

The ASEAN



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YOUTH AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT BUILDING BLOCKS FOR BETTER COMMUNITIES



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CONVERSATIONS

ASEAN's Young and Inspiring
Social Entrepreneurs

VIEWPOINT

Singaporean Olympic
Champion Joseph Schooling

INSIDE VIEW

Education, Training and Sports
for Youth Development

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A Note from the Editorial Team

ASEAN celebrated its 53rd anniversary in a low-key virtual ceremony on 8 August. This year's theme is a call to build a cohesive and resilient community amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many young men and women in the region have been stepping into action: frontline workers, implementors and volunteers in social welfare projects, innovators in digital technology and services, and social entrepreneurs.

But these are indeed challenging times for everyone; our youth today face uncertainty the likes of which we have never encountered.

In this issue, Lao PDR Youth Union Secretary General H.E. Alounxai Sounnalath, Chair of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth, talks about the need to address vulnerabilities that the youth are exposed to during these volatile times. The pandemic is only one of the major disruptions in their lives, as they try to carve out their futures.

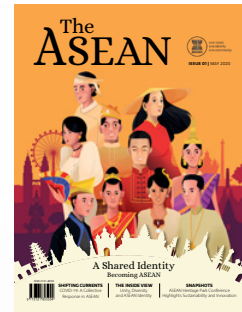
ASEAN's Head of the Education, Youth and Sports Division, Mary Therese Manuson, underscores how disruptions provide an opportunity for ASEAN to help youth build skills that are adaptive to future risks. As ASEAN Human Development Department Director Rodora Babaran explains, ASEAN's partnerships to provide Higher Education for the youth will help build a more competitive workforce. Our contributors also highlight the importance of other tools needed for the future such as 21st-

century skills; vocational education and training; and social entrepreneurship. In our Conversations section, we hear from four young innovators who empower their communities.

We also focus on the role of sports development in building up our youth, even as many sporting events are put on hold. The Tokyo Summer Olympics will now be held in 2021, and Olympic swimming gold medalist Joseph Schooling shares how he is preparing for it. ASEAN's football players and fans will be pleased to learn more about ASEAN-FIFA's collaboration to improve the sport in the region.

The editorial team would like to thank all those who submitted their entries to the Youth and Skills Art Competition. While no winner was selected for this issue's cover, the magazine team chose two artworks to be featured in the inside pages. Find the work of young Filipino artist Ramchad Tiongson on our Shifting Currents page. The illustration by Vania Djunaidi from Indonesia opens the Conversation section. Both budding artists expressed the need for resilience, as young people like them face many challenges of today.

There was a point in our lives when we were the youths of our previous generation, but none of us encountered this kind of global disruption during our time. While the youth will determine the environment of their future, it is part of our legacy to ensure that we have equipped them with the right tools to take them there.



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A night view of The Supertree Grove at Gardens by the Bay, Singapore. The image shows several large, illuminated trees with intricate, branching structures. The trees are lit up with warm yellow and orange lights, and their canopies are filled with small, glowing lights. A curved walkway with a railing is visible in the upper part of the image. The sky is dark blue.

Inside View

Night view of The Supertree Grove at Gardens by the Bay, Singapore

Education, skills training, and sports development

Preparing ASEAN's youth for the future

SKILLED YOUTH TODAY, STRONGER ASEAN TOMORROW



BY MARY ANNE THERESE MANUSON
HEAD, EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORTS DIVISION
ASEAN SOCIO-CULTURAL COMMUNITY DEPARTMENT

There was a time when job ads were a lot shorter. Those ads would not take up more than three or four lines in a newspaper, and typically sought candidates with “a pleasing personality.”

Apart from the requisite educational qualifications and experience, employment vacancies today spell out a host of vital skills and competencies ranging from problem-solving skills, critical thinking, communication and teamwork, to prioritisation, leadership, intercultural awareness and a strong work ethic.

The fast-changing landscape of work has significantly expanded the universe of skills needed for young workers to be employable. Global megatrends such as technology, artificial intelligence, migration and climate change are reshaping skills demands. Minimum academic or vocational qualifications along with a pleasing personality will no longer get young job seekers very far.

COVID-19 and Shifting Skills Needs

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a truly challenging time for young people. The International Labour Organization reports that more than one in six young people have stopped working since the onset of COVID-19. Young workers who continue to be employed have had their working hours reduced by 23 per cent.

Prior to the crisis, young people globally were already three times more likely to be unemployed compared to adults.

Delayed school-to-work transitions have resulted in mass numbers of youth not in employment, education or training.

The worldwide closure of schools, universities and technical and vocational training institutions poses a serious threat to learning continuity and skills development. In the ASEAN region alone, estimates place more than 152 million children and youth as having been affected.

As early as 2017, UN Special Envoy for Global Education Gordon Brown

had warned that if trends continue, by 2030 around 800 million young people will not have the appropriate skills required to access the job market.

We need to take a long, hard look at how the COVID-19 crisis has dramatically altered learning environments and the workplace.

The World Economic Forum’s recent ASEAN Youth Survey 2020 investigated how young people in the region are coping with the disruptions triggered by the pandemic. With remote learning and work-from-home arrangements becoming more commonplace, COVID-19 has compelled ASEAN youth to increase their digital footprint, nurture a growth mindset, develop resilience, and innovate new business strategies to generate income. However, the survey also found that there are segments of young people that are at risk of being left behind—particularly those who are less digitally included, young workers in the gig economy, and young entrepreneurs. Going forward, efforts to expand digital access, promote digital skills, and provide funding support will be essential to enabling all ASEAN youth to embrace the new normal.

The COVID-19 crisis could be used as an opportunity to create momentum for youth skills development. If we expect ASEAN youth to contribute to rebuilding





“ *Various international reports have highlighted the need for today’s young workers to be adaptable, which requires a combination of higher order skills such as critical thinking, and problem-solving, as well as socio-emotional skills such as self-awareness, empathy, and perseverance.* ”

post-COVID-19 societies and economies, we will need to equip them with the skills needed to adapt to rapidly evolving realities and future disruptions.

Building Transversal Skills for the Future of Work

Globally, skills needs are being disrupted by an era of constant change.

In recent years, the concept of employability has expanded to include not only foundational knowledge and technical know-how, but also crucial transversal skills. In fact, Google—one of the world’s top employers—considers candidates’ transversal skills such as communication, teamwork and problem-solving as a critical factor in hiring decisions over academic background or technical skills. There is also a falling demand for skills that are routine and job-specific.

Transversal skills are transferable to a wide range of occupations and contexts.

These skills are particularly significant in today’s volatile job market where workers transition to multiple careers over their lifetime.

Various international reports have highlighted the need for today’s young workers to be adaptable, which requires a combination of higher order skills such as critical thinking, and problem-solving, as well as socio-emotional skills such as self-awareness, empathy, and perseverance. Adaptability in young workers takes on a new meaning in this time of pandemic as we navigate changing technologies and work environments. Transdisciplinarity, social intelligence, and novel and adaptive thinking are likewise often named as some of the future skills needed by the labour market.

Entrepreneurship is increasingly becoming a viable career option for youth, particularly those who are naturally suited for self-employment.

Whilst there is a lack of global consensus as to the definition of entrepreneurship or what constitutes its core competencies, it is generally agreed that entrepreneurs exhibit strong characteristics of innovation, risk taking, and self-motivation. Social entrepreneurship is one form of entrepreneurship that is quickly gaining ground in ASEAN. Social entrepreneurs are known for developing innovative solutions that drive social change and bring about transformational benefits to society.

A solid learning disposition has also been frequently cited by employers as key to young people’s employability. UNESCO’s 1996 Delors report introduced the four pillars of lifelong learning (learning to be, learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together) and their significance in equipping young people with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to adapt to a rapidly globalising world.

Investing in Youth Skills Development, Investing in ASEAN’s Future

A third of ASEAN’s population consists of young people, aged between 15 and 34 years old. These numbers alone demonstrate the urgency to prepare our young people to take on the role of future leaders, change makers, innovators and influencers of the region.

The ASEAN youth sector sees supporting young people to be ‘future-ready’ through skills development and widening youth participation in policy dialogue as priorities for the next five years.

Through ASEAN’s youth development programmes, we seek to build transversal and digital skills and promote social entrepreneurship. We are fostering a sense of volunteerism amongst our young people to enable them to contribute to community development. By providing spaces for interaction with the region’s leaders and policy makers, we help ASEAN youth shape the policies that concern them.

Sports also plays a critical role in promoting skills and values amongst ASEAN youth.

Increasingly, sports is being recognised as a tool for peace and social cohesion. Sports and physical activity help prevent crime and minimise risky behaviours for at-risk youth. It promotes the values of respect, inclusion, fairness, and unity.

It is in this context that ASEAN works to develop leadership skills amongst the

region's youth leaders, enabling them to advocate for healthy lifestyles and combat youth crime. By harnessing the power of sports, we empower ASEAN youth to be healthy and active peacebuilders in the ASEAN Community.

Skills will be the currency of the future. A stable ASEAN Community is one where

young people have access to the skills development they need to achieve the future that they want and deserve. The peace, prosperity and progress of our region will rest on a foundation of a skilled youth population: highly adaptable and resilient lifelong learners, equipped with transversal and digital skills, and with good physical and mental well-being. ■

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM'S ASEAN YOUTH SURVEY 2020

The survey involved **68,574 youth respondents** from ASEAN, aged 16 through 35 years old



Use of digital tools during the pandemic

87% increased usage of at least one digital tool
42% picked up at least one new digital tool

Some of these tools include social media (**51%**), online education (**45%**), e-commerce buying (**42%**), virtual meetings (**40%**), e-banking (**34%**), and food delivery (**34%**)

Resilience and growth mindset

41% reported having learnt new skills

31% found new business models and new ways to improve income

64% reported using online education tools more actively, **30%** of whom were first-time users

Key lessons from the crisis include hand-washing, budget prioritisation, need for emergency savings, and the value of family time

Gaps in digital skills and digital infrastructure

69% found it difficult to work or study remotely

Common constraints cited were weak internet quality, high internet costs, household distractions, lack of motivation, and difficulties with team management/coordination

Source: *ASEAN Youth Survey 2020 Edition (COVID-19–The True Test of ASEAN Youth’s Resilience and Adaptability)*, World Economic Forum, July 2020



Download the survey results from:

http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_ASEAN_Youth_Survey_2020_Report.pdf



QUICK FACTS

There are over 213 million youth in the ASEAN region, aged 15 to 34 years old

Youth population is expected to reach over 220 million in 2038



Viewpoint:

H.E. Alounxai Sounnalath

Secretary General, Lao PDR Youth Union
Chair, ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth

With the ASEAN Work Plan on Youth 2016 to 2020 about to wind down, what would you say are the major accomplishments of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth (AMMY) in the past four years?

Despite being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in this final year of implementation, ASEAN's youth sector has successfully addressed more than 80 per cent of the programmes under the **ASEAN Work Plan on Youth 2016-2020** through ASEAN-driven activities led by ASEAN Member States, Dialogue Partners and Partner Organisations.

The commitment of ASEAN Member States to support youth across the region was also shown through some notable achievements of the ASEAN youth sector, namely:

- The launch of **First ASEAN Youth Development Index** and the **ASEAN Declaration on the Adoption of ASEAN Youth Development Index** adopted by ASEAN Leaders, both in 2017;
- The adoption of the **ASEAN Declaration on the Adoption of ASEAN Youth in Climate Action and Disaster Resilience Day** in 2018;
- The commitment for the annual contribution to the ASEAN Youth Programme Fund (AYPF) in 2019;
- The regular convening of the ASEAN Youth Day Meeting and ASEAN Youth Expo; and
- The Interactive Webinar Series on ASEAN Youth and COVID-19. These webinars are the ASEAN youth sector's contribution to the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community's COVID-19 Webinar Series initiative. The webinars are organised by the ASEAN Secretariat in collaboration with the ASEAN Foundation, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity. These youth and COVID-19 webinars are made possible through the



endorsement and support of the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Youth.

In the forthcoming plan of action on youth, what will be the goals and priorities of AMMY under your leadership?

The ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth has agreed to structure the Post-2020 ASEAN Work Plan on Youth based on the five domains of the ASEAN Youth Development Index, namely: Education; Health and Well-Being; Participation and Engagement; Employment and Opportunity; and ASEAN Awareness, Values and Identity. We also identified the Post-2020 strategies on the ASEAN Youth Development Initiative, which will focus on fostering future-ready ASEAN youth through digital skills development and the institutionalisation of youth engagement mechanisms, including in the region's policy discourse.

Therefore, ASEAN youth should be able to adapt to ways of learning under these new circumstances. The challenges brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution may be addressed by technological innovation through revolutionising methodologies in human capital development.

How has the youth sector been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic? What initiatives has AMMY pursued to respond to this crisis? What policies and programmes are needed to prepare the youth for a post COVID-19 future? How can the youth sector be more engaged in the process of shaping these initiatives?

The main impact has been on the education sector and there could be greater challenges ahead. We have seen innovative approaches in support of education and training continuity. Distance learning solutions have been developed.

We, as AMMY, the governments and partners are supporting continued education provision. Thanks to responses by various stakeholders, we are constantly reminded of the essential role of teachers and educators, and the duty of governments and key partners to care for the needs of those in the education sector.

Therefore, we should focus on addressing learning losses and preventing school dropouts. This is true for children and youth affected by lack of resources, or an enabling environment, to access learning. Particularly for vulnerable groups, we should offer employability programmes, support the teaching profession with improved training in new methods, and strengthen the flexibility across all levels and types of education and training. As we shape the future of learning and adapt to new modes of delivering quality education, it is imperative that no one is left behind.

In July, Lao PDR participated in the Virtual Expert Meeting on the ASEAN Work Plan on Youth 2021-2025, during which there was a presentation from the World Economic Forum's (WEF) on the key findings of the *WEF ASEAN Youth Survey 2020:COVID-19—The True Test of ASEAN Youth's Resilience and Adaptability*. Based on the survey, ASEAN youth have been adapting to challenges caused by COVID-19 by significantly increasing digital adoption, learning new skills, thinking creatively and developing new business models. Findings from the survey recommend the strengthening of public-private-partnership in improving digital access, investing in promoting digital skill capabilities, and providing more funding to support youths in the gig economy and entrepreneurs. The issues faced by our youth in terms of access to education, as well as livelihood are relevant to the priorities of the ASEAN youth sector in the next five years. There must be ASEAN awareness among the youth and we must encourage the development of knowledge and skills for the new normal, through ASEAN news/information on healthy lifestyles from the World Health Organization, and e-conversations among youth leaders in the context of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic through digital platforms such as the webinars and video conferences. Through these activities, we get the youth leaders and youth experts of



***“ I am of the view that education, livelihood and physical and mental health are key areas requiring attention from youth development stakeholders, as we respond to the crisis. It is crucial to include the promotion of social support and dissemination of important information to help our youth avoid stress and anxiety during these challenging times.*”**

ASEAN and our partners to discuss and exchange experience gained from the pandemic, such as their contribution, ideas, perspectives on how they cope, and how they react to this pandemic.

The Chair of the Senior Official Meeting on Youth (SOMY) was a commentator in an enlightening discussion, with youth speakers from different fields, on #ASEANYouth at the Forefront of COVID-19 Response. The webinar series was organised by the ASEAN Secretariat in collaboration with the ASEAN Foundation, the International Federation of the Red Cross, and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity. This will be followed by another session where youth and mentors can exchange views and knowledge on how to be more adaptive and resilient amidst the pandemic.

