



CASE STUDY

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW: Malaysia

Background Information

Malaysia's New Economic Policy (NEP), introduced in 1970 to eradicate poverty and restructure societal imbalances, at the country on a course towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since then, each of its 5-year plans have included key elements of sustainable development, including aiming for sustainable economic growth, equitable distribution of gains across society, as well as environmental conservation efforts, and access to public services like infrastructure, utilities, education, healthcare. The current Malaysia plan, "Anchoring Growth on People" aims to ensure that no section of society gets left behind as the country moves forward.

Malaysia volunteered to present its national review (VNR) at the 2017 High Level Political Forum (HLPF).

Quotes

"Sustainable development has been at the heart of Malaysia's development approach since the 1970s, with an emphasis on eradicating poverty, improving the well-being of the people, providing universal access to education, and caring for the environment."

-Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak - Prime Minister of Malaysia

Approach, Delivery, & Challenges

Malaysia's Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) grouped the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under eleven thematic areas for the purpose of highlighting development achievements. These included: Absolute Poverty and Hunger (SDGs 1 & 2), Diseases and Mortality Rates (SDG 3), Education (SDGs 4 & 5), Basic Amenities (SDGs 6 & 7), Infrastructure (SDGs 9 & 11), Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16), Sustainable Consumption & Production and Climate Change (SDGs 12 & 13), Economy and Employment (SDGs 5 & 8), Income Inequalities (SDG 10), Environmental Endowment (SDGs 14 & 15), and Global Roles (SDG 17). The report highlighted progress among each of these themes, from the significant poverty reduction experienced, down from 49.3% in 1970 to 0.6% in 2014, to the shared development experienced through hosting 31,000 participants from 142 countries through the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Program.

The VNR guidelines ask countries to demonstrate their commitment to the process through their reports, possibly by including a foreword from the country's highest political office. Malaysia's prime minister, Dato'



Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, met this request in writing that the VNR reaffirmed Malaysia's commitment to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. He added his belief that going down that path would "help to ensure that no one is left behind, and that every Malaysian has an equitable share in the prosperity and wealth of the nation."

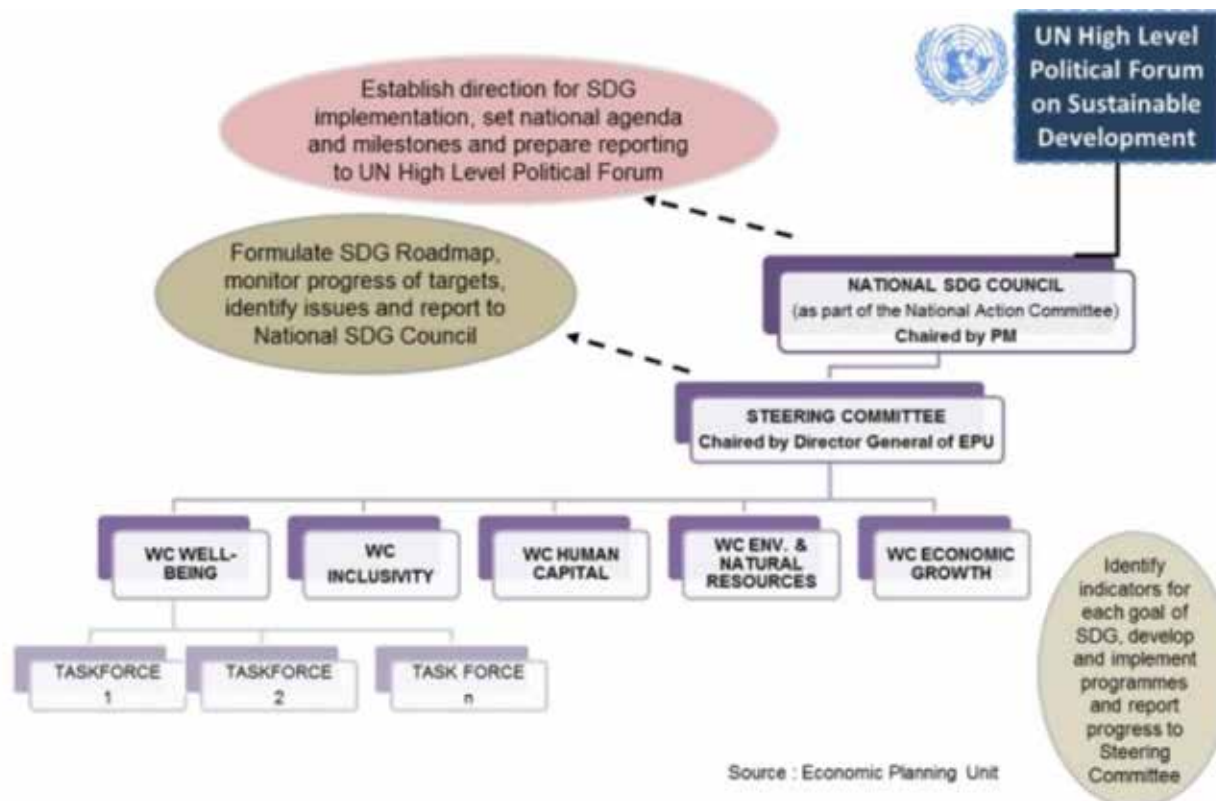
VNR guidelines also suggest the creation of working groups to assess the country's progress towards the goals Malaysia created such working groups around well-being, inclusivity, human capital, environment and natural resources, and economic growth. The groups included members of government and civil society organizations, and they sought input from a broader group of stakeholders. The Government of Malaysia prioritized the inclusion of stakeholders in the committees that worked on the institutional coordination mechanism for the 2030 Agenda. Actors from civil society participated in a self-organized effort that led to the formation of the Malaysian CSO-SDG Alliance, a group whose representatives participate in the working committees. Working with civil society to improve data sharing was also called out in the report. Doing so was deemed critical for monitoring SDG progress at the local level.

