, and particularly of course, how they will be able to work together within ASEAN. Awareness of ASEAN, and awareness of all priorities of our region are important as they need to know and fully appreciate, as well as direct their attention to actions.

And certainly, of course, what the future will lie for them, particularly in relation to ASEAN. ASEAN has been here for 56 years already, and we will need to continue to deepen economic integration and enhance our ASEAN Community building for the long term. It is all for the future generations.

ASEAN integration is a long-term process. We need to ensure that we get the youth to be involved as much as possible and as early as possible in all the activities of ASEAN that we can get them involved so that they can become not only supporters but also key players in the ASEAN Community building.

**What would be your message to the youth now? Coming from your generation, you have probably been through difficult challenges as well. What would you tell our youth today?**

**Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn:**

Certainly, I will tell them that they are very fortunate. They have the whole future to themselves. Youth today have so much freedom and opportunities. They should use the time that they have today to learn, to acquire skills, and to build their future. They should have the dreams, the ambitions, and the courage to pursue their future, with the right mindsets.

I think they have so much ahead of them. The time they have now is that they should enjoy their life while they are in school. They should also use this time to really think about their aspirations, do a lot more readings, build good habits, especially a reading habit, and do good work to support ASEAN. We should also build a culture of resilience and diligence for our youth, and also make sure they have all the skills that they need so that they can plan ahead.

I think it is now the best time for our youth, because compared to the previous times or previous generations, our ASEAN youth have a wonderful future ahead of them.

**What was it like growing up during the Khmer Rouge era and how did you manage to survive that tragic ordeal?**

**Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn:** It was a very difficult time of my life. For those who survived, they had the will to live and the ability to endure the pain and the suffering that was imposed upon them by the Khmer Rouge regime at that time. It was also the ability to endure hunger, because the people of Cambodia at that time faced more than three years of starvation, hardship, and genocide. I think this is something that the world should learn, and that history should never repeat itself.

**You spent many years in the United States before coming back to Cambodia. What were the most important learnings that you had from your life in the US?**

**Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn:** Of course, I had learnt many things during my time in the US, but one thing is for sure, nothing is impossible. When I went to the US, I did not know any English. When I was in Cambodia, at the time when the Khmer Rouge took over, I was only in my second grade. But in the US, there were many opportunities. Truly, there was a great opportunity for me to go to school, to learn, and to prepare myself for the future.

Undoubtedly, I was able to capitalise on the opportunity that I had. I was able to finish high school in just about three years and then went on to university. And from there, I just kept moving. I think the goal is to keep working on what you are interested in, and what you are so passionate about, and to stay focused on your goal in life and work diligently.

So for me, I think the opportunities are there. Opportunities are, in fact, all around us. Just identify what you are truly interested in, work on it, and fully concentrate on the tasks before you. Nothing is impossible, when you put your mind, your efforts, and your energy to work.

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*Secretary-General Dr. Kao Kim Hourn was interviewed by The ASEAN's Editor-in-Chief Mary Kathleen Quiano-Castro and Director Lee Yoong Yoong of the Community Affairs Directorate, ASEAN Community and Corporate Affairs Department.*



# Engaging The Youth

## in ASEAN Community Building



**Roger Y. Chao Jr., PhD**

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*ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department*

As future leaders of their countries and the ASEAN region, the youth is a key priority for ASEAN. The ASEAN Work Plan on Youth focuses on enhancing the capacity of youth through education, health and well-being, employment and opportunity, participation and engagement, and ASEAN awareness, values, and identity. The priorities include developing platforms that facilitate and promote ASEAN youth participation in ASEAN Community building, enhance awareness, belonging, and contribution to address regional and global challenges.

Adopted at the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summits last November 2022, the **ASEAN Leaders' Statement on the Year of ASEAN Youth to Strengthen the Role of Youth in ASEAN Community-building** recognised that the youth are ASEAN's future leaders and workforce, and are also catalysts for regional socio-economic and environmental development. ASEAN considers the young as important actors in realising the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and achieving the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. To set the momentum and strengthen efforts in building an inclusive, resilient, dynamic, and harmonious ASEAN with the youth, the ASEAN Leaders' Statement proclaimed 2022 as the Year of ASEAN Youth. The leaders committed to strengthen youth participation/contribution in ASEAN's work, ASEAN Community building, and addressing contemporary and emerging challenges.

Grassroots initiatives undertaken by the ASEAN youth to address key regional and global challenges should not be underestimated. Knowledge exchange between the youth and other stakeholders have resulted in creative and innovative ideas, piloted and implemented key initiatives, and in some cases, contributed to efforts in addressing contemporary local, regional, and global challenges.

Advocacies undertaken by the youth also catalyse changes in perspectives, policies, and approaches in addressing key challenges, including those related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs.

In 2022 and early 2023, ASEAN youth representatives participated in several initiatives supported by ASEAN, ASEAN Member States, dialogue partners, and other stakeholders. These included the 1st ASEAN Youth Dialogue, the EU-ASEAN Young Leaders' Forum, and the ASEAN-Australia Youth Mental Health Fellowship. ASEAN youth participation in these programmes provided for capacity building, exchanges of grassroots projects and the development of youth recommendations on various thematic areas relevant to ASEAN Community building, ASEAN-EU cooperation, and promoting mental health.

The key question is, what happens to these recommendations after the ASEAN youth develop, deliberate and present them in these events?

Youth participation in various forums, platforms, and initiatives have brought out youth perspectives and inputs which in some cases resulted in key recommendations. In 2022, young people in ASEAN participated in the 1st ASEAN Youth Dialogue under the theme, "Youth in the Era of Fourth Industrial Revolution: Opportunities and Challenges in Post-Pandemic Recovery," which was supported by the Republic of Korea. They also joined the EU-ASEAN Young Leaders Forum under the theme "Scenarios for the Future of EU-ASEAN Relations".

Both discussions and interactions with experts led to the development of ASEAN youth recommendations. These recommendations touched on various thematic focus related to ASEAN Community building and regional/global challenges including decent work, inclusive and

relevant education, environment, and sustainable development (1st ASEAN Youth Dialogue); and enhancing ASEAN-EU relations from multiple perspectives, e.g. political, economic, socio-cultural, global health, green deal, and connectivity (EU-ASEAN Young Leaders Forum).

The youth recommendations from the 1st ASEAN Youth Dialogue were presented during the youth's interaction with ASEAN Leaders at the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summit. The EU-ASEAN Young Leaders Forum recommendations were further discussed at the EU-ASEAN Youth Summit and presented at the ASEAN-EU Commemorative Summit both in December 2022.

These youth recommendations have reached the highest levels of ASEAN's leadership and this highlights that their views are valuable and can contribute to discussions on ASEAN Community building and ASEAN-EU relations.

The ASEAN Work Plan on Youth and other sectoral roadmaps and work plans already address some of the issues and recommendations raised by the youth.

In 2023, under the Indonesian ASEAN Chairmanship, the 2nd ASEAN Youth Dialogue will again be conducted. A youth interface with ASEAN Leaders will also take place at the 43rd ASEAN Summit in September 2023.

The ASEAN-Australia Youth Mental Health Fellowship was another significant event in 2022 and early 2023. ASEAN and Australian youth were given an opportunity to showcase their respective mental health projects and enhance their capacity and technical expertise. The youth's engagement with health, education, and youth experts from the ASEAN Secretariat provided them with the ASEAN perspective, initiatives and advice on enhancing their individual and collective advocacy on mental health. These recent programmes that aimed to engage the youth are just the tip of the iceberg. Individual ASEAN Member States, dialogue partners, and international and regional organisations also work with ASEAN in providing platforms to support youth initiatives and maximise their potential contributions to ASEAN Community building. Implemented in 2022 with support from Japan, the ASEAN Youth Volunteers Programme provides young ASEAN citizens with the opportunity to work with local partners and undertake grassroots initiatives in various ASEAN Member States.

ASEAN clearly values the youth, not only by declaring 2022 as the Year of ASEAN Youth, but also in providing capacity building opportunities, knowledge exchange, and peer learning. Most importantly, ASEAN provides the young generation with platforms that enable, encourage, empower their voices, and strengthen their contributions to ASEAN and global community building.

The voices of the ASEAN youth are heard. They will make a significant contribution to ASEAN Community building and the regional and global challenges we face today and in the near future.

## ASEAN Work Plan on Youth 2021 - 2025

# Summary of Programmes and Activities



## PRIORITY AREA 1: EDUCATION

I.1 Engage national youth councils and organisations in the review of human resources development (HRD) policies and programmes through:

- participation in ASEAN forums on education, training, and employment
- capacity building programmes to enable youth participation in policymaking
- development of an inclusive and participatory youth evaluation model on HRD

I.2 Develop youth's capacity to promote inclusive, safe, and innovation-friendly education systems, as well as life-long learning systems through:

- virtual, youth-led knowledge-exchange forums on eliminating violence in schools and online
- collaboration with partners to empower youth for school safety
- real-life learning exposure and immersion programmes for ASEAN students

I.3 Foster 21st-century skills and digital skills among the youth through:

- ASEAN Youth Skills Forum
- development of a digital transformation declaration and framework; investments in relevant infrastructure and teacher training; and promotion of digital literacy and transferable skills

## PRIORITY AREA 2: HEALTH AND WELLBEING

2.1 Empower youth to develop knowledge and promote physical and mental health and wellbeing, and identify solutions on health and wellbeing-related issues through:

- access to data and information on the youth's health and wellbeing, including mental health
- a regional youth conference on the state of health and wellbeing of ASEAN youth
- training modules and programmes for the promotion of healthy lifestyles, including prevention of non-communicable diseases





2.2 Enhance inter-regional knowledge sharing and youth empowerment programmes to address the impacts of health emergencies (e.g. COVID-19) on the mental health of young people through:

- an inter-regional conference on the impact of COVID-19 on youth
- training and intervention programmes on first aid, psychological first aid, and psychosocial support

## PRIORITY AREA 3: EMPLOYMENT AND OPPORTUNITY

3.1 Promote the creation of more opportunities for ASEAN youth to develop technical and digital skills relevant to the future labour market, including by supporting ASEAN cooperation in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) through:

- digital skills development programmes in collaboration with ASEAN dialogue partners, entities, and partner organisations
- creation of more access to work and job market for the youth



3.2 Enable ASEAN youth to have more inclusive access to opportunities for skills development programmes, including entrepreneurial skills through:

- entrepreneurship skills development programmes in collaboration with ASEAN dialogue partners, entities, and partner organisations
- an online knowledge management hub for ASEAN youth containing volunteering, internship, education/training scholarship, workshop, and youth exchange programmes, as well as a directory of activities led by relevant youth organisations



3.3 Empower youth leaders and organisations to lead community projects and social enterprises that address youth-related issues in green economy, including promoting gender equality and empowerment of persons with disabilities (PWDs) through:

- a regional conference on youth participation in green economic transitions, climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction
- support for the training of trainers/project development workshop for youth leaders/organisations on green education and green jobs for the youth, promotion of gender equality and empowerment of PWDs



## PRIORITY AREA 4: PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

4.1 Foster 21st-century skills/soft skills among ASEAN youth through volunteerism and leadership in community projects through:

- mobilisation of youth volunteers across ASEAN Member States in collaboration with ASEAN dialogue partners, entities, and partner organisations
- platforms for knowledge exchange and dialogues, and recognition of youth's achievements in volunteerism and leadership programmes

4.2 Harness creative and innovative solutions from ASEAN youth to address development issues through:

- capacity development projects to address development issues through social and technological innovations
- funding support for youth-focused and youth-led projects

4.3 Establish an institutionalised mechanism for youth participation in the policy discourse and actual engagement in volunteering/community-level activities through:

- engagement of youth leaders in the ASEAN and SOMY Chairship activities
- platforms for ASEAN youth to voice their aspirations towards ASEAN's policies and programmes



## PRIORITY AREA 5: ASEAN AWARENESS, VALUES AND IDENTITY

5.1 Update the data profile of ASEAN youth for reference in programme planning and policy-making on youth development in ASEAN through:

- data compilation and research study on the five domains of ASEAN Youth Development Index (YDI) for the Second ASEAN YDI Report
- a conference/ symposium with experts, youth leaders, and youth organisations to launch the Second ASEAN YDI Report and exchange views on its findings



5.2 Foster ASEAN awareness, values and identity through students/ youth exchange, mainstream media, leadership programmes, including through collaboration with youth from ASEAN dialogue partners through:

- leadership and negotiation skills development programmes to encourage more collaboration among ASEAN youth for ASEAN Community building

- platforms that foster a sense of belonging and sharing among ASEAN youth in line with the narrative of ASEAN identity
- collaboration with ASEAN dialogue partners in youth exchange programmes to foster outward-looking ASEAN youth in the global community

5.3 Build the foundations of peace among ASEAN youth in the context of advancing the ASEAN Culture of Prevention and supporting the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism through:

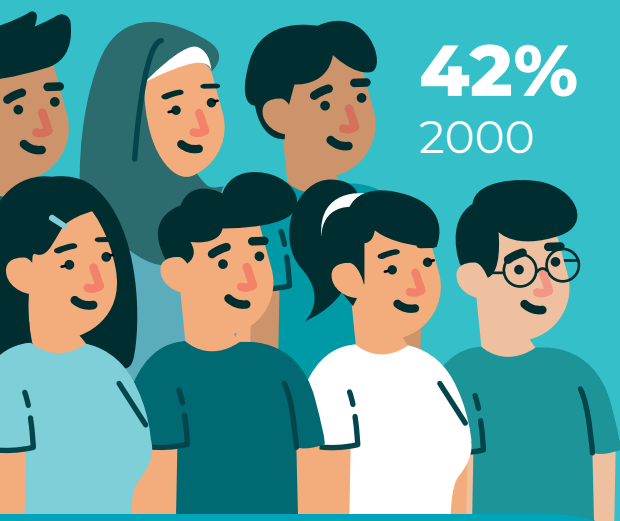
- the annual ASEAN Youth Inter-faith Camp (AYIC); development of a reference module for interreligious and intercultural youth forums in ASEAN
- capacity building programmes for ASEAN youth to advocate for peace and equality in ASEAN Community building



Read the work plan at <https://asean.org/book/asean-work-plan-on-youth-2021-2025/>

# YOUTH STATISTICS

## Youth population in ASEAN (0-19 years old)



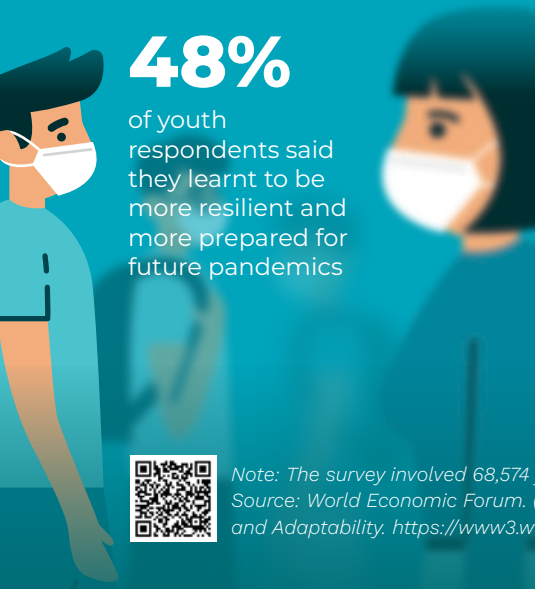
**42%**  
2000

**33.1%**  
2020



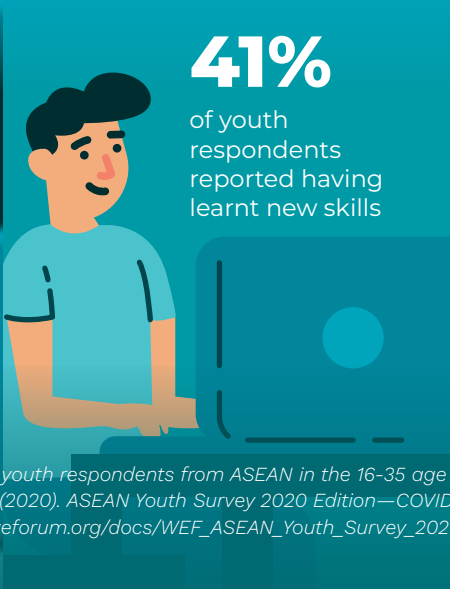
Source: ASEAN Secretariat. (2022). ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community in Facts and Figures (Volume Number 1). <https://asean.org/serial/asean-people-where-are-we-now/>

## Youth and resilience



**48%**

of youth respondents said they learnt to be more resilient and more prepared for future pandemics



**41%**

of youth respondents reported having learnt new skills



**31%**

of youth respondents found new business models and new ways to improve income



Note: The survey involved 68,574 youth respondents from ASEAN in the 16-35 age group. Source: World Economic Forum. (2020). ASEAN Youth Survey 2020 Edition—COVID-19—The True Test of ASEAN Youth's Resilience and Adaptability. [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_ASEAN\\_Youth\\_Survey\\_2020\\_Report.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_ASEAN_Youth_Survey_2020_Report.pdf).