On 12 August, we celebrated International Youth Day and SOMY showed its appreciation to youths across ASEAN, for their valuable contributions in the region's COVID-19 pandemic response

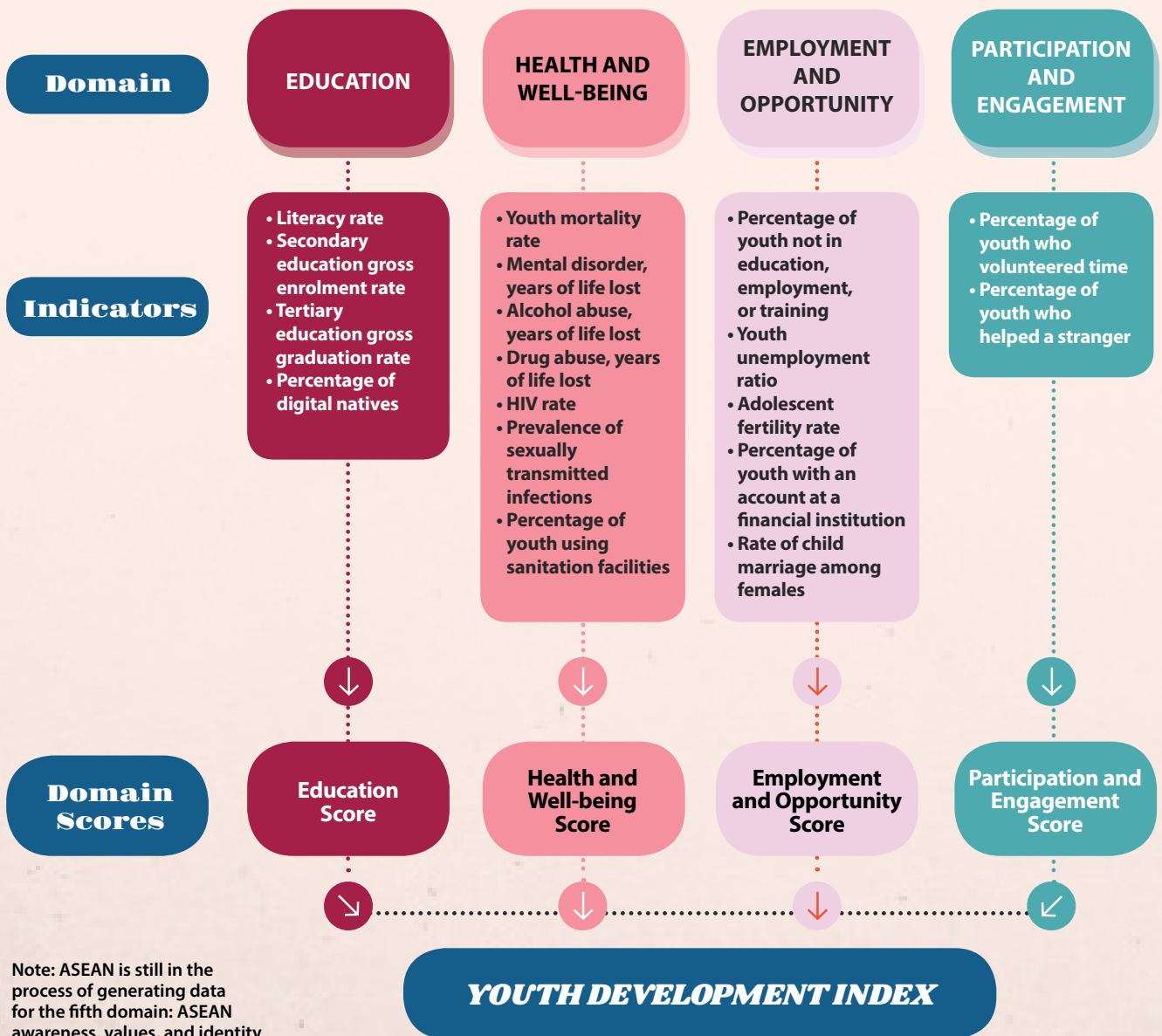
despite the challenges they face. It was inspiring to learn about many young people who are on the frontlines of the response, as medical workers, social welfare project implementors, volunteers and innovators.

I am of the view that education, livelihood and physical and mental health are key areas requiring attention from youth development stakeholders, as we respond to the crisis. It is crucial to include the promotion of social support and dissemination of important information to help our youth avoid stress and anxiety during these challenging times. The content of our messaging may include how to cope with risks and vulnerabilities like stress, anxiety, smoking, alcohol and drugs. Information through all forms of media should be available for our ASEAN youth so that they are able to manage adversities, prevent and control the spread of the coronavirus, and avoid harmful behavior as we help them navigate through these trying times. ■

WHAT IS THE ASEAN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INDEX?

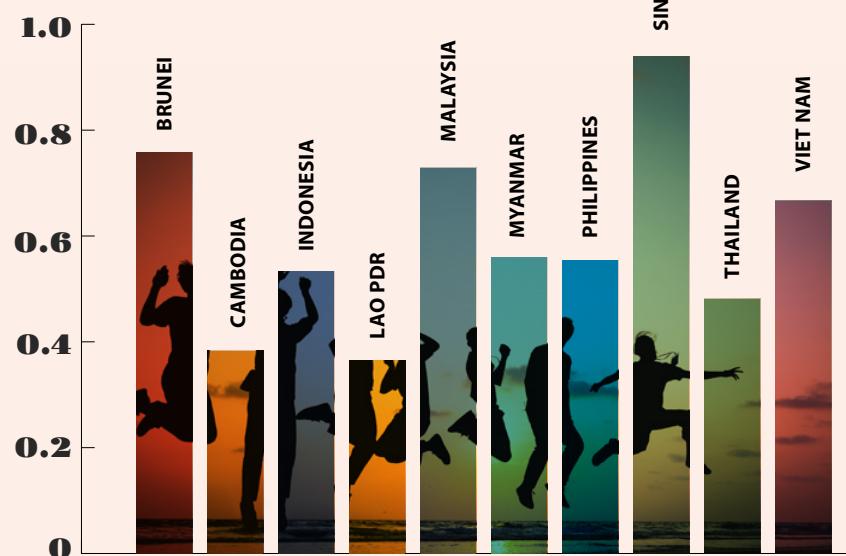
The ASEAN Youth Development Index (YDI) is a tool designed to keep track of the level of development and wellbeing of the region's youth in the following domains: education; health and well-being; employment and opportunity; participation and engagement; and ASEAN awareness, values, and identity. Each domain is composed of several indicators or measures. The data for these indicators were obtained from international sources, such as the World Health Organization, Gallup World Poll, and UNESCO. The first YDI was published in 2017.

The YDI is a score that ranges from 0 to 1, with 0 as the lowest and 1 as the highest level of youth development. It is computed by combining the indicators from all of the domains of youth development.



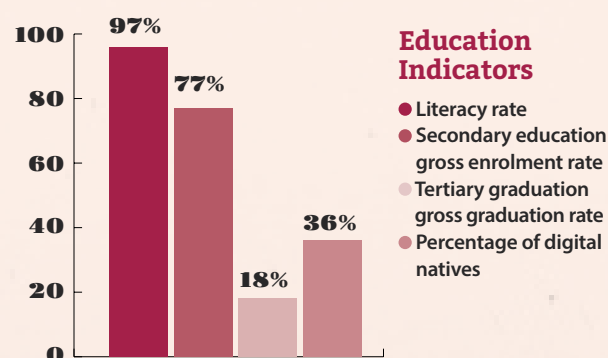
Note: ASEAN is still in the process of generating data for the fifth domain: ASEAN awareness, values, and identity

ASEAN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INDEX



Brunei	0.758
Cambodia	0.383
Indonesia	0.533
Lao PDR	0.365
Malaysia	0.729
Myanmar	0.56
Philippines	0.554
Singapore	0.94
Thailand	0.481
Viet Nam	0.667

REGIONAL DATA FOR EACH INDICATOR

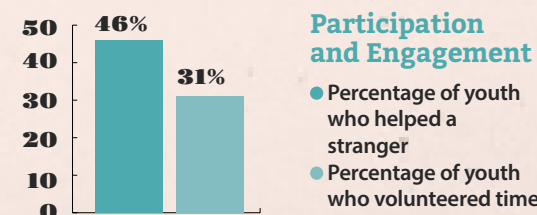


Health and Well-Being Indicators

Youth mortality rate	112 per 100,000 population
Mental disorder, years of life lost	529 per 100,000 population
Alcohol abuse, years of life lost	32 per 100,000 population
Drug abuse, years of life lost	194 per 100,000 population
HIV rate	0.2%
Prevalence of sexually transmitted infections	15,425 per 100,000 population
Percentage of youth using sanitation facilities	77%

Employment and Opportunity Indicators

Percentage of youth not in education, employment, or training	11%
Youth unemployment ratio	6%
Adolescent fertility rate	37 births per 1,000 females
Percentage of youth with an account at a financial institution	53%
Rate of child marriage among females	15%



Download the YDI publication from:
https://asean.org/storage/2017/10/ASEAN-UNFPA_report_web-final-05sep.pdf



HIGHER EDUCATION

for a Competitive ASEAN Workforce



BY RODORA T. BABARAN

DIRECTOR, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE
ASEAN SOCIO-CULTURAL COMMUNITY DEPARTMENT

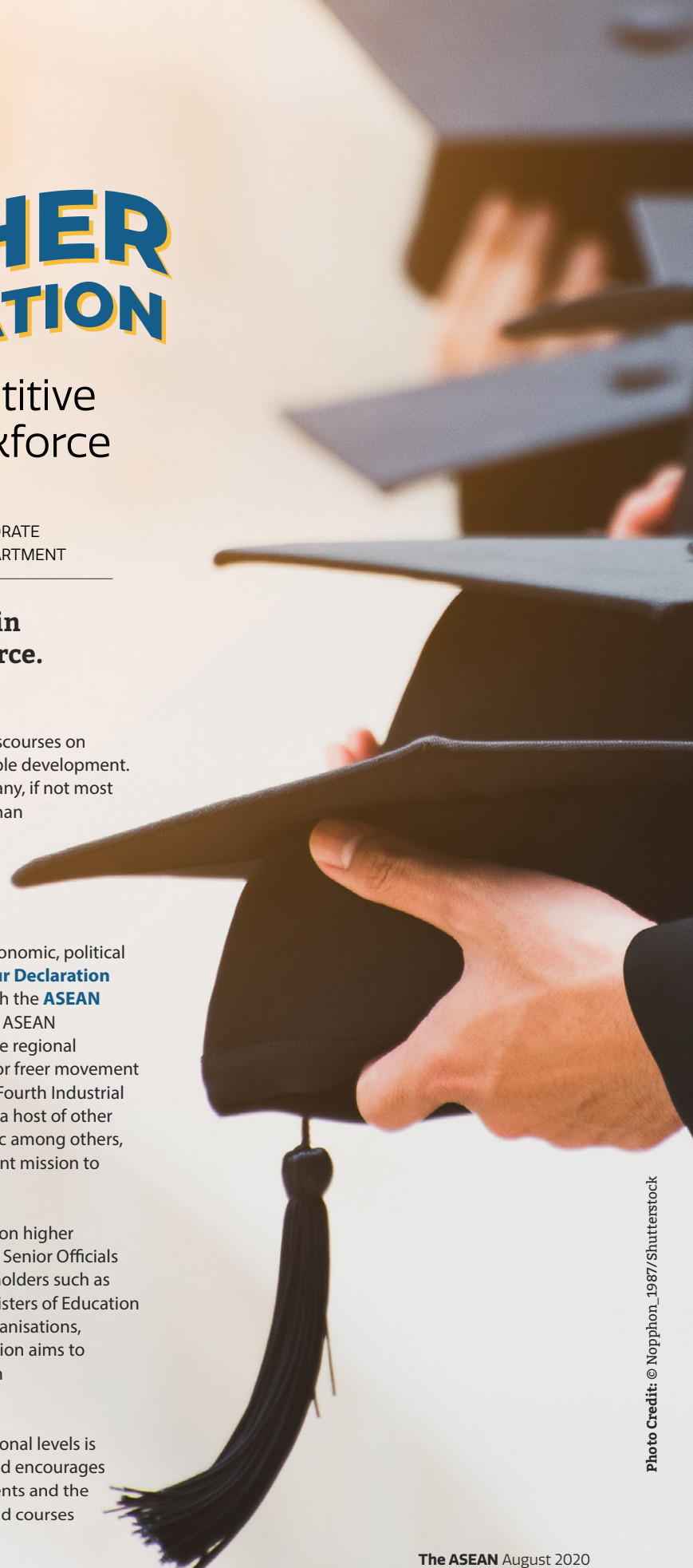
Higher education plays a vital role in developing a highly-skilled workforce.

It fosters research and innovation, and stimulates policy discourses on important issues such as poverty eradication and sustainable development. It hones individuals for civic participation and produces many, if not most of the countries' leaders. Its value in the overall goal of human capital development is clearly indispensable.

Since its founding in 1967, ASEAN has placed strong emphasis on education cooperation, and reaffirmed it in the ASEAN Charter in 2008. In recognition of higher education's catalytic role in accelerating ASEAN's economic, political and socio-cultural development agenda, the **Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Higher Education** was adopted in 2015. This, along with the **ASEAN Community Vision 2025** and its Blueprints, other relevant ASEAN declarations, and the Sustainable Development Goals guide regional cooperation on higher education. The long-standing aim for freer movement of skilled workers and professionals within the region, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and its impacts on the future of work, and a host of other issues such as ageing societies and the COVID-19 pandemic among others, highlight even more the higher education sector's important mission to develop a future-ready, adaptive, and resilient workforce.

The ASEAN education ministers provide overall leadership on higher education cooperation in the region. It is supported by the Senior Officials Meeting on Education (SOMED), in partnership with stakeholders such as the ASEAN University Network (AUN), Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation, affiliated entities to ASEAN, international organisations, and dialogue partners. ASEAN's higher education cooperation aims to uphold the quality of higher education and foster its role in socio-economic development.

A robust quality assurance mechanism at national and regional levels is important in upholding the quality of higher education, and encourages greater student mobility. It builds confidence among students and the higher education community that programme offerings and courses



“ *Scholarship programmes have been a mainstay in ASEAN’s regional cooperation, in recognition of its potential to raise the expertise and competitiveness of human resources, thereby helping in the home countries’ socio-economic development.* ”



anywhere in the region meet quality standards. The **ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2016-2020** therefore commits to strengthen the higher education sector through the implementation of robust quality assurance mechanisms.

One major initiative is the EU-SHARE Programme or the European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region, a multi-year, 10-million-euro programme that started in 2015. It supports the harmonisation of higher education in the region by contributing relevant experiences and expertise from the European Bologna Process and the creation of the European Higher Education Area. It aims to strengthen regional cooperation as well as enhance the quality, competitiveness, and internationalisation of ASEAN higher education systems, institutions, and students.

The programme’s support to regional policy making on higher education has so far brought together 1,288 practitioners, specialists, policy makers, and representatives from regional and international organisations in ASEAN and beyond through policy dialogues. Students’ representation was also ensured to provide a platform for the students to share their experiences and ideas on how to further internationalise higher education in the region.

SHARE supports the implementation of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF) and the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQR). SHARE published studies that investigated regional developments in qualifications framework (QF) and quality assurance (QA) and organised a series of national dissemination workshops aimed at raising awareness for the AQAF and AQR. These workshops convened experts, policymakers, university leaders as well as representatives from the labour market. A regional Peer-Multiplier-Training was also conducted to create a pool of “champions” to sustain the work at national level. SHARE also included the review of selected external QA agencies and the institutional assessment of 10 universities across eight countries to pilot the AQAF and to stimulate benchmarking according to regional principles.

To boost student mobility, close to 500 undergraduate students from a network of 32 public and private universities across ASEAN were funded to study for one semester in another university within ASEAN. Meanwhile, over 100 ASEAN students were provided scholarships to spend a semester in Europe. Tools to support a common platform for online credit transfer were developed as an integral part of the programme.

SHARE is also supporting the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on ASEAN Higher Education Mobility, which seeks to assess the compatibility of the SHARE credit transfer system vis-à-vis other systems currently operating within the region and eventually transfer it to an ASEAN institution. In order to further intra-regional student mobility, a “Study on Enhancing Intra-ASEAN University Student Mobility” was commissioned by SHARE to determine the availability of data with which to monitor regional student mobility, assess the provision of student visas within the region with a view towards making it more consistent and easier to navigate, and consider a more coherent approach towards scholarship provision.

China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea also cooperate with ASEAN on internationalisation and mobility of students. Through the ASEAN Plus Three Working Group (APTWG) on Student Mobility and Quality Assurance of Higher Education, ASEAN Plus Three (APT) countries, in collaboration with other regional education entities like SEAMEO and AUN, share information on projects and programs related to higher education quality assurance and mobility. It also promotes capacity building related to quality assurance and strengthens the network of policymakers and those involved in higher education. The APTWG developed the APT Guidelines on Student Exchange and Mobility in 2016 and its accompanying monitoring mechanism in 2017 to provide a basic framework for quality-assured student exchanges and mobility among the APT countries. As a follow-up to this effort, the APTWG developed the APT Guidelines on Transcripts and Supplemental Documents for Academic Records of Exchange Students in 2018 that outlined recommended information to be included in transcripts and/or supplemental documents for exchange students. With a view towards promoting transparency and mutual understanding, ensuring the safe mobility of students, and contributing towards the further harmonisation of higher education within the region, these guidelines were adopted by the APT Education Ministers in 2018.

