



SOCIETY FOR PROMOTION OF
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
PPM-023-14-07012020

2025 SCORECARD MALAYSIA



Persatuan Promosi Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari (PPMPL)
Society for Promotion of SDGs



Background and Reporting Methodology

Established in 2020, the Society for Promotion of Sustainable Development Goals (Malay abbreviation PPMPL) is a Malaysian CSO legally registered by the Registrar of Societies of Malaysia (ROS) under the Societies Act 1966. As one of the key SDG CSO in Malaysia, we have played a key role in influencing public discourses on sustainable development in the country.

In the same year as our establishment, PPMPL was appointed by the Parliament of Malaysia to be the Secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG). APPGM-SDG is an initiative convened by the Parliament to localise the 2030 Agenda in parliamentary constituencies across the country. A one-of-a-kind model globally, it is a bi-partisan initiative led by a 12-member committee comprising parliamentarians from both the House of Representatives (Dewan Rakyat) and the Senate (Dewan Negara).

On APPGM-SDG's behalf, PPMPL facilitates engagement between MPs, government bodies, CSOs, and grassroots communities to address local challenges using the SDG framework. Our activities are supported via core annual funding from the Ministry of Finance of Malaysia complemented by additional funding from Yayasan Hasanah, a foundation supporting grassroots empowerment initiatives, as well other project fundings.

As of 2025, PPMPL has worked in 143 out of 222 parliamentary constituencies on behalf of APPGM-SDG, addressing various unique grassroots challenges across different locations in Malaysia via initiatives including ground-level research to map local challenges, supporting sustainable micro-projects, facilitating community-government dialogues, establishing subnational SDG committees, and advocating for long-term policy solutions with ministries and MPs.

Reporting methodology

PPMPL implements APPGM-SDG's activities through a structured cycle: issue mapping, project implementation, capacity development, impact assessment, and policy advocacy. This has ensured that we are able to maintain a long-term presence in the constituencies, allowing us to monitor or work's impact across the different stages.

We complement these core activities with supporting initiatives, including situational research on critical issues faced by target groups, collaboration with CSO counterparts who work with specific constituencies or target groups, and monitoring of national policies' impact.

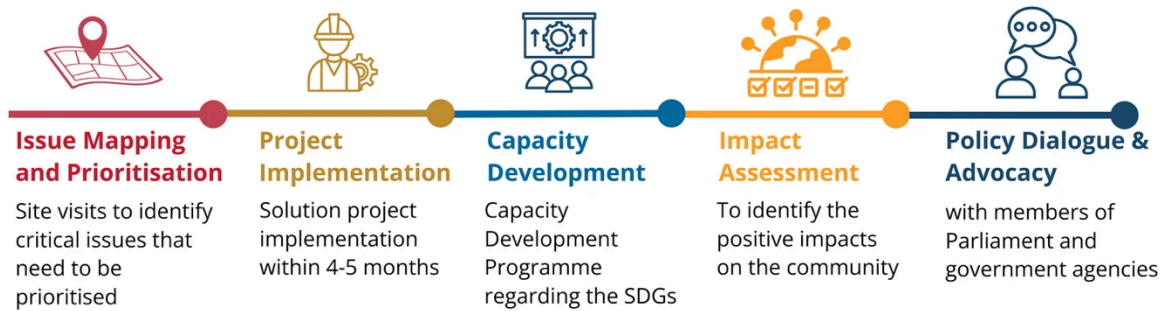


Figure 1: APPGM-SDG's core activities

This People's Scorecard Report on SDG Progress 2025 for Malaysia focuses mainly on our work on issue mapping and prioritisation in 28 parliamentary constituencies between January and August this year. Issue mapping represents the foundational stage in our work, where PPMP researchers go down to the ground to identify local socioeconomic needs, analyse problems emerging from the mapping activities, and determine issues to be prioritised for intervention in each constituency.

Figure 2 below summarises our issue mapping activities:



Figure 2: APPGM-SDG issue mapping and prioritisation activities

The primary methodology we adopt to conduct the issue mapping activities is focus group discussions (FGDs) with target groups who we have jointly identified with constituency MPs and local governments, typically district offices. The FGD approach was adopted as it allows us to hear directly from people's real-life experiences and views about their life challenges. We are also able to engage with the groups via targeted questioning on specific issues as well as its focus to uncover their concerns in great depth.

Our researchers are sent to the constituencies to conduct the FGDs for a minimum duration of 4 days for each issue mapping visit.¹ Through the FGDs, insights are gathered from target groups and communities about their day-to-day socioeconomic challenges. We take reasonable measures to safeguard the integrity of our findings by ensuring FGD participants can respond free from external or political influence. The findings are transcribed and documented, and we conduct further engagement with the constituency MPs and local government agencies to hear their feedback about the issues that have emerged. Subsequent core activities as illustrated in Figure 1 above are implemented upon the conclusion of the issue mapping process.

