



# Sustaining the Sustainable Development Goals





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By: Rian Firmansyah

# Indonesia's Accomplishment on SDGs

Like in many other nations, the COVID-19 pandemic has precipitated monumental shifts in the way people in Indonesia live, work, and interact with one another. If 2020 was the year that the world grappled with the initial health crisis, then 2021 was when the full picture of COVID-19's fallout began to emerge.

For Indonesia, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides a historic opportunity for the country to prepare a population that will grow and develop in a sustainable, inclusive, prosperous, resilient, and integrated manner, “leaving no one behind.”

In April 2021, the United Nations (UN) in Indonesia published a “survey of surveys” which examined the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on the SDGs. More than half of all surveys the UN studied focused on the way the pandemic had gutted decent work—including cutting hours for some 24 million Indonesians with a further 2.56 million people losing their jobs—and set back economic growth, which plunged from 5.02 percent in 2019 to a -2.07 percent in 2020. In parallel, national poverty rate rose to 10.19 percent over the same period, equivalent to a three-year setback.

“The SDGs provide a historic opportunity for Indonesia to prepare a population that will grow and develop in a sustainable, inclusive, prosperous, resilient, and integrated manner.

Image: theaseanpost.com



Predictably, the severest impacts fell on those already at risk of being left behind, including migrant workers, refugees, people living with HIV, and people with disabilities. The pandemic also struck a blow to Indonesia's progress on gender equality with sectors such as retail, hospitality, and garment manufacturing that employ many women sustaining massive job losses. A still higher proportion of women work in the informal sector, where access to social support systems is limited and the pandemic's impacts are difficult to capture.

Young people have been similarly disadvantaged. Between 2020 and 2021, the proportion of youth not in employment, education, and training

**“In response to the health crisis, the Government of Indonesia mobilized one of the world's most complex vaccination campaigns across thousands of inhabited islands that span three time zones.**

Image: [www.weforum.org](http://www.weforum.org)



doubled from 8 percent to 16.4 percent. Meanwhile, the proportion of youth working in the informal sector rose by 6 percent overall between February 2020 and February 2021, with the proportion of young graduates informally employed rising 13.1 percent at that time. Over the same period, the proportion of adults working in the informal sector rose by 2 percent.

In 2021, as the UN and the Government of Indonesia contended with the fallout of the pandemic's first year, Indonesia faced a resurgent health crisis driven by COVID-19's virulent Delta Variant. At its July peak, the archipelago recorded more than 350,000 new cases in a week and more than 12,400 deaths the following week. Several international media outlets dubbed Indonesia as Asia's new COVID-19 “epicenter” as stories focused on oxygen shortages, overflowing hospitals, and volunteers mobilizing to build coffins.

Despite the escalating challenges, the Government of Indonesia and the UN's extraordinary COVID-19 response and recovery efforts began to bear fruit in 2021. Gross domestic product (GDP) growth bounced back to 3.69 percent, approaching the government's growth target of 3.7 to 4.5 percent. Meanwhile, GDP per capita reached US\$4,349.50.

At year's end, the graphs were trending upwards. Indonesia's economic growth quickened in the final quarter of 2021, powered by resurgent domestic demand and a global commodity boom. Meanwhile, the Government's National Economic Recovery program continued in 2021 with a total budget of IDR699.43 trillion (US\$42.7 billion), or an increase of 0.6 percent from the 2020 budget.

In response to the health crisis, the Government of Indonesia mobilized one of the world's most complex vaccination campaigns across thousands of inhabited islands that span three time zones. By January 19, 2022, Indonesia had administered more than 300 million COVID-19 vaccination doses, including some 87 million doses whose arrival the UN facilitated through the COVAX facility.

Macro-economic recovery and mass vaccinations were not the year's only developmental success stories. While the Government's 2021 Voluntary National Review showed that some SDG indicators that had been making headway from 2015 to 2019 had veered off course—including the proportion of the population living below the national poverty line, the prevalence of undernourishment, and the economic growth and unemployment rate—other indicators progressed despite the pandemic.



In 2021, Indonesia saw improvements in the completion rate of senior secondary education under SDG4 (quality education), the proportion of households using improved sanitation services under SDG6 (clean water and sanitation), the renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption under SDG7 (affordable and clean energy), and the proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births were registered by the civil registration office under SDG16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions).