Stakeholder engagement is an additional element that was deemed critical for VNRs, with the goal of having broad participation from conception to preparation, as well as follow-up on the reports. In looking to achieve its SDG targets, Malaysia has integrated stakeholder engagement as a continuous process for its efforts, in looking to foster collaboration and trust. Malaysia's VNR also noted that South-South cooperation on the goals has been boosted by its participation in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Developing an institutional coordination mechanism that fosters and maintains the necessary participation of different stakeholder groups, as Malaysia has, is a key responsibility for the group tasked with leading the VNR effort. Doing so will help ensure the necessary structure is place going forward to continue to receive input from the sort of diverse group that's necessary to create as full a picture of the country's progress as possible. In specific, Malaysia's stakeholder participation efforts included the establishment of a multi-stakeholder, participatory governance structure that will support SDG implementation. The country also held two national SDG symposiums and it also held a mapping exercise with members of civil society and private sector firms in working to align the 11th Malaysia Plan initiative with the SDGs.

Malaysia has long been focused on the import goal of development in looking to improve the lives of all its people, but it also recognizes the importance of social and environmental factors in its approach. Through its VNR, Malaysia's government articulated the multidimensional nature of growth and stated its commitment to a multi-faceted approach. To support this work, Malaysia's leaders commissioned a study that will look at the country's policy coherence, governance, human capital, and data responses for the SDGs. Each of those goals is linked to the main "thrusts" of Malaysia's current National Development Plan as the SDGs are now intertwined with those efforts.

The organization of the working groups and the multi-stakeholder partnership that came together to support Malaysia's VNR efforts came from the UN Country Team, which supported the creation of a Multi-Stakeholder Partnership and the development of the country's SDG roadmap.



Examples of institutional coordination mechanisms in Malaysia

Benefits & Lessons Learned

Working on the SDGs is a complex matter for any nation, and Malaysia's diverse and dispersed nature add to the complexity. Measurable progress that can be validated requires a systematic approach. To develop the necessary systems, Malaysia's leaders have undertaken the following efforts:

- Established a structure for multi-stakeholder, participatory governance;
- Promoted awareness of the process and the participation of diverse stakeholders via the delivery of national SDG symposiums and focus group sessions. Together, the stakeholders discussed the work necessary to enact the 2030 Agenda to help enable the work to begin. These efforts were co-organized by Malaysia's Economic Policy Unit (EPU), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP);
- Assessed data readiness and performed gap analysis;
- Involved NGOs, CSOs, and the private sector in a mapping analysis that worked to align the SDGs with the 11th Malaysia Plan Initiatives;
- Established a National SDG Roadmap to guide implementation of Agenda
- 2030 and the SDGs. The Roadmap documents Malaysia's inclusion of states, Government agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and the private sector in their participatory process. This effort was driven by Malaysia's EPU, and it was supported by the United Nations country team.



Opportunities & Next Steps

Malaysia is working to localize the SDGs by reproducing the national multi-stakeholder governance structure at the state levels, and mobilizing resources through partnerships, social entrepreneurship, CSR programs, and international sources. They're also working to improve competencies around data gathering and analysis, while building the dataset that's necessary to implement the SDGs. As Malaysia's Prime Minister, Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, put it, "We have made significant progress on all other dimensions of the SDGs as well and have put in place concrete measures to take them forward."

Malaysia's VNR further details its efforts to collect disaggregated data, efforts to collaborate with CSOs and NGOs in working to reach people at the local level, and other programs aimed at improving the lives of the bottom 40. Participating in the VNR process was determined to be important by those who worked on Malaysia's report, and they found that doing so helped create momentum towards their SDG targets.

Sources & Verification

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