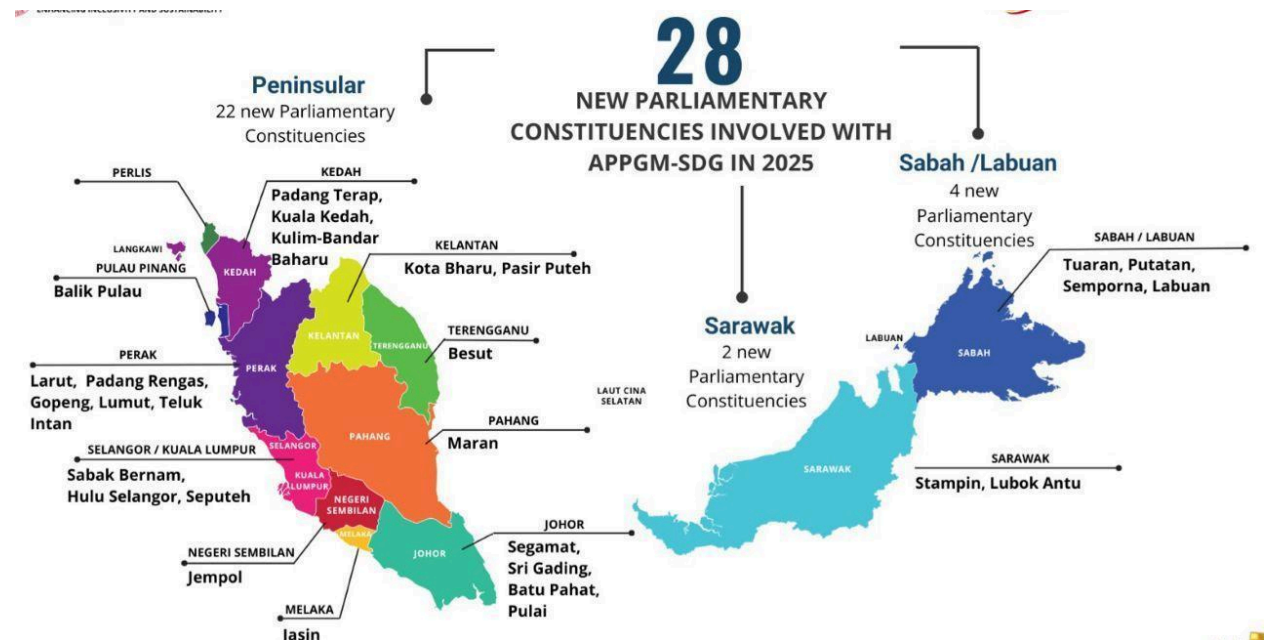
The overall assessment in this report reflects a broad-based consultative process that we have undertaken throughout the reporting period. The report is produced by compiling the feedback of nine individual reviewers who are core members of the PPMP and APPGM-SDG Secretariat team. Throughout 2025, these reviewers have been involved in our issue mapping activities in different parts of the country. Their feedback consolidates the diverse perspectives gathered from target groups and stakeholders during the issue mapping process.

The reviewers were also carefully selected for their broad demographic representation—spanning education, gender, ethnicity, and region—to ensure a diversity of perspectives. Among them, seven are female and two are male. Four of them hold doctoral degrees, two hold master's degrees and the remaining have undergraduate degrees. By ethnicity, four are ethnic Malay, one ethnic Indian, one ethnic Chinese, and the remaining three come from indigenous backgrounds – Iban-Chinese, Dayak, and Dusun. In addition, each reviewer is involved in issue mapping activities in constituencies located in different zones and regions across the country – Central, Northern, Southern, East Coast, Sabah and Sarawak.

In total, 247 FGDs were conducted across the 28 parliamentary constituencies we visited this year. Altogether, a total of 3,615 participants were involved in our issue mapping activities. Figure 3 below indicates the constituencies and their locations in Malaysia.

¹ The duration may increase due to factors such as constituency size and geography, and availability of FGD respondents.

Figure 3: Twenty-eight parliamentary constituencies mapped by PPMPPL on behalf of APPGM-SDG in 2025



Meanwhile, Table 1 below provides the breakdown of key details for our issue mapping activities.