Indonesian democracy improved in parallel as well. The 2021 Democracy Index released by The Economist Intelligence Unit awarded Indonesia a score of 6.71 on a scale of zero to 10, up from 6.30 the year before. That pushed Indonesia from 64th to 52nd place out of 167 countries that The Economist studied. While Indonesia remained categorized as a “flawed democracy”, it was among the 10 countries with the biggest score improvement. Elsewhere in the region, democracy was in crisis. The coup d'état in Myanmar in February 2021 had a deep political impact on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Indonesia also took up a more prominent role on the world stage in 2021. On December 1, amid continuing uncertainty over the global economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia assumed the Presidency of the Group of Twenty (G20). The international forum brings together nations that represent 60 percent of the world's population, 75 percent of global trade, and 80 percent of the world's GDP—as well as around 80 percent of its greenhouse gas emissions.

As G20 President, Indonesia has vowed to represent the voices of less developed nations, including small island states. It has the political and diplomatic advantages of being a non-aligned, active, and strategic middle power that can potentially drive more impactful and actionable G20 resolutions. It also has a stark national imperative to lead climate change mitigation efforts. In 2021, Indonesia recorded 3,092 disaster events, or the equivalent of eight disasters per day. Weather extremes and other climate-related disasters add to a litany of volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, floods, and tsunamis with which the archipelago already contends.

### **Indonesian Priority**

Indonesia is committed to the 2030 Agenda: Sustainable Development Goals through the enactment of Presidential Regulation No. 59 Year 2017 on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Under the mandate of the Regulation, Indonesia has mainstreamed the targets and indicators of sustainable development to the 2017-2019 and 2020-2024 Medium Term National Development Plan (RPJMN), localizing sustainable development at the subnational level, and the development of the Sustainable Development Goals Roadmap Towards 2030.

The inclusivity principle has remained an anchor in implementing the SDGs, which do not only involve ministries and institutions, but also encourage partnership among non-governmental organizations, philanthropy and business, universities, the media, and the parliament.

**“The inclusivity principle has remained an anchor in implementing the SDGs.**

Image: [www.flickr.com/photos/unwomen](https://www.flickr.com/photos/unwomen)



In the development planning multi-stakeholder consultation forum (*Musrenbang*) of 2021, the President of Indonesia delivered his directive based on his commitment to the implementation of SDGs:

**First**, with large tropical forests and mangrove forests, Indonesia must harness this for the well-being of the population.

**Second**, Indonesia must participate in the global trend towards a green economy. Therefore, transformation of energy towards new and renewable energy sources is essential in strengthening Indonesia's national energy security and its global competitiveness.

**Third**, Indonesia also has the world's richest maritime biodiversity, which must be harnessed to power a sustainable blue economy in all coastal areas.

**Fourth**, Indonesia's economic growth must be inclusive and equitable; with economic fairness being the foundation in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Indonesia's Voluntary National Report 2021 shows its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that emphasizes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The report indicates Indonesia's policy strategy for development reform as the basis for a resilient and sustainable social, economic, and environmental recovery, which will then be used for the achievement of the 2030 targets: achievement of decent work and economic growth (Goal 8) and responsible consumption and production (Goal 12) towards economic recovery and reforms, aligned with the National Health

System Reforms supported by zero hunger (Goal 2) and good health and well-being (Goal 3), whereas social protection reforms will be attained through no poverty (Goal 1) and reduced inequality (Goal 10), and disaster resilience system reforms through climate action (Goal 13).

Furthermore, the four policy reforms to be implemented in Indonesia to build a better future are as follows:

- a. Economic recovery and reforms to strengthen economic resilience and quality development, enabling economic transformation from reliance on natural resources to manufacturing competitiveness, modern services, and high added values;
- b. Health system reforms to strengthen promotive and preventive measures, reinforcing health security and fulfilment of health resources, (facilities, infrastructures, pharmaceuticals, and medical devices) and health workforce needs;
- c. Social protection system reforms to improve and expand mechanisms and coverage of social assistance and social security, enhancing adaptive financing and social protections; and
- d. Disaster resilience reform, specific strategies for disaster resilience through the strengthening of the system and natural and non-natural disaster early warning response for communicable disease/pandemic prevention preparedness.

### Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda:

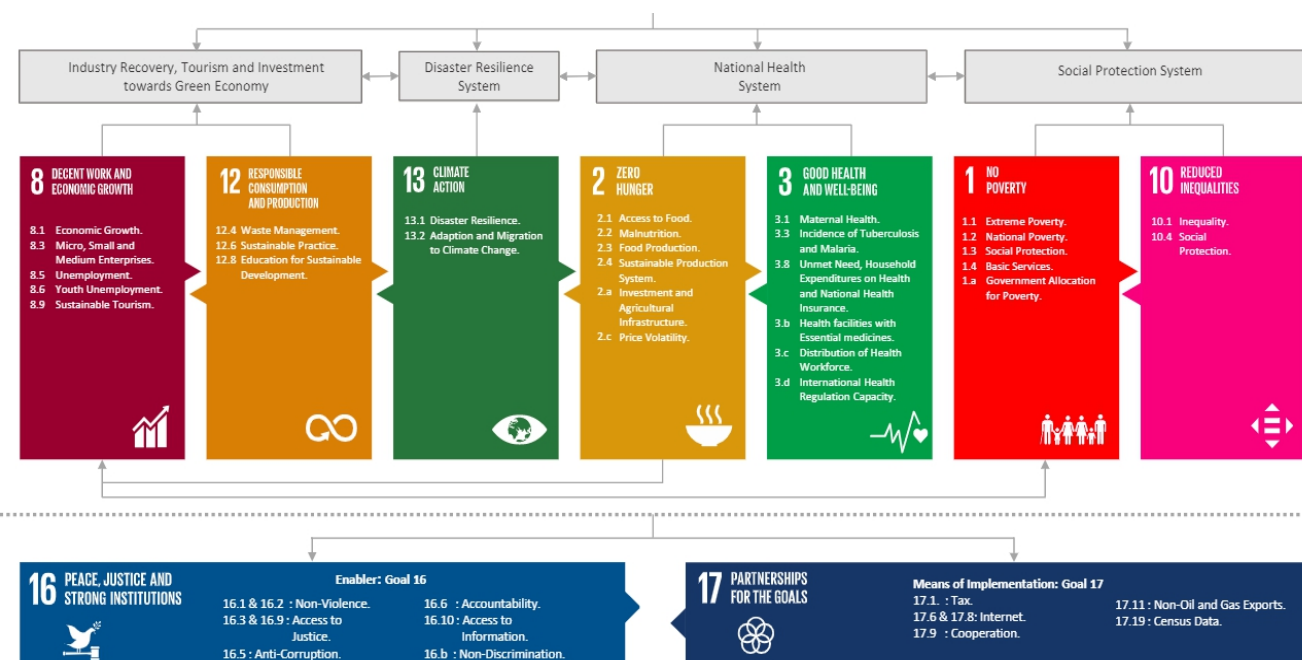






Image: www.en.antaraneews.com

“Indonesia is undertaking systematic reforms in social protection, the national health system, disaster resilience, and industry recovery.

### **Status and Development of SDG Achievement**

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven to be a challenge for global efforts towards the achievement of SDGs and has called attention to the need for greater international cooperation. To ensure a sustainable and resilient recovery, Indonesia is undertaking systematic reforms in four sectors, namely social protection system, national health system, disaster resilience system, and recovery of industry, tourism, and investment towards the green economy, supported by low-carbon development.

Despite large- and microscale social restrictions and health protocol implementation in several provinces, there still has been progress in the attainment of the SDGs. Recovery efforts in Indonesia include:

### ***Social Protection System***

- a. The national poverty level decreased from 11.13 percent in 2015 to 9.22 percent in 2019 but then increased to 10.19 percent in 2020 due to the pandemic in the past year, setting back the poverty level to three years ago. Women, rural population, and the elderly were the groups most affected, and poverty among children increased from 11.76 percent in 2019 to 12.23 percent in 2020.
- b. From 2015 to 2019, the Gini ratio has narrowed from 0.402 to 0.380; but due to the pandemic, it has widened to 0.385 in 2020. Indonesia has increased social protection expenditure rate from 12.3 percent in 2019 to 12.7 percent in 2020 in the national expenditure budget—the highest rate ever allocated to date.