Scholarship programmes have been a mainstay in ASEAN's regional cooperation, in recognition of its potential to raise the expertise and competitiveness of human resources, thereby helping in the home countries' socio-economic development. Currently, several scholarship offerings are available for ASEAN students supported by dialogue partners namely China, Republic of Korea, Canada, United States, India, Japan, and Hungary. These are designed to promote human resources development, enhance people to people exchanges, and support achievement of national, regional, and global development goals.

The cooperation on higher education in ASEAN can be considered robust and provides meaningful engagement of higher education stakeholders. Collaboration with non-education sectors is also strengthened, such as with labour, business and industry. However, there is room for improvement in terms of speed, scale, and effectiveness of these efforts. While quality assurance, credit transfer systems, scholarship support for mobility programmes are all important components of a regional higher education space, there are many other elements that must be put in place to support a sustainable ecosystem for student mobility. More



efforts are needed to enable students to actually participate in mobility programmes, at a scale that's significant enough for regional integration. The COVID-19 pandemic also serves as a wake-up call for the higher education sector to speed up its adaptation to the digital transformation. The ongoing development of the **ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2021-2025**, which is complemented by the **Roadmap of the ASEAN**

Declaration on Human Resources Development for the Changing World of Work, the **Comprehensive Strategy for the 4IR**, as well as the **ASEAN Recovery Framework and Implementation Plan** provide an opportunity for the higher education sector to make meaningful contribution and stay relevant. ■



- The **Canada-ASEAN Scholarships and Educational Exchanges for Development (SEED) Program** started in 2018 and provides students from ASEAN Member States (AMS) with short-term exchange opportunities for study or research in Canadian post-secondary institutions at the college, undergraduate and graduate levels.

- The **ASEAN-China Young Leaders Scholarship Program (ACYLS)** started in 2019 and provides full scholarships and allowances to support nationals from AMS to study for Master or PhD degrees, undertake short-term research programs, and participate in training courses in China.

- The **Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Programme** started in 2017 and provides full scholarships to students from AMS to study in Hungarian universities, primarily in the fields of Economics, Culture and Liberal Arts, Natural Sciences, Engineering, Technology and Medicine and Life Sciences.

- India has been providing support for students to undertake a two-year **Masters Programme at Nalanda University** since 2015. Initially available for students from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam, it was made available to students from all AMS in 2019.

- The **Higher Education for ASEAN Talents (HEAT) Programme** Programme, funded by ROK, provides three-year scholarships and allowances to faculty members from higher education institutions in ASEAN who want to obtain a doctoral degree from a ROK academic institution.

- The **Fulbright U.S.–ASEAN Visiting Scholar Initiative** started in 2012 and offers scholars from AMS an opportunity to carry out 3-4 month research at U.S. universities on a wide range of subjects of importance to ASEAN.

- **ASEAN University Network**

Member universities of AUN provide scholarships under the AUN Student Exchange Programme to promote intra-ASEAN student mobility at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

With support from ASEAN Dialogue Partners, AUN has also been implementing the China-AUN Scholarship since 2008, the AUN Southeast Asia Engineering Education Development Network (AUN/SEED-Net) which has been providing scholarships for graduate studies and fellowships for industry-academe projects in various fields of engineering since 2001, and the AUN Disability and Public Policy Network (AUN-DPPnet) Scholarship since 2016.

This year, the ASEAN Master in Sustainability Management was launched by Universitas Gadjah Mada in Indonesia and the University of Agder in Norway with funding support from the Norway-ASEAN Regional Integration Programme.

BUILDING GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE ASEAN UNIVERSITIES AND STUDENTS THROUGH THE SHARE SCHOLARSHIP



BY JOANNE B. AGBISIT
AND THE ASEAN EDITORIAL TEAM

Breathing life into ASEAN's intersecting commitments on higher education and the youth is an overwhelming task, but thankfully, ASEAN has found a partner in the European Union.

The SHARE Scholarship, a component of the EU Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region Programme, gives college students an opportunity to study in a neighbouring ASEAN country or an EU country for one semester. It is meant to support the practice of mutual credit recognition—an important step towards the internationalisation and increased competitiveness of the region's higher educational institutions—while at the same time, instill the value of cultural understanding and a global outlook among the youth in ASEAN.

More than 500 scholarships have been awarded since the SHARE Scholarship was launched in 2016.

One of these scholars is Fernando Fernando of Indonesia. He was in his final year in college when he chanced upon a SHARE Scholarship post on Facebook. He saw the scholarship as an opportunity to see the world beyond the confines of his community. "I do not want to live inside my own bubble. I always know that there is so much more to explore and learn out there even at a young age," he said.

Fernando chose to spend his semester at the Vietnam National University of Science in Hanoi, Viet Nam. He enrolled in its International Standard Program in Biology (Bachelor's level) and took courses on ecology, animal physiology, and biochemistry to complement his undergraduate major, aquaculture technology and management, in Bogor Agricultural University, Indonesia.

Fernando admitted that he had a lot of adjustments to make because of the language, weather, food, and the weight of academic expectations. He said that the language barrier was particularly tough, but he managed to overcome this with the help of Google Translate and "a bit of courage to speak up and interact with people despite this language issue."

He made the most out of the study programme by making friends and exploring Viet Nam in between classes. "I travelled with them (friends) around the city to enjoy good food, attractions, museums, etc.," he said. By the time the programme ended, Fernando had formed lasting friendships and connections with students from Viet Nam, Laos PDR, and Myanmar, and fellow Indonesians as well.



Fernando Fernando spent a semester at the Vietnam National University of Science under the SHARE scholarship

After completing his bachelor's degree, Fernando applied for and was admitted into the Master of Science in Aquaculture Science and Technology programme at James Cook University, Australia. He said that his experience as a SHARE scholar has prepared him for this new academic milestone. He noted, "SHARE allowed me to experience

living and studying abroad for the very first time. This equipped me with the skills to adapt and thrive in different settings."

Fernando looks forward to using his education to contribute to his country and community. "In 10 years' time, I would like to become a technopreneur in aquaculture (i.e. fish farming)," he said. He hopes to apply science in fish farming and "produce nutritious and sustainable fish protein for the wider community."

Similar inspiring stories of SHARE scholars have been documented by the EU SHARE Programme and can be read from the publication, *Faces of SHARE*. ■



Download *Faces of SHARE* from:

<https://admin.share-asean.eu/sites/default/files/FoS%20FA.pdf?ga=2.185460398.646856051.1598339946-1777456935.1598339946>

PREPARING ASEAN'S YOUTH FOR THE LABOUR MARKET

A look at the role of in-company training



BY FRANZISKA SEEL
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DEUTSCHE GESELLSCHAFT FÜR
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Transitioning from school to work is an important stage in a young person's life. Matching what young people learn at school with the skills employers need helps youth to transition more quickly and into a better job. Increasing the share of training taking place in companies can help to strengthen the matching of skills, facilitate the integration of youth into the labour market, and prepare ASEAN's economy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Many youth in Southeast Asia struggle to gain employment after leaving school. A major obstacle to finding an entry-level job is young people's lack of basic competencies. Outdated and often overloaded curricula and a focus on memorising theoretical knowledge do not prepare the youth adequately for the world of work. Performing effectively at a workplace requires the practical application of knowledge, 21st-century skills (such as critical thinking, collaboration, and resourcefulness) and a professional attitude. Overcoming the skills gap is particularly relevant for young people graduating from technical and —vocational education and training (TVET) institutes, as TVET is widely considered inferior to a university education across the ASEAN region.

Beyond the issue of youth unemployment and long-term effects for the individual young person (such as lower salaries that persist for years into one's working life), ASEAN's skills gap also represents a significant economic opportunity cost for the region. Improving learning and strengthening young people's employability is a critical issue for ASEAN's social and economic community.



A transformation of learning in ASEAN Member States requires more responsiveness to the demands of the labour market. In times of rapid digital transformation, these demands are constantly changing. The best—and possibly only—way to respond to such a fast-changing labour market is by reconsidering the role of the private sector in education.

Germany's Dual Training System as a Model

In countries such as Germany, active private sector involvement in education, particularly in TVET, has a long history. Germany's dual training system features two places of learning: companies and TVET schools. Trainees are hired by a company for the duration of their training (usually 2-3.5 years) and receive a stipend. They spend 70 per cent of training time at the company embedded in a real-life work



A TVET student learns digital skills in Myanmar

environment. Theoretical training at a publicly funded TVET school constitutes the remaining 30 per cent of training.

Germany's dual training model is highly recognised worldwide for its contribution to low youth unemployment and high skill levels. Copying this model may not be feasible for ASEAN Member States, but a steady increase of the share of in-company training would help address the region's skills gap, facilitate the integration of youth into the labour market, and prepare ASEAN's economy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Benefits for Companies

While many ASEAN companies remain reluctant to actively engage in the development of a skilled ASEAN workforce, research shows that companies benefit in numerous ways from investments in the training and development of students and employees. Among the benefits are lower recruitment costs, higher productivity and competitiveness, reduced staff turnover, higher employee engagement and loyalty because employees feel valued and appreciated, and a higher reputation which helps to attract the best talent in the labour market.

“ Improving learning and strengthening young people's employability is a critical issue for ASEAN's social and economic community. ”

In recent years, ASEAN Member States have recognised the importance of public-private cooperation for the improvement of learning outcomes. The German government's Regional Cooperation Programme for TVET in ASEAN or RECOTVET supports ASEAN Member States in their numerous efforts to strengthen the involvement of the private sector in TVET. In cooperation with labour

and education ministries, chambers and business associations, RECOTVET, which is implemented by the German development agency GIZ, has put a focus on promoting, expanding, and improving the quality of in-company training.

The learning outcomes of in-company training depend to a large degree on the skilled technicians and supervisors who train or mentor students, apprentices, and other employees in their company. These in-company trainers are at the heart of the approach.



A Vietnamese student receives instructions from a TVET trainer

The Standard for In-Company Trainers in ASEAN Countries

Between 2014 and 2015, a regional working group addressed the need to define a benchmark for the essential competencies of in-company trainers. The group consisted of 60 experts from labour and education ministries, standard authorities, the business and industry sector, as well as universities and other educational and training institutions from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam. In a collaborative process, they jointly developed the *Standard for In-Company Trainers in ASEAN Countries*.

Since 2015, a regional steering committee has been overseeing the promotion and implementation of the standard at the regional and national levels. The committee brings together nine ASEAN Member States and is composed of one public and private sector representative from each country. The work

“**With several ASEAN Member States having adopted this standard as a basis to regulate in-company training at the national level since its inception is a testament to its usefulness,”** said Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Kung Phোক.

of the steering committee has been recognised by ASEAN Member States with the endorsement of the standard by the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Education in 2017 and the ASEAN Senior Labour Officials Meeting’s Working Group on Progressive Labour Practices to Enhance the Competitiveness of ASEAN in 2018.

At the national level, several public TVET authorities have introduced regulations for in-company trainers based on the regional standard. In 2018, for instance, the Philippines’ Technical Education and Skills Development Authority approved a training regulation for in-company trainers. In Viet Nam, the Directorate of Vocational Education and Training has initiated in 2019 the development of a training programme for in-company trainers in close cooperation with the Vietnamese Chamber of

Commerce and Industry. In Thailand, the government provides tax incentives for companies that invest in the qualification of in-company trainers.

To support the roll-out of trainings for in-company trainers according to the standard, RECOTVET and its cooperation partners trained over 200 master trainers (trainers of in-company trainers) from across the region and facilitated the development of training materials and assessment instruments, the translation of the standard into ASEAN languages, and knowledge sharing among ASEAN Member States.

Calls to Invest in In-Company Training

Calls for more investments in in-company training can be found elsewhere too: From 2018 to 2019, the ASEAN Secretariat with support from RECOTVET facilitated a regional learning process about business and industry cooperation in TVET among ASEAN Member States. As part of the process, a working group of 20 TVET champions from chambers, business associations, and companies from across ASEAN developed 45 recommendations that are compiled in the document, the *Future ASEAN Agenda for TVET*. One of the recommendations calls for the strengthening of in-company trainers.

Similarly, under the ASEAN Chairmanship of Viet Nam this year, governments, tripartite partners, the academia, and business sector jointly crafted the **ASEAN Declaration on Human Resources Development for the Changing World of Work**, which was adopted by the 36th ASEAN Summit in June 2020. The declaration calls for private sector leadership and “incentives and recognition to companies investing resources in skills training, internships and apprenticeships.”

As these high-level commitments show, in-company training is increasingly recognised in ASEAN as a means to address the region’s skills gap. But the work has only begun and cannot stop here. The digital transformation—which is at the core of RECOTVET’s work in the years 2020 to 2023—will continue to significantly influence how we learn and what skills we (need to) acquire. Lifelong learning, and with it the role of training that takes place in companies, will become even more important to elevate the employability of the young—and old—in a workforce that is increasingly at risk of being replaced by robots and artificial intelligence. ■



The Standard can be accessed at:

https://asean.org/?static_post=standard-company-trainers-asean-countries

COVID-19

SPORTS FOR A STRONGER ASEAN:

Footballers Urge Fans to Stay Healthy and Active

The COVID-19 pandemic has put sporting events on hold. Stadiums and football fields are empty, but for ASEAN, promoting sports development and healthy lifestyles will not stop.

"We are diverse, but if we stick together, we are stronger. Be active today, tomorrow and always!"

This is the key message from ASEAN football stars who joined the #BeActive video campaign jointly launched by ASEAN and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association or FIFA in July 2020. Football players from the ASEAN Member States, speaking in their local languages, encouraged citizens to lead healthy and active lifestyles amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

The campaign is the first initiative for ASEAN and FIFA since signing an agreement in November 2019 on the sidelines of the 35th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok to implement joint activities. The priority areas in the ASEAN-FIFA agreement include the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles, FIFA's Football for Schools Programme, and professional capacity-building in relation to safety and security at football matches, all of which require effective multi-stakeholder cooperation. The cooperation will be carried out through ASEAN's Senior Officials Meeting on Sports (SOMS).

"The ASEAN sports sector is currently focusing, among others, on strengthening the contribution of sports to ASEAN community-building. During this pandemic, it is important for us to work hand in hand with our key partners. We are pleased to collaborate with FIFA in this campaign to leverage the role of sports in social development," said the Chairman of the Philippine Sports Commission, William Ramirez, in his capacity as the Chair of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Sports.

The videos were produced through close collaboration between FIFA, its member associations, SOMS and the World Health Organization (WHO).

"More than ever, especially now, one thing must be clear to everyone, health comes first," stressed FIFA President Gianni Infantino. "FIFA is pleased to join forces with ASEAN and the WHO in order to raise awareness of the need to stay active and to continue to follow WHO guidance concerning hygiene and social

distancing in the face of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. COVID-19 poses multifaceted challenges to our societies, but due to our partnerships with ASEAN and the WHO we are encouraged that the football community can also play an active role in ensuring these important messages are promoted in the ASEAN region and globally. For the first time ever, we are all on the same team and together, with team spirit and positive energy, we will win."



ASEAN-FIFA #BeActive video campaign

This campaign supports the implementation of the ASEAN Work Plan on Sports 2016-2020, particularly in promoting healthy and active lifestyles and engaging sports ambassadors to encourage the growth of the sports sector in the region.

Guided by the ASEAN sports ministers and in line with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Kazan Action Plan on sport policy development, the ASEAN sports sector will focus on promoting Sport for Development and Peace and other key programmes in the next five years.