Table 1: Breakdown of APPGM-SDG issue mapping activities

| | Region | State | Constituency | Number of FGDs | Number of Participants |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Central | Selangor | Sabak Bernam | 9 | 94 |
| 2 | | | Hulu Selangor | 9 | 117 |
| 3 | | Kuala Lumpur | Seputeh | 7 | 70 |
| 4 | North | Kedah | Padang Terap | 8 | 177 |
| 5 | | | Kuala Kedah | 9 | 142 |
| 6 | | | Kulim-Bandar Baharu | 8 | 108 |
| 7 | | Pulau Pinang | Balik Pulau | 8 | 118 |
| 8 | | Perak | Larut | 10 | 126 |
| 9 | | | Padang Rengas | 8 | 90 |
| 10 | | | Gopeng | 10 | 138 |
| 11 | | | Lumut | 8 | 83 |
| 12 | | | Teluk Intan | 8 | 95 |
| 13 | South | Negeri Sembilan | Jempol | 9 | 108 |
| 14 | | Melaka | Jasin | 8 | 107 |
| 15 | | Johor | Segamat | 8 | 119 |
| 16 | | | Sri Gading | 7 | 86 |
| 17 | | | Batu Pahat | 10 | 95 |
| 18 | | | Pulai | 9 | 139 |
| 19 | East Coast | Pahang | Maran | 9 | 128 |
| 20 | | Kelantan | Kota Bharu | 8 | 110 |
| 21 | | | Pasir Puteh | 9 | 151 |
| 22 | | Terengganu | Besut | 8 | 126 |
| 23 | Sabah + Labuan | Sabah | Tuaran | 9 | 205 |
| 24 | | | Putatan | 10 | 147 |
| 25 | | | Semporna | 14 | 228 |
| 26 | Sarawak | Labuan | Labuan | 9 | 227 |
| 27 | | Sarawak | Stampin | 8 | 64 |
| 28 | | | Lubok Antu | 10 | 217 |
| GRAND TOTAL | | | | 247 | 3615 |

The following target groups were met during the issue mapping activities:

1. **Residents and local associations:** Council housing residents, villagers, Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) settlers, community leaders
2. **Ethnic and cultural groups:** Orang Asli, Indian, Chinese, Iban, Bidayuh, Malay, Siam communities, Cultural and Arts Association (*Persatuan Kebudayaan dan Kesenian*)
3. **Economic and livelihood stakeholders:** Entrepreneurs, agricultural communities, fishers, livestock/aquaculture entrepreneurs
4. **Social welfare groups:** Community-Based Rehabilitation Centres (PPDK), NGOs, Women's Associations
5. **Schools and educators:** Parent-Teacher Associations (PIBG), teachers, students
6. **Vulnerable populations:** Urban poor, flood victims, people with disabilities (PWDs), squatter communities
7. **Youth**
8. **Professional groups:** Military veterans' association (PVATM), strata homeowners and property professionals
9. **Environmental and tourism groups**

In filling out the Global People's Scorecard on SDG Progress 2015 – 2025 survey form, the researchers have considered the views of the target groups they have interacted with during the issue mapping process. At the same time, they have reflected on their respective experiences of the ground situation during their encounters with those communities. This is a process which has amplified the stories that grassroots communities have told us and our reflection on what the stories mean to SDG progress in Malaysia.

The report is divided into two parts, reflecting the survey form completed by the nine reviewers. Part 1 consolidates their responses to general questions about the 2030 Agenda's national-level implementation process. Part 2 presents the reviewers' average numerical scores for relevant targets across the 17 SDGs, with brief qualitative justifications for each score.

Part 1: General Questions About the Agenda 2030 Implementation Process at National Level

Overview of SDG progress

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, Malaysia has demonstrated a clear and structured commitment to the SDGs, establishing a robust institutional framework that has driven measurable, though uneven, progress. The country's trajectory is characterised by strong policy integration at the national level, with the SDGs systematically embedded into successive five-year development plans, starting with the 11th Malaysia Plan² and continuing through the 12th Malaysia Plan and its Mid-Term Review,³ supported by dedicated frameworks like the SDG Roadmap Phase I and II, which timelines align with the Malaysia Plans.

This mainstreaming, coupled with the establishment of governance bodies like the National SDG Council (*Majlis SDG Negara*) chaired by the Prime Minister and the National SDG Centre (*Pusat SDG Negara*), has provided a solid foundation for implementation. The maturation of data systems, led by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) with its annual SDG reports⁴ and dedicated public dashboard,⁵ alongside the submission of Voluntary National Reviews in 2017,⁶ 2021,⁷ and 2025,⁸ reflects a growing commitment to transparency and monitoring. This top-level commitment, combined with a national assessment indicating that about 43% of Malaysia's SDG targets were on track to be achieved in 2030, provides a strong foundation for continued progress.⁹

A unique and pivotal element has been the role of APPGM-SDG, a bipartisan body that has been instrumental in localising the Goals and fostering multi-stakeholder engagement across government, the private sector, civil society, and grassroots communities.

This institutional effort has yielded significant achievements in several key areas. Malaysia is on a strong path to achieve specific Goals by 2030, particularly those related to basic infrastructure and social development. SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) is a standout, with nearly universal electricity access and ambitious state-level

² <https://ekonomi.gov.my/sites/default/files/2020-08/Kajian%20Separuh%20Penggai%20RMK11.pdf>

³ <https://www.parlimen.gov.my/ipms/eps/2023-09-11/CMD.30.2023%20-%20CMD30.2023.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.statistics.gov.my/portal-main/article/sustainable-development-goals>

⁵ <https://statistics.gov.my/portal-main/article/sustainable-development-goals>

⁶ <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2021/15881Malaysia.pdf>

⁷ <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/malaysia/voluntary-national-review-2021>

⁸ https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2025/VNR%202025%20Malaysia%20Report_0.pdf

⁹ Based on 2022 data provided in Malaysia VNR 2025 document.

https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2025/VNR%202025%20Malaysia%20Report_0.pdf

transitions, such as Sarawak's target of 60% renewable energy by 2030 through hydropower, solar, and green hydrogen projects.