## **National Health System**

- a. The COVID-19 pandemic has put enormous pressure on the national health system.
- b. As of 18 May 2021, as many as 1.748 million Indonesians have been infected with COVID-19, causing the health system's primary focus to shift to handling the pandemic. As a result of the pandemic, essential health services such as maternal and child health, nutrition, non-communicable disease prevention, and other infectious disease management have been affected.
- c. Although the number of births in health care facilities has grown, coverage of prenatal care at *posyandu*<sup>1</sup> has declined by nearly half. Furthermore, 55 percent of *posyandu* reported delays in vaccination procedures.
- d. The incidence of tuberculosis decreased from 316 (2018) to 312 per 100,000 population (2019). However, the pandemic poses a challenge to reduce the incidence of TB to 272 per 100,000 population by 2020. This condition is considered to be caused by the decline in essential TB services such as the utilization of molecular rapid test kits and the assignment of TB program staff for handling COVID-19.
- e. Prevalence of undernourishment has decreased from 10.73 percent in 2015 to 7.63 percent in 2019 but increased to 8.34 percent in 2020.
- f. Prevalence of stunting among children under the age of five has declined from 37.2 percent in 2013 to 27.67 percent in 2019, whereas that of wasting also dropped from 12.1 percent in 2013 to 7.44 percent in 2019.
- g. Prevalence of food insecurity, as measured with the Food Insecurity Experience Scale, decreased from 8.66 percent in 2017 to 5.12 percent in 2020.
- h. The National Health Insurance (*Jaminan Kesehatan Nasional*) has covered 222.5 million people (82.51 percent) of the population in 2020, but unmet needs for healthcare had increased from 4.66 percent in 2015 to 5.44 percent in 2020.
- i. However, strengthening of the health system is maintained, marked by the increase in *puskesmas* (National Clinic) with standard types of health workers from 23 percent (2019) to 39.9 percent (2020), district/city hospitals which

have 4 basic specialists and 3 other specialists from 61.7 percent (2019) to 75.04 percent (2020), as well as qualified drugs from 78.6 percent (2019) to 90.6 percent (2020).

- j. The national health system reform will cover eight main aspects, namely: (1) strengthening health workers' education and placement; (2) strengthening of primary health care; (3) improving the capacity of hospitals and health services in isolated, border and small island areas; (4) increasing the country's independence in pharmaceuticals and medical equipment; (5) strengthening health security and resilience; (6) disease control and immunization; (7) increasing the country's independence in pharmaceuticals and medical equipment; (8) development of information technology, digitization and community empowerment including the cultivation of the Healthy Life Style Community Movement (*Germas*).

## **Disaster Resilience System**

- a. The pandemic is also a momentum for Indonesia to strengthen its disaster resilience system, in addition to continuing its response to climate change through low-carbon development and increasing community resilience to climate change.
- b. Regarding disaster management in 2020, as many as 409 people died, and 6,451,439 people were affected by and/or displaced due to disasters.
- c. The Ministry of National Development Planning has issued a policy document entitled Climate Resilience Development as a guide for the implementation of Presidential Regulation No. 18 of 2020, National Priority 6 and Priority Program 2.
- d. GHG (Green House Gas) emissions in 2019 reached 1,866,500 GT of CO<sub>2</sub>. During the 2010-2019 period, the potential reduction in GHG emission was 23.46 percent from the baseline. Meanwhile, in 2019, the GHG emission reduction was 20.51 percent from the baseline, or 401,822.53 thousand tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e and the reduction the GHG emission intensity was 20.77 percent in 2019 from the baseline, or 420 tons CO<sub>2</sub>e/billion rupiah.
- e. The total government budget allocated for low-carbon development activities for 2018- 2020 was IDR54.57 billion (US\$3.54 million).

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<sup>1</sup> Posyandu is combination of the words pos, pelayanan and terpadu, which literally means 'integrated service post.' Posyandu provides essential health services to women and children in rural areas — *the editor*.