# ASEAN Youth Development Index

(Average Score on Four Domains)



**0.597**  
ASEAN

\*The score, which ranges from 0 (lowest) to 1 (highest), indicates the level of development and wellbeing of the region's youth in the following domains: education; health and well-being; employment and opportunity; and participation and engagement.



Source: ASEAN Secretariat (2017). First ASEAN Youth Development Index. <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/First-ASEAN-Youth-Development-Index.pdf>

**0.56**

Myanmar

**0.667**

Viet Nam

**0.365**

Lao PDR

**0.554**

The Philippines

**0.481**

Thailand

**0.383**

Cambodia

**0.729**

Malaysia

**0.758**

Brunei Darussalam

**0.94**

Singapore

**0.533**

Indonesia

## Youth and digital tools

**87%**

of youth respondents increased their use of at least one digital tool during the pandemic

**42%**

of youth respondents picked up at least one new digital tool during the pandemic

More than  
**70%**

of youth respondents said that their increased use of social media and e-commerce will last beyond COVID-19

**64%**

of surveyed full-time students said they used online education tools more actively during COVID-19; of these, 30% were first-time users

**69%**

of youth respondents found it difficult to work or study remotely, including 7% who said it was impossible



Note: The survey involved 68,574 youth respondents from ASEAN in the 16-35 age group.  
Source: World Economic Forum. (2020). ASEAN Youth Survey 2020 Edition—COVID-19—The True Test of ASEAN Youth's Resilience and Adaptability. [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_ASEAN\\_Youth\\_Survey\\_2020\\_Report.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_ASEAN_Youth_Survey_2020_Report.pdf).

## The 1st ASEAN Youth Dialogue

# Addressing Challenges, Seizing Opportunities in the 4IR Era



**Larasati Indrawagita**

Senior Officer, Education, Youth and Sports Division

ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department



**Ixora Tri Devi**

Staff Writer, The ASEAN

ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department

Each generation is shaped by unique experiences and circumstances, and there is no better way to understand each other except through dialogue.

Under Cambodia's ASEAN chairmanship, 2022 was designated the Year of ASEAN Youth. In line with the theme, "ASEAN A.C.T: Addressing Challenges Together," the Year of ASEAN Youth recognised the youth's role in strengthening the region's recovery and growth. Consistent with the post-2020 vision of ASEAN youth development, which focuses on fostering digital and 21st-century skills, the year's activities aimed to provide more meaningful platforms where the youth's voices can be heard, their creativity can flourish,

and their abilities can be tapped for the greater good.

One of the year's flagship activities was the 1st ASEAN Youth Dialogue held from 25 to 26 July 2022 in Cambodia. The dialogue was co-organised by the country's Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and the ASEAN Secretariat, co-funded by the ASEAN-Republic of Korea (ROK) Cooperation Fund with the government of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

It consisted of a virtual pre-departure programme and on-site events held in Siem Reap, the second largest city

of Cambodia and home to the world-famous Angkor Wat temple. Youth delegates of ASEAN and the ROK jointly developed policy recommendations that were later submitted to the ASEAN Youth Ministers and High-Level Representatives.

This was ASEAN's first large-scale in-person gathering of youth since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. It demonstrated the importance of ASEAN's strong commitment to youth engagement even amidst various challenges. The dialogue also opened a new avenue for youth representatives



*Young delegates at the 1st ASEAN Youth Dialogue Closing Ceremony, Siem Reap, Cambodia, 26 July 2022*



and ASEAN policy-makers to come together, communicate their concerns, and think through solutions to society's most pressing challenges.

Nearly 70 young people from the ASEAN Member States and South Korea from diverse educational and professional backgrounds participated in the event. High schoolers, university students, young government officials, business leaders, and development practitioners from urban and non-urban settings participated in this event with their unique characteristics and experiences.

The theme was "Youth in the Era of Fourth Industrial Revolution: Opportunities and Challenges in Post-Pandemic Recovery."

The pandemic hastened technology use and digital adoption, particularly among the youth. In addition, the crisis highlighted the unique responses of each generation to new norms of living, learning, and working. A 2020 World Economic Forum survey showed that young people had demonstrated

skills, adaptability and resilience that are crucial for the region's recovery. However, with an accelerated path towards digitalisation and 4IR, the youth must have the opportunities, infrastructure and environment to build their skills and abilities for the future.

## Pre-departure programme

A virtual pre-departure programme from 18 to July 2022 allowed the delegates to deepen their knowledge of the ASEAN Community and ASEAN-ROK relations. ASEAN Secretariat representatives, experts from the ASEAN-Korea Centre (AKC), National Council of Youth Organizations in Korea (NCYOK), and prominent youth leaders shared their knowledge and ideas on the theme from different perspectives.

The ASEAN and ROK youth delegates jointly developed policy recommendations that were later submitted to the ASEAN

Youth Ministers and High-Level Representatives. They ran along eight thematic areas which also shaped the onsite discussions: (i) governance, (ii) science, technology, and innovation, (iii) the future of work, (iv) infrastructure and connectivity, (v) inclusive and sustainable growth, (vi) climate change, (vii) narrowing the development gap in ASEAN, and (viii) ASEAN-ROK people-to-people exchanges.

A live-streamed panel discussion, "The Vital Roles of Millennials and Gen-Z in Post-Pandemic Recovery", introduced youth delegates to peers who lead community projects that address some of these challenges. Moderator Timothy Low, a Singaporean ASEAN Youth Fellowship Programme alumnus and chief operating officer of Halogen Foundation, led the sharing of experiences of three inspiring speakers: Indonesia's Fayola Maulida, founder of The Study Friend; the Lao PDR's Panalath Lathouly, alumnus of Empowering Youth Across ASEAN (EYAA) programme; and Viet Nam's Vinh



*Siem Reap, home to the ancient marvel of Angkor Wat, hosted youth delegates from ASEAN and Republic of Korea*



“

We have to seize the promises and opportunities these new technologies offer.

*Ambassador of Republic of Korea to ASEAN, Kwon Hee-Seog, at the opening of the 1st ASEAN Youth Dialogue*

Quang Pham, 3rd prize winner of the 2021 ASEAN Youth Social Journalism Contest. The speakers highlighted that passion and persistence, collaboration, and creative resource mobilisation are crucial to successfully implementing projects.

## Gathering at Siem Reap

Upon arrival in Siem Reap, youth delegates joined peer-to-peer interactions, organised discussions, Q&A with the speakers, and a World Café session to deepen their understanding of the 4IR, its impact on socio-economic development, and ASEAN-ROK relations. These enabled them to review and refine the draft recommendations for presentation to the ASEAN ministers.

Interestingly, in the discussions about the 4IR and pandemic recovery, there was an intense focus on equality rather than the advanced use of technology. Deliberations on green jobs focused on environmental conservation and how the youth can create more jobs for their local communities through social entrepreneurship schemes. The overarching idea that emerged from discussions across all thematic areas is the importance of ensuring equal access to opportunities across different youth groups that transcend language, geographical, or technological barriers.

One of the highlights of the event was the ASEAN Talk. During this TED-Talk-inspired session, participants listened to fresh ideas and real stories on how young people can leverage technology to address various challenges. Speakers included Brunei Darussalam's Shaun Hoon, who is an alumnus of the World Economic Forum Global Shapers; Cambodia's Richard Yim of Quantum Engineering and Manufacturing, who was listed in the 2019 Forbes 30 Under 30 Asia; Indonesia's Musawwir Muhtar, co-founder and Expansion Director of OCTOPUS; and South Korea's Sol Kim representing the Asia-Africa Centre of Seoul National University.

## Youth delegates meet Youth Ministers

The dialogue with the ministers took place the following day. Selected delegates from ASEAN and ROK delivered the recommendations.

In a pre-recorded video, Kim Hyunsook, Minister of Gender Equality and Family of the ROK, expressed her hope for the youth delegates to take the dialogue as an opportunity to understand each other's culture and develop close friendships. The engagement of ASEAN dialogue partners in ASEAN Youth Dialogue is essential, not only to allow the expansion of networks among young people but also to cultivate a sense of global citizenship.

The ministers and representatives expressed appreciation to the youth for the constructive recommendations. One of the recommendations focuses on the importance of investments in advancing science



and technology through the relevant ministries or agencies and public-private partnerships. Conversations on narrowing development gaps also led to a shared idea among ministers that volunteerism and youth entrepreneurship are areas in which ASEAN can pursue future collaboration.

## Advocating for a culture of collaboration and co-creation

ASEAN's approach to engaging young people has evolved following technological advancement and social innovations over the past decades. With technological advancement rapidly moving in, we must keep providing young people with opportunities to voice their opinions and find solutions for a better future. The wisdom of the older generation and the innovative mindset of the younger generation should go hand in hand so that the people of ASEAN can reap the benefits of 4IR.

As a forward-looking region and as stated under the ASEAN Leaders' Statement on the Year of ASEAN Youth to Strengthen the Role of Youth in ASEAN Community Building adopted by the leaders at the 40th and 41st Summits, ASEAN is committed to promoting the role of ASEAN youth in regional and global security, political stability, peace, creative industries and entrepreneurship, respect for cultural diversity, and sustainable socio-economic development.

The willingness to put aside intergenerational differences for a moment, listen to the younger generation's voices, and learn from the older generation's stories will create more opportunities to collaborate that may eventually keep the next generation from experiencing preventable development gaps.

The Second ASEAN Youth Dialogue is set to happen in April 2023. Learning from the inaugural dialogue, ASEAN shall explore further the value of intergenerational collaboration to promote synergy, continuity, and agility of efforts towards a future that works for all generations across the region over the next decades.



*Youth delegates had jam-packed activities, including peer-to-peer interactions, organised discussions, Q&A with the speakers, and a World Café session*



*Selected delegates from ASEAN and ROK delivered the recommendations at the final day of the event*

“

As policy-makers, it is important for us to give our youth plenty of opportunities to voice their ideas and perspectives and translate those into concrete actions. Institutionalising youth engagement mechanisms is a central part of this, as it provides our young people with durable platforms to effect change at the national, regional, and global levels.

*Former ASEAN Secretary-General Dato Lim Jock Hoi, at the opening of the 1st ASEAN Youth Dialogue*

Reflections on the 1st ASEAN Youth Dialogue

# The Digital Divide Youth Delegates Push for More Equality

**Ixora Tri Devi**

Staff Writer, The ASEAN

ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department

Lukas Norman Kbarek (second from the right) works with Komunitas Informasi (Komin) Papua, a civil society organisation that promotes digital literacy among students and schools in rural Biak

As of 2021, almost half or 44.7 per cent of the ASEAN population live in urban areas. With more than half of the population living in rural areas, including young people, they very likely experience the problems typically associated with rural and remote communities, such as inadequate access to health and education services, internet and ICT, and employment opportunities. Therefore, issues of the digital divide and lack of preparedness for 4IR cannot be overlooked.

Twenty-three-year-old delegate Pen Sreykeo, a native of Siem Reap, believes that the education facility in her community is still insufficient. Spending her time as a volunteer English teacher at a public school in her hometown, Sreykeo observed: “My area lacks skilled and well-educated human resources because we do not have enough schools. Many young people also prefer to work and gain income. Some are ignorant and waste their time while not being productive.”

Lack of access to education facilities is a problem echoed by Indonesian delegate 24-year-old Lukas Norman Kbarek. Born on Biak island in the easternmost part of Indonesia, Lukas first moved to Java and then to Bali. Lukas saw the disparity between living in rural Papua and big cities.

“Youth in my hometown are not aware of digital technology. How can they adapt to the so-called 4th industrial

revolution? That is why I push digital literacy through my community, to close this huge gap. I hope that kids from rural areas, like me, can have the same chance of adapting to digital transformation. Not just those from Jakarta and other big cities,” he said.

Lukas’ concern was embodied in one of the recommendations conveyed by delegates to the ministers that called for guaranteed regional technological connectivity across ASEAN and the ROK. The recommendation calls for enhancing partnerships between governments, high-level institutions and the private sectors, through exchanges on policy developments.

Lukas, who works with Komunitas Informasi (Komin) Papua, a civil society organisation that promotes digital literacy among students and schools in rural Biak, is often surprised by these glaring deficiencies. For example, he once worked at an elementary school with only one teacher, a headmaster, who also needed to teach six classes. He recalled, “So, whenever the headmaster went out of town for a meeting, the school would close down.”

Lukas yearned to do more for his community; however, he found it hard to gather support for his cause. Learning from experience, he proposed to include a line under the Inclusive and Sustainable Growth theme: “There should be increased relevant and country-specific support for grassroots organisations and volunteer groups, so that they are able to act as liaisons to

the marginalised areas. This is, among others, to enhance the distribution of educational materials and enhancements in infrastructure in the rural, remote and marginalised areas for equitable access to education.”

“Many participants noted the same barrier and immediately agreed to adopt the recommendation,” he added.

Sreykeo, on other hand, noticed a different kind of barrier among the youth delegates. She noticed that some seemingly more affluent delegates were reluctant to mingle with those outside their circles.

“That should not happen. Because of the division, youth do not have a chance to compete fairly and to innovate together,” she said.

For Sreykeo, increasing youth exposure to the workforce is essential, as she believes young people can learn to cooperate and set their differences aside.

“To me, the point of recommendation that says ‘create a culture of collaboration and collective action among the students to work together to support each other’ is critical. These suggestions resonate with me, and it is best if my community can follow them,” she said.

Sreykeo, Lukas, and their fellow youth delegates look forward to ASEAN’s leaders implementing their recommendations and hope for another follow-up dialogue to evaluate their suggestions.



*Pen Sreykeo (fourth from the left) believes increasing youth exposure to the workforce is essential for young people to learn, cooperate, and set their differences aside*

# Insight Towards More Meaningful Dialogue with the Youth



**Muhammad Dika Harliadi**

*Officer, Education, Youth and Sports Division*

*ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department*

It is not a rare occurrence for the youth in ASEAN to have the opportunity to voice their ideas and opinions in front of high-level officials in the region. On occasions such as the ASEAN summits in 2019 and 2020, youth representatives interfaced with the Heads of State/Government. They managed to deliver statements on behalf of the youth, who comprise a third of the ASEAN's population. However, can the youth be confident that their voices will be heard? How can the region's policy-making community and key stakeholders act on the youth's recommendations?

Youth participation and engagement in the policy-making processes in ASEAN are highly encouraged under the ASEAN youth sector's five-year work plan. Consistent with this plan, the 1st ASEAN Youth Dialogue was held in July 2022 in Siem Reap, Cambodia. It served as a meaningful platform for approximately 70 delegates from the ASEAN Member States and the Republic of Korea (ROK) to discuss policy issues and exchange views with the ASEAN and ROK Youth Ministers and key dialogue partners. The dialogue centred on the theme, "Youth in the Era of Fourth Industrial Revolution: Opportunities

and Challenges in Post-pandemic Recovery", which focused on the way stakeholders can collaborate with youth to reap the benefits and opportunities arising from the Industrial Revolution 4.0, and address the challenges of global trends and the pandemic.

I have had the privilege of witnessing how the dialogue unfolded. The dialogue's order of proceedings was formal and involved high-level representatives. This is beneficial for the youth as it exposes them to typical government processes and dynamics and raises their level of professionalism. During the first drafting workshop, the delegates were divided into pre-identified thematic areas, with suggested key issues and a recommendation outline to guide the discussion. This approach is useful in framing and eliciting the views of the youth in this inaugural edition of the ASEAN Youth Dialogue. In succeeding dialogues, the young delegates can be encouraged to formulate their own problem statement(s) under each area which will encourage them to commit even more in-depth thinking about pressing issues in each area. They can also be given a chance to acknowledge the responses of ASEAN governments and revisit their recommendations

based on their responses.