Similarly, SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) benefits from sustained investment and policies like the National Industrial Master Plan 2030 (NIMP 2030). In social sectors, SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) has been bolstered by expanded healthcare access and immunization programmes, while SDG 4 (Quality Education) has seen near-universal primary enrolment and a push towards digital learning and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Progress on SDG 1 (No Poverty) is notable, with a significant reduction in absolute poverty rates through extensive social protection programs, though this success is tempered by the persistent challenge of multidimensional poverty.

However, this progress is overshadowed by profound and persistent challenges that demand urgent attention. The most critical area is deepening socioeconomic inequality (SDG 10), where widening income gaps between urban and rural areas, as well as between high and low-income groups, threaten social cohesion. Despite aggregate national improvements, vulnerable communities—including indigenous populations (Orang Asli and Orang Asal), residents of small islands, the B40 income group, and single mothers—continue to face exclusion from quality education, healthcare, and economic opportunities due to geographic isolation, discrimination, and structural barriers.

A second critical gap is in climate action and environmental sustainability (SDG 13). While policy commitments like the National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR) and a 2050 carbon-neutral aspiration exist, the energy transition is slow, reliance on coal remains high, and climate resilience is weak. This is evidenced by recurrent major floods that catch communities unprepared, highlighting a failure in adaptive infrastructure and early warning systems.

Underpinning these implementation gaps is the weakest link in Malaysia's SDG implementation: the transition from planning to concrete, accountable, and inclusive action. Budget allocations for SDGs are often fragmented and short-term, local governments lack financial autonomy and technical capacity, and data remains insufficiently disaggregated to effectively track the progress of the most marginalised, including stateless persons, refugees, and persons with disabilities.

In conclusion, Malaysia's SDG journey since 2015 is a tale of two realities. On one hand, the country has built a commendable architecture for sustainable development, characterised by policy coherence, innovative multi-stakeholder platforms, and tangible gains in infrastructure and basic services. On the other hand, the transformative promise of the SDGs is being undermined by unaddressed inequalities, a pace of climate action that is not commensurate with the emergency, and systemic weaknesses in financing, localisation, and inclusive monitoring. The path to 2030 requires a decisive shift from prioritising plan-making to ensuring accountable implementation, with a focus

on closing the inequality gap, building genuine climate resilience, and empowering local authorities with the resources and mandate to leave no one behind.

Civil society participation

Civil society in Malaysia has articulated a coherent and multi-faceted set of demands that collectively call for a fundamental transformation in how the SDGs are governed, financed, and implemented. These demands move beyond mere requests for specific projects and instead advocate for a new paradigm of development—one that is genuinely inclusive, transparent, rights-based, and accountable. At its core, this represents a powerful call to shift from a top-down, plan-heavy approach to a bottom-up, action-oriented model of empowerment where communities are active architects of their own development, not just passive recipients.

A paramount and consistent demand is for inclusive and meaningful participation in governance. Civil society organisations (CSOs) consistently stress that current consultation processes are often tokenistic, occurring after key decisions have already been made. The crucial demand is for formal and structured platforms that enable ongoing dialogue, ensuring that grassroots communities, including marginalised groups such as the Orang Asli, indigenous peoples in Sabah and Sarawak, refugees, stateless individuals, and rural communities, have a direct voice in shaping policies from the outset. This includes their involvement in the drafting of Local Plans, national master plans, and state structural plans.

This demand for deeper democracy is often linked to the call for revived local elections, which would decentralise power and enhance direct accountability to local populations. In this model, civil society sees itself as an essential bridge, channelling the feedback, complaints, and needs from the grassroots directly to policymakers to ensure that the voices of the people are not just heard but are heeded.

Underpinning this participatory call is a demand for transparency, accountability, and a rights-based framework. CSOs argue that without these pillars, SDG progress reports risk being political exercises rather than honest assessments. Key legislative and institutional reforms are also called for, including the passage of a Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, tougher anti-corruption measures, and independent monitoring mechanisms to verify government data. There is a strong emphasis on the need for disaggregated data—by gender, ethnicity, location, and disability status—to accurately track progress and ensure no one is left behind. Furthermore, civil society insists on a rights-based approach to delivery, which includes legally recognising the right to a healthy environment, enforcing Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for indigenous communities regarding land and resource use, enacting a robust Climate Change Bill, and implementing anti-discrimination laws that protect all vulnerable groups.

To translate participation and transparency into tangible outcomes, civil society highlights the critical need for equitable resource allocation and localised implementation. A starkly common critique is the gap between numerous action plans,

reports, and roadmaps and the lack of concrete implementation on the ground. CSOs call for “finance that follows function,” advocating for transparent SDG budgeting, predictable long-term funding streams for grassroots initiatives, and environmental fiscal transfers. They stress that many programmes, especially in rural and marginalised communities, fail due to fragmented, short-term, and unpredictable funding. This demand for financial justice is coupled with a call for stronger localisation, which entails clearer state and local mandates, greater autonomy for sub-national actors, and improved federal-state coordination to ensure that resources and implementation strategies are tailored to local contexts and needs, particularly in regions like Sabah and Sarawak.