### ***Recovery of Industry, Tourism, and Investment Towards a Green Economy***

- a. The pandemic has caused contractions in economic growth, from 5.02 percent in 2019 to -2.07 percent in 2020. This has implicated reduced income per head from US\$4,174.90 in 2019 to US\$3,911.70 in 2020; the informal economy has expanded to 60.47 percent in 2020; the unemployment rate has increased from 5.23 percent in 2019 to 7.07 percent in 2020; youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET) has increased from 21.77 percent in 2019 to 24.28 percent in 2020, including the NEET youth with disability from 52.32 percent in 2019 to 53.37 percent in 2020 and the NEET in non-disabled youth from 21.21 percent in 2019 to 23.85 percent in 2020; foreign tourist visits have decreased from 16.1 million in 2019 to 4.1 million in 2020.
- b. In 2019, reduction and processing of waste have reached 14.58 percent and 67.40 percent respectively, whereas 68.35 percent of hazardous and toxic waste materials were treated. Around 100 companies have published sustainability reports in 2020, including 55 banks.
- c. Until 2020, as many as 2,038 companies participated in the PROPER assessment, which contributed to a reduction in pollutant loads of 46.16 million tons, a reduction in non-B3 waste 3R activities of 5,029,181 tons, a reduction in GHG emissions of 131.2 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e, and an increase in water efficiency of 339,529.963 m<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, between 2019 and 2020, some 895 industrial businesses obtained green industry certification certificates. According to data from the 2019 Green Industry Awards, energy and water savings totaled IDR3.5 trillion and IDR228.9 billion, respectively.

### ***Enabling Environment and Means of Implementation***

- a. Several enabling environments and means of implementation of SDGs in Indonesia are indicated among others with the increasing anti-corruption awareness of the public, increases in the number of information organizations and in the Press Freedom Index by 1.56 points scoring from 73.71 in 2018 to 75.27 in 2020; expansion of legal assistance (77 percent in 2019 and 89 percent in 2020 litigation; 80 percent non-litigation in 2019 and 77 percent in 2020); and an increase in the number of legal identity ownership reaching up to 77.38 percent for children under five years old and 58.03 percent for infants under 1 year old in 2020.

b. 73.7 percent of the population were internet users in 2019, highlighting the remaining digital divide and literacy challenges.

- c. The role of data is essential for pandemic response, supported by the successful implementation of the internet-based population census in 2020 due to collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

**“The pandemic has caused contractions in economic growth.**

Image: www.reuters.com





## Focus on Integration and Interlinking

Integration of the economic, social, and environmental dimensions is key to achieving sustainable development towards sustainable recovery and ensuring resilience against present and future crises. Inclusive and sustainable economic growth policies (SDG 8) will result in reduction in poverty (SDG 1) and inequality (SDG 10) through the strengthening of various social protection systems. Furthermore, economic growth due to industrial recovery, tourism, and investments in green economy will also benefit from the strengthening of the circular economy<sup>2</sup> (SDG 12) which is to be undertaken through low-carbon development and the strengthening of the natural and man-made disaster resilience system (SDG 13). Disaster resilience will affect food availability and nutrition (SDG 2) and the strengthening of the national health system. Implementation of multi-sector policies of the seven Goals will be based on the achievements of the enabling environment target (SDG 16) which focuses on enhancing good governance and a corruption-free environment, as well as means of implementation (SDG 17).

## Conclusion and Way Forward

Indonesia is committed to the successful implementation of the SDGs and the attainment of the 2030 development agenda, while continuously striving to become a sovereign, advanced, fair, and prosperous country. The achievement of the SDGs target has experienced a slowdown since 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is the perfect opportunity for transformation or radical change, namely recovery of industry, tourism and investment towards green economy, reform of the national health system, strengthening the system of social protection, and putting a disaster resilience system in place. Indonesia is moving towards an inclusive and sustainable economic transformation to build forward better, by increasing the role of manufacturing and services, strengthening the domestic economy through maintaining inter-island connectivity, green growth program, digital transformation, and human resource that are competitive at the global level. The Indonesian Transformation Agenda is expected to drive the efforts in meeting the 2030 development agenda which provides a solid foundation for achieving Indonesia's vision for 2045: to become a high-income country, to be part of the 5 highest GDP countries, with zero percent extreme poverty rate, and increased access to quality jobs. ■

**“Integration of the economic, social, and environmental dimensions is key to achieving sustainable development.**

Image: [www.globalpeace.org](http://www.globalpeace.org)



<sup>2</sup> A circular economy is a model of production and consumption which involves sharing, leasing, repairing, reusing and recycling of existing materials and products for as long as possible — *the editor*.

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