"Football and sports in general have the power to bring people together through a shared interest, promoting an active lifestyle and bringing ASEAN together as one community. They are instrumental in enhancing camaraderie amongst the youth who are the future of our ASEAN community," said ASEAN Secretary-General Dato Lim Jock Hoi. "The campaign will raise awareness amongst football fans and our larger community on the importance of leading healthy and active lifestyles." ■

**VIEWPOINT:
HARNESSING THE POWER OF
FOOTBALL FOR POSITIVE CHANGE
FATMA SAMOURA
SECRETARY GENERAL, FIFA**

On the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) partnership with ASEAN, staying healthy and active during the pandemic, and elevating the sport in the region



Photo Credit: © FIFA, © user6624752 / Freepik Premium

**Why was it important to forge the ASEAN-FIFA agreement?
What are its main goals and objectives?**

Samoura: Football has the power to unite and inspire people, as well as to bring about positive social change. It can also contribute to achieving societal development and growth which Gianni Infantino, the FIFA President, referred to during his address at the 2019 ASEAN Summit in Bangkok. The ASEAN-FIFA agreement will see both organisations work together to harness the power of football to address challenges such as a holistic education, better health, equality, and social integration.

ASEAN has a young and vibrant population with great interest in football and we look forward to working hand in hand with ASEAN, to use the beautiful game to bring about positive changes in the region, that echo ASEAN's vision of unity and solidarity among all nations and peoples of ASEAN.

The partnership covers a broad range of collaboration areas with a strong focus on education through the implementation of FIFA's Football for Schools Programme, which will aim to foster life skills and physical education through football for boys and girls in schools across the Southeast Asian region.

The joint initiative will also see ASEAN and FIFA work together on the implementation of strategies to promote healthy lifestyles and inclusive participation in football, particularly for women and marginalised communities. Other areas of the cooperation will be the promotion of child safeguarding in football, as well as the advancement of sports integrity via increased awareness raising of match manipulation and doping.

Most of Southeast Asia is crazy about football but few players in the region make it to the big leagues. How would you describe the state of the sport in the region and how is FIFA helping to promote and develop it?

Samoura: Southeast Asia is crazy about football with many people from the region passionately following European club teams and taking part in efootball through the FIFA eWorld Cup, the online version of the FIFA World Cup, where skilled gamers from around the globe battle it out for eWorld Cup glory.

FIFA wants to harness this passion and further develop football in the region, so that we will see more teams from ASEAN reach FIFA competitions at youth level, such as our Under 17 and Under 20 FIFA World Cups. This kind of experience will provide a

gateway for ASEAN teams to qualify for the ultimate FIFA competitions, the Men's and Women's FIFA World Cups.

Through tailor-made football development programmes across the ASEAN region, taking the individual needs of the national football associations into account, and our FIFA Forward programme, we hope to bring ASEAN football and ASEAN football talent to the fore.

The FIFA Forward programme provides resources and structure to deliver a state-of-the-art development programme through increased investment in development for member associations' (MA) football activities accompanied by impactful tailor-made plans to meet specific needs of each MA, and more oversight of funds so that they are used responsibly and go to the development of football.

We believe that by working with ASEAN to highlight the positive impacts of football, tailoring the FIFA Forward programme to meet the specific needs of our MA's in the ASEAN region and the expansion of the FIFA World Cup to 48 teams, ASEAN football has many exciting years ahead of it.

Can you expound on the need for professional capacity-building, in relation to safety and security at football matches?

Samoura: Football should always be played in secure and safe environments and therefore stadia and their safety and security personnel play a role of paramount importance in protecting and maintaining the safety and security of fans, players, etc.

FIFA's experience has shown that a well-structured safety and security capacity-building programme delivers the best long-term results, and we support our confederations and MA's to improve and maintain consistent levels of safety and security via:

- knowledge sharing in the field of safety and security planning, in accordance with the FIFA Stadium Safety and Security Regulations and relevant local/regional regulations
- facilitating the formulation of frameworks of safety and security plans for key areas (e.g. crowd flows, ingress, egress, player and official security, venue operations centre work, field of play protection, zoning)
- identifying gaps and agreeing on critical action points
- providing subject-matter expertise and support

It is through these measures that FIFA can help MA's and confederations to build capacity in terms of safety and security, and guide them towards maintaining the highest global standards in this field for the protection of everyone at football matches.



ASEAN Leaders witness the MOU signing between ASEAN and FIFA

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the planning and implementation of the agreement? Can you tell us more about the first initiative, a video project that you launched to promote healthy and active lifestyles among the youth? And the COVID-19 Relief Plan?

Samoura: COVID-19 has impacted football like everything else around the globe and at FIFA, we believe that it is essential to follow the guidelines

and best practices of the World Health Organization (WHO) in order to slow the spread of the disease and save lives. Football matches and training sessions have been affected by COVID-19 and on this point, I echo the words of the FIFA President, in that no football match is worth risking a life right now, and people should only hold matches when it is safe to do so.

Despite the ongoing pandemic situation, the spirit of cooperation between ASEAN and FIFA is high and enthusiasm from both sides remains strong. We are currently working on finalising the roadmap with concrete projects for immediate implementation.

In early August, the official e-Workshop on the ASEAN-FIFA Annual Collaboration Plan took place with roughly 50 participants from all ASEAN Member States, the ASEAN Secretariat and FIFA. We were of course hoping to hold a physical meeting, which was not possible due to the ongoing travel restrictions.

In the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, ASEAN and FIFA teamed up to launch a social media campaign to help pass key health messages to the wider population. Together, we launched the #BeActive videos at the end of July 2020, featuring regional football stars as part of a joint campaign encouraging ASEAN citizens to lead healthy and active lifestyles by following the recommendations of the WHO amidst the COVID-19 outbreak.

In addition, ASEAN countries will be able to benefit from FIFA's COVID-19 Relief Plan which will see a total of 1.5 billion US dollars available to assist the football community (including men's and women's professional, youth and grassroots football, through a system of combined grants and loans under strict compliance requirements) via:

- each FIFA MA benefitting from a 1 million US dollars grant to protect and restart football, and an additional 500,000 US dollars specifically for women's football
- interest-free loans of up to 5 million US dollars being made available to all MAs



ASEAN and FIFA signed a Memorandum of Understanding at the sidelines of the 35th ASEAN Summit in 2019

The fund will be supervised by a steering committee led by Olli Rehn, the Deputy Chairman of the FIFA Governance Committee, who is also the Governor of the Bank of Finland, a Member of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank, and a former Vice-President of the European Commission.

Sporting events are on hold or postponed and stadiums will likely be empty for the foreseeable future. How has football been affected by the pandemic? How can young footballers in the region use this time to keep fit and prepare for future sporting events?

Samoura: Right now FIFA wants to ensure that football is only played when safe to do so, and although this is tough, with many training sessions and matches being postponed or cancelled, we are encouraging football fans to look at other safer and more socially distant ways to be involved in the game.

The #BeActive campaign encourages people to try to lead a healthy and active lifestyle during the COVID-19 pandemic and includes advice and practical guidance from football stars from across ASEAN and encourages fans to stay active during lockdown phases through a range of activities like:

- online exercise classes
- dancing
- stretching and conditioning
- jumping rope
- muscle strength and balance training

In addition, FIFA— together with the WHO—published in May 2020 a risk assessment tool, alongside draft medical considerations for all 211 MAs and six confederations, which

aim to help facilitate the planning and resumption of football after health authorities and national governments in the relevant countries have considered it safe to do so.

The 2021 FIFA U-20 World Cup is scheduled to be held in Indonesia. How has the planning for this event been affected?

Samoura: As with other FIFA tournaments, due to COVID-19, the overall planning and milestones had to be reviewed for Indonesia 2021. Discussions and preparations for the tournament have so far been very positive and FIFA and the Local Organising Committee (LOC) are working closely with the government authorities in Indonesia to finalise the host cities and venues as well as the exact dates for the tournament.

Women's football has grown in popularity around the world. Does FIFA see any opportunities to work with ASEAN in promoting women's football in the region?

Samoura: In line with the FIFA Women's Football Strategy, FIFA has a long-term vision for the development of the women's game and is working with MAs and confederations to build on the momentum generated by last year's FIFA Women's World Cup and to further develop the sport.

Along with other upcoming women's football development initiatives that will be announced very soon, this additional financial investment will provide MAs in ASEAN and other regions with an opportunity to access dedicated funding to support women's football during the COVID-19 pandemic and further develop it once football begins to restart.

We also believe that the ninth edition of the FIFA Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand in 2023 will act as a springboard for women's football across the entire Oceania and Asia regions.

How do you see the post-COVID 19 future of football in the ASEAN region?

Samoura: Right now, it's difficult to say and if the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that planning and looking to the future is difficult until we get this disease under control. Football is not immune to these impacts and FIFA's top priority has been and will remain the health, safety, and wellbeing of all those involved in the game.

At this stage, our first priority is health and FIFA is committed to supporting football— particularly MAs, including those in the ASEAN region—to overcome the challenges they are facing. FIFA through a range of measures, including the COVID-19 Relief Plan, as well as various initiatives and campaigns to support football and fans in these difficult times, will help football in weathering the storm that is COVID-19 until brighter and safer days of football are here. ■



Further information on the #BeActive campaign can be found here:

<https://www.fifa.com/who-we-are/news/asean-fifa-and-football-stars-launch-beactive-campaign>

REIMAGINING THE POWER OF SPORTS IN ASEAN



BY LARASATI INDRAWAGITA
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When we think of sports, we immediately think of our favorite athletes and their physical prowess, and the excitement we feel as we watch them play and compete. We do not often think about sports in the same breath as peace- and community-building, or see it as a development tool.



Photo Credit: © Blanscape / Shutterstock; © torwaiphotos / FreepikPremium

But the history of sports, going back to the ancient Olympic Games in the ninth century BC, tells us that sporting competitions have been used time and again to stop wars and (re)establish diplomacy between hostile communities.

Sports has also evolved into a trillion dollar global industry to date, employing not just athletes and coaches, but millions of people involved in managing and marketing professional leagues and clubs, manufacturing sporting goods, producing sporting events, and other sports-related activities.

ASEAN is cognisant of these multiple facets of sports—its unifying power and development potential—and has made it a priority under the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025.

Community-building and Sports

In ASEAN, we have seen firsthand how sports fosters unity in diversity and strengthens mutual understanding, be it through the SEA Games, ASEAN Para

Games, ASEAN School Games, or ASEAN Football Federation’s Championships. On this basis and in alignment with the global commitment on promoting sports for development and peace, the Philippines as the Chair of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Sports aptly announced “One Vision, One Goal, One Community: Strengthening Unity Through Sports” as its chairpersonship theme for the period 2019-2020.

In 2019, ASEAN Member States in collaboration with the Government of Norway and the nongovernment organisation, Right to Play, began implementing the ASEAN Youth Sports for Development, Peace and Leadership (S4DPL) project. This ongoing project aims to develop life skills among ASEAN youth leaders. These youth leaders are also empowered to take the lead in





promoting a sense of ASEAN Community, advocating for healthy lifestyles, and supporting crime prevention through sports projects at the community level.

In light of ASEAN's commitment to advance sports for development and peace and against the backdrop of the Tokyo 2021 Olympic and Paralympic Games, ASEAN is also working in partnership with Japan to promote the participation of women and girls in sports and a forthcoming initiative on the capacity development for physical education teachers.

The Fifth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Sports in 2019 agreed that in the next five years, ASEAN will focus on multiple dimensions in sports, namely, sports for development and peace, sports for all, sports integrity, as well as sports science, sports tourism, and sports industry. The composition of priorities signals that ASEAN perceives sports as a platform for social development and as an industry.

Sports, Livelihood, and Development

Sports does not only offer a lucrative career path for professional athletes, but generates business and creates employment as well. Coaches, referees, team managers, trainers, sports medicine and sports science practitioners, facility managers, ticket sellers, security staff, sports commentators, production staff, and merchandise sellers are just some of the people who populate the world of sports.

Except for a few countries, the contribution of sports industry to ASEAN economies—and the world of work—has been largely overlooked, or has yet to be assessed. A systematic reckoning of the economic value of sports at the national and regional levels and an assessment of the welfare and wellbeing of workers in this industry may be necessary to unlock the sports industry's full potential. Such an initiative is consistent with the **Declaration on Human Resources Development and the Changing World of Work**, in which the ASEAN Leaders pledged to enhance the leadership of business and industry in human resources development and craft cohesive labour and economic policies that will lead to job creation and enterprise competitiveness.

The development of promising athletes remains an important aspect of the sports industry and as such, a grand roadmap may

be needed to ensure improvement of and complementarity among physical education modules in schools, local/grassroots sports programmes, and recruitment process for professional sports. There is also a need to create a decent work environment for athletes, and address issues of pay gap within and across sports and between genders, unstable income, and inadequate social protection, to draw more young people to a sporting career.

Technology has impacted sports over the past few decades in terms of improving the design of sport apparel (e.g. swimwear)

and equipment (e.g. concussion helmet) and analysis of an athlete's physical fitness and performance. Technological advancements in the Fourth Industrial Revolution will only intensify technology's role and likely lead to new types of businesses and jobs. Artificial intelligence in coaching and training as well as virtual reality in game simulations and e-sports are some examples that are worth exploring.

Sports in ASEAN will bring people closer together and offer more opportunities for all in the years ahead. As it has been successfully applied to tourism and culture, it is timely for development actors to also shift their narrow perspective of sports as merely recreational, and reimagine how to harness its power to contribute to ASEAN's socio-economic development. ■

“**Sports in ASEAN will bring people closer together and offer more opportunities for all in the years ahead. As it has been successfully applied to tourism and culture, it is timely for development actors to also shift their narrow perspective of sports as merely recreational, and reimagine how to harness its power to contribute to ASEAN's socio-economic development.**”

Viewpoint:

Joseph Isaac Schooling



JOSEPH ISAAC SCHOOLING won the first Olympic gold medal for his home country Singapore in the Rio 2016 Summer Olympics. He beat legendary American swimmer Michael Phelps in the 100m butterfly, and broke the Olympic record that Phelps previously held. Schooling started swimming at an early age and has won in many other international competitions. He is a philanthropist and public figure who has promoted swimming in Singapore and the rest of the region. The 26-year-old swimmer talks to *The ASEAN* about what it takes to be a world class athlete and how he is gearing up for the Tokyo Olympics in 2021.



Photo Credit: © Joseph Isaac Schooling

The ASEAN: You started swimming at a very young age, 4-5 years old, why did you choose that sport? What motivated you to get into the pool every day to train for hours?

Schooling: I started swimming when I was 4 and started competing at 5 years old. I have always been interested in all types of sports. I come from a sporting family. My granduncle, Lloyd Valberg, was the first and only athlete to represent Singapore at the London 1948 Olympics and both my parents represented their countries as well in international sporting tournaments. So you can say that sports is in my blood. I also enjoy golf, tennis, table-tennis, badminton, and when I went to school, we had to choose only one sport. I chose swimming and I guess the rest is history.

Determination, passion, and hard work is what keeps me going. Those sound very cliché, which they are, but in reality, it's hard to put in those three things day in and day out. Not many people will want to wake up for morning practice at 5 in morning, then

go for another session in the afternoon and add to that, sessions in the gym as well. Day in and day out. But it's all about the passion and how badly you want it.

You had to move to the United States to train and compete, why was it necessary for you to make the move? What were the challenges you faced during those times? How did you manage to balance school work, training, and competing?

Schooling: We made the huge decision together as a family to make the move to the US when I was 13/14 years old. At that time, it was the only choice to be made if I was really serious about taking my swimming to the next level or a few stages of where I was at that time. It was hard—hard leaving friends, very hard leaving family members, and to be in a boarding school in the first two years. Moving away from home at such a young age meant I had to grow up and learn to be independent.

My parents laid a very strong foundation and have a great part to play in building

“Determination, passion, and hard work is what keeps me going. Those sound very cliché, which they are, but in reality, it's hard to put in those three things day in and day out.”

me as a person— how you treat other people, your manners. All that come into play and my parents have always given me the opportunity to discuss and make the decisions for myself. They're not too constricting and guide me along the right path and so I definitely have my parents to thank for instilling all the right values and belief in me.

I am also very fortunate to have the opportunity to work with some of the best coaches who knew how to get the best out of me and how to help me achieve my goals.

Describe to us your journey to the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics. Did you ever think that you could beat your childhood idol, Michael Phelps, in the 100m butterfly competition; beat an Olympic record; and bring home Singapore's first Olympic gold medal?

Schooling: My journey to 2016 was an up and down roller coaster but I learnt a lot of lessons along the way. Lessons that also had to be translated into my daily life. But regarding having the confidence to beat Michael in the 100m Butterfly and breaking the Olympic record, I would say yes. I had raced him a couple of times throughout the year (in the lead up to the Olympics), I knew that if I could be ahead during the in-season competition, I would have a really good shot when the Olympics came around. So I was always confident and never gave up hope.