Finally, these demands are woven together by a central plea for strengthened institutions and policy consistency. Civil society recognises that sustainable development is jeopardised by political instability and shifting priorities with each change in government. There is a crucial demand for long-term strategies that transcend political cycles and race-based politics, focusing instead on building inclusive, stable, and trustworthy institutions as envisioned by SDG 16. This involves ensuring policy coherence across different levels of government and safeguarding the space for civil society to operate as an independent and critical partner in the development process. In essence, the most crucial demands from civil society are not merely a checklist of items but an integrated call for a fresh approach to development—one rooted in participatory governance, unwavering accountability, equitable financing, and institutional integrity to ensure the SDGs are delivered for all Malaysians.

SDG Governance

Malaysia has established a comprehensive and multi-tiered formal institutional mechanism for the oversight of SDG implementation, characterised by high-level political leadership and a structured, multi-stakeholder approach. The cornerstone of this governance framework is the National SDG Council, which serves as the apex decision-making and monitoring platform. This body is not a repurposed existing council but was newly created specifically for SDG oversight in 2016, underscoring the country's dedicated institutional commitment to the 2030 Agenda.

The Council is distinctly multi-stakeholder in nature. While its core membership comprises the highest levels of government, it also incorporates a range of stakeholders. Leadership within this body lies with the Prime Minister who serves as the Chair. This reflects the highest level of political commitment and is intended to drive policy coherence across the entire administration.

Beneath this high-level council operates a multi-ministerial executive and technical structure that drives the day-to-day coordination and implementation. This includes the SDG Steering Committee, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister or alternatively Minister of Economy. The Ministry of Economy itself, via the National SDG Centre, acts as the national SDG focal point, providing the secretariat and technical backbone for the entire framework. The Steering Committee is supported by the SDG Technical Committee led

by the Director General of Ministry of Economy as well as various thematic working committees that involve a wide array of ministries and government agencies, such as the Ministries of Finance, Education, and Environment. A critical feature of this layer is its expanded multi-stakeholder character, as these technical committees actively include representatives from CSOs, the private sector, academia, and international partners like UN agencies, facilitating broader engagement and expertise beyond the government.

A unique and widely highlighted component of Malaysia's SDG oversight landscape exists at the parliamentary level through the APPGM-SDG. It is crucial to note that this is not a standing parliamentary committee with formal legislative power, but rather a bipartisan cross-party platform that has established a significant and permanent presence. The APPGM-SDG comprises MPs from both the government and opposition blocs, united in their mission to localise and monitor the SDGs. It operates through its Secretariat, functioning as a vital bridge between national policy and constituency-level implementation. Its role is primarily one of local-level implementation, advocacy, grassroots capacity building, and independent monitoring, complementing the executive-driven work of the National SDG Council by providing a channel for grassroots feedback and ensuring the SDGs remain a policy priority.

Despite this meticulously designed and comprehensive structure, assessments of its effectiveness highlight several systemic challenges. The mechanism is criticised for being highly centralised, with real decision-making power concentrated at the federal level, which can limit the empowerment of state and local governments. The inclusiveness of non-state or civil society actors, while present, is often described as uneven, with civil society participation frequently being consultative rather than influential in shaping final decisions. Furthermore, issues of policy continuity arise with changes in the federal government, and overlaps with existing planning bodies can lead to fragmented mandates and diluted accountability. While monitoring and reporting are conducted, persistent data gaps at the sub-national level and limited public accountability mechanisms mean that the structure's transformative impact on SDG delivery does not yet fully match its ambitious design on paper.

National budget, implementation and budget commitments

As mentioned earlier, Malaysia has pursued a systematic and multi-faceted approach to incorporating the SDGs into its national policy, planning, and implementation frameworks, primarily by embedding them within its core national development plans. The integration began with the 11th Malaysia Plan (2016-2020), which wove SDG elements into its six strategic thrusts, and was significantly strengthened in the 12th Malaysia Plan (2021-2025). The 12MP explicitly aligns its results-based framework with all 17 SDGs and is complemented by a dedicated SDG Roadmap (Phase II, 2021-2025), which serves as the specific strategic document detailing targets and implementation pathways.

This mainstreaming extends beyond central planning into sectoral and spatial policies, including the National Physical Plan, various state structure plans, and policies for

health, housing, and the environment. These spatial plans are particularly significant as they legally enforce SDG principles under the Town and Country Planning Act 1976, ensuring sustainability considerations are embedded in land-use and development decisions at all levels of government. This comprehensive embedding demonstrates a formal commitment to the entire 2030 Agenda, though the practical execution reveals clear patterns of prioritisation.

While the government's framework nominally covers all 17 Goals, there is a consistent observation of "cherry-picking" or unequal emphasis, driven by national priorities and economic imperatives. Goals that align closely with traditional economic and social development agendas, such as SDG 1 (No Poverty) through cash assistance and rural programs, SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) via investments in digitalisation and mega-projects, receive the most robust policy attention and resources. In contrast, goals requiring deeper structural or governance reforms, notably SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), are frequently cited as receiving less in-depth focus and facing greater implementation challenges, despite being included in official documents.