Nonetheless, the final version of the policy recommendations turned out substantive and profound without losing their sense of youthfulness.






Youth advocacy is a journey rather than a destination, and it involves constant dialogue with decision-makers. It is about building trust between two parties, exercising the advocacy rights of the youth, and getting governments to be open to the youth's point of view. By and large, the 1st ASEAN Youth Dialogue has created this environment. I note that government representatives and stakeholders in ASEAN appreciated the youth's enthusiasm in delivering meticulously formed policy recommendations on critical problems in the region. The recommendations from the dialogue were elevated to the Leaders during the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summit held in November 2022 in Phnom Penh. This has led to the issuance of the ASEAN Leaders' Statement on the Year of ASEAN Youth to Strengthen the Role of Youth in ASEAN Community-Building. The youth in the region will be looking forward to more meaningful engagement with ASEAN beyond 2022 and expecting concrete action on their recommendations.








## 1st ASEAN Youth Dialogue

# RECOMMENDATIONS PRESENTED TO THE ASEAN YOUTH MINISTERS



## Governance

-  Standardise the focus of knowledge and skills development across education systems
-  Promote lifelong learning especially in the ICT sector
-  Improve youth policies through National Youth Councils
-  Develop evaluation reports on each ASEAN Member States' youth-related policies
-  Establish a network of ASEAN Youth Representatives

## Future of Work




-  Integrate digital tools and digital literacy into education
-  Standardise the skills certification process across the region
-  Integrate on-the-job training and include the teaching of employable skills in the curriculum
-  Ensure the rights and safety of workers in all sectors
-  Promote inclusion in the workplace and deter discriminatory behaviour

## Infrastructure and Connectivity



-  Build and maintain public infrastructure in areas in need
-  Build the capacity of human resources working in public facilities
-  Guarantee regional technological connectivity in the region and ROK
-  Enable the participation of beneficiaries and stakeholders in the development of smart city action plans

## Climate Change

### Preventive





-  Provide funding for youth programmes on climate change
-  Develop climate consciousness through education
-  Reduce single use plastic consumption by developing a Mapping and Assessment of Standards and Labels on Plastic Packaging

### Curative


-  Increase engagement with private sector on climate-related policies
-  Establish an ASEAN subcommittee for monitoring and evaluation








## Inclusive and Sustainable Growth

-  Provide support to children deprived of parental care due to the long-and-short-term impacts of COVID-19
-  Revise protocols for the recruitment of female youth, underprivileged youth, and youth with disabilities in workplaces that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic
-  Craft more well-rounded and inclusive curricula that put equal emphasis on social sciences or artistic subjects and STEM-related subjects
-  Provide relevant and country-specific support for grassroots organisations and volunteer groups
-  Promote more green jobs for the youth

## Science, Technology, and Innovation

-  Ensure that innovations retain connectivity and enhance collaboration
-  Invest in research covering a broad range of issues and disciplines, but especially the 4IR
-  Provide local community with infrastructure for digitalisation
-  Use artificial intelligence (AI) to promote harmony and bring information to target beneficiaries
-  Establish a universal platform that requires a low bandwidth and fosters science-based decision-making process

## Narrowing the Development Gap among ASEAN Member States

-  Expand student-exchange and teacher-exchange programmes across the ASEAN-ROK community
-  Encourage entrepreneurship among the youth in ASEAN and ROK
-  Encourage direct foreign investments in ASEAN and ROK
-  Facilitate technology exchange involving young farmers in ASEAN and ROK
-  Strengthen ASEAN-ROK cooperation on health-related programmes, such as mental health literacy, capacity building for health workers, etc.

## ASEAN-ROK People-to-People Exchange

-  Encourage networking and cooperation at the organisational level
-  Apply ideas and concepts generated from various exchange activities
-  Provide more opportunities for students, young scholars, and researchers in the region to participate in various exchange programmes
-  Make exchange programmes for citizens of ASEAN and ROK more accessible for marginalised and underprivileged groups
-  Ensure that people-to-people exchanges involving the youth incorporate opportunity-sharing activities, not just culture-based values

# The Youth are the Future of Today

6 months—6 themes—90 youth:  
**A contribution to ASEAN-EU relations**



**Katia Maronati**

*Advancing the European Union's role in  
multilateral fora in Asia*

It is no coincidence that both the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU), two of the world's most advanced examples of regional integration, celebrated 2022 as the "Year of Youth."

**Y**oung people represent more than 30 per cent of the European population and 34 per cent of ASEAN's population. The youth population in ASEAN countries is expected to peak at over 220 million by 2038 (ASEAN website).

The youth are key agents for social and political change, as well as economic and cultural development. They are an important section of the population in any country, and they deserve everyone's attention.

The youth are also most affected by the problems of today's interconnected societies: climate change, unemployment, security threats, economic uncertainty, migration, etc. Addressing and adjusting to these changes will be a defining feature and task of future generations.

Recognising the role young people can play and their potential to build

bridges across communities, working together, helping to manage conflict, and promote peace, the EU and the ASEAN launched the **EU-ASEAN Young Leaders Forum** in April 2022, which brought together ambitious young leaders from both regions.

More than 450 candidacies were submitted for the forum, proving both the need and the value of such an opportunity. Following a careful analysis of CVs, motivation, and field of activity, with a close look at gender and geographical balance, 90 young people aged between 20 and 35 were selected.

Coming from the business communities, academia, and civil society organisations, they had the chance to make their voices heard by putting forward their proposals and participating in shaping the future of ASEAN-EU relations.

During the opening ceremony, attended by more than 300 participants, Dato Lim Jock Hoï, then Secretary-General of ASEAN, underlined that "the youth should play a larger and meaningful role in building a more participatory, inclusive, sustainable, resilient, and dynamic global community," while Igor Driesman, EU Ambassador to ASEAN, reiterated the need of connecting to "the next generation of leaders from across the EU and ASEAN to share their ideas and hopes for the future."

Entitled "Scenarios for the Future of EU-ASEAN Relations," the programme combined online and hybrid sessions, where youth developed skills for problem-solving through critical strategic thinking, teamwork, policy research and proposition while simultaneously learning about ASEAN-EU relations.

During a meeting, Federica Mogherini, Rector of the College of Europe and former EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, reminded the youth of the importance of their role: "These times are leading the world to dangerous places. It is very important that young leaders of our regions focus their minds and their actions on how to build bridges, how to build dialogue, how to exchange positive practices, how to build a better present and future. My message to you is this: you already have the possibility, you already have a role to play, and I personally count very much on you to fulfil this task."

The forum continued with workshops and webinars until October 2022, a unique opportunity to take part in a global network of inspiring and motivated young leaders engaged in the future of ASEAN-EU relations.

In the six months programme, the youth discussed the most pressing challenges for both regions with an impressive global network of policymakers, diplomats, international



development experts, entrepreneurs, and other inspiring leaders.

The forum offered an opportunity and a safe space for a comprehensive, analytic and open dialogue on six themes:

- democratic governance and basic rights
- security
- economic perspective
- COVID-19 mitigation and recovery
- multilateralism and climate governance
- people-to-people connectivity, including education; and employment and cultural exchanges

The 90 participants contributed, with their different perspectives and innovative thinking, to the discussions on the future of ASEAN-EU relations, analysing current and future priorities for the relationship, and proposing how to achieve them through a solutions-oriented approach.

At the end of the course, the young leaders prepared thematic recommendations that six of them, elected by their peers, presented

at the EU-ASEAN Youth Summit in December 2022 in Brussels, where they met their peers from the Young Indo-Pacific Forum and the Youth Sounding board.

The EU-ASEAN Youth Summit, which saw the participation of more than 200 youth representatives from Europe and Asia, was a youth-led activity, funded by the European Union, as an ASEAN-EU Commemorative Summit side event, and represented a unique space for young leaders to contribute with their different perspectives, on current and future priorities for the ASEAN-EU relationship.

During the event, the youth from the three different organisations, compiled a final list of recommendations which emphasised the need to:

- Establish an EU-ASEAN youth forum
- Strengthen relations between the two continents and increase actions against the Russian Federation and more support for the ASEAN Special Representative for Myanmar
- Increase cooperation in the rules-based regional security architecture for maritime affairs, and exchange of knowledge and practices and

investment of resources to develop cybersecurity training

- Enhance the dialogues and negotiations on an ASEAN-EU Free Trade Agreement and call for the participation of civil society organisations and relevant stakeholders to participate during the phases of its creation
- Strengthen, via the ILO, the regulations on labour standards to promote responsible business practices and establish an independent organisation to unlock employment opportunities. Take COVID-19 back onto the agenda, with recovery measures, the development of emergency response frameworks, and medical resources for rural communities
- Increase cooperation on green climate in emission-intensive sectors as well as strengthen climate adaptation and mitigation measures
- Support new existing mechanisms for education, linked to the acceleration of digitalisation and encourage cross-regional labour mobility as well as cultural exchanges

Below, some of the participating youth tell us why it's important to listen to them, how to strengthen ASEAN-EU relations and, most importantly, what they have to say to ASEAN and European leaders.



“

I think that today's youth are in a position to strengthen Europe-Asia relations more than ever. One of the largest gaps between Europe and ASEAN has always been geographical, but digitalisation is gradually closing this gap, and the youth tend to be its most proficient users and innovators. Furthermore, a wider range of young people have already grown up being exposed and even communicating with people on the other side of the world. You could say that the strengthening of relations has already been happening bottom-up, and youth contributions at the top level simply reflect this development.

————— Jhon, on how the youth can contribute to strengthening Asia-Europe relations



“

Connectivity is perhaps one issue that has been talked about the most in terms of Europe and Asia cooperation, and it is a sector that provides the most tangible benefits for citizens in both regions. Europe-Asia cooperation will enable dynamic mobility for citizens in both regions, introducing diversity in education, trade and even cultural opportunities. The combination of Asia's resources and Europe's stability will create thorough, stable, and rapid development. It will be a good catalyst not only for growth, but will also offer incentives for citizens from both regions.

————— Silvi, on how Asia-Europe relations make a difference in our daily lives



“

Your decisions to nurture Asia-Europe cooperation play a key role for both regions, as well as for global spectators, in accelerating efforts to decouple the economy and carbon emissions, for the better or the worse.

Amira's message to Asian and European leaders



“

Listen to and include the bold and ambitious young generation in the search for policies to solve our world's most pressing challenges: the climate crisis and the upholding of human rights and democracy.

Zoe's message to Asian and European leaders

## YOUNG LEADERS' AGE



## YOUNG LEADERS' GENDER



## YOUNG LEADERS' OCCUPATION AND MAIN INTEREST

Academic	3	Lawyer	4	Consultant	3	Entrepreneur	9	Graduate/Student	25
Manager	3	Journalist/Communication Manager	2	NGO	7	Policy/Analyst	17	Research/Think Tank	16
Teacher	1	Advocacy	7	Security and Defence	7	Diplomacy	5	Economics	2
Education	2	Energy	1	Governance	6	Healthcare	2	Human/Rights	5
Journalism	1	Migrant/Asylum	3	Policy	15	International Relations	20	Sustainable/Development	10
Trade	3								

## YOUNG LEADERS' COUNTRY OF ORIGIN





# ASEAN-EU YOUTH SUMMIT RECOMMENDATIONS

## Theme 1: The Political Perspective

-  Establish a dedicated ASEAN delegation to the EU
-  Facilitate regional networks of democracy and human rights actors to act as watchdogs and sounding boards for governments
-  Strengthen meaningful youth participation in policy-making
-  Create a shared definition of democracy and actively work together to ensure that states are held accountable for upholding standards on democracy and basic rights
-  Act now to prevent further democratic decline and human rights abuses

## Theme 2: Security in the Indo-Pacific

-  Effects of international conflicts on the EU and ASEAN and the importance of dialogue
-  The Russian invasion of Ukraine
-  The civil war in Myanmar
-  The conflicts in the Taiwan Strait and in the South China Sea
-  Agreement on nuclear non-proliferation
-  Maritime security and supply chain in the EU and ASEAN
-  The future of EU-ASEAN security dialogue and rules-based regional security architecture
-  Non-traditional security issues





## Theme 3: Economic Perspective—Future of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) between EU-ASEAN and the ASEAN Member States

-  Shared expectations on the future of the EU-ASEAN FTA
-  Prioritisation of Sustainable Development and Green Economy in the EU-ASEAN FTA
-  Promote International labour standards and human rights protection of workers
-  Independent platform for interconnectivity among entrepreneurs, innovators, talents, and professionals

## Theme 4: COVID-19 Mitigation And Recovery: an EU-ASEAN Health Partnership

-  Joint COVID-19 pandemic recovery and future preventive actions
-  Improved global health governance to mitigate COVID-19

## Theme 5: How can the EU-ASEAN cooperation in mitigation and adaptation support the Paris Agreement objectives and sustainable development

-  Energy (power generation, industry, transportation, and buildings)
-  Agriculture, Biodiversity, Food, and Waste
-  Economic strategies (e.g. knowledge exchange and financing on developing and implementing the climate finance strategy and taxonomy)
-  Supporting strategies (e.g. a dedicated platform for potential collaboration on climate-related agenda)

## Theme 6: People-to-People Connectivity

-  Digitalisation
-  Education
-  Employment
-  Cultural awareness

# Promoting Healthy Competition among the Youth

Finalists of the ASEAN Youth Video Contest went through a four-day skills training workshop



**Joanne B. Agbisit**

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ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department



**Ixora Tri Devi**

Staff Writer, The ASEAN

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Youth competitions keep young people involved in ASEAN while developing their social skills, confidence, and resilience. In 2022, three region-wide youth competitions were held: 6th ASEAN Youth Video Contest, ASEAN Youth Photo Competition 2022, and ASEAN Youth Debate 2022.

## 6th ASEAN Youth Video Contest

The ASEAN Youth Video Contest, now on its sixth cycle, focused on the theme “Youth Addressing Challenges Together—Staying Dynamic in the Time of Pandemic: ACTnow!”.

Nine amateur filmmakers were selected as finalists out of over a hundred applicants. The finalists were given an intensive four-day training workshop in August 2022 to hone their photography, videography, editing, and storytelling skills. After the training,

they were given a chance to polish and finalise their video projects.

Soumontha Douangmala of the Lao PDR was chosen as the competition's winner. Her short video titled “Change for Better Mental Health” called attention to the mental health struggles of the youth during the pandemic and showed how a strong support system could dispel feelings of isolation and loneliness.

In the second and third places were Prince Jairo Paglinawan of the Philippines for his video titled “Y.A.N.A. (You Are Not Alone)” and Kirtana

Genason of Malaysia for her video “Ask, Listen, Communicate.” Indonesia’s Nabila Yasmin Nurrita, with her video “Silent Room” received an honorable mention. The videos of all finalists are available at ASEAN Foundation’s YouTube channel.

The contest is a joint initiative of the U.S. Government through the U.S. Agency for International Development; Cambodia’s Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; the ASEAN Foundation; ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Youth (SOMY); and the ASEAN Secretariat.



## ASEAN Youth Photo Competition 2022

Spearheaded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of Cambodia, the ASEAN Youth Photo Competition 2022 invited budding photographers in the region to submit photos on the theme “Youth’s Role in Supporting ASEAN A.C.T. (Addressing Challenges Together).”

The winning entry was submitted by Phanith Um of Cambodia, who captured the building of a bamboo bridge, the traditional way of crossing the Mekong River during the dry season. The second prize went to Thailand’s Pitchawat Proongsak, whose photo depicted communal street cleaning, while the third prize went to Borey Ten of Cambodia with his rice planting photo.

The award-winning images, along with 42 other top entries from 10 ASEAN Member States, were compiled into a photo book by Cambodia’s youth ministry. In his message, Minister Hang Chuon Naron said that the competition allowed the youth to play a role in building ASEAN awareness. Cambodia’s Director General of Youth and SOMY Leader Sroy Socheath added that the competition gave a platform for the youth to find and understand the strength within themselves.

The competition was held in partnership with the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) and the ASEAN Secretariat.



Winning entry for the ASEAN Youth Photo Competition 2022 by Phanith Um from Cambodia

## ASEAN Youth Debate 2022

The inaugural ASEAN Youth Debate aimed to equip young people with research, in-depth thinking, public speaking skills, and to raise awareness of ASEAN values and identities. Hosted by the 2022 chair of ASEAN, Cambodia, the debate competition was held under the Addressing Challenges Together theme.