Laszlo Cseh (HUN), Chad le Clos (RSA), Michael Phelps (USA), and Joseph Schooling (SGP) at the Rio 2016 Summer Olympics

Many people say that was the pinnacle of your career. How did that defining moment change you as an athlete and as a person? What are the next goals you have set out for yourself?

Schooling: I remember going through a gamut of emotions when I realised I've won the gold medal. That was probably one of the best feelings ever and one that I will cherish forever and will always spur me on and keep me focused on achieving future higher goals. There is still some way for me to go in my career. I am focusing on the Olympics for next year to defend my title in the 100m Butterfly. I am also focusing on qualifying for other events, especially the relay event. It would be the first time the Singapore's men's relay team (swimming) will feature in the Olympics if we qualify.

The Tokyo Olympics have been postponed to 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. How has that affected your sport, your physical and mental training?

Schooling: Despite the Tokyo Olympics being postponed, I think you can find positives out of every negative. It gives me

an extra year to get physically and mentally stronger, working on the things that can get me to where I want to be in 2021. Although we've had to do things a bit differently, "different" doesn't mean we can't do other things to get me to the same spot I wanted to be in. So I'm looking at the extra year as a positive boost for myself.

For the young people who look up to you and would like to follow in your footsteps, what will you tell them about how to deal with challenges and achieve their goals? What would you advise them to do while sporting events are on hold and they are unable to train and compete?

Schooling: I'd tell them to love what you do, be passionate about it. If you have that mind-set and that perseverance, nothing can really stop you, or anyone. I'd say just keep working at it. There are always ways to work around these situations. The environment or circumstances may have changed but your goal hasn't changed, so keep working towards it and be creative. Work hard, never give up.

“ I believe it's important to give back because you always have to go back to your roots. My journey to the Olympics, while it was mostly enabled through my Mum and Dad and also on my own accord, we did have a lot of help from external parties. Whether it's through organisations or scholarships to help fund me through my school and my training.

You have donated your time, celebrity status and funds to several charities. Why do you believe that it is important to give back?

Schooling: I believe it's important to give back because you always have to go back to your roots. My journey to the Olympics, while it was mostly enabled through my Mum and Dad and also on my own accord, we did have a lot of help from external parties. Whether it's through organisations or scholarships to help fund me through my school and my training. Being a world-class athlete is not only time consuming but also very expensive and you always need strong support behind you at all times. Right now, being in the position that I am, I think it's fundamentally important to give back to budding athletes and also the athletes who might not be in as lucky position as I was and try to help them realise their hopes and dreams. Not everyone is going to be an Olympic champion but I believe it's amazing to help as many people as possible realise their potential, whether it being gold medals or different breakthroughs in other avenues of life.

What do you hope to see for the development of sports, not just in Singapore, but in the rest of the Southeast Asian region? How can athletes and sports be given more support?

Schooling: We have a huge population in Southeast Asia, and within that there are obviously different facets of talent that can be tapped and nurtured. I believe everyone is talented in a different way and in their chosen sport, be it golf, tennis etc. I believe athletes need a solid atmosphere, good foundation and obviously strong support pushing them, allowing them to elevate themselves to the level they need to be at, to compete against the world's best. ■

The ASEAN thanks the Sports Division of the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth Singapore for making this interview possible.

ASEAN IMPACT CHALLENGE:

Young Social Entrepreneurs Imagine a Sustainable Economic Future for ASEAN

BY ASEAN-USAID PROSPECT

(PARTNERSHIP FOR REGIONAL OPTIMIZATION WITHIN THE SOCIO-CULTURAL AND POLITICAL SECURITY COMMUNITIES)

Imagine a world where economies put a premium on sustainability through the elimination of waste and the efficient use of resources. Young entrepreneurs in ASEAN are not only imagining such a world, but coming up with innovative ideas to take advantage of the new principle of “circular economy.”

The 2019 ASEAN Impact Challenge (AIC)—an annual programme to identify, engage, and support innovators from ASEAN—provided a platform for entrepreneurs to develop product ideas intended to build a more resilient economic system aimed at eliminating waste and reuse of resources. Last year’s challenge presented opportunities to identify and strengthen innovations with proven impact, specifically targeting achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Under the theme “Circular Futures: Innovations for a Circular Economy,” the AIC emphasised future-proof innovations to promote the ASEAN development agenda and commitment to strengthening cooperation on regional and global challenges embodied by the SDGs.

Now in its 5th year, the AIC engages local partners across all 10 ASEAN Member States, inviting them to nominate innovators who have developed both early- and scale-stage innovations to participate in the challenge. Selected finalists join an intensive

two-month accelerator programme, receiving mentorship through selected partners to help them prepare for the Regional Finals. Through the process, innovators are matched with multi-sector actors from government, private sector, and academia who provide guidance and support, particularly focusing on how innovations deliver on achievement of the SDGs. The programme also facilitates cross-border collaboration among participants to build knowledge and promote a spirit of volunteerism amongst those who want to contribute to achieving the social impact that the ventures aim to achieve. At each country level, teams compete to become regional finalists where they can pitch their proven innovations and impact models.

To date, the AIC has garnered a digital reach of over 70 million impressions, discovered more than 1,000 innovations, galvanised over 80 partnerships, and awarded 60 finalist innovations. Impact Hub Kuala Lumpur, the lead organiser and host of the AIC, has

both a private sector as well as social motivation. While these innovations stemming from the AIC contribute to the economies within ASEAN, they also provide a growing number of promising innovations and interventions that can change the world.

ASEAN’s Senior Officials Meeting on Youth (SOMY) in collaboration with United States through the USAID-ASEAN Partnership for Regional Optimization within the Socio-Cultural and Political Security Communities (PROSPECT), Impact Hub Kuala

Lumpur, and the ASEAN Foundation hosted the 2019 AIC Regional Finals in Bangkok on 31 October– 4 November 2019. For the first time, the AIC was officially endorsed by an ASEAN body, the SOMY. It also specifically targeted young innovators or Start Impact Innovators from the region to tap into business expertise of potential investors, and pitch their sustainable business ideas—ranging from high-protein cricket powder to incentivising recycling through a lucky draw raffle. In 2019, 20 entrepreneurs representing all 10 AMS were shortlisted to participate in the AIC Regional Finals.



A BIOPS representative answers a question from Mr. Abri Eko Noerjanto, representative from SOMY Indonesia



Dr. Shariha Khalid Erichsen, co-founder of Impact Hub (far left), grants the Start Impact Challenge award to BIOPS representatives, Mr. Fahri (middle-left) and Mr. Dally. Also in photos are Mr. Setio Soemeri, Program Manager of ASEAN-USAID PROSPECT (middle-right) and Ms. Tongja Thanachanan, Director of C-ASEAN (far right)

To help finalists prepare to pitch their ventures to potential investors and partners, the first two days of the Regional Finals focused on skills and knowledge building, including how to effectively communicate their sustainable business concepts. The workshop featured presentations from experts on the circular economy, impact-based storytelling, scaling strategies, and how to effectively partner with private sector players. During the workshop, the 20 Start Impact innovators also had an opportunity to meet entrepreneurs from Digital Big Bang and the ASEAN Start-up Hack-a-thon, who shared practical guidance from their own successful start-up journeys.

After the workshop, on 2 November, all AIC 2019 regional finalists from both Start-Impact Innovators (early stage) and Scale-Impact Innovators (ventures older than 2 years with minimum working capital of 100,000 US dollars) delivered demo pitches of their circular economy start-ups to a panel of judges comprised of representatives from SOMY, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the private sector. The teams also had a chance to hear from start-ups as well as established private sector players, such as Unilever and SCG, about their initiatives related to the

“ While these innovations stemming from the AIC contribute to the economies within ASEAN, they also provide a growing number of promising innovations and interventions that can change the world. ”

circular economy. Panelists highlighted the importance of building trust, learning from failure, and supporting the larger circular economy and social enterprise community.

SOMY representatives who attended this workshop have stated that this type of youth social entrepreneurship platform was effective in empowering youth social entrepreneurs in their efforts to support the development of their countries. In particular, the SOMY representative from the Philippines, Mr. Juan Carlos

Marquez, stated that it “was a very good opportunity for young entrepreneurs to showcase their business concepts which are innovative and sustainable. It gives recognition and drives our young entrepreneurs to do more. Continue to establish the strong involvement of SOMY in future activities.”

On 3 November, Start Impact Innovators were also invited to the first day of the 2019 World Environmental Education Congress, an international meeting point for all public and private stakeholders involved with education for environment and sustainable development. At the congress, AIC finalists pitched their concepts and connected to a wider audience of corporate social responsibility representatives, UN agencies, and universities.

AIC winners were also announced at the congress—BIOPS Agrotekno from Indonesia (Start Impact category) and Bambuhay from the Philippines (Scale Impact category). BIOPS Agrotekno is the brainchild of six young tech students, including graduates from the Institute of Technology Bandung. This agritech start-up aims to harness the power of data to help Indonesian farmers. BIOPS Agrotekno started when three of its founders—Nugroho Hari Wibowo, Dally Chaerul, and Malikul Ikram—saw an opportunity to use technology solutions to increase farmers’ agricultural productivity amidst a changing environment with unpredictable weather patterns. They helped farmers improve irrigation practices on their farms. BIOPS Business Director, Dally Chaerul, explained, “One farmer told us he used songs to decide how long to water his fields. But what if one day the song is very long, and another day, the song is very short?” BIOPS solution was to develop a device that ensured optimal water supply for plant growth. By connecting weather stations with an automatic irrigation system, BIOPS “Encomotion” device uses a patented algorithm to calculate specific water needs for a farm. Initial prototypes were refined with a grant from the Indonesian Ministry of Research and Technology Business Incubation programme. Now, the devices are being adopted by farmers across Java and East Nusa Tenggara.

ASEAN and USAID will continue collaborating to support young social entrepreneurs in the region. ■



"In today's world, young people are facing more pressure in their life. The artwork reveals the versatility of the youth in today's world to adapt to present pressures and meet challenges."
Vania Djunaidi, Indonesia

Conversations

Young innovators and entrepreneurs who empower their communities

LOUISE MABULO

Social Entrepreneur

At just 21 years old, Louise Mabulo is an award-winning chef, farmer, and public speaker. Her culinary career started after joining the Philippine version of the popular tv show, “Junior Master Chef.”

Mabulo shifted to agriculture advocacy, after witnessing the devastating impact of Typhoon Nock-Ten on her hometown, San Fernando, Camarines Sur. She founded the “Cacao Project,” a social venture that supports farmers in sustainable agriculture. Mabulo is a Young Champion of the Earth under United Nations Environment Program, Outstanding Farmer of the Year 2018, and a Friend of Humanity Awardee under Friendship Ambassadors Foundation. In April 2020, she landed a spot in the prestigious Forbes Asia Under 30 list.

IN HER OWN WORDS:

“My town was an agricultural town and I had always been adamant about advocating farm to table food and promoting local produce for Filipino food and it’s been something that’s kind of always on my mind. So, from Junior Masterchef, I got launched unexpectedly into a culinary career at a very, very young age. I was looked at by a lot of chefs and mentors who wanted to kind of develop this young culinary prodigy and I felt that it wasn’t enough to just be a chef.

“I decided to buy cows and then slowly integrated other things, grew my own ingredients and food. I was just so passionate about agriculture and growing things yourself. And that was what I noticed when Typhoon Nock-Ten came in, that was why I knew I had to help the farmers because I was affected by that, and I saw how devastating that impact would be, especially if your livelihood was fully dependent on producing food.

“We were looking at cacao because after the storms you could see that they were still standing, the trees still had their pods on them, which was surprising, considering the strength of the storm. And not just that but we had to look at crops that were profitable with a high demand in the markets,



we were looking at cacao because after the storms you could see that they were still standing, the trees still had their pods on them, which was surprising, considering the strength of the storm.

that people would actually buy them from the farmers and they would be assured of a market. And it had to be something that was suited to our ecosystem.

“With the Cacao Project, our aim is to promote regenerative agriculture and its resilience for livelihoods. We have been doing training programmes that train farmers on sustainable farming and

growing cocoa, and teaching them about farming practices like natural farming practices or bringing back traditional methods, and promoting that in general. In the end, what we do is we consolidate and connect the farmers with international buyers or local buyers who are looking for cacao. We make sure they get paid a fair price and we show them how to value their product, how much their product is worth. Because a lot of farmers here are kind of taken advantage of by middlemen or people who just want to get the cheapest crops and harvests that they can.

“Well, we’ve worked with over 200 hundred farmers and we’ve planted over 85,000 thousand trees over a span of 85 hectares of land. And thanks to this, a lot of the soil fertility has been improving throughout the town. We’ve seen revivals of streams and water sources because of the tree planting efforts and because of diversifying the crops.

Agriculture is considered one of the most unsustainable industries because it has a lot of greenhouse gas emissions, it pollutes a lot of areas, and it causes a lot of deforestation. But with sustainable and regenerative agriculture, we’re integrating it into forests and towards sustaining land caves so that it’s intrinsically sustainable. Food is something necessary and we’ve



been farming for ages, but it's just in the past 50 years or so that agriculture has become unsustainable because of mass production and use of chemicals.

"Early on our challenge was getting farmers to understand what our mission was and to see the vision in the long term, because, if a girl like me shows up on a farm, people won't exactly take me with much credibility because there are stereotypes around farming here. So it's teaching farmers about the possibilities of agriculture—that it's profitable, that there's so much opportunity in it—and to see themselves differently and to disassemble these stereotypes and negative stigmas we often associate to agriculture.

"ONE OF THE MAIN MESSAGES THAT I ALWAYS TELL PEOPLE—WHETHER IT'S IN TALKS, NO MATTER HOW OLD THEY ARE, WHEREVER THEY ARE—IS THE IMPORTANCE OF STEWARDSHIP. IN ORDER TO BE A LEADER, YOU HAVE TO SERVE, AND IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO MAKE A GREAT IMPACT, YOU HAVE TO BE ON THE GROUND AND EMPATHISE WITH PEOPLE AND WORK ON ISSUES THAT ARE REALLY CLOSE TO YOU.



I wouldn't have been able to work with farmers if I hadn't been living here, and been able to empathise with them because I grew my own crops. And it's important to work on issues that are not only close to you, but have a great impact within your community or within your circle that you work with.

"A lot of farmers are really encouraged by the increased in profits that they are expecting to see, and not just from cocoa, but a lot of the crops that we gave them. The idea of

diversified crops and teaching them how to regenerate and revive soil so that it produces more income for them and more harvest, I think that's one of the things that really motivates people.

"I think for the whole region, I hope that more young people can come to view agriculture as a noble profession with lots of potential. I'm really overwhelmed that Forbes would come towards us, and choose to put us on the front page of their magazines, especially since that's something that's often associated with billionaires and the really elite class of people. So, it's a huge honor and it's a giant step not just for me, but also for the farming communities here in ASEAN and here in the Philippines.

"One of the things that these awards have really done is, it's empowered a lot of farmers to view themselves and change their view of the industry. A lot of the farmers here are often associated with poverty. They want to get out of an agriculture career. But now, they're kind of encouraged to continue it and they see a new vision for its potential in the country and for themselves, as well. ■

Interviewed by Mary Kathleen Quiano-Castro

JOSEPH PHAN VAN QUYEN

Multimedia Art Entrepreneur

For 25-year-old entrepreneur Joseph Phan Van Quyen, being young means having endless opportunities to contribute to communities.

He established Jos Creative (www.joscreative.com) to channel his passion for multimedia art. His interest in human-centered design that creates solutions and social impacts prompted him to set up Ethnicity in 2018, a digital conservation project that preserves the patterns on the ethnic minorities' textiles. With this, he aims to promote mutual understanding among rural and urban communities to create positive change in the lives of ethnic minorities in Viet Nam.

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"I was born and raised in Lam Dong province. Growing up among the ethnic groups gave me a deep understanding about their struggles with life due to poverty. I established 'The Fingerprint Volunteer Group' when I was a high school student to raise money to help the ethnic minorities improve their living standards and education. But I think the circle of giving and receiving is not sustainable for future generations.