On the critical question of financing, budget commitments are characterised by a dispersed and multi-source approach rather than a single, transparent SDG budget line. The national government employs outcome-based budgeting to support SDG achievement and makes special allocations for social welfare (e.g., *Bantuan Sara Hidup* and *Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah* cash transfer programmes), sustainability (e.g., Green Technology Financing Scheme, renewable energy incentives), and essential services in education and health.

A key financial innovation is the Malaysia-UN MySDG Trust Fund, launched with an initial RM20 million in 2021, designed to co-finance SDG solutions and open to proposals from NGOs and academia. Beyond direct government spending, financing is supplemented by private sector investment facilitated by tools like the SDG Investor Map, green *sukuk* issuances, and programs from international financial institutions.

However, a significant criticism is the lack of transparency regarding the actual expenditure against SDG targets annually, and despite gender-responsive and rural budgeting, allocations dedicated to the most marginalised groups—including indigenous communities, refugees, and stateless persons—are often assessed as insufficient to meet their needs, risking the core pledge to leave no one behind.

The process of integrating the SDGs has included formal avenues for civil society input, though the depth and transformative impact of this engagement are subjects of debate. Key multi-stakeholder platforms include APPGM-SDG and CSO-SDG Alliance, which actively localise the goals and channels grassroots feedback to policymakers. Civil society organisations, academics, and the private sector are consulted through pre-budget dialogues, thematic working committees under DOSM for indicator

monitoring, and the formulation of VNRs. While these mechanisms provide valuable entry points for input, the prevailing view is that civil society's role remains largely consultative. Their recommendations are often only partially reflected in final policies, and the governance structure is criticized for being highly centralized, limiting the potential for more transformative, community-driven changes to national planning and budgetary decisions.

Monitoring and review

Our experience of engaging with SDG monitoring processes in Malaysia reveals a complex landscape characterised by established official systems for data collection alongside significant challenges in inclusivity, data granularity, and the meaningful integration of non-official data. The primary entity responsible for official SDG monitoring is DOSM, which maintains a public SDG Dashboard and publishes annual SDG Indicators reports. This platform provides a foundational level of accessibility, offering data disaggregated by year, state, urban/rural strata, sex, and age for many indicators, with some data available down to the district level.

This system represents a formal commitment to tracking progress and provides a baseline of information for stakeholders. However, the accessibility and utility of this official data are frequently questioned. Many stakeholders point to irregular updates, data that often fails to fully capture on-the-ground realities, and formats that are not always user-friendly, which collectively constrain deeper analysis and broader public engagement.

A more significant limitation is the insufficiency of data disaggregation to fully operationalise the SDG slogan of "leave no one behind." While basic demographic breakdowns are available, there remain profound gaps in data covering key marginalised and vulnerable populations. Official statistics systematically undercount or entirely miss groups such as refugees, undocumented communities, and stateless persons, who are often excluded from formal surveys and censuses. This data invisibility directly impedes the creation of effective, targeted policies for these populations and means that national progress reports can mask the severe inequalities experienced at the margins of society.

In response to these gaps, civil society actors have developed parallel and complementary monitoring processes. Organisations like APPGM-SDG through its Secretariat play a particularly pivotal role by generating grassroots, constituency-level evidence through issue mapping, focus group discussions, site visits, community-based project support, and multi-level policy advocacy. This bottom-up approach captures qualitative insights and local realities that official statistics often miss, especially concerning left-behind groups such as rural, indigenous, and low-income (B40) communities.

Channels do exist for feeding this alternative data into formal review processes. The most significant of these is the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process, where

multi-stakeholder consultations are held, and CSOs and NGOs can submit formal inputs. Furthermore, platforms such as the National SDG Council's working committees and specific consultation sessions, like those on the ten priority SDG focus areas for 2025, provide structured, though limited, opportunities for civil society to present its findings. However, as mentioned previously, despite these formal channels, a persistent critique is that the integration of civil society data remains more consultative than transformative.

Overview of climate change commitments

Malaysia's delivery on its commitments under the Paris Agreement presents a paradox of progressive policy ambition at the national level juxtaposed with significant implementation gaps and a pace of transition that is not yet aligned with the urgency of the climate emergency.

The country has demonstrated a clear commitment to the international process by submitting an updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in 2021, pledging to reduce the economy-wide carbon intensity of its GDP by 45% by 2030 against a 2005 baseline and aspiring to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.¹⁰ This commitment is underpinned by a string of national policy frameworks and roadmaps, including the NETR, the National Policy on Climate Change,¹¹ and the development of a Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategy (LT-LEDS).¹² These documents outline a strategic vision for decarbonisation, particularly in the energy sector through targets for renewable energy expansion, such as the goal for 31% renewable installed capacity by 2025, and initiatives in biofuels and sustainable aviation fuel. Official reports, such as the Fourth Biennial Update Report indicating a 35.9% reduction in GHG intensity by 2019,¹³ suggest measurable, albeit incremental, progress from the baseline.