Thirty-two teams from 10 ASEAN Member States competed in the debates. Each country had three



Malaysia and Cambodia debate teams compete at the ASEAN Youth Debate 2022 grand final round

groups, with five members and a team leader in each group. Viewers at home were invited to join the conversation through a live social media broadcast by Cambodia’s Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

The first elimination round took place on 4 and 5 August, while the final round was on 12 October 2022. Cambodia and Malaysia competed in the final round held in Phnom Penh. Sok Tola, Nang Khourn Kimmariya,

Hor Heng Serey Roth, Usha Sophea Janardhan, and Veng Sovanmeng from the Cambodian Team prevailed over the Malaysian team.

On the final day, Cambodia’s Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, Hang Chuon Naron, said that debate could build 21st-century skills among ASEAN people through industrial revolution 4.0 and strengthen the ASEAN spirit to contribute to achieving the ASEAN vision.



# Fighting Disinformation and Misinformation: Digital Literacy for the Young and Marginalised

ASEAN Digital Literacy Programme Team



The new age of digitalisation has redefined and significantly widened access to information for many citizens in the ASEAN region. However, the threat of misinformation and disinformation is also an increasing concern in the digital landscape. In response, Google.org, Google's philanthropic arm, supported the ASEAN Foundation with a grant of 1.5 million US dollars to run the ASEAN Digital Literacy Programme (ASEAN DLP) from 2022-2024.

*Launch of #TuliBijakBerdigital with Nissi Taruli of FeminisThemis and representatives from the Central Java Province Government, Masyarakat Anti Fitnah Indonesia (MAFINDO), and Tular Nalar*

The regional programme aims to combat misinformation and disinformation by providing digital literacy training for youth, teachers, parents, community leaders, and government officials in collaboration with local implementing partners. The programme includes a strong awareness campaign element to make a wider audience understand the importance of media and information literacy and inspire people to become agents of change, capable of detecting and preventing hoaxes and fake news from spreading.

To achieve this, the ASEAN Foundation, with the support of Google.org funding, established the ASEAN Youth Advisory Group (ASEAN YAG) comprising

selected youth from 10 ASEAN countries to help ensure that the benefits of ASEAN DLP can reach the communities at the grassroots level.

Among the 20 youth leaders appointed to the group in October 2022 are Nissi Taruli Felicia Naibaho from Indonesia, and Miguel Pangalangan and Miguel Lopez from the Philippines.

## Reaching people with disabilities in Indonesia

Twenty-four-year-old Nissi Taruli Felicia Naibaho is a Deaf founder of FeminisThemis (@feministhemis), a community that fights for gender equality, sexual-reproductive health,

and diversity, with unique content for Deaf people. Nissi, an architect with a degree from Bina Nusantara University, is also a consultant for various DEI (Diversity-Equity-Inclusion) projects in various communities.

Deaf people are particularly vulnerable to misinformation and disinformation in cyberspace because they have limited access to correct information. This is what prompted Nissi to join ASEAN YAG.

To spread awareness of the ASEAN DLP in Indonesia, Nissi will organise a campaign with the hashtag #TuliBijakBerdigital, targeting Deaf people aged 18-35. Nissi believes that anyone can be a "knight" or "hero". Through the campaign which involves workshops in areas where the deaf





Miguel Lopez and Miguel Pangalangan of the ASEAN Youth Advisory Group discuss their project with The ASEAN Foundation's Piti Srisangnam, Philippine Ambassador to ASEAN Hjayceelyn M. Quintana, and the ASEAN Secretariat's Roger Chao Jr.

community lacks access to digital literacy knowledge, Nissi welcomes conversations and collaboration with anyone, especially persons with disabilities, to create a safe and inclusive digital space in Indonesia.

"I believe ASEAN DLP and ASEAN YAG are a powerful illustration of Google.org and ASEAN Foundation's commitment to supporting the younger generation who plays an important role as owners of the future," she concluded in appreciation of the programme's focus on vulnerable groups such as young people and persons with disabilities.

## Closing the digital divide in the Philippines

In the Philippines, Miguel "Mico" Pangalangan, a master's degree holder in Development Studies from Erasmus University, the Netherlands, and Miguel Lopez, a consultant for international institutions, collaborate through the ASEAN YAG. They aim to address the challenges of digital divide faced by Filipinos, including misinformation and disinformation.

With a population of around 113 million, the Philippines has been called the social media capital since 8 out of its 10 residents have access to the internet. However, disinformation

and misinformation are also rife, especially during general elections, which adversely impact the nation. "Our project is intended to answer the challenge of creating young leaders who are digitally responsible," said Mico.

Their project is called *DigiReadyNoypi*. Led by Miguel Lopez, it aims to hone the digital literacy skills of youth representatives in local government units, particularly the *Sangguniang Kabataan* (youth council), and student organisations.

Mico intends to focus on student-organisation leaders from the University of the Philippines. Student organisations are involved in the community because they are interested in topics of great importance to society as a whole. However, because they are among the educated, students have more access to communication channels which can render them vulnerable to misinformation and disinformation.

Mico and Miguel said their campaign is in the final stages with potential partners identified. They plan to launch this project in March 2023, starting with building awareness in the next three months. They intend to partner with mass media organisations in the Philippines and utilise social media to promote their campaign.

### About ASEAN Foundation



ASEAN FOUNDATION

ASEAN Foundation is an organisation from and for the people of ASEAN. The Foundation exists because of one vision: to build a cohesive and prosperous ASEAN Community. As an ASEAN's body, the Foundation is tasked to support ASEAN mainly in promoting awareness, identity, interaction, and development of the people of ASEAN. For more info about the ASEAN Foundation, visit: [www.aseanfoundation.org](http://www.aseanfoundation.org)

### About Google.org

Google.org

Google.org, Google's philanthropy, brings the best of Google to help solve some of humanity's biggest challenges combining funding, product donations and technical expertise to support underserved communities and provide opportunity for everyone. It engages in nonprofits, social enterprises, and civic entities who make a significant impact on the communities they serve, and whose work has the potential to produce scalable, meaningful change.

# CONVERSATIONS

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- Empowerment. Inclusion. Workers' Rights. Climate Action.
- Why young people fight for change, even when change seems unattainable.



ASEAN Prize Award 2022

# Empower the Youth, Empower the Community

**Ixora Tri Devi***Staff Writer, The ASEAN**ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department*

## Iqbal Damit

ASEAN Prize 2022 Winner

Participating in a youth programme can profoundly impact the course of one's life. Take for example the story of Brunei native, Iqbal Damit.

**T**he former member of Brunei's Ten-pin Bowling national team never thought about volunteering before he joined the Southeast Asian and Japanese Youth Programme (SSEAYP) in 2009. Previously, he spent most of his spare time in bowling alleys, tennis courts, or football fields. After the youth programme, he took an entirely different path: community empowerment.

On 13 November 2022, at the closing of the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summit, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen announced Iqbal Damit as the recipient of the ASEAN Prize 2022. Then Secretary-General of ASEAN, Dato Lim Jock Hoi, said the award is a token of appreciation for Damit's perseverance and leadership in



Photo Credit: ©Iqbal Damit



*Iqbal Damit (second from the left) in one of his trips to Cox's Bazaar refugee camp, Bangladesh*



strengthening humanitarian protection in the region.

Damit admitted that he started volunteering fairly late in life, at 27 years old, compared to the youth of today. But even at that age, it was hard to find collaborators.

“Back then, in Brunei, volunteerism wasn’t a big thing. I didn’t have the platform or the opportunities to do all this. I remember the first few years I started doing this, looking for 20 volunteers was very hard,” he says.

Damit and his other three friends persisted in volunteering, although it was not a popular activity in the country. In 2017, they decided to give their group a name, Hand4Hand. Five years later, Hand4Hand collaborated with thousands of volunteers to support humanitarian aid and emergency responses in the region and beyond.

Through digital transformation, Damit and his colleagues are now able to find enthusiastic volunteers with less effort. He says, “Looking for volunteers is so easy now. A lot of youth want to do it. Social media really helps. Without social media, I would probably be unable to be where I am right now.”

Under his leadership, Hand4Hand has finished 41 projects in Brunei and 25 projects abroad. His strategy is to bring together the public and private sectors to devise solutions for a wide range of problems.

The father of one did not expect his dedication over the past decade to get noticed, let alone by the prestigious ASEAN Prize. Damit dedicates the prize to all the volunteers around the region: “Be it for stray cats, dogs, climate change, championing in the river, forest, ocean, underprivileged families, or communities. This prize is dedicated to volunteers in ASEAN, especially in Brunei.”

To support youth activities across ASEAN, Damit highlights the importance of having a sustainable programme that keeps youngsters engaged in the long term. His experience, he says, shows that youth are more interested in working on impact-driven projects. “The impact should be seen within a year or two. If you can’t see the result in two years, some youth will not be interested,” he observes.

“A lot of youth right now are getting smarter in terms of asking questions: Why do I want to do this? What impact can I get if I join this? What benefit? And so on.”

The fintech industry worker hopes to engage more youth since he believes that the volunteerism spirit will make the world a happier place, and that is what keeps him going. “You will meet amazing crazy people when you do volunteer work!” he says.

Next, Damit plans to jump right back into Cox’s Bazaar refugee camp in Bangladesh.

“I made eight trips before the pandemic. I always say this when I give a talk: no matter how much money you bring in, it will never be enough. What is more important is what you can learn from it. Number one, you need to be thankful for what you have. *Syukur* (grateful), to the almighty.”

As he is looking forward to restarting his journey after hiatus due to the pandemic, Damit reveals he is also cooking up a project which involves one million ASEAN youth. We cannot wait!

Read more about ASEAN Prize Award at:



<https://asean.org/brunei-youth-community-leader-awarded-asean-prize-2022/>



# Dorcas Tang Wen Yu

Climate activist,  
artist, and writer



On Instagram @earthtodorcas, Dorcas Tang Wen Yu creates stories and advocates for a better world through her illustrations and poems. Her activism brought her to Egypt to attend the United Nations Conference of Youth (COY) 17, which was held on the sidelines of the UN Climate Change Conference/Conference of the Parties (COP) in 2022. Dorcas was one of the youth representatives who gathered from around the world to discuss urgent action to fight climate change.

Dorcas' illustration is featured on the cover of this issue. She talks to *The ASEAN* about her passion for the environment—using her art to inspire action, and working for a better future even when it feels there is little hope for change.

“I use the power of storytelling to create hope-driven narratives that advocate for more empathy for both our human and more than human neighbours. By day, I’m actually an architectural designer, and this is something that I do on the side.

“My personal mantra is that ‘I don’t know if this will change anything, but I know it’s the right thing to do.’ I think when it comes to the climate crisis, I think it’s an issue that everyone who has the capacity to contribute should contribute, because it is such an existential issue. Nothing else can happen on an unlivable planet. So, for me, it’s about acting in my capacity even though I don’t know if it will make any impact.

“My biggest concern is that our planet will become irreversibly unlivable. I’m already close to being in my mid-20s, and with doomsday climate projections eating into 2030, 2050, 2070—I fear that most of my life will be spent being scared of what will happen in the future. I have friends who have children who are much younger than me as well, and I fear for the home that they will eventually have to inherit.

“When I first started to want to take more action for the climate, I didn’t know where to start because I had little to no background information about the environment, policies, or sustainability. But since I was young, I have always loved art as a way to express myself. I had started a small

art business at that time and decided to just insert a few pieces to spark conversation about the subject. Slowly, they started to gain attention, so I decided to transition into climate activism because I realised that this was a good way to get the ball rolling.

“There are also many ways to engage the community through art, not just in communications. I like to think of it in terms of the head, heart and the soul. Art can be used to break down difficult information into narratives that are more digestible for the wider community to consume. This is especially important because climate knowledge can be very dense and full of jargon. The second is to engage the heart. What are the emotional barriers that drive or impede us to take climate



## A RIGHTEOUS FANTASY

Light flows in special ways and bathes the lair,  
 Shades of aquamarine danced in the air;  
 A water nymph plunges tall and fair,  
 From a rock into the water swiftly with flair.  
 She presides over water bodies, sceptre in hand,  
 They diverge into streams at her command;  
 Springs and rivers teeming with life,  
 Through her beckoning formed a perfect design.  
 But one fine day to her dismay,  
 Intrusion came, was here to stay;  
 Parasites plagued the surrounding seas  
 And clung on stubbornly like a disease.

action? How do we feel about it? What kind of personal stories can we bring in to make it more relatable? How can we drive conversation around it by engaging the community in a way that is fun and participatory? And the last is to engage the soul. There is a Malay saying that goes, 'Tak kenal maka tak cinta,' translated into 'you can't love what you don't know.' I've realised that one of the key reasons why, especially in Singapore, people don't feel especially invested in climate action, is because our systems and urban environment are far removed from nature. Thus, art is an effective way to help people notice the beauty and joy of nature, and build a stronger connection with it. Using this three-pronged method, art can be a holistic way to drive climate action.

"I would say the biggest takeaway from Egypt would definitely have to be the stories that I heard from other. I always gain a new perspective when hearing about these stories directly from other youth. It also helps me understand the nuanced impacts of the climate crisis on different communities more, especially those that are disproportionately affected.

"We got to hear about the global youth statement that was compiled by YOUNGO prior to the COY17 conference, and sent to COP27 afterwards to inform international climate policies. It gave me context of how youth statements are being crafted, and how we might apply them to the local context here in Singapore when we form youth statements.

"Having no qualifications to back up my environmental knowledge has been a challenge, as my skill sets are primarily in art and design. Not only is it hard for people to take me seriously, but it is also harder to get paid fairly in my capacity as both a professional artist and an environmentalist, because both professions are seen as something that people 'do on the side' as opposed to a real job. So, it can be tiring to have to advocate for myself while advocating for the cause as well.

"I think what the youth bring to the table is really a pristine sense of idealism and hopeful visions of what the world could be. Not having experience or being practical enough is often seen as a bad thing, but I think that when it is paired together with the knowledge that government and

businesses have, it can help to drive healthy change for the world. This can look like having more participatory sessions where governments can take more initiative to listen to youth voices, and more transparency in why each decision has been made afterwards.

"My hope is that human and nature rights eventually become obvious to us, and our policies will reflect this shift in values. I think we can have more events where people in ASEAN can exchange stories with each other, so that we can have a stronger sense of community and camaraderie with each other."

*Interviewed by Priscilla Putri Nirmala Sari. The conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity. The views and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the interviewee and do not reflect the official policy or position of ASEAN.*



Read Dorcas' reflection from COY-17 in Egypt "No Man is an Island" here:  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CIdRqJ1uDID/>



# Margianta Surahman J.D.

Youth activist, Emancipate Indonesia

In 2021, an online petition called #LindungiKurir, revealed troubling work conditions of Indonesian couriers. It quickly went viral. The petition stated that these platform workers were often verbally and physically threatened by Cash On Delivery (COD) customers while receiving only 2,000 Indonesian rupiah (less than a quarter of a dollar) for each package delivered to customers' doorsteps.

As the news spread, thousands signed the petition calling for more decent working conditions for the platform workers, and an evaluation of the COD payment schemes.

Thanks to the petition, Indonesia's Ministry of Manpower invited industry experts and the couriers' representatives for a dialogue.

Although the ministry has yet to release any new policies related to the petition, the dialogue is seen as a step towards fairer work conditions for gig workers in the country.

Margianta Surahman Juhanda Dinata, or Gian, was one of the young people behind the petition. Since high school, he has collaborated with other young people to raise awareness on many issues, such as tobacco control, gender equality, and mental health.

In 2017, Gian founded Emancipate Indonesia to bring modern slavery issues and the importance of workers' rights on the spotlight. The 29-year-old shares with *The ASEAN* ways the youth can help combat abuse and inequality in the fast-changing landscape of work.

"These past years—especially since the pandemic—Emancipate Indonesia has been focusing on Indonesia's gig economy, especially the workers, commonly referred to as *mitra* or 'partners.'

"Initially, the gig economy looked awesome: workers can have a side job to increase their



Photo Credit: © Margianta Surahman



*Margianta Surahman J.D. (second from the right) of Emancipate Indonesia in a dialogue with online driver union, couriers' representatives, and the Directorate General of Post and Informatics from the Ministry of Communication and Informatics of Indonesia*

income. But, in reality, many chose to quit their full-time jobs and just depend on their side hustle. In the beginning, they were tempted by various bonuses offered by ride-hailing companies. What started as part-time gigs have now forced the gig workers to work day and night endlessly to make ends meet.