"After graduating from high school, I stayed in the village to become a coffee and tea picker. But after a year, I started to think about who I wanted to be in life, and what I wanted to change. I decided to move to Ho Chi Minh City when I was 21, and this decision is my biggest accomplishment to date. I worked for about a year in the city to save money for my studies. I graduated from college and got a diploma in multimedia, and established Jos Creative. During my studies, I started to learn about the world and discover myself. I participated in many ASEAN programmes for youth and was chosen to represent Viet Nam to meet the former US President Barack Obama last year for a roundtable discussion organised by the Obama Foundation.

"Then I noticed how youth in the city are influenced by other cultures; that their own cultural identity is fading away. I founded Ethnicity to bridge the gap among urban and rural youth, and promote mutual understanding among them, which is fundamental for a more sustainable collaboration. Through the promotion of online libraries of brocade's patterns, we pull the urban and rural closer together and indirectly introduce the



With Ethnicity, Joseph Quyen preserves cultural heritage while promoting mutual understanding among rural and urban youth

I FOUNDED ETHNICITY TO BRIDGE THE GAP AMONG URBAN AND RURAL YOUTH, AND PROMOTE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AMONG THEM, WHICH IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE COLLABORATION

traditional brocade weaving to the tourist to preserve this tradition as well as increase income.

"My team and I organise field trips to my hometown to do research on the patterns. We started with the K'Ho and Ma people who account for over 25 per cent of the province's population to get a deep understanding of the message behind each pattern. We have around 400 patterns in our digital library. We mix the shapes and colours to create new patterns for the

modern creative industry and design ready-to-use templates for CV and business cards, for example. We also have illustrations on cultural activities of the ethnic minorities. I want these patterns to appear more so people can learn about the patterns as they learn about the culture. The ethnic minority people are also happy as they get noticed more.

"COVID-19 affected my works too. But I took this as an opportunity to expand digital skills. I launched Jos Foundation during the pandemic to support young people who want to make changes to the communities. Young people have lots of energy and ideas, but they do not have funding or mentorship to do it. The Foundation is a platform to give such mentorship to young people. Ethnicity is also now supported by Jos Foundation. It is a challenge for me now to balance my business and social projects. I would love to focus on community projects, but I need money to fund them.

"Many people told me that I should take care of myself, focus on my study before taking care of others. But as young people, we have a lot of energy and can do a lot of things. We just need support, and we want to be recognised about what we are doing. If our voices are heard, we can do more than what we have done. We can dedicate more to the communities." ■

Interviewed by Novia D. Rulistia

LIM CHONG TEE

Environmental Engineer and Water Consultant

Lim Chong Tee, 29, is the co-founder and Chief Marketing Officer of WaterROAM, a Singapore-based social enterprise that develops portable water filtration solutions which provide quick access to clean water for people in rural communities and disaster-relief sites.

Lim met with the other two co-founders, David Pong and Vincent Loka, at a water initiative programme in the National University of Singapore. Sharing the same passion, the trio founded WaterROAM in 2014. Some of their projects include helping the communities affected by Typhoon Haima in the Philippines, floods in Lao PDR, and Lombok earthquake in Indonesia. So far, their innovations have reached 100,000 people across 38 countries. WaterROAM focuses on developing technologies to help improve the livelihood of individuals, and ultimately ending prolonged thirst in the world.

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"I like traveling around Asia, being on road trips, and backpacking to different areas. During my journey, I saw children not going to school for various reasons. Often, it is because they are sick as they drink water that is not clean. I really wanted to do something about it, as I have always had a strong passion with water. Together with David and Vincent, we decided to develop a simple tool that can purify water.

"The first few years were really challenging; it was about identifying the needs on the ground and developing our first solution. We had to find the financial resources and technological expertise to develop a water filter. It has never been so personal for us until we started working on the ground and we started feeling that there was a great need out there. We talked to the communities to understand their needs, we started developing the prototypes, and went through many rounds of product iterations. Instead of building a simple machine, the prototype was kind of clunky and hard to transport around. So, we streamlined our design to create simple, portable, durable, and affordable systems.

"We were using any available resources in the beginning. We were thankful that our professors allowed us to build up prototypes and test them so long as we submitted our assignments. Singapore has



Lim Chong Tee shows children how WaterROAM's portable water filtration works at a project in Cambodia

RIGHT NOW, WE TRY TO GIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO OUR TEAMMATES TO BE ABLE TO TRAVEL AROUND, GO ON THE GROUND, AND GET FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE ON WHY IT NEEDS TO BE A WATER PROVIDER OR WATER CONSULTANT.

an ecosystem that allows for innovation, and we were shamelessly applying for grants. We got rejected more than we were accepted for some of the grants, but we never stopped. We took the feedback and improved our designs.

"When I started, I was 23 years old, had no credentials as I was just a student. People had doubts, and it might be hard for organisations to trust you wholesale. But slowly we earned the trust. There are people who do not trust us, but there are advisors who offer their knowledge and experience. Where we are today is thanks to these people and organisations.

"One of the most enjoyable parts of WaterROAM is where I can travel and feel very alive. Traveling can be tiring, but when you see the works being done, it is rewarding. Right now, we try to give opportunities to our teammates to be able to travel around, go on the ground, and get first-hand experience on why it needs to be a water provider or water consultant.

"But we had to stop traveling due to COVID-19. We have taken this period to reorganise and re-strategise. We develop virtual educational content that can help bridge the gap on the ground, such as simple instructional videos on how to deploy the system and fix up the water filter easily. During this time, we want to be able to provide clean water to more communities with no proper sanitary and water infrastructure to keep them safe.

"Six years on, we're still thirsty for more. Climate change is still one of the biggest threats, whether you believe it not, and underprivileged communities will feel the brunt of it. WaterROAM is committed to developing technology that can help tackle this issue, and help improve the lives of those impacted. If we can have more collaboration, this problem could be well managed within our generation." ■

Interviewed by Novia D. Rulistia

AUNG MYINT MYAT KYAW

Programmer and Cyber Security Specialist

Aung Myint Myat Kyaw is a fourth year university student with a passion for all things digital.

In 2019, he was selected by the ASEAN Foundation to receive training on computer science education under its ASEAN Digital Innovation Programme (ADIP), a partnership programme with Microsoft which aims to create a generation of future-ready youth in the region. This training allowed him to conduct similar training courses for scores of Myanmar youth who lack digital skills.

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

“When I was child, my father bought a computer for business and this started my interest in computers. I started learning how computers work and I became interested in computer software. At first my parents didn't like me spending a lot of time on the computer. They wanted me to focus on my studies and pass my exams. After I got some scholarship on programming from the training center, New Horizons, they began to support my interest in programming. I started learning programming in 2017.

“Aside from programming, I am also knowledgeable about Internet security and privacy. I started learning about cyber security and data privacy in 2019. The movie *The Great Hack* and *Do not Track Me* made me interested in them. I love to educate people about how to safeguard their privacy on the Internet and about digital tools.

“Currently, I am creating a chatbot for digital security as well as a digital helpline. The chatbot for digital safety and security that I am working on is a project for a nongovernment organisation called MIDO. People need to know how their data in the Internet are obtained and how many types of data they are giving away to different Internet sites. Most people don't know the amount of personal data they make available on social media. In Myanmar, 97 per cent of Internet users use Facebook. Many also experience cyber-bullying, blackmail, etc., everyday. We are focusing on giving digital knowledge and help through this project.



Aung Myint Myat Kyaw has made it his mission to teach Myanmar youth about programming and cyber safety

PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW HOW THEIR DATA IN THE INTERNET ARE OBTAINED AND HOW MANY TYPES OF DATA THEY ARE GIVING AWAY TO DIFFERENT INTERNET SITES. MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW THE AMOUNT OF PERSONAL DATA THEY MAKE AVAILABLE ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

“When ASEAN Foundation sent me an invitation to serve as a trainer under ADIP, I was very excited. It is my greatest achievement so far. I became a trainer for online ASEAN coding classes. This programme is very good for Myanmar youth who want to learn a programming language, especially now that many are staying at home due to COVID-19 situation.

“I also work as a teacher, handling Grade 11 Mathematics and Physics, while I study. I got high marks in Mathematics and Physics in my matriculation exam and so my neighbors asked me to teach their children. I began working as a home teacher. I have been teaching for three years now. I have some passion for teaching and I love to give my knowledge to others.

“In Myanmar, there are many young people with a university degree but they don't know what to do for work or profession. It is a major problem for the youth in Myanmar and a challenge for the educational system too. As for me, I tried self-learning on the Internet and attended other training centers.

“If ASEAN wants to support the youth in Myanmar, it should provide training for professionals and conduct livelihood workshops for the youth. In addition, it should encourage youth cultural exchanges between ASEAN countries since it leads to personal development and it is an effective way to learn about neighboring countries in the region. ■

Interviewed by Joanne B. Agbisit



Photo Credit: © Ramchad Tiongson

"The youth of today are equipped with a variety of skills; if used and honed properly, they will propel and help build a better future for all Filipinos." — **Ramchad Tiongson, Philippines**

Shifting Currents

New study on managing technology's impact on ASEAN's workforce
Improving literacy in the region

TECHNOLOGY, A BOON FOR THE ASEAN WORKFORCE?



BY JOANNE B. AGBISIT
AND THE ASEAN EDITORIAL TEAM

Millions of jobs will be lost across industries in ASEAN as we hurtle towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). Numerous studies have predicted this, but is it an inevitable disaster? Will it derail the development trajectory of less developed economies?

Not necessarily, according to a new ASEAN study titled “Managing Technology’s Implications on Work, Workers, and Employment Relationships in ASEAN.”

The study noted that there are three technological trends and disruptions that ASEAN governments must address to ensure that their workforce is prepared for 4IR. These trends are changing the global work environment and provide a preview of what could be in store for us on a larger scale in the 4IR era.

First is the automation of routine-intensive work which has begun impacting the

manufacturing, services, and retail sectors. Technologies such as 3D printing, cobots (collaborative robots), and sewbots (sewing robots) are now prevalent in many manufacturing subsectors, such as electronic and electrical as well as textile, clothing, and footwear. Cloud computing and artificial intelligence are also now increasingly used in the business process outsourcing industry.

While these automation technologies will increase productivity and profits, they are also expected to erode the region’s traditional competitive advantage: low-cost workforce. Fifty-six per cent of all jobs in five



Photo Credit: © Sergey Nivens / Shutterstock



As more industries turn to automation and digitalisation and with the emergence of frontier technologies, the demand for people with abilities to design, build, operate, manage, troubleshoot, and upgrade various technologies will increase.

can emanate from technological advancements. The rise of the platform economy portends this third important trend. Platform economy refers to commercial transactions mediated by digital or internet-based platforms.

These platforms act as matchmakers between buyers and sellers, or clients/contractors and service providers.

In Southeast Asia, the most popular homegrown platforms are Grab and Go-Jek, which both started as ride-hailing apps but have since branched out to become multi-service platforms. Apart from these location-based platforms, cloud-based platforms such as Freelancer.com—in which work could be solicited and done remotely—are also gaining traction among young people in the region.

Platforms present a conundrum to governments as they do not conform to traditional forms of employment that are governed by existing laws. Platform companies are not regarded as employers

ASEAN Member States, namely, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam, are said to be at risk of automation in the next decade or so. Among the most vulnerable are workers in the garment industry of Indonesia and Cambodia, the automotive and auto parts manufacturing in Thailand, and the business process outsourcing sector in the Philippines and Malaysia.

Second, the shift to a knowledge-oriented economy requires a technologically competent workforce. As more industries turn to automation and digitalisation and with the emergence of frontier technologies, the demand for people with abilities to design, build, operate, manage,

troubleshoot, and upgrade various technologies will increase. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that ASEAN economies will create 14 million new high-skilled occupations by 2025. Whether ASEAN workers can match the skill requirements of these occupations remains to be seen. An ILO survey of 4,000 enterprises in 2016 painted a bleak picture—the region has a shortage of available skilled workers to operate new technologies, hampering technological adoption.

Ominous warnings about job displacement often fail to highlight the new forms of employment and work arrangement that

Top

More business process outsourcing companies are poised for automation in the coming years, potentially displacing thousands of low-skilled workers

since payment to service providers comes from clients and a portion of the fee goes to the platform. Yet, some platform companies act like employers in that they set the base pay, provide bonuses or incentives, and can discipline erring service providers. On the other hand, service providers also do not strictly qualify as self-employed workers because their fee is often determined by the client and/or platform and their ability to secure more work and receive incentives depends on customer reviews and ratings which are often posted on the platforms. Given the peculiarities of platform work, the following worker-related issues have emerged: Who should take responsibility for workers' social protection and welfare? Do platforms entice workers away from formal employment which is regulated and guarantees social protection, or do they give otherwise fragmented, self-employed workers an opportunity to connect, organise, and bargain collectively? Does platform work benefit only those with access to technology and have digital skills?

The study mentioned several ASEAN declarations that provide the broad strokes of how Member States intend to respond to these ongoing technological developments and challenges. In the **ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection**, for instance, Member States expressed their commitment to expanding the coverage and improving the quality of their social protection programmes. Similarly, in the **Vientiane Declaration on Transition from Informal Employment to Formal Employment towards Decent Work Promotion in ASEAN**, Member States committed to strengthen their human resources policies and programmes, particularly in the areas of technical vocational education and training, skills development, and lifelong learning.

The study said that Member States must hunker down to translate these commitments into concrete actions and must be pursued in cooperation with businesses, trade unions, and civil society in order to succeed.

One action that Member States can take is to delineate the responsibility for welfare provision. A universal model of social protection, one that is not tied to a person's employment status or on

traditional employer-employee relationship, is ideal. However, given the different fiscal capabilities of Member States, some should consider a "hybrid strategy that entails universal provision of some benefits, while holding employers or technology intermediaries, and workers themselves accountable for others."

Another measure is to treat formal education and skills training as part of a continuum rather than as two separate activities. This system requires the integration of digital and 21st-century



Grab and Go-Jek drivers are among the emerging category of workers in ASEAN's platform economy

skills in basic education and industry-led programmes for skilling, reskilling and upskilling workers. This will ensure that workers can quickly adapt to shifts in technology.

Meanwhile, to maximise the gains from the rising platform economy and minimise the adverse effects on workers, the study said that Member States must carry out a number of interventions. One of these is to explore the possibility of imposing taxes on the platforms' profits which can be earmarked for workers' welfare, and/or the viability of mandating platform firms to contribute to social protection schemes for platform workers.

Other measures include recognising the rights of platform workers to organise and enter into collective bargaining in the absence of legislation governing platform employment, and ensuring that female platform workers have equal access to work opportunities and are not discriminated in terms of work conditions and pay.

For Member States to develop informed policies on the platform economy, the study further recommended that governments generate relevant data on

platform workers, such as their working hours, earnings, occupational safety, and health. This may be done through data-sharing arrangements between the public and private sectors and by including a new module in the country's labor force survey. The data collected can be the basis for establishing formal legal categories for platform economy workers and determining the effectiveness of using platforms as a site for collecting appropriate revenue and social security contributions from platform users and workers.

If Member States carry out these interventions, they can turn technological threats into opportunities and offset the potential negative impact of technology on the labour and employment sector.

The study is set to be released this 2020. ■

LITERACY FOR ALL IN ASEAN



BY KIRAN SAGOO, PhD,
AND THE ASEAN EDITORIAL TEAM

As we move into a new technological age with new challenges, the ability to read, write and understand information has become a crucial component for survival. In addition, our rapidly changing world demands that we embrace new forms of literacies, such as digital, financial, and cultural literacies.

The definition of literacy continues to evolve and is now defined as a way to identify, understand, interpret, create, and communicate in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, and information-rich world (UNESCO).

ASEAN has made impressive gains over the decades, with adult literacy rates over 80 per cent in all 10 countries. Literacy rates exceed 90 per cent in seven countries. This has contributed towards empowering the people of ASEAN, enabling them to participate fully in society. It also allows access to higher quality jobs with better pay and working conditions, thus improving living standards. At the national level, a well-educated workforce lowers poverty rates, contributes to economic growth, and increases social well-being.

Nevertheless, despite these impressive gains, pockets of illiteracy, which include the inability to read or write basic sentences, continue to exist in the ASEAN region. Most affected are older women, minorities and indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, and out-of-school children and

youth. Functional literacy, which is the ability to comprehend written and numerical material beyond basic skills, is also low.