However, a critical assessment reveals that these policies and current progress are insufficient to meet the scale of the challenge. The pace of the renewable energy transition is widely regarded as too slow, with the 31% target for 2025 not aligned with a 1.5°C pathway, and the nation's continued reliance on coal remains a major concern absent a binding phase-out strategy. The legal and regulatory architecture also needs to be updated. The longstanding Environmental Quality Act of 1994 contains significant enforcement gaps, leaving regulators unable to address novel pollutants and emerging environmental challenges effectively. While the proposed development of a dedicated

¹⁰

<https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/Malaysia%20NDC%20Updated%20Submission%20to%20UNFCCC%20July%202021%20final.pdf>

¹¹

<https://www.nres.gov.my/ms-my/pustakamedia/Penerbitan/National%20Policy%20on%20Climate%20Change%202.0.pdf>

¹² https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/MALAYSIA_cop28cmp18cma5_HLS_ENG.pdf

¹³ <https://unfccc.int/documents/624776>

Climate Change Act is a positive step,¹⁴ critics have highlighted its slow progress.¹⁵ Furthermore, implementation is hampered by systemic issues of coordination, particularly between federal and state governments, leading to policy incoherence and uneven execution across the country, as seen in the unique challenges and opportunities in states like Sabah and Sarawak.

To genuinely address the climate emergency, Malaysia requires a suite of additional, decisive policy changes that move beyond planning to transformative action. A primary focus must be the accelerated and ambitious decarbonisation of the energy sector. This entails not only significantly raising renewable energy targets but also streamlining approvals for large-scale solar, wind, and hydropower projects, and implementing a firm, timed strategy to phase out coal-fired power plants. Complementing this, the introduction of a comprehensive carbon pricing mechanism, such as a carbon tax covering heavy industries by 2026, is essential to create a financial imperative for emission reductions across the economy. Concurrently, the legal framework must be strengthened through the swift enactment of the Climate Change Act, coupled with amendments to the Environmental Quality Act, to provide regulators with unambiguous enforcement powers and to establish legally binding obligations for emissions reduction and climate resilience.

Alongside these mitigation efforts, a monumental shift is needed in climate adaptation and resilience planning. The increasing frequency and intensity of unpredictable flooding, as experienced in the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak, expose a critical vulnerability and a failure in early warning systems and public preparedness. Addressing this requires the development and implementation of a comprehensive National Adaptation Plan that is locally specific.¹⁶ This must be operationalised through the establishment of mandatory climate-resilient infrastructure standards for all publicly funded projects, updated national climate risk maps, and significant investments in robust early warning systems and urban flood management. Finally, achieving these ambitious goals demands a whole-of-society approach that transcends current practices. This includes ensuring meaningful, inclusive stakeholder engagement that integrates the knowledge and addresses the vulnerabilities of marginalized communities, and fostering stronger, more effective coordination between federal and state authorities to ensure that national climate commitments are translated into coherent and decisive action at every level of governance.

Progress since last VNR

Malaysia's engagement with the VNR process demonstrates a clear trajectory towards institutionalising the SDGs within its national planning framework, with progress evident

¹⁴ <https://www.bernama.com/en/news.php?id=2457759>

¹⁵ <https://www.bernama.com/en/thoughts/news.php?id=2454422>

¹⁶

<https://www.nres.gov.my/ucapan/Koleksi%20Ucapan/Teks%20Ucapan%20KSU%20Kick%20Off%20MyNAP%205%20Jan%2025%20PK%20KSU.pdf>

in the integration of the agenda, though significant challenges remain in ensuring equitable and fully resourced implementation.

As mentioned earlier, the country has submitted VNRs in 2017, 2021, and most recently in 2025, using these reports as strategic tools to assess and communicate progress. The primary mechanism for acting upon VNR findings is not a standalone national action plan, but rather its direct incorporation into the country's central development blueprints. The 12th Malaysia Plan (2021-2025) and the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 and later the Ekonomi MADANI framework serve as the main vehicles for implementation, with the SDG Roadmap Phase II (2021-2025) acting as a complementary technical and operational guide. This Roadmap is, in effect, the national action plan stemming from the VNR assessment, explicitly identifying priority areas and "accelerator points" for goals that are lagging, thereby ensuring a direct line from global reporting to domestic policy.

A critical component of this process has been the development of data-based gap analyses that inform policy prioritisation. DOSM has been central to this effort, with its initial SDG indicator assessment in 2018 and subsequent annual reports providing the evidence base for tracking. This data-driven approach has enabled a more targeted alignment between the SDGs and the 12th Malaysia Plan. The VNR process itself functions as a comprehensive gap analysis, systematically highlighting areas of progress, such as reductions in poverty incidence and improvements in education, alongside persistent challenges. These identified gaps, particularly concerning data disaggregation for vulnerable groups, regional disparities, and environmental goals, have catalysed broader policy dialogue.