"I believe there was mismanagement from these start-up companies. Meanwhile, legal loopholes have failed to hold these companies accountable for failing to provide job security to their workers, especially those they call 'partners.' They treat 'partners' as full-time employees by giving them warnings, punishments, or even cutting them off. At the same time, these companies have never given their 'partners' their rightful benefits.

"What was once glorified as the beacon of hope for economic growth, the gig economy, has recently shown its unsustainable nature. This is a good time for our government to reflect. Why do we fail to bring in investments that can absorb a labour-intensive workforce with good-paying union jobs?

"Here is where we came in. As a youth movement, we work as a facilitator. We connect those from the grassroots communities. Unions and communities have many constituents; however, they often do not have time to build a campaign and advocacy strategy to deliver their aspirations to policymakers and the government.

"Sometimes we meet with government officials, lobbying them with research and petitions. We also protest on the street—along with other workers—to make sure our voices get heard. We use every lawful method possible.

"I believe that is what the youth movement is supposed to do in Indonesia and ASEAN. Be the bridge: a bridge across generations, a bridge across sectors. We, the young, have creativity, connections, and other skills that can turn something seemingly impossible into a reality.

"For instance, when the *#LindungiKurir* petition went viral in 2021, the Minister of Manpower's staff contacted us to discuss it. We followed up on this request with the couriers' representatives. What began as a dialogue to protect the couriers now has a wider scope to include gig workers in general.

"We also collaborate with numerous anonymous social media accounts, such as *@ecommurz* on Instagram, to highlight the real aspiration of young workers—from employees of start-up companies to government institutions. I see these accounts as a modern way to unionise, a platform where workers can 'spill the tea' on their working conditions and fight for their rights.

"Here is my take on ASEAN youth: we have an ideal imagination about the alternative world. It is preeminent to have this shared dream, shared vision. In the end, youth will ask, how

to achieve our vision? What kind of policies should we push? Many times, youth are also a lot more progressive than the institutions or the regions.

"I have been following the ASEAN youth movement since it closely relates to my work. We can see that despite all of our limitations, ASEAN youth are doing the best they can. That is the most admirable.

"Youth events, such as the ASEAN Youth Dialogue, undoubtedly have a positive impact. It can open networking opportunities and collaboration across nations. Above all that, the most critical aspect is achieving meaningful youth participation. Youth should fully understand why they are there, what kind of aspiration they are voicing, and what kind of follow-up they could seek.

"ASEAN should involve youth from the pre-event up until the post-event. Meaningful youth participation. The event should be built on a sustainable, detailed and inclusive foundation. If this is done, the output will be sustainable."

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*Interviewed by Ixora Tri Devi. The conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity. The views and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the interviewee and do not reflect the official policy or position of ASEAN.*



# Airliftz, a.k.a Aliff Aolani

Musician, Singer,  
Rapper



As a young musician, 25-year-old Aliff Aolani or Airliftz, has witnessed how the internet could be a double-edged sword for aspiring artists.



“

Not Today is basically about ‘I used to feel that way, but not today. I used to go through that, but not today. Today is going to be a different day.’

Aliff has been writing music since he was 13. At 17, he released his first properly produced song, *Shine*, on SoundCloud. In 2017, the local media called him an internet sensation—thanks to his freestyle—rap ability. After dipping his toes in the music industry with an independent label, Airliftz later signed with a major label, RedRecords, in 2022.

Aliff has witnessed how technology could help boost his art. On the flip side, however, he has also endured the worst of the internet. As his fans grew, so did the haters, trolls, and cyberbullies.

Aliff does not shy away from those haters. Instead, he bites the bullet, faces them and proudly says, “Not today!”

He shares some of his hard-earned wisdom with *The ASEAN*. Aliff talks about how young artists in the region can navigate through the complexities of social media, weed out the negativity, and focus on creating art and music.

“I have been in that position before. I didn’t take it easy the last time. I have been getting that since I was little. Those emotions and those feelings nowadays just fade away. I am trying to make things better instead of putting myself in that hell hole again. I’ve been there, it is dark, and I don’t want to go there again.

“What I can say to those who are bullied is, ‘Hey, I know it feels like hell sometimes, but I guess it is best if we can see the world from a different perspective. Instead of focusing on one, why don’t you put that energy and time into creating?’”

“If you are angry that people are talking bad about you, use it to drive and create your music. That is what art is all about. If you don’t express it and keep it muted, you will forever be trapped in that box.

“*Not Today* (one of Airliftz’s latest songs) is basically about ‘I used to feel that way, but not today. I used to go through that, but not today. Today is going to be a different day.’

“I have always loved creating things. I am bad at putting words together, so I used music and melodies to express that. Music is the easiest for me

because I can’t do anything else. Being able to express myself and my feelings with music helps me a lot.

“My music has a lot of storytelling. A lot of pain, struggle, and love. Stories that I wanted to share with the world. What keeps me going is the process of being able to work with other people collaboratively.

“How do I show my ASEAN identity? I think ASEAN Pop is the way Southeast Asian musicians induce their flavour and style into this whole pop. It could be through lyrics, instruments, or visuals in the music video.

“The hardest challenge for us (ASEAN young musicians) is expanding our music regionally. If you don’t have the right people around you, it will be a problem. For local creatives, we need to help each other and not step on or hate on each other. We have had enough of that.

“ASEAN can spend more time supporting local creatives. Pay more attention. It is not just about money. I know many starving artists are out there—you can’t lie that money has always been an issue. But please, also provide us with more platforms, not social media platforms, because we already have a lot of them. Instead, we need venues like live performances. You can bring artists from Malaysia to perform in Singapore, for example, something like exchange students.

“Let’s do things collaboratively in different countries. We could all share different cultures and views in creating music and ideas. Have live shows and tours. That will be great.

“On my side, for the short future, I hope I will be able to release more songs in the next six to seven months. I also plan on doing more shows and doing more things collaboratively.”



Listen to Airliftz’s latest release, *Smile Strong*, at <https://redrecords.lnk.to/SmileStrong>.

*Interviewed by Ixora Tri Devi. The conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity. The views and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the interviewee and do not reflect the official policy or position of ASEAN.*



# ASEAN Youth Forum A Movement for Change and Solidarity



**Ixora Tri Devi**

Staff Writer, *The ASEAN*

ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department

**T**he ASEAN Youth Forum (AYF) was first held in 2009 in sync with the ASEAN Summit in Bangkok, Thailand. AYF is a youth movement that aims to provide a safe space for young ASEAN people to gather, connect, and build solidarity.

Fourteen years later, AYF has grown, with ten more forums under its belt—Viet Nam (2010), Indonesia (2011), Cambodia (2012), Brunei Darussalam (2013), Myanmar (2014), Malaysia (2015), Cambodia (2016), the Philippines (2017), and Indonesia (2019)—which were participated in by at least 2,500 young people in Southeast Asia.

In 2020, AYF's board, composed mainly of young volunteers, sought to strengthen the network by establishing a secretariat. Thirty-two-year-old Indonesian volunteer, Fatimah Azzahrah, was subsequently designated as its regional coordinator.

## A safe space for youth expression

Fatimah just attended a policy brief with the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) and the ASEAN

Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) when she met with *The ASEAN*. As a youth representative, Fatimah often gets invited to such events. Despite the lengthy travel time from her home in Purwokerto, Central Java, she would often attend these events for a chance to network and bring youth voices to the forefront.

“Being AYF Regional Coordinator is challenging. But, I am honoured to do this job because I agree with the forum's values: human rights and equality. I can use this venue to represent our friends in the region who otherwise have no platform. They are the marginalised youth in their communities and countries,” she says.

Besides offering a safe space for young people to share their views, AYF provides various capacity-building programmes, such as the School of Advocacy. The School of Advocacy aims to provide youth with relevant human rights knowledge, effective advocacy skills, and intersectional, analytical, and critical rights-based approaches.

Since 2020, AYF has also started to showcase young talents through print media and exhibitions. “We are committed to art and activism, activism. AYF provides a space for young artists to be heard and recognised through *Yuwana* zine and exhibition. We even collaborate with young curators across Southeast Asia,” Fatimah says.

## Championing human rights and the youth agenda

AYS also works with many organisations in conducting regular events such as Youth Open Space (national and regional) and World Human Right Cities Forum.



“We are closely engaged with international organisations, including the ASEAN Secretariat. In fact, AYF is proud to say that we were the ones who suggested that the word ‘human rights’ be included in the ASEAN Work Plan on Youth 2021-2025.”

Fatimah adds that the visions and principles of AYS are chronicled excellently in the Yangon Declaration, 2014.

She says, “In a nutshell, we bring forward issues relatable to youth. Our most urgent concern currently is freedom of expression, digital repression, climate justice, and availability of decent work for young people.”

“We want to push ASEAN and the Member States to not only focus on leveraging economic prowess. One of ASEAN's values is (being) ‘people-centred.’ Thus, if (the) Member States can embrace and work more with civil society, we believe our concern about freedom of expression will be addressed.”

Fatimah hopes the 14-year-old forum will endure the test of time, regenerate, and continue to be fertile ground for young people to blossom. “We nurtured the young people. We want to share this space to grow together.”

Read the Yangon Declaration:



<https://aseanyouthforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/AYF-Yangon-Declaration.pdf>



Through *Yuwana* zine and exhibition, ASEAN Youth Forum provides a space for young artists to be heard

# ASEAN Youth Voices at the G20 Summit



**Ixora Tri Devi**

Staff Writer, *The ASEAN*

ASEAN Socio-Cultural  
Community Department

The historic Asian-African Conference Building in Bandung, Indonesia, witnessed yet another notable moment on 24 July 2022 when hundreds of G20 Youth Summit (Y20) delegates gathered and declared a joint resolution for a better future. The communiqué was pivotal after a round of events that started earlier in the year.

Y20 delegates and observers worked tirelessly for the presummit since March 2022, in various locations across Indonesia: Palembang, West Nusa Tenggara, Balikpapan, and Manokwari. After two years of gathering online, these young people could finally meet in person to discuss, collaborate, and align their objectives. Moreover, for the first time, Y20 has invited four ASEAN youth representatives to contribute to the Y20 Communiqué. The delegates came from all over ASEAN region—Nguyen Dang Dao (Viet Nam, Diversity and Inclusion Track), Jin Xuan (Singapore, Youth Employment Track), Mohd Harith Ramzi (Malaysia, Digital Transformation Track), and Jitsai Santaputra (Thailand, Sustainable and Livable Planet Track).

The invitation is a recognition of the Year of ASEAN Youth 2022 and aims to prepare for the ASEAN Chairmanship of Indonesia in 2023. ASEAN Youth Head of Delegation to the Y20 Summit, Nguyen Dang Dao, conveys that the G20 presidency invitation to ASEAN youth is a wonderful opportunity to bring the voices of youth across Southeast Asia to the world leaders.

“We have conducted several activities to include the voices of ASEAN youth, particularly our Focus Group Discussion Event, where we consulted the needs and concerns of students and young professionals



*Vietnam*  
**Nguyen Dang Dao**  
Diversity & Inclusion



*Singapore*  
**Jin Xuan**  
Youth Employment



*Malaysia*  
**Mohd Harith Ramzi**  
Digital Transformation



*Thailand*  
**Jitsai Santaputra**  
Sustainable & Liveable Planet

on the aforementioned tracks of the summit. The feedback we received helped inform our policy proposals and helped us prioritise and strategise our negotiations to be reflective of the experiences and needs of ASEAN.”

Through the recommendation, Dao adds, summit participants coming from different places acknowledge the same goal: to create better living conditions and a better future for young people across the world.

## Youth engagement gaining more momentum

Having experienced working with an international office since 2017 as an intern for the ASEAN National Secretariat in the Viet Nam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dao witnessed how policy-making organizations like ASEAN constantly improve their efforts to engage with young people. He affirmed that meaningfully engaging youth voices in the discourse is critical for G20 leaders to move towards a more diverse and inclusive society.

“It is impossible to solve the mismatches between young people and other stakeholders without talking about it through dialogue. That is why dialogue is important. It is a chance for young people to be listened to and to come up with common goals,” he argues.

Despite the growing youth representation in the international arena, Dao notes that youth is not a monolithic entity and expresses hope for greater inclusion of less-

privileged youth in such international negotiations.

“When I come to international forums, I always see the same faces from people with similar backgrounds. Sometimes it feels a little bit exclusive. I hope pupils with fewer privileges and access will also be engaged in international forums. Hence, access to education plays a big role in boosting the ASEAN youth voice on the international stage where communication and negotiation skills are just as important as technical know-how and experience,” he says.

## Advocacy continues

Currently, the ASEAN observers have been disseminating the Y20 Communiqué as part of post-Y20 summit advocacy efforts. Specifically, Jitsai, the delegate from Thailand, shared key takeaways from the Y20 Communiqué and emphasised intergenerational cooperation in the just energy transition and reaching the net zero emission targets during the recent New York Climate Week. Meanwhile, Jin and Harith, who represented Singapore and Malaysia, have been actively working with the Singapore National Youth Council and Youth Economic Forum to promote their policy recommendations.

In the meantime, Dao also hopes that ASEAN youth will be invited to the Y20 Summit again in the very near future, “so we can make a consistent impact to incorporate the voices of ASEAN youth into the Y20 and G20 summits,” he concludes.



## 4th ASEAN-India Youth Summit

# Building Blocks for Partnerships



**Pricilia Putri Nirmala Sari**

*Officer, ASCC Analysis Division*

*ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department*



**Muhammad Dika Harliadi**

*Officer, Education, Youth and Sports Division*

*ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department*

Around 100 youth from ASEAN and India gathered in Hyderabad to explore new initiatives to enhance the connection between ASEAN and India during the 4th ASEAN-India Youth Summit. From 12 to 16 February 2023, young people of diverse backgrounds participated in group discussions and experiential learning, including site visits in Hyderabad, tours, and cultural performances.

Taking the theme of “Strengthening ASEAN-India Partnership in the Indo-Pacific,” the fourth rendition of the youth summit featured a panel discussion on four sub-themes: (i) Good Governance and Regional Development, (ii) Digital Partnership for the 21st Century, (iii) ASEAN-India Connectivity, and (iv) Shared Cultural Ethos and Promotion of People-to-People Ties.

“My favourite session was (led by) Deepa Malik, a paralympic gold medallist. As a sports person myself, I feel connected with her. She covers the basis of resilience and perseverance, to not let anything take you down even if the challenge is too big,” shared Amar Syahirah Haji Abd Murad, a youth participant from Brunei.



Photo Credit: ©India Foundation





Participants also made a presentation about their countries, allowing them to learn more about each other and contribute to community building between ASEAN and India.

Since it was the first physical youth summit since the COVID-19 pandemic, the participants were thrilled to be able to collaborate and network with other youth from ASEAN and India in person.

Fikri Al Hafidh, an Indonesian participant who does volunteer work with Persons with Disabilities, shared with *The ASEAN* that the summit gave him an opportunity to collaborate with people from various backgrounds. "I met with a friend from India who worked at International Cooperative Alliance, and we had a deep conversation regarding the

inclusivity programme and have a plan to reconnect again in the future. This was in line with meeting a fellow delegate from the Lao PDR who is also a sign language interpreter," said Fikri. "With the people I met at the summit, we are planning to have a discussion regarding how we can connect deaf people in ASEAN and India despite the sign language barriers."

Aside from the panel and group discussion sessions, the summit included activities designed to build camaraderie among the participants. "We shared jokes, sang together, and even found things that we have in common. The open mic and cultural festivities promote bonding amongst the delegates. We shared each other's music and dances and just had fun," said Amar.

*The Government of India organised this year's summit in cooperation with the Indian Foundation and the ASEAN Foundation.*

*The ASEAN-India Youth Summit aligns with one of the priorities of the ASEAN Work Plan on Youth 2021-2025, i.e. strengthening collaboration with ASEAN Dialogue Partners in youth exchange programmes to foster outward-looking ASEAN youth in the global community. The previous ASEAN-India Youth Summits were held in August 2017 in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh; in February 2019 in Guwahati, Assam; and virtually in June 2022.*



Viewpoint

# India's G20 Presidency and Its Relevance to ASEAN

## Harsh Vardhan Shringla

*Chief Coordinator for India's G20 Presidency and former Foreign Secretary of India*

India assumed the presidency of the G20 in December 2022 and is set to host the G20 Summit in 2023 after year-long deliberations on macroeconomic issues and inter-alia trade, sustainable development, health, agriculture, energy, environment, and climate change. Spearheading the G20 at a time when the world looks at a sustained exit from the devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, India sees this as an opportunity as well as a responsibility. During its presidency, India aims to leverage the wide and balanced representation of both developed and developing countries that is unique to the G20 for securing global and regional equitable and sustainable growth.