Vulnerable Communities

Older women—The intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality that girls and women endure have resulted in lower literacy rates experienced by older women. Due to older women being marginalised from education during their younger years, between a quarter to more than half of women above the age of 65 in seven ASEAN countries, are unable to read or write.

The benefits of socio-economic development have resulted in longer life expectancy. It is important, therefore, for older women to be provided an opportunity to develop literacy skills through culturally relevant and learner-centered literacy programmes.

Minorities and indigenous communities—

This sector tends to experience low rates of literacy due to social exclusion and a sense

of alienation. Developing literacy in multilingual societies is a challenging task. For minority populations, being literate in the official language of society provides better socio-economic and political benefits such as increased access to jobs and participation in society, while being literate in a respective minority language helps develop socio-cultural identities and well-being. There is a need to strive for a balance between building a sense of cultural identity and enabling full participation in society.

Persons with disabilities—Due to social barriers, persons with disabilities are less likely to attend school. Those that do attend school are less likely to complete primary or secondary education, thus having fewer years of schooling. This contributes towards persons with disabilities having lower literacy rates compared with the general population. The gender disparities in literacy rates among persons with disabilities are also high, with one in two women likely to be illiterate, compared to one in four men (UNESCO 2018, Education and Disability: Analysis of data from 49 countries).



Programmes to improve literacy among persons with disabilities need to address the intersection of literacy, disability and gender.

Out-of-School Children and Youth—ASEAN recognises that there is a significant number of out of school children and youth in some parts of the region who require access to education. Effective measures need to be taken to ensure that this marginalised group

has access to, remain and complete their education.

Regional Efforts to Improve Literacy

ASEAN Human Rights Declaration affirms that every person has the right to education. At the international level, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 calls for “inclusive and quality education for all.” Target 4.6 sets the priority of ensuring that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy by 2030.

ASEAN Leaders have demonstrated their commitment towards education with its core function of improving basic and functional literacy, through the adoption of various declarations and masterplans. These include a commitment to promote gender equality, reduce social inequality, ensure that the needs of vulnerable populations are being addressed through life-long learning, and improve access to data. ■



COMMITMENTS TOWARDS IMPROVING LITERACY IN ASEAN

Bangkok Declaration on Advancing Partnership in Education for 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in ASEAN (2019) provides for lifelong learning and training to respond to regional and global trends through formal, non-formal, and informal systems.

ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration (2019) recognises the need to strengthen national systems, including education to address the needs of children in the context of migration.

ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2018) seeks to advance inclusive educational systems, thus improving access to education and literacy rates for persons with disabilities.

ASEAN Declaration on the Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals (2017) supports the strengthening of national and sub-national sex-disaggregated databases and analyses on all SDGs.

Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN (2017) pledges to promote gender equality and reduce social inequalities.

ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out-of-School Children and Youth (2016) strives to implement inclusivity, equity, accessibility to education for out-of-school children and youth.

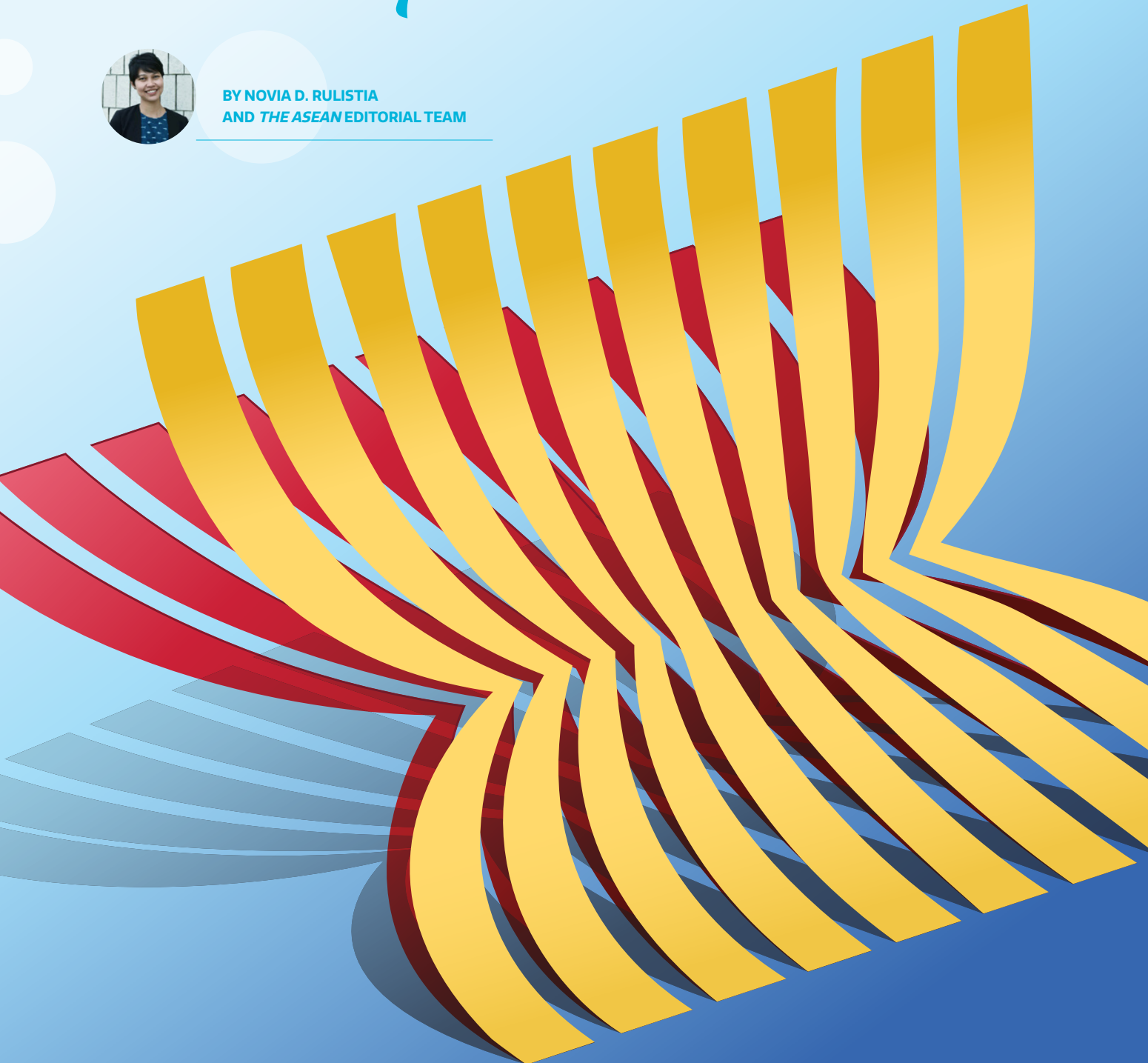
Bali Declaration on the Enhancement of the Role and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the ASEAN Community (2011) seeks equal opportunities for persons with disabilities to education, especially basic education and alternative means of communication including sign language and Braille.

Ha Noi Declaration on the Enhancement of Welfare and Development of ASEAN Women and Children (2010) supports the improvement of the quality of education and gender equality in education and school enrollment for children, including children of ethnic and/or indigenous groups as well as children with disability and with special needs.

ASEAN Celebrates 53rd Anniversary Virtually



BY NOVIA D. RULISTIA
AND THE ASEAN EDITORIAL TEAM



The ASEAN Secretariat organised for the first time an online celebration to mark ASEAN’s 53rd founding anniversary on 8 August 2020.

Under the theme, ASEAN’s cohesive journey to resilience, the Secretary-General of ASEAN Dato Lim Jock Hoi opened the virtual ceremony by highlighting the significance of international cooperation in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic.

“No single country can wrestle any crisis alone. Tackling the pandemic and its socio-economic impact demands solidarity and action at all levels across the international community,” he said.

The ultimate task would be for ASEAN to have a robust, holistic, and practical recovery framework to minimise the socio-economic effect of the pandemic while propelling the economic trajectory, the Secretary-General said.

Indonesia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi rallied for all ASEAN Member States to continue to work together in fighting the pandemic.

“ASEAN must always cooperate to maintain our regional peace and stability, and not to be dragged into the storm of geopolitical tension or being forced to choose sides. Therefore, the region must stay ahead of the curve to maintain our centrality, maintain our relevance, and be at the driving seat in turning rivalry into cooperation, distrust into strategic trust,” she said.

Viet Nam’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh said that as a community of 650 million people with a combined GDP of 3 trillion US dollars, ASEAN would continue to promote both the interest of the peoples, peace, and prosperity in the region.

Under Viet Nam’s chairmanship this year, a cohesive and responsive ASEAN has taken well-coordinated measures to protect the health of ASEAN people and revive the economies, he said.



“ASEAN has led regional efforts in fighting the COVID-19, innovated our operations, and further deepened our external relations, thus elevated ASEAN’s international standing.”

A special tribute was given to ASEAN’s front-liners, who put their lives at risk to save others and help stop the spread of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

Youth from ASEAN Member States also conveyed their dreams for ASEAN, in video clips they filmed and contributed for the occasion.

There were expressions of hope for an ASEAN that involves more young people in its policy-making process; that is free of human trafficking; and provides quality education and health care for all.

Viewers were entertained with traditional dances from all ASEAN Member States and music performances by ASEAN traditional music group **C asean Consonant**.



To mark ASEAN’s 53rd anniversary, a 50-minute video was produced by the ASEAN Secretariat, featuring messages from key officials and top diplomats as well as showcasing the region’s traditional dances and a special music video

No single country can wrestle any crisis alone. Tackling the pandemic and its socio-economic impact demands solidarity and action at all levels across the international community.



“ASEAN as One” Song Unites ASEAN Through Traditional Sounds

At the 53rd ASEAN Day online celebration, ASEAN traditional music group **C asean Consonant** launched a music video, titled ASEAN as One, featuring Philippines’ singer Lara Maigue, Thailand’s singer Kittinant Chinsamran, and the Suanplu Chorus.

The song writer, Sutthipun Nujjaya, said that the idea to write the song came up after she gathered C asean Consonant’s musicians to do online jamming sessions to brighten their moods during the lockdown.

“I wrote the song in April when the pandemic was at its worst. After hearing them play online, I want to make something new, something interesting for their next performance,” she said.

Taking inspiration from ASEAN’s spirit of sharing and caring, Nujjaya said that the song could serve as a reminder on how the people of ASEAN remain united despite the challenging times that keep them apart. The group then got an offer to participate, through a music video, in the ASEAN Day online celebration.

As the musicians live in 10 different countries, they recorded their parts in their respective countries. The tracks were later put together in a studio in Thailand, where C asean Consonant is based.

“I admired their (the musicians) efforts; even when they played music separately, they still could produce such a unified harmony,” Nujjaya said. “That’s because they trust each other and are familiar with each other’s sounds.”

Founded in 2015, C asean Consonant is a group of 10 musical prodigies chosen from 10 ASEAN countries to co-create performances with traditional musical instruments.

C asean Consonant is a frequent performer at ASEAN Day celebrations, and has also performed in numerous ASEAN events, such as the opening ceremony of the 34th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok, ASEAN-China Music Week, and ASEAN-EU anniversary concert. ■



View the music video “ASEAN as One” by C asean Consonant:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQjGJZxcMSA>



BRIEF HISTORY OF ASEAN

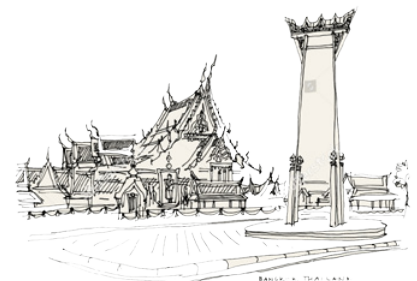
On 8 August 1967, the ASEAN Founding Fathers—Foreign Minister of Indonesia Adam Malik, Foreign Minister of Malaysia Tun Abdul Razak, Foreign Minister of the Philippines Narciso R. Ramos, Foreign Minister of Singapore S. Rajaratnam, and Foreign Minister of Thailand Thanat Khoman—gathered in Bangkok to sign the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) that declared the establishment of ASEAN and set out the aims and purposes of the regional organisation.

Brunei Darussalam joined on 7 January 1984, Viet Nam on 28 July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999. Today, these 10 Member States make up the ASEAN.

On its 30th Anniversary, the ASEAN Vision 2020 was adopted to prepare the regional bloc for the 21st century. It outlined a shared vision of ASEAN nations that is outward looking; living in peace, stability, and prosperity; and bonded together in partnership in dynamic development and in a community of caring societies.

In 2003, the ASEAN Leaders resolved at the 9th ASEAN Summit that an ASEAN Community shall be established.

In 2015, the ASEAN Community was established. ASEAN is now anchored on three community pillars, namely Political-Security Community, Economic Community, and Socio-Cultural Community.



ASEAN-CHINA COOPERATION: ALLEVIATING POVERTY CAUSED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



BY KIRAN SAGOO, PhD
AND THE ASEAN EDITORIAL TEAM

ASEAN's impressive progress in reducing poverty is currently under threat of being reversed due to COVID-19.

With growth estimated to decelerate to only one per cent in 2020, there is a risk of those lifted out of absolute poverty falling back into poverty. One-third or more of the working population in seven ASEAN countries are in vulnerable employment, facing the risk of unemployment. Also at risk are youth who will be unable to join the workforce due to decreasing economic growth.

The positive pace and trend in poverty reduction, which was expected to nearly eradicate poverty in most ASEAN countries by 2030, appears to be derailed by COVID-19. Two-thirds of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015 to improve people's lives by 2030 also appear unlikely to be met.

Against this background, the **2020 Extraordinary ASEAN-China Social Development and Poverty Reduction Forum** was held on 29 July, 2020 to address the poverty dimension brought about by COVID-19. The online forum was co-hosted by the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development of China (LGOP) and the ASEAN Secretariat, and organised by the International Poverty Reduction Center in China (IPRCC).

Promoting Poverty Alleviation

Eighty officials from relevant agencies in China and ASEAN countries, and also representatives from international organisations and non-governmental organisations participated in the forum.

Addressing the theme of "Joining Hands and Fighting against COVID-19, Promoting Poverty Alleviation," participants shared key initiatives on poverty reduction undertaken by their respective countries due to the pandemic. Initiatives included providing economic stimulus at the local level, promoting digital inclusion and entrepreneurship, establishing village funds, as well as other measures to empower communities, including women and youth.

It clearly emerged that timely and decisive actions made are crucial for safeguarding the life and well-being of poor and vulnerable groups. There is also a need for increased and sustained investment in social protection, human capital development, knowledge-building and targeted interventions to tackle the multi-dimensional nature of poverty.

Fighting COVID-19

The forum noted ASEAN's development of a recovery framework and action plan that will steer the direction of recovery from the crisis. Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, Kung Phoak, shared that "... a common understanding and ensuing actions on multi-dimensional and non-income poverty at the regional level will help us to effectively address deprivation and vulnerabilities". He also looked forward to the development of the ASEAN Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (RDPE) Masterplan to which the wealth of experiences and expertise from China can be of tremendous relevance.

The unprecedented challenges in poverty reduction for ASEAN countries and China, due to the pandemic, was noted by ASEAN-China Center Secretary-General Chen Dehai. Nevertheless, he shared that the pandemic has resulted in

a number of new industries and business forms, such as the digital economy, which should be harnessed. Deng Xijun, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to ASEAN, called for expanded cooperation in emerging industries, such as e-commerce, clean energy and 5G.

Joining Hands

Su Guoxia, Director-General of the General Affairs Department and Spokesperson of the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development of China, affirmed that the Chinese government will continue to strengthen cooperation with ASEAN Member States to jointly promote international exchanges and cooperation in poverty reduction in the post-pandemic era.

Using ASEAN platforms, such as the ASEAN Plus Three Summit, ASEAN countries and China have been providing valuable support and assistance to each other in combating the COVID-19 epidemic. The **Joint Statement of the Special ASEAN Plus Three Summit on Coronavirus Disease 2019** issued in April 2020, reaffirmed ASEAN and China's commitment and strong partnership.

ASEAN Economic Ministers and the Minister of Commerce of the People's Republic of China have also issued a Joint Statement on Combating the Coronavirus Disease and Enhancing ASEAN-China Free Trade Area Cooperation.

As no country alone can effectively deal with the complexities of the pandemic and its devastating effects, cooperation and partnership must be sustained. ■

ASEAN Secretariat's Poverty Eradication and Gender Division contributed to this article.

Photo Credit: © Jerome Quek/Shutterstock

Tangible Impact Of Covid-19 On Intangible Cultural Heritage



BY ALVIN TAN

DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE, POLICY AND COMMUNITY
NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD OF SINGAPORE

Just a few short months ago, we went about our lives celebrating festivals, partaking traditional feasts, and watching cultural performances. But all these activities—classified as intangible cultural heritage or ICH—came to a grinding halt with the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures imposed to curb the spread of the virus.

*Chinese Teochew Opera.
Backstage before a performance
at the Chinese Ghost Festival in
Singapore, August 2019*



A video recording of a traditional arts practitioner performing arts for the creation of digital content

audiences or customers back, postponement or cancellation of projects, and financial sustainability.

Apart from economic losses, ICH practitioners and practices are also affected by COVID-19-related measures. As most ICH experiences are communal or performative in nature and often require physical participation or presence, the suspension of large gatherings and the implementation of safe-distancing measures affected and are still affecting how ICH practitioners perform or practise their craft.

According to NHB's survey, close to 70 per cent of respondents shared that the current measures had impacted their craft or practice "significantly" or "very significantly," and the measures which had the most impact are the ones pertaining to group size and crowd capacity, safe-distancing, and the suspension of workshops and live performances.

Embracing the Digital Shift

Fortunately, the ICH sector is nothing but resilient, and practitioners have always been able to modify their practices and products in order to evolve and adapt to changing times. This is perhaps most evident in how the sector has embraced the shift towards digital as a means of (re)connecting with their audiences.

For instance, the suspension of religious services and gatherings in Singapore from March to June 2020 resulted in the live-broadcasting of such services by places of worship. Likewise, ICH practitioners in the traditional performing arts also used social media platforms to live-stream performances, while traditional

ICH, also referred to as our "living heritage," is composed of traditions, rituals, crafts, expressions, knowledge, and skills that are practised and passed on from generation to generation. It also provides employment and generates income for ICH practitioners.

The pandemic has dealt a series of sustained and severe blows to this sector, the extent of which needs to be understood not only to help ICH practitioners, but also to preserve our sense of identity and rootedness, as well as strengthen our connections to our community and country.

Impact on ICH Sector

Recently, UNESCO shared the findings of its ongoing online survey and noted that COVID-19 had upset, or in the worst case scenario, obliterated, the global calendar of ICH events, impacting the livelihoods of ICH practitioners and disrupting the social and cultural lives of many.

This survey, together with another survey by the Dutch Centre for ICH, further noted that traditional craftspeople have been particularly hard-hit. However, UNESCO conceded that it is still too early to obtain an accurate assessment of the economic

impact of COVID-19 on the ICH sector worldwide.

In Singapore, the National Heritage Board's recent survey on the impact of COVID-19 on ICH practitioners and stakeholders revealed that more than 70 per cent of the 22 respondents rated the impact as "severe" or

Fortunately, the ICH sector is nothing but resilient, and practitioners have always been able to modify their practices and products in order to evolve and adapt to changing times.

"very severe." Traditional craftspeople, practitioners of traditional performing arts, and those who prepare traditional food were among those who participated in the survey.

The main impact of COVID-19 comes in the form of loss of income due to reduction in revenue, cancellation of jobs, and continued overhead costs of workers in the sector. Their key concerns include attracting

craftspersons conducted online workshops on how to prepare food according to traditional recipes, make hand-crafted products, etc.

In fact, more than 70 per cent of respondents to NHB's survey indicated that they have been able to use digital platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and their own websites, to reach out to their target audience and customers.

However, local ICH practitioners have shared that they faced challenges, such as the lack of funds, technical know-how, and skilled staff. In this area, ASEAN countries could perhaps learn from the UK's Digital Cultural Network which has employed and deployed a pool of "tech champions" (or digital specialists) to provide one-to-one support for the arts and culture sector.

Going Digital: Boon or Bane?

Having said that, if there's one thing good that has come out of the pandemic, it has to be the unprecedented amount of living heritage-related digital content that is being made available for the first time as more and more practitioners venture online.

There are several benefits to this phenomenon. First, it has opened up previously unexplored or understudied ICH elements, which may be worthwhile for organisations and scholars to carry out further research on, along with the modified elements that may have emerged in the wake of COVID-19.

Second, it has created a repository of digital records that contribute to the documentation of ICH elements. In doing so, it has also expanded the accessibility of content beyond its traditional audiences, and sped up the transmission of ICH knowledge and skills.



Top

A recording session involving a lion dance practitioner for the Singapore Heritage Festival 2020

Bottom

Key visuals for the National Heritage Board, Singapore's online #RamadanTogether campaign

However, it should be cautioned that the digitalisation of ICH elements could post a plethora of problems as well. The first problem concerns the digital divide, as some practitioners may be disadvantaged by the lack of technological infrastructure and know-how. The second revolves around the concern that these digital records could paradoxically lead to the "fossilisation" of what are essentially evolving cultural customs and practices.

Turning to ICH for Comfort and Strength

In spite of the various issues raised, one thing is certain. In times of uncertainty and

stress, people all around the world are turning to ICH (besides other entertainment and health related options) for cultural first-aid to boost their morale, make life more tolerable, retain a sense of normalcy, and shore up resilience.

The key role played by ICH is perhaps most evident in how it acts as a "social glue" and keeps communities and families together even though they may be physically apart. For instance, many Muslim families came together online during the fasting month of Ramadan and participated in NHB's #RamadanTogether campaign, which included breaking fast together.

Besides keeping communities together, ICH practitioners also contribute to the ongoing fight against COVID-19 by supporting and reinforcing public health messages. For instance, craftspersons in Peru and China created face masks using traditional designs and techniques while string puppeteers in Sri Lanka staged performances based on stories of confinement and safe distancing.

Consequently, while the COVID-19 pandemic may have exposed the vulnerabilities of ICH in times of emergencies, it has conversely demonstrated the dynamic and adaptive nature of ICH elements and the resilience of their practitioners. More importantly, it has reaffirmed the importance of ICH as a form of cultural ballast against the threat of COVID-19 and possibly other future threats. ■



A LOOK BACK AT SOUTHEAST ASIA'S TRADITIONAL GAMES



BY KIRAN SAGOO, PhD



JOANNE B. AGBISIT

Countries in Southeast Asia have a rich tradition of local games, some dating back to as early as the 8th century. These traditional games are shaped by local culture and the environment, incorporating cultural knowledge, values, and skills. Played by children and adults, these games have served as tools for community building and cognitive development.

Unfortunately, many traditional games have been cast aside and replaced with electronic and commercially produced games. Rural to urban migration has also resulted in space restrictions, hindering

the ability to play certain games. These days, many traditional games are played either as part of a cultural showcase or on special occasions in rural communities.

Traditional games have contributed to the cultural heritage of Southeast Asia. Similarities between games played in neighbouring countries contribute towards building a sense of regional community and identity. It is important to create new opportunities for more active participation in these games, particularly for the younger generation. Below are some of the traditional games that are common to various countries in the region:

SEPAK TAKRAW

Countries: Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore (*sepak raga*); Cambodia (*sey dok*); Lao PDR (*ka-taw*); Myanmar (*ching loong*); Philippines (*sipa*); Thailand (*takraw*); Viet Nam (*cau may*)

Sepak takraw and its various regional forms is popular throughout Southeast Asia. Its history can be traced to the royal courts of Melaka in the 15th century as mentioned in the historical text of *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals). It is also noted that the game was played in the Ayutthaya

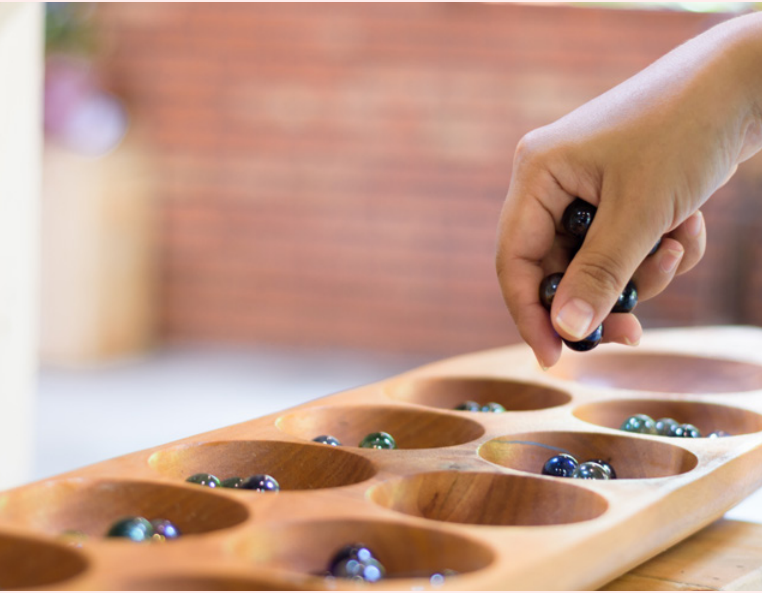
Kingdom in the late 16th century.

The game is played with a woven rattan ball. Players use their feet, knees, chest, and head to pass the ball between themselves and over the net to their opponent. In certain regions, the game is

considered more of an art form to keep the ball aloft in increasingly interesting and graceful ways, rather than being a competitive sport. The standardised version of the game consists of three players on each side, with any of its three players being allowed only three kicks, to keep the ball in control.

This game was incorporated into the 1965 South East Peninsular Games (precursor to the South East Asian Games), and given the official name of *sepak*, meaning kick in Malay, and *takraw*, meaning woven ball in Thai. The Asian Sepaktakraw Federation was formed in 1965 to oversee the game in Asia. The popularity of *sepak takraw* grew over the years and in 1992, the International Sepaktakraw Federation was formed to be the world administering body for the sport.





MANCALA

Countries: Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Singapore (*congkak*); Cambodia (*bay khom*); Indonesia (*congklak*, with regional variations); Philippines (*sungka*); Thailand (*mak khom*); Viet Nam (*o an quan*)

Mancala is a generic name for a broad group of games sharing similar features. Common features include a surface with rows of holes where small stones or seeds are inserted. Dating to as far back as the sixth century, it is among the oldest known games to still be widely played today. Records indicate that the Philippine form of mancala was played in Cebu in the 17th century.

In Southeast Asia, various forms of this game are played, either with a board or drawn on the floor. Boards are boat-shaped blocks, generally made of mahogany or teak sometimes with intricate carvings. Boards contain two rows of between three to nine circular holes, with an enlarged hole at the

end of the board. In places where no boards are used, squares are drawn on the ground instead. A defining feature of the game in Southeast Asia is the existence of holes at the end of the rows, which are used to “house” the stones or seeds collected. Stones, cowrie shells, marbles, saga seeds, or tamarind seeds are used to fill the holes.

Played by two people, the objective of the game is to steal as many of the opponent’s stones or seeds as possible. Players need to employ mathematical and observation skills to ensure that they move strategically in ways that enable them to have the most seeds in their possession.

Mancala boards are now often used for display or decorative purposes. While competitions are still held to showcase it, more needs to be done to revive interest in Southeast Asia’s mancala games. For example, It can be promoted to teach mathematical skills to young children.

SPINNING TOPS

Countries: Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore (*gasing*); Lao PDR (*tuj lub*); Philippines (*trumpo*); Thailand (*ba kang wo*)

Spin tops date back to 1300 BC and are considered one of the oldest toys. Ranging in size and materials used, tops continue to be played today. In Southeast Asia, spinning tops are mostly made out of wood.

The game is played at competitions held to mark harvest festivals or other social events. The competition begins with participants hurling the spinning top toward the ground while controlling the top with an attached string. Competition rules vary. In certain competitions, winners are those whose tops spun the longest, while other contests assess the ability of the participants to make their tops spin within marked boundaries or hit their opponent’s spin top.



POLE CLIMBING

Countries: Indonesia (*panjat pinang*), Philippines (*palo sebo*), Thailand (*been sao nam-mun*)

The game involves a participant or group of participants climbing up a long pole, usually a tree trunk, to collect a prize placed on top. The pole is often covered in grease to make the climb more difficult. In Indonesia, *pinang* climbing competitions are held as part of its independence day celebrations, while in the Philippines, *palo sebo* contests are held during town fiestas. In Thailand, *been sao nam-mun* is played on occasions such as the Buffalo Racing Festival.

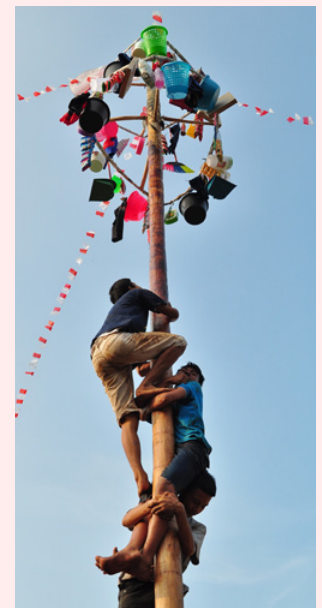


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TUGGING GAMES AND RITUALS

Countries: Cambodia (*teanh prot*), Myanmar (*lun hswe*), Philippines (*punnuk*), Thailand (*chak-ka-yer*), Viet Nam (*kéo co*)

Tugging games and rituals are largely recognised as games played by rice farmers in festivals held to mark the beginning of the agricultural cycle. This ritual has both a spiritual and social significance, and is participated by children, women, and men. Using a rope which is made from either dried rice stalks, jute, bamboo, or leather, two teams pull from each end of the rope with the aim of tugging it from the other.

Tugging games are held with men against men, women

against women, men against women, or other mixed teams. The games are mostly fun and not too competitive. They are meant to build solidarity and a sense of belonging among community members, and instill the importance of cooperation.

In Cambodia and Thailand, tugging games are played right after the New Year in mid-April to mark the start of the rice cultivating season. Similarly, in Viet Nam, tugging games are held as part of the spring festivals within villages. They mark the beginning of a new planting season and express wishes for good crops, prosperity, and happiness. In the Philippines, it is held as the final ritual after the rice is harvested, which signals the end of the agricultural cycle and the beginning of a new one.

The tugging rituals of Cambodia, Philippines, and Viet Nam, together with the Republic of Korea, are listed in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.



CHESS

Countries: Brunei Darussalam (*catur asli*), Indonesia and Malaysia (*catur*), Cambodia (*ouk chatrang*), Myanmar (*sittuyin*), Singapore (*xiangqi*), Thailand (*makruk*), Viet Nam (*co ngu oi*)

Different forms of chess have been played in the region since the 8th century. The traditional versions of chess in Southeast Asia, which are still played today, originated from the Indian board war game called *chaturanga*. The lexical similarities give away their origin: *catur* in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Malaysia, and *chatrang* in Cambodia. The term *sittuyin*, as used in Myanmar, is related to the meaning of *chaturanga*: *sit* in Myanmar means army and *sittuyin* represents the four

characteristics of an ancient army, which are chariot, elephant, cavalry and infantry. The war strategy approach remains strong in the versions played in the region, with chess pieces consisting of a minister or general, a chariot, and an elephant, among others, in some versions.

Other forms of traditional chess played in the region include *xiangqi*, also derived from *chaturanga*. It is played in Singapore and Viet Nam. Traditional chess played in Viet Nam includes a colorful human chess game known as *co ngu oi*. Despite the diversity of traditional chess forms, the objective of all these forms remains the same: to force the opponent's king into a checkmate.

YESTERYEARS: GAMES SCHOOLGIRLS PLAYED

SAGA SEEDS

Countries: Malaysia, Singapore

Popular until the 1960s, the game involves schoolgirls collecting saga seeds, or if none are available, tamarind seeds. The objective of the game is to win as many seeds as possible. Two or more players sit in a circle and pool their seeds. The player then make an imaginary line between two



seeds. She flicks a seed and gets it to clash with another. If the seeds clash, the player picks them up; otherwise, the player loses a turn.

FIVE STONES

Countries: Brunei Darussalam (*simban*), Indonesia (*gatheng*), Malaysia (*seremban*), Philippines (*siklot*)

Another game popular with schoolgirls is five stones. Using either five stones or five triangular cloth bags filled with dried beans or uncooked rice,



players throw and pick up stones through a sequence of rounds. The winner is the person who completes most rounds. ■

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