Founded in 1999 after the Asian Financial Crisis as a forum for finance ministers and central bank governors, this Group of Twenty, has evolved with time. In 2008, after it succeeded in averting the possibility of an economic depression by launching the largest and most coordinated global economic stimulus, it became a "premier forum for international economic cooperation." Currently, it represents 85 per cent of global

GDP, over 75 per cent of global trade, and about two-thirds of the world's population. Therefore its relevance to any aspirational and forward-looking region or country forum can hardly be overstated.

Similarly, charting the journey of ASEAN through decades, one comes across the statement made by the Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Narciso Ramos, right after the signing of the ASEAN Declaration in which he highlighted the state of the "fragmented economies of Southeast Asia," and hoped that ASEAN "could marshal the still untapped potentials of this rich region through more substantial united action." After nearly six decades, ASEAN has proven to be one of the most successful inter-governmental organisations in the developing world today. Therefore, bearing commonalities in the thought behind their inception, the G20 and ASEAN can collaborate and explore synergies to advance the genuine cause of inclusive and sustainable development.

The current troika of the G20 is composed of the previous, present, and successive chairs, i.e. Indonesia, India, and Brazil, respectively. Among

these, Indonesia is a founding Member State, while Brazil is a Sectoral Dialogue Partner of ASEAN. As the troika is designed to extend seamless continuity to the G20 agenda, India's G20 presidency provides an invaluable window for ASEAN Member States to put their concerns and priorities on the high table as the geo-economic and climate change-induced uncertainties which are hurdles to achieving a sustainable, prosperous, and inclusive future for the region.

Additionally, many of ASEAN's Dialogue Partners, such as Australia, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Russia, the UK, the USA, and the European Union, are also G20 members, giving them yet another platform to align their bilateral engagements within a larger perspective suitably. Additionally, India has invited Singapore, an ASEAN Member State, as a guest country to the G20 Summit while extending an invitation to the ASEAN Secretariat and its institutions even when the current ASEAN Chair, Indonesia, is a G20 member. India aims to deliver an inclusive G20 presidency and articulate the concerns of the Global South, especially in ensuring food, fuel, and fertilizer security along with obtaining adequate climate

finance to expedite our energy transitions.

Since India began its formal engagement with ASEAN in 1992 in the capacity of a Sectoral Dialogue Partner, the partnership has only deepened with cooperation on multiple fronts, ultimately leading to the elevation of the previously existing Strategic Partnership to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership at the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit last year, which also marked the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-India relations.

During this Summit, the Vice President of India, Jagdeep Dhankar, noted that the partnership with ASEAN is the key pillar of India's Act East Policy while also highlighting the importance of ASEAN-India cooperation in the face of multiple global challenges. India is a country with a vast coastline overlooking the Indian Ocean and most members of ASEAN are also littoral states; the ASEAN-India partnership naturally develops a maritime thrust. As a partner, India is cognizant as well as empathetic towards the cause of the ASEAN Member States and their sensitivities. The ASEAN-India cooperation was further strengthened during the Summit by outlining areas of utmost significance.

As the outcome of the Summit delineated broadly, there are five essential areas in which the ASEAN-India partnership warrants immense focus, having acknowledged that the immediate challenges before us can be tackled only by global collaboration and cooperation. The *first* and most important among these focus areas is to advance maritime cooperation in areas of maritime security, disaster management, emergency response and relief, as well as through the implementation of projects under the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific and Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative. *Secondly*, given the interlinking and interdependence among economies, we need to prioritise strengthening cooperation in areas such as cyber security, and digital economy fintech cooperation, including exploring the inter-operability of digital financial systems. *Thirdly*, with increasing vulnerability to climate change-induced calamities, which hamper our developmental journey despite a far lower share of historical emissions,

we need to enhance cooperation in the field of sustainable development. There must be a renewed focus on new and emerging technologies, in areas such as renewable energy, smart agriculture, smart cities, healthcare, and cooperation in the space sector.

The *fourth* dimension of our partnership focuses on promoting the revival of tourism and enhancing youth-centric activities to promote people to people connectivity. Apart from giving a boost to the economy, a thriving tourism sector enables the world to understand and engage with our rich history and culture while marketing our local food, textile, and craft products whilst also showcasing our indigenously developed technologies and developmental milestones. As both India and the ASEAN Member States are home to a large percentage of the youth population, we need to actively facilitate avenues for cultural engagement to foster meaningful ties for the future. As chair of the G20, India called on its youth to act as cultural ambassadors and participate in a range of events to make their voices heard. To kickstart the year, India held a University Connect programme where there were substantive discussions with young students on their expectations and views on India's chairmanship. Lastly, we need to use all the ways, across all the forums of consequence, to address regional and global issues of common concern to promote peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

All the areas mentioned above find strong resonance in the key priorities that India has outlined for its G20 presidency: green development, climate finance and lifestyle for environment (LiFE); accelerated, inclusive and resilient growth; accelerating progress on the sustainable development goals; technological transformation and digital public infrastructure; multilateral institutions for the 21st century; and, women-led development. India firmly believes that its own experience in developing and leveraging home-grown digital public goods and using them for financial inclusion and socio-economic transformation can benefit other aspiring members of

the developing world in accelerating progress. Significantly, India considers ASEAN to be a fruitful partner in its developmental journey, and therefore, the Government of India has created three funds to support cooperation activities between ASEAN and India: (i) ASEAN-India Cooperation Fund (AIF), (ii) ASEAN-India Green Fund (AIGF), and ASEAN-India Science and Technology Development Fund (AISTDF).

To demonstrate India's commitment to highlighting issues of the developing world within the framework of the G20, India held the largest-ever virtual gathering of the Leaders and Ministers of the developing world, Voice of the Global South Summit, in January 2023. A total of 125 nations participated. Notably, Cambodia, Thailand, Viet Nam, Malaysia, Myanmar, Timor-Leste, the Philippines, and the Lao PDR participated in different sessions of the summit. Addressing participants at the summit, the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi called for "human-centric globalisation" and said "we want a globalisation that brings prosperity and well-being to humanity as a whole."

India's G20 presidency is an opportunity to initiate meaningful dialogue and distil strong action points accommodating the concerns of the developing world, especially when the current troika is composed of developing countries and can promise sustained action. The strong cultural, economic, diplomatic, maritime, and security ties between the Member States of ASEAN and India, both individually and collectively, call for constructive and active engagement by ASEAN and India in the context of its G20 presidency amidst heightened conflicts in the geopolitical order.

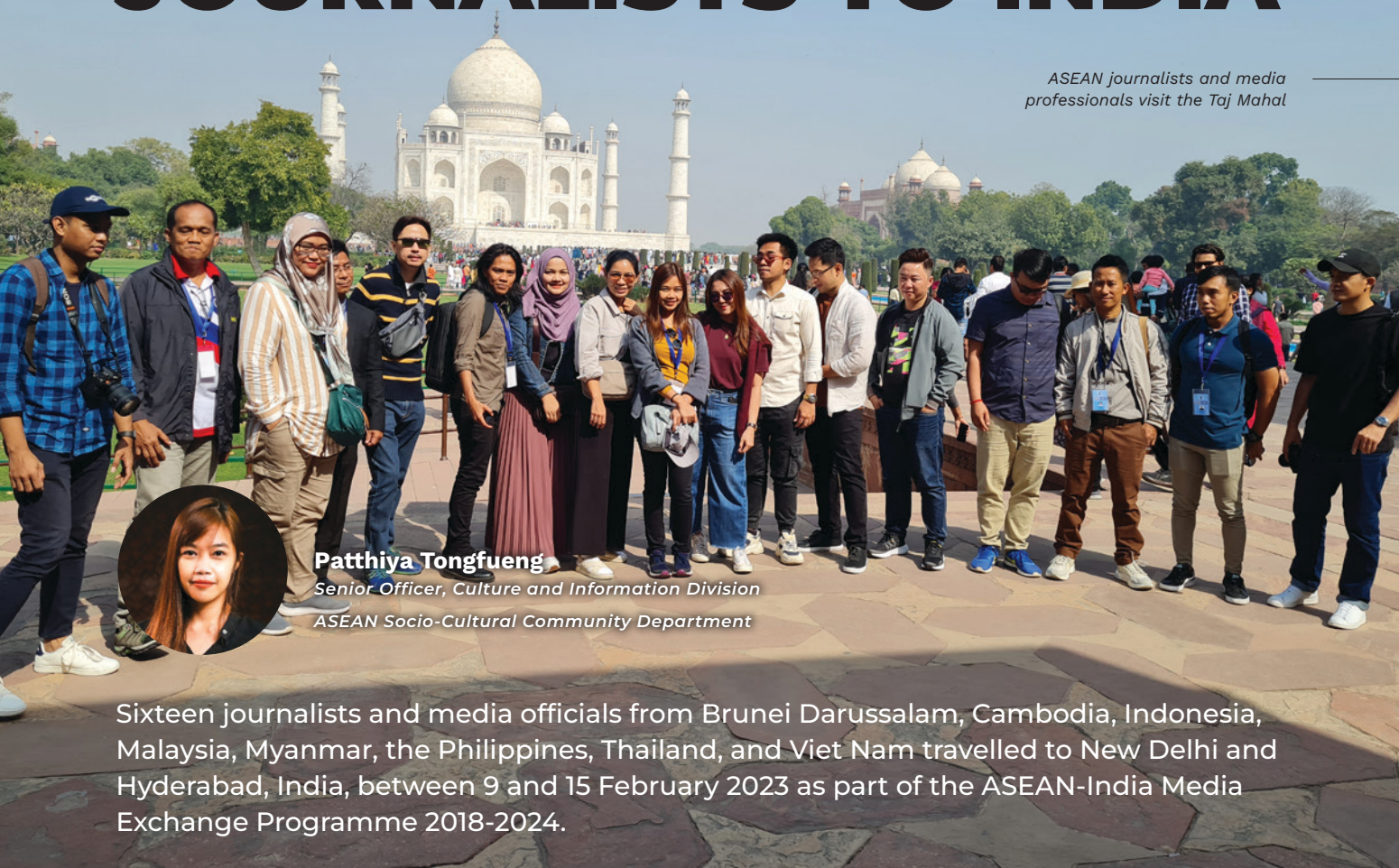
To conclude, the idea of a peaceful world, devoid of any conflict, which lies at the heart of the theme of India's G20 presidency, "One Earth, One Family, One Future," envisions the whole world as one family living in harmony with each other. And as has been proven time and again by various events that jolted the world, this spirit of a universal sense of oneness is the only logical path towards a prosperous world.



## ASEAN-India Media Exchange Programme

# CONNECTING ASEAN JOURNALISTS TO INDIA

*ASEAN journalists and media professionals visit the Taj Mahal*



**Patthiya Tongfueng**  
Senior Officer, Culture and Information Division  
ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department

Sixteen journalists and media officials from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam travelled to New Delhi and Hyderabad, India, between 9 and 15 February 2023 as part of the ASEAN-India Media Exchange Programme 2018-2024.

The programme has two components: a visit of ASEAN journalists to India and a reciprocal visit of Indian journalists to ASEAN countries. They are conducted each year to familiarise journalists with issues surrounding the ASEAN-India relations and to promote people-to-people connection. The programme is supported by the ASEAN-India Fund.

Promoting cultural understanding through media exchanges has been one of the key priorities of ASEAN-India relations. This is articulated in the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity (2021-2025).

For most of the participating journalists and media officials, the visit to India was their first. They welcomed the prospect of learning about India's socio-economic development from officials and leading businesses in India and gaining experience in covering India. The visit coincided with the 4th ASEAN-India Youth Summit, giving the journalists an opportunity to write stories about youth's perspectives on and suggestions to enhance the cooperation between ASEAN and India in light of global developments.

During the New Delhi leg of the visit, the ASEAN journalists and media officials received a briefing on India's

G20 Presidency 2023 from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), including the history, structure, and key results of the previous G20 Summits as well as this year's priorities. Thoughts were exchanged on how G20 could support ASEAN amidst global challenges and how the results of last year's summit in Indonesia could be further advanced by the G20 Leaders.

Additionally, the journalists learned about the history of ASEAN-India relations from the MEA. One of the key takeaways was that the close civilisational links between ASEAN and India have not only laid a strong foundation for promoting people-to-people trust and cultural



*The week-long programme included visits to and briefing sessions by successful companies in India*

Photo Credit: © Pattiya Tongfueng

understanding, but also serve as a stepping-stone for the two sides to advance political-security and economic cooperation, especially in the digital sector where India has strong expertise.

The visit to the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led, and industry-managed organisation with approximately 9,000 members from the private and public sectors, meantime, gave journalists and media officials insights into India's economy, the 5th largest in the world in 2022.

In Hyderabad, the journalists and media officials observed the inaugural session of the 4th ASEAN-India Youth Summit held on 12-16 February 2023. They also visited India's three leading companies that represent case studies of India's success in film, healthcare, and financial industries. These include the Ramoji Film City which was certified by the Guinness World Records as the world's largest film studio complex; the Bharat Biotech, India's leading biotechnology company which manufactures COVID-19 vaccine "COVAXIN" and other vaccines including the eco-friendly recombinant Hepatitis-B vaccine, the Rotavirus vaccine, and the Typhoid Conjugate vaccine; and the National Payments Cooperation of India, an umbrella organisation for operating retail payments and settlement systems that integrated the use of technology for achieving greater efficiency in operations and widening the reach of payment systems. Throughout these engagements, they learned

about how the companies tackled rising challenges, such as digital transformation and public health emergencies.

ASEAN journalists and media officials also went to see the Taj Mahal, Shilparamam arts and crafts village, and Salar Jung Arts Museum. They likewise socialised with Indian journalists and government officials, and the ASEAN diplomatic officials based in India to exchange thoughts on several issues.

The participants appreciated the contacts and ties they have formed through the programme.

"We have met a lot of people in the area of communications from the India side; it is not easy to get a chance to connect and to get to know them," said Sukanda Kaewwanurak, a media official from Thailand. "I hope that I can exchange (views) with them more when I get the chance to come back to India again."

This view was echoed by Merry Ann Bastasa, a journalist from the Philippines who also appreciated the opportunity to get connected to fellow journalists. "I have been surrounded by many journalists from several countries, both from ASEAN neighbours and India, and I got to see their points of view. What struck me the most is the big similarity between ASEAN cultures and India, such as how we value our family, our warmth, and hospitality."

The participants also noted that the first-hand experience will come in

useful, particularly in synthesising information and delivering better analysis in their news reports.

Nguyen Tien Anh, a journalist from Viet Nam who has a strong passion in business and economic issues, said that the visit was important for him to gain more information and to have deeper analysis about the relationship between ASEAN countries and other countries, especially India. "With this trip, I learned about life in India. I saw the differences between provinces and cities in India and the differences between rich and poor societies in India. Now, I know how to deliver my message in stories, how to write about India, and how to truly understand the issues."

According to the programme participants, ASEAN should continue enhancing cooperation with dialogue partners such as India in the area of media-to-media engagement. This could serve as a platform for journalists to exchange knowledge and know-how related to their work, such as on how to use digital technology to bring the news to the people.

"We need an information mechanism for media to learn about news and updates from other countries," said Anh. "Finding information on the internet is easy for everyone, but the connection and opportunity to engage with other people in ASEAN remain the primary means to deeply understand what is happening in other countries and build people-to-people understanding."

Photo Credit: © Ministry of External Affairs of India



# SHIFTING CURRENTS

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- ASEAN 2023  
Indonesia's priorities and deliverables as ASCC chair
- ASCC Policies and Trends
- ASCC Fact Sheet

Photo Credit: ©SOPA Images/Shutterstock

# Indonesia Announces Chairmanship Priorities and Deliverables of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community at SOCA Retreat

The Senior Officials Committee for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (SOCA) held its retreat on 28 February 2023. The meeting was chaired by Professor Warsito, Deputy Minister for Education Quality Improvement and Religious Moderation, Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs Indonesia and SOCA Chair. The SOCA Leaders discussed ASEAN's priorities, including the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) priority areas and deliverables under Indonesia's Chairmanship theme "ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth".

Professor Warsito welcomed Timor-Leste Director-General of the Ministry of Solidarity and Social Inclusion, Florenço Pina Dias Gonzaga's presence in the meeting as an Observer. In support of Timor-Leste's preparations to join ASEAN, the meeting was receptive to follow the agreed approach of the ASEAN Coordinating Council Working Group on Timor-Leste on sharing the report of the fact-finding mission to Timor-Leste.

One of the main agendas of the SOCA Retreat was to brief the meeting on Indonesia's ASCC priorities and deliverables throughout the year. In his remarks, Professor Warsito stressed ASEAN needs to remain relevant by maintaining its centrality and becoming an anchor of stability and prosperity. He underlined the importance of the ASCC Pillar in strengthening health architecture, accelerating rural development, mitigating impacts of climate change, protecting and enhancing capacity of labour, and strengthening disability-inclusive development.

On strengthening regional health architecture, the meeting was briefed on promoting the one health approach to better respond to the health risks in the region. Such an approach recognises the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment.

Empowering villages to enable them to fast-track rural development in the region will be another ASCC priority this year. The ASCC will accelerate rural development through harnessing collaborative platforms for knowledge-sharing and cooperation opportunities.

Promoting environmental cooperation to conserve biodiversity and mitigate the impacts of climate change will also feature in Indonesia's Chairmanship of the ASCC. In particular, it will enhance regional capacity to conserve biodiversity and implement the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution.

On better protecting land-based and sea-based ASEAN migrant workers and enhancing the capacity of workers for the future of work, the ASCC will strengthen the protection of the rights

of migrant workers in crisis situations and fishing vessels, and promote reskilling and upskilling of workers to meet future workforce demands.

Strengthening disability-inclusive development through enhancement of partnership is another capstone of Indonesia's chairmanship of the ASCC in 2023. It will ensure the rights of persons with disability through the implementation of ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025 and beyond.

Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for the ASCC Ekkaphab Phanthavong commended the range of deliverables for the ASCC this year. "I am confident that the ASCC under Indonesia's able leadership will allow ASEAN to continue to be an epicentrum of growth" said DSG Ekkaphab Phanthavong.

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*From a press release previously published by the ASEAN Secretariat on 28 February 2023.*



# ASEAN 2023 Indonesia Chairmanship SOCA Retreat

ASEAN MATTERS:  
EPICENTRUM OF GROWTH

Senior Officials Committee for the  
ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (SOCA) Retreat  
INDONESIA  
28 February 2023



**Pricilia Putri Nirmala Sari**

*Officer, ASCC Analysis Division*

*ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department*

The Senior Officials Committee for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (SOCA) is a senior official body that meets at least twice a year, hosted by the ASEAN Chair of the year. Aside from the regular meeting, special or emergency meetings, such as the SOCA Retreat on 28 February 2023, it may be held to discuss a particular topic with the approval of all ASEAN Member States.

**S**OCA supports the work of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Council, and it was established initially as the ASCC Council Preparatory Meeting and later became SOCA on 24 August 2009. It is chaired by the ASEAN Member States that holds the ASEAN Chairmanship of the year, while the Vice-Chair post is assumed by the Member State slated to be the next Chair.

With Indonesia's ASEAN Chairmanship 2023, Professor Warsito, Deputy Minister for Education Quality Improvement and Religious Moderation, Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs of Indonesia, assumed his role as the SOCA Chair during the SOCA Retreat on 28 February 2023.

The SOCA Retreat was held to discuss key priority areas and deliverables with activities under the three main pillars: i) ASEAN matters, ii) epicentrum of growth, iii) implementation of ASEAN's Outlook on Indo-Pacific.

"Strengthening regional health architecture, empowering villages to enable them to fast-track rural

development in the region, promoting environmental cooperation to conserve biodiversity and mitigate the impacts of climate change, better protecting land-based and sea-based ASEAN migrant workers and enhancing the capacity of workers for the future of work, and strengthening disability-inclusive development. These are the priorities of Indonesia chairmanship in (the) ASCC pillar," explained Professor Warsito.

From the environment sector, Basar Manurung from COP-AATHP Indonesia informed the meeting about the plan for establishing the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Transboundary Haze Pollution Control as one of Indonesia's key deliverables.

In the rural development and poverty eradication sector, Theresia Junidar from Senior Officials Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (SOMRDPE) Indonesia briefed the body about the plan for an ASEAN Village Network. "COVID-19 pandemic has opened our eyes that rural areas are among the hardest-hit communities while over 50 per cent of the ASEAN population live in rural areas. There

is, then, a need to enable village communities across ASEAN to build back better and faster".

Protection of migrant workers is also one of Indonesia's key priorities during its chairmanship. Indonesia will propose two declarations on the protection of migrant workers in crisis and fishing vessels to be adopted at the 42nd ASEAN Summit.

Learning from the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia also intends to strengthen the health system in ASEAN. Specifically, Indonesia announced its three main health agenda: i) strengthening pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response through the One Health Initiative, (ii) promoting digital health transformation through the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Digital Health Certificate and the Knowledge Management Platform of ASEAN Health Sector, and (iii) strengthening ASEAN Vaccine, Therapeutic, and Diagnostic (VTD) security and self-reliance by establishing ASEAN VTD Research and Manufacturing Centre.



# SOCIAL ISSUES AND PROGRESS IN ASEAN

Key facts and figures from the ASCC Fact Sheet,  
produced and published by the ASCC Analysis Division

## Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the progress in education with school closures and the shift to online learning. **27%** of children who stopped attending school could not fully participate in online learning programmes due to weak/insufficient internet connections or lack of digital devices.

only  
**4%** OF WOMEN  **3%** OF MEN completed no education.









Even when schools offered online classes, not all children attended them. **8%** did not attend any online classes, **19%** attended only a few, and **16%** attended some but not all online classes.

ASEAN has developed a guideline for ASEAN Member States for safe school reopening and strengthening the resilience of education system in “**Reopen, Recover and Resilience in Education: Guidelines for ASEAN Countries**”.

Source: ASEAN Gender Outlook, 2021; Reducing Inequality in the Decade of Action to Achieve the SDGs and Accelerate Post-Pandemic Recovery, 2022

## Demographic Shift

ASEAN countries are ageing rapidly due to low fertility and high life expectancy. In 2020, **11.2%** of the population or **74 million** people are 60 years old or over. The number is expected to **double by 2050**.

There are **213**                   **MILLION YOUTH (15-34 YEARS)**            

in ASEAN countries, constituting the largest ever cohort of ASEAN youth. The peak population of just over **220 million is expected in 2038**.

Source: ASEAN Ageing Data Sheet 2020; First ASEAN Youth Development Index, 2017

## Social Protection

ASEAN Member States are implementing the **ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework** as a collective effort to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19.

ASEAN Member States committed to **133** social protection measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as of mid-May 2021.

Source: Reducing Inequality in the Decade of Action to Achieve the SDGs and Accelerate Post-Pandemic Recovery, 2022



## Environment

Southeast Asia is home to **60%** of the world's tropical peatland. **90%** of transboundary smoke haze in ASEAN is linked to peat fires.

Road transportation generates about **89%** of total transport-related emissions in ASEAN. Major ASEAN cities with population over 5 million tend to have PM 2.5 and PM 10 levels **above** the WHO recommended level.

ASEAN has committed to contribute to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement.

**Key ASEAN targets for energy:**



- Reduce the average fuel consumption per 100 km of new light-duty vehicles sold in ASEAN by **26% between 2016-2025**.



- Reducing energy intensity by 32% and increasing the component of renewable energy mix or total primary energy supply by **23% by 2025**.

Source: ASEAN State of Climate Change Report 2021, Fifth ASEAN State of Climate Change Report

## Gender

ASEAN demonstrated its strong commitment to achieve gender equality and the SDGs through the **Declaration on the Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals**.

**90%** of births in ASEAN region are attended by skilled personnel. However, in the poorest rural households, **33%** of births are still unattended.

**20%** of seats in the national parliament across ASEAN Member States are held by women.

Child marriage rate in ASEAN is among the lowest in the world. Roughly **16%** of girls marry before turning 18.



Source: ASEAN Gender Outlook 2021

## Disaster

**405** disaster events hit ASEAN region in 2020, affected **19.3** million people, displaced **2.4** million, and led to **\$227.4** million in damages.

**53.7%** of Southeast Asians considered climate change as an immediate danger.

**Annual average losses as percentage of GDP** caused by major natural hazards in Southeast Asia:

Drought: **60%**

Flood: **22.5%**

Tropical cyclone: **14.3%**

Earthquake: **4.1%**

Tsunami: **0.2%**

Source: ASEAN Disaster Resilience Outlook, 2021

## Culture

ASEAN has launched the **ASEAN Cultural Heritage Digital Archive (ACHDA)** as a landmark initiative to preserve ASEAN's cultural heritage through digitalisation.

Over

**260**

cultural heritage



from Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand can be viewed online through ACHDA portal.

## Health

An estimated **92 million** people in ASEAN have gained access to safe drinking water since 2000.

**20** **MILLION PEOPLE** in ASEAN region already are or at risk of becoming acutely food-insecure.

Source: ASEAN Gender Outlook, 2021; Reducing Inequality in the Decade of Action to Achieve the SDGs and Accelerate Post-Pandemic Recovery, 2022



ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community in Facts and Figures Volume 2  
<https://asean.org/serial/social-issues-and-progress-in-asean/>

## Policies and Trends

# ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Policy Brief

The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Policy Brief is a publication of the ASCC Department at the ASEAN Secretariat. It identifies trends and challenges that will impact ASEAN and ASCC sectors, and propose policy-relevant solutions and recommendations to uplift the quality of lives of ASEAN people.



## ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Policy Brief #2

# COMMON RESILIENCE CHALLENGES IN ASEAN AND POTENTIAL AREAS OF COLLABORATION IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

by Mizan B. F. Bisri and Fathia Lutfiananda

This policy brief recommends a focus on institutions, financing, and technology to improve disaster resilience



# Highlights of the Policy Brief



**Joanne B. Agbisit**

Associate Editor, *The ASEAN*

ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department

Scientists say the Earth's average surface temperature has risen by about 1 degree Celsius since the Industrial Revolution. While the world is debating how to keep the temperature from crossing the dangerous 1.5-degree-Celsius threshold, Southeast Asia is already experiencing global warming's worst impacts.

And the threats do not stop there. Even as most countries in the region are still reeling from the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, experts warn of emerging biological and health security risks. The region also has a front-row seat on natural hazards, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons, floods, and landslides.

ASEAN Member States, individually and as a group, have policies, plans, and programmes to manage these threats. But what areas need to be improved? What gaps need to be plugged? The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Policy Brief #2 titled, "Common Resilience Challenges in ASEAN and Potential Areas of Collaboration in Disaster Management", examines some of these areas and identifies measures for countries to consider.

But first, the policy brief makes a case for looking at climate change, COVID-19, and other threats as "systemic risks." This means that they do not only have the potential to cause direct loss and damage but can also trigger a chain of disruptions and open up vulnerabilities across existing systems, e.g. social, economic, and environmental. These disruptions may occur simultaneously or in a sequential or cascading manner.

In the case of climate change, the impact in the region has been frequent extreme weather events, such as tropical cyclones, storm surges, and drought, which have led to mass casualties, destruction of property and infrastructure, disruption of public services, and loss of livelihood. People have been forced to flee their homes and pushed into poverty. Poverty, in turn, increases people's exposure to climate-related and other natural hazards.

At the macro scale, extreme weather has wreaked havoc on agriculture, fisheries, and other economic sectors—so much

so that experts say the region could lose 35 per cent of its GDP from climate change and natural disasters by 2050. This has ramifications for the longer-term development and stability of countries in the region.

Sea level rise, intense flooding, and biodiversity loss are also major consequences of climate change, bringing with them a new cycle of risks.

Using the systemic risk lens helps countries realise that climate change's ripple effects are wide-ranging, hard to track and measure, and sometimes unforeseen. It compels them to shift their strategy towards building overall resilience so that systems, institutions, and people can survive, adapt to, and quickly recover from these effects.

The policy brief provides three recommendations for improving the resilience of ASEAN Member States.

These are as follows:

1. *Establish the ASEAN Regional Disaster Resilience Platform to enable cross-pillar and cross-level coordination to address institutional issues in dealing with and anticipating disaster risks. However, this is contingent upon the existence of a clear governance structure to coordinate action across multiple institutions.*

At present, disaster risk management is not integrated or taken into consideration in the policies, plans, and programmes of other sectors and pillars of ASEAN. Existing disaster coordination mechanisms, such as the ASEAN-Emergency Response and Assessment and the Disaster Emergency Logistics System of ASEAN, are also not maximised for disaster preparedness and response at the regional and national levels. Moreover, vulnerable and affected populations are often not directly involved in decision-making processes. The ASEAN Regional Disaster Resilience Platform is a mechanism where these gaps can be addressed.

2. *Invest in inclusive, systemic, and measurable probabilistic risk diagnostic and modelling using new and innovative technologies to enable better risk understanding in a probabilistic manner and in*

*building and planning for resilience in addressing complexities and uncertainty.*

Cutting-edge technologies, such as drones, satellites, and space-based technologies, enable the collection of accurate, real-time, and quality data to forecast risks, inform emergency response, and plan post-disaster reconstruction. At the moment, however, not all relevant actors have access to them, or have the technical know-how to analyse these data. Investing in both technology and capacity-building programmes must therefore go hand in hand. Technology-based data must also combine with local knowledge, community feedback, and expert opinion in resilience-building planning.

3. *Utilise existing ASEAN disaster management tools and mechanisms, particularly the Southeast Asia Disaster Risk Insurance Facility, to overcome limited access to and innovation of disaster risk finance and insurance.*

National governments typically absorb financial losses from climate change-related and other natural disasters. However, businesses, households, and individuals have inadequate financial protection—through available and affordable insurance or contingent credit (pe-arranged loan)—to see them through disaster events, including their aftermath. Strengthening the Southeast Asia Disaster Risk Insurance Facility will bolster the financial resilience of the ASEAN Member States. The facility is an ASEAN+3 initiative, in partnership with The World Bank, which offers participating countries insurance and risk management solutions against climate-related and other natural disasters.

Download the policy brief from the following link:



<https://asean.org/serialparent/asean-socio-cultural-community-policy-brief/>



# BRIDGES

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- The ASEAN Identity Symposium:  
Why a regional identity matters
- Sarong Diplomacy:  
Unity in Cultural Diversity



# A REGIONAL IDENTITY IN THE MAKING



**Joanne B. Agbisit**

*Associate Editor, The ASEAN*

*ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department*

What is ASEAN identity? ASEAN culture ministers and senior officials have spent the past two years grappling with the question. They coalesced around the idea that ASEAN identity is derived from two sources. One, the historical connections and common cultural traits passed on through generations, and two, the values and goals agreed upon by the Member States and enshrined in the ASEAN charter.

To make sense of the region's awareness and acceptance of this narrative and discuss how to move forward with regional identity-making, the ASEAN cultural sector held a symposium on 22 September 2022 titled "ASEAN Identity and Strengthening ASEAN-Republic of Korea Cooperation: Now and Beyond." Experts, academics, and creative and media professionals were invited to weigh in on the subject.

## Why a regional identity matters

While ASEAN has existed for 55 years, the concept of an ASEAN regional identity emerged only recently. Dewi Fortuna Anwar of the National Research and Innovation Agency of Indonesia said that nation-states were preoccupied with cementing their own national identities for most of ASEAN's existence.

"National identity is still very much a work in progress; it is still very contested," she said. Thus, advancing the idea of a regional identity was initially "a tough sell."

But the ASEAN Member States, Anwar said, made a policy decision to develop and promote an ASEAN identity "because a community needs to have a sense of togetherness, of a 'we-feeling,' and while economic integration—functional integration—is necessary, it is not sufficient."

She added, "If ASEAN wants to be relevant to its people, have sustainability, and move forward together, we need to have something that binds us, and so common values become very important."

Melba Maggay of the Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture agreed and said ASEAN needs to foster relational ties as a foundation of social trust. She noted, "It's always easy to do business with a friend. If you're

seen as a hostile entity, everything is hard. You cannot come to any kind of consensus.”

## Elements of our collective identity

Member States have their own rich cultures and national identities. Still, these can co-exist side by side with a regional identity, said Siyonn Sophearith of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts of the Kingdom of Cambodia. “But how can we accept a regional identity when we do not know ourselves?”, he asked.

Unravelling the region’s social history is one way of deepening our understanding of our longstanding ties and commonalities, according to the academics and creative professionals who joined the symposium’s breakout session. Writing a textbook on the history of Southeast Asia and capturing oral history were some of the suggestions they raised to pin down the rudiments of this shared identity.

Article 2 of the ASEAN charter also articulates the collective values and aspirations of ASEAN Member States. Anwar said these values include

traditional ones like dialogue, harmony, tolerance, non-interference, and new universal values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, to name a few.

Maggay suggested, “In constructing an ASEAN identity, we need to identify which ‘inherited’ values are to be enhanced and brought into the future, and which values emerging from the globalising processes need to be transformed for usability in our own contexts.”

She raised the problem of cultural homogenisation as a result of the globalisation of media technology and content. With ASEAN people constantly bombarded with content that promotes consumerist values and global youth culture, national and regional identity could be superseded or diluted.

Difficult conversations about ASEAN’s professed values, such as democracy and human rights, must also be tackled to define where ASEAN is headed, Maggay and Hoo Chiew Ping of the Universiti Kebangsaan of Malaysia pointed out. It is also easier to resolve conflicts if Member States have a similar interpretation of ASEAN principles, claimed Hoo.

## ASEAN in the school curricula

Education remains pivotal in developing a strong sense of regional identity, former ASEAN Secretary-General Dato Lim Jock Hoi stressed at the symposium. He said, “Information regarding ASEAN is already incorporated in schools in higher education curricula across the region.”

In addition, participants noted that exposing students to ASEAN content at a young age will leave a greater impact and ensure sustainability. Thus, they suggested incorporating ASEAN studies into the basic education curricula.

Anwar, meantime, stressed that it is equally important to define what type of content must be taught. She said, “We need to teach about ASEAN, not just about facts and figures, but what ASEAN stands for and the values...But what are we going to convey? Do not just focus on the tools.”



*Symposium speakers with representatives of the Mission of the Republic of Korea to ASEAN and officials of the ASEAN Secretariat*



## Bridging the familiarity gap

For many of the symposium participants, raising awareness about ASEAN and its Member States is a crucial first step in the long process of identity formation.

One of the ways to increase the visibility of ASEAN is to tap the media. During the breakout session, media professionals shared that there is interest among ASEAN people to learn about their neighbours—as evidenced by their consumption of news, popular drama series and music—but the content is not always available or sustained in local media outlets.

Among the suggestions they cited were the use of new media platforms like Tiktok to carry ASEAN-related content; the production of mobile apps that compile information about ASEAN, such as major attractions in each nation-state; and the allocation of space for ASEAN news in news and feature programmes.

A few media professionals also called for ASEAN bodies to engage more with media organisations and to be more

forthcoming with information about ASEAN events and developments.

However, the diversity of languages across ASEAN could also impede regional identity formation. Media professionals pointed out that since ASEAN content is typically delivered in English, a significant number of the ASEAN population who are non-English speakers may feel marginalised or excluded. Participants suggested allocating resources to translate content and messages into the most common languages spoken in the region, apart from English.

Both experts and media professionals also suggested media co-productions. Shawn Ho of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies of Singapore said the content of these co-productions should be authentic and not watered-down for foreign consumption so that they resonate with ASEAN audiences.

He noted, “For ASEAN to have an ‘ASEAN wave,’ the quality matters. People must be curious or attracted to it (content) because it is something unique, something that has not been seen elsewhere, and it pushes certain boundaries.”

This point was also stressed by Doobo Shim of Sungshin Women's University, Republic of Korea who said that producing original and domestic-oriented content, such as the hit series *Dae Jang Geum*, has been the cornerstone of *Hallyu* or the Korean wave phenomenon.

Culture, arts, and sporting events and collaborations were also cited as avenues for enhancing the visibility of ASEAN and gaining knowledge about the other Member States. Some of the activities proposed were a regular region-wide musical competition similar to *Eurovision*, fashion shows or contests showcasing local or indigenous textiles, food-related events, and ASEAN-EU football matches.



“

If ASEAN wants to be relevant to its people, have sustainability, and move forward together, we need to have something that binds us, and so common values become very important.



*The ASEAN's Mary Kathleen Castro moderates a breakout session on the media's role in identity-building*

## People should be part of the narrative

The top-down approach to developing and promoting the ASEAN identity is necessary at the moment since identity-making is still in the beginning stages. Said Anwar, “We carry them out in a very deliberate manner in the same way (that) we built nation-states through constitutions, laws, and real and concrete activities to develop an advanced society. This is a policy-driven way of developing this imagined community.”

The quickest way to make ordinary people care about or be invested in belonging to ASEAN is to highlight the benefits, privileges, and opportunities that go with it. People from the ground up will support the ASEAN ‘brand’ if they know what they are getting from it,” said Siyyon. “There should be clear privileges accorded to people within ASEAN as opposed to those outside of it,” added Shim.

The process of identification will also flow more organically if ASEAN is perceived as relevant. “Relevance means it has to touch your daily life, so ASEAN has to be much more down to earth,” Anwar said. “For a long time, ASEAN was minimalist, elitist, bureaucratic...Now you have to engage people, because when you are talking about community, it means, people.”

Being people-centred and people-oriented, Anwar added, means “not just mobilising (people) to do things because of directives from the top, but (people) owning the various activities, taking part in the decision-making process, and deciding and participating in what is good and important for them.”

## Spaces for collaboration

ASEAN’s Community-building and regional identity development efforts have received staunch support from dialogue partners like the Republic of Korea.

At the regional level, ROK has been supporting an annual musical festival featuring ASEAN artists over the past several years. It also co-organised the 22 September 2022 symposium, “ASEAN Identity and Strengthening ASEAN-Republic of Korea Cooperation: Now and Beyond.” Ambassador Kwon Hee-Seog of the Mission of the ROK to ASEAN said in his remarks, “The symposium is a reminder of who you are, where you came from, and where you’re heading.”

Private-sector-led joint ventures are also happening at the national level. Gyu Tag Lee of George Mason University, ROK noted that a chart-topping boy band from the Philippines, *SB-19*, was formed through a partnership with a South Korean media group. Shawn Ho of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies of Singapore also mentioned the recent ROK-Singapore movie co-production, *Ajooma*.

Similar collaborations can be undertaken in the future. Ambassador Kwon said, “ASEAN identity will create a stronger sense of a ‘we-feeling’ and ‘ASEAN-ness’ and togetherness which are essential to this community building process...ROK will do its part to contribute to shaping the ASEAN identity.”



*Ambassador Kwon Hee-Seog of the Mission of the Republic of Korea to ASEAN speaks at the ASEAN Identity Symposium*



# Sarong Diplomacy: UNITY IN CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Programme participants  
showcase their country's  
version of the sarong



**Fiori Rizki Djuwita**

Officer, Culture and Information Division  
ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community  
Department



**Prof. Ts. Dr. Ruslan Abdul Rahim**

Rector, National Academy of Arts, Culture and  
Heritage (ASWARA)

The 20th century saw the gradual waning of the popularity of the traditional clothing, such as the *sarong*, in ASEAN metropolitan cities.

Long before the colonial era, sarong was worn by men and women at all levels of society in Southeast Asia. Hence, we can say that the sarong is much more than just a fashion piece; it is a cultural element shared by the people of ASEAN. Each pattern, colour, and texture of the sarong tells its own story, reflecting customs, ethnic backgrounds, and cultural affiliations.

Sarong is called by many names in different parts of the ASEAN region, such as, sarong or *sarung* in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia,

and Singapore; *sampot* in Cambodia; *phaa sinh* in the Lao PDR; *longyi* in Myanmar; *malong*, *tapis*, or *patadyong* in the Philippines; *xà-rông* in Viet Nam; and *pha kao ma* (for males) and *pha tung* (for females) in Thailand.

## The convening of Sarong Diplomacy: Unity in Cultural Diversity

In the spirit of preserving sarong as our region's shared cultural heritage,

the National Academy of Arts, Culture, and Heritage (ASWARA)—a higher educational institution under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture, Malaysia—organised the event, “Sarong Diplomacy: Unity in Cultural Diversity,” from 2 to 6 October 2022 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The sarong symbolises the unity and harmonious co-existence that ASEAN can achieve despite the diverse cultures in the region.

The three-day programme aimed to raise awareness on the importance of sustaining our living and cultural





*The three-day programme included workshops and masterclasses on performing arts and multimedia design, culminating in a Gala Night*

heritage and enhancing the creativity and diverse artistic and cultural expression of the participants.

It is timely and relevant since ASEAN's rapid modernisation has resulted in an increasingly globalised and homogenised culture.

The programme gathered 26 delegates from ASEAN Member States composed of dancers, musicians, and multimedia artists. On the first day, the Malaysia Tourism Centre (MaTiC) conducted dedicated workshops and masterclasses where participants exchanged knowledge on and were able to appreciate the similarities and differences of each other's sarong. These workshops were divided into different tracks. For example, delegates in the dance and music tracks went through an artistic skills sharing session. Multimedia delegates, meanwhile, attended specially-curated bootcamp cultural mapping workshop

series that exposed participants to case studies on Extended Reality (XR), later honing in on Augmented Reality (AR). These workshops prepared the delegates for the Gala Night. Delegates who joined the dance and music tracks gave an original performance at the Gala Night, while multimedia delegates showcased their Augmented Reality (AR) output.

The second day started with a cultural mapping visit to Sekolah Seni Malaysia Kuala Lumpur or SSeMKL (Malaysia Art School) where the dance and music participants performed their traditional music and dances and learned about how the youth appreciate performances as an artistic cultural expression. The multimedia delegates worked on the development of a mobile AR app and further compiled into an e-catalogue that can be assessed anywhere. They then proceeded with sightseeing activities that included a trip to the Kuala

Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) and Central Market.

On day three, workshops on Mastery of Sarong ASEAN Arts–Transmission of Knowledge, Techniques and New Product of “Sarong ASEAN” – Inspiring Originality and the Gala Night performance were held.

The Gala Night, which showcased the workshops' artistic outcomes, was led by Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri, Minister of Tourism, Arts, and Culture of Malaysia. “Sarong diplomacy is a platform to create a network of new experiences, talent, and development cooperation...The programme provides many opportunities for ASEAN delegates comprised students, experts, and professionals to bond over shared artistic interest,” says Minister Shukri. The final programme was also attended by Prof. Ts. Dr. Ruslan bin Abdul Rahim, Rector of ASWARA; Dato' Shahira Ahmed



“

**Sarong Diplomacy: Unity in Cultural Diversity** surfaced a sense of shared history and destiny among the participants, which bodes well for ongoing efforts to instil a sense of ASEAN identity among the people of ASEAN.

Bazari, Trustee and Managing Director of Yayasan Hasanah; Rudy Irwan Shukaime, Director of MaTiC; and the ambassadors of ASEAN Member States to Malaysia.

## Weaving a stronger shared identity

“Sarong Diplomacy: Unity in Cultural Diversity” surfaced a sense of shared history and destiny among the participants, which bodes well for ongoing efforts to instil a sense of ASEAN identity among the people of ASEAN. The programme also led to a better appreciation of sarong weavers across ASEAN and their craftsmanship. This could translate to stronger support and better lives and livelihoods for sarong weavers, a majority of whom are women. The programme likewise highlighted the export potential of the sarong, bringing into focus the socio-economic value of

culture. This could potentially bolster Member States’ cultural and creative industries.

The feedback from the participants was generally positive. For example, Surisak Ponpaipal, a 3D modeler and artist from Thailand, shared that the programme for upskilling and sharing of knowledge and expertise has been eye-opening for him. Ummu Hani Yusof, programme head/lecturer from Selayang Community College, was also favourable: “The organiser planned the workshop perfectly from how to choose a project, planning, develop and how to manage a team using Agile method. Although the duration of the course is too tight for developing artworks, the trainer managed to sync everyone’s work to make a final output which is superb. I will use this process for my art students. The e-catalogue idea is brilliant to document everyone’s project.”

Most ASEAN delegates expressed hope that similar interdisciplinary programmes will be convened to promote closer people-to-people interaction within ASEAN, while also raising awareness on ASEAN identity and diversity.



*Gala Night Performance*  
[bit.ly/3sZluky](https://bit.ly/3sZluky)

*Augmented Reality (AR) Showcase*



*Download AR App*  
[bit.ly/SARONGAR](https://bit.ly/SARONGAR)



*View e-Catalogue*  
[bit.ly/SARONG\\_E-CATALOGUE](https://bit.ly/SARONG_E-CATALOGUE)



# ASEAN Youth Publications


## Let's Travel Through ASEAN History (2022)

The comic book narrates ASEAN's historical milestones in the form of cartoon-drawings. It tells the story of ASEAN's community building processes, its milestones, and the story of regional integration and cooperation from the formation of ASEAN until the present day.

 <https://asean.org/book/lets-travel-through-asean-history/>


## Graduate Employability in ASEAN: The Contribution of Student Mobility (2022)

The study aims to map the student and labour mobility trends in the ASEAN region. It examines the supply side and demand side perspectives on the value of intra-ASEAN student mobility on graduates' career outcomes, and provides recommendations to further enhance and understand the links between mobility and employability.

 <https://asean.org/book/graduate-employability-in-asean-the-contribution-of-student-mobility/>

## ASEAN Work Plan on Youth 2021-2025


The ASEAN Work Plan on Youth 2021-2025 seeks to guide the ASEAN youth sector in implementing youth policies and programmes through a set of activities that will realise the ASEAN Community Vision 2025.

 <https://asean.org/book/asean-work-plan-on-youth-2021-2025/>

## The ASEAN (February-March 2021)


### "ASEAN Youth: Powering the Future with Innovation"

This magazine issue looks at initiatives in the region that open opportunities for the youth to develop innovative thinking and express their creativity. It also features young inventors, innovators, and social entrepreneurs who create digital and sustainable solutions to help their communities.

 <https://asean.org/book/the-asean-asean-youth-powering-the-future-with-innovation/>

## Understanding How Young People See ASEAN: Awareness, Values, and Identities (2021)

The ASEAN Youth Development Index (YDI) was launched in 2017 with the aim of tracking key development indicators specific to the ASEAN youth population. This publication is a follow up to the First ASEAN YDI and focuses on the fifth domain of the index: ASEAN awareness, values, and identity.


 <https://asean.org/book/understanding-how-young-people-see-asean-awareness-values-and-identity-full-version/>



## The ASEAN (August 2020)

### "Youth and Skills Development: Building Blocks for Better Communities"

This magazine issue examines ASEAN's plans and programmes to develop the transversal skills of the youth, which will enable them to navigate the future of work and other difficult challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes conversations with young professionals who are using their talents and skills to contribute to their sectors and communities.

 <https://asean.org/book/the-asean-youth-and-skills-development-building-blocks-for-better-communities/>


## ASEAN Youth Bytes (2019)

This publication provides real-life accounts of participants and beneficiaries of ASEAN youth programmes and activities, including those pursued with ASEAN partners. These programmes and activities come in the form of camps, community immersion, workshops, study visits, and even boat cruises. They serve as models of youth engagement.

 <https://asean.org/book/asean-youth-bytes-2/>


## Study on Enhancing Intra-ASEAN University Student Mobility (2020)

ASEAN has nearly 20 million higher education students and over 7,000 universities. Supporting the mobility of students in the region is an important aspect of ASEAN's work on the internationalisation of higher education, consistent with the ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2016-2020 and the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025. This study looks at three factors crucial to enhancing intra-ASEAN mobility for university students as follows: understanding the data available on international students, the role of visa provision, and scholarship and ASEAN single branded scholarship.


 <https://asean.org/book/study-on-enhancing-intra-asean-university-student-mobility/>

## First ASEAN Youth Development Index (2017)

The ASEAN YDI is a tool designed to track the level of development and well-being of the region's youth in five domains. This publication discusses findings in four of the five domains, namely, education, health and well-being, employment and opportunity, and participation and engagement. Through this index, ASEAN aims to determine specific areas that need greater attention and further development and investment.

 <https://asean.org/book/first-asean-youth-development-index-2/>





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# The ASEAN

Indian Holi Festivities  
in Malaysia



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