Despite this structured approach, the follow-up on VNR priorities reveals a mixed record of achievement and acceleration. On a positive note, progress has been made in specific areas. The establishment of the Malaysia SDG Trust Fund (MySDG Fund) in 2021 represents a direct response to the need for diversified financing, and the creation of the National SDG Centre has strengthened institutional coordination.

The 2025 VNR reportedly shows advancements in economic resilience and environmental protection. However, critical areas for follow-up from previous VNRs remain pressing. Concerns persist around "cherry-picking" of prioritised goals, as mentioned earlier. Structural inequalities, malnutrition, and uneven development across states continue to be significant challenges. A major impediment to effective follow-through is the state of data systems; while improved, the lack of comprehensively disaggregated data at the district level and for marginalized groups.

Furthermore, the translation of policy prioritisation into concrete, adequately funded action is inconsistent. While there has been a selective increase in SDG-aligned budgeting, particularly for social protection and rural infrastructure, there is no transparent system of budget tagging for the SDGs. This makes it difficult to ascertain the true scale of financial commitment and whether it matches the ambitious policy frameworks.

The recently passed 13th Malaysia Plan (2026-2030) contains a conspicuous lack of emphasis on the SDGs, a notable departure from previous plans. This issue was raised in Parliament by an MP who is part of APPGM-SDG's bipartisan committee. Despite government assurances that the SDGs remain a priority, civil society must hold it accountable to this commitment, especially as the 2030 Agenda enters its final five years.

Public awareness of the SDGs

Malaysia's dissemination of the 2030 Agenda presents a landscape of robust institutional and elite-level engagement that has yet to fully permeate the broader public consciousness. The agenda has been systematically institutionalised within the upper echelons of governance and academia, yet awareness among the general populace and even within some government agencies remains fragmented and inconsistent. This creates a scenario where the framework for promotion is well-established, but its effectiveness in achieving widespread public understanding is still a work in progress.

At the national level, the government has demonstrated a clear commitment to publicising the SDGs through high-profile events and integrated planning. The Malaysia SDG Summit in 2024, co-hosted by the Ministry of Economy and the National SDG Centre and attended by the Prime Minister, stands as a key example of a major public campaign designed to set a national direction for the 2030 Agenda. The primary languages for dissemination are Malay and English, with key government platforms, including websites, providing information bilingually to maximize accessibility.

A significant and dynamic component of SDG publicity is the active role of local governments and educational bodies. The Malaysia SDG Cities initiative,¹⁷ driven by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and agencies like URBANICE Malaysia, has empowered local authorities (PBTs) to develop their own SDG roadmaps and Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs).¹⁸ With 45 out of 155 local authorities having prepared such roadmaps, there is a tangible, though uneven, effort to localise the goals. In parallel, educational and research institutions have become central hubs for SDG analysis and sharing. Public universities have established sustainability offices, integrated SDGs into their curricula and strategic plans, and produced a substantial body of academic research on topics ranging from the role of universities themselves to local government implementation.¹⁹ This academic engagement provides a critical evidence base for policymakers and helps to cultivate SDG literacy among students.

However, the most impactful mechanism for bridging the gap between national policy and grassroots awareness is APPGM-SDG. Its work transcends traditional publicity by combining awareness-raising with concrete action. Through community-level issue

¹⁷ <https://www.urbanicemalaysia.com.my/projects/malaysia-sdg-cities>

¹⁸ <https://www.urbanicemalaysia.com.my/publications/vlr-guidelines>

¹⁹

<https://um.edu.my/news/um-tops-world-in-global-partnerships-soars-into-top-25-in-sustainability-rankings>

mapping, capacity-building workshops, and the implementation of over a thousand "SDG solution" micro-projects, APPGM-SDG translates the abstract goals into tangible local interventions. It actively engages local leaders, CSOs, and community members, thereby fostering a more practical and localised understanding of the agenda.

Despite these multi-faceted efforts, significant challenges to widespread publicity persist. Public awareness remains uneven, with rural and indigenous communities often left behind. While materials are available in Malay and English, there is a noted absence of translations into vernacular and indigenous languages, limiting accessibility for these groups.

Furthermore, knowledge within some government agencies and among the public is often superficial; the SDGs are recognised in name but not deeply understood or consistently applied in daily work and life. This indicates that while the infrastructure for publicity—comprising summits, roadmaps, academic research, and constituency projects—is increasingly sophisticated, the goal of achieving a truly pervasive and functional public understanding of the 2030 Agenda across all segments of Malaysian society is yet to be fully realised. The dissemination has been strong on structure but is still developing in its depth and breadth of public penetration.

Localising of the SDGs

Local-level engagement with the SDGs in Malaysia presents a complex picture of emerging formal frameworks and proactive initiatives that are fundamentally constrained by structural, financial, and capacity challenges. While there is a clear and growing recognition at the national level of the critical role subnational and local governance structures play in achieving the 2030 Agenda, the translation of this recognition into effective, resourced, and equitable local action remains incomplete, resulting in a landscape of uneven and often limited localisation.

Formally, several mechanisms exist to connect national SDG strategies with local development. The primary vehicles for this integration are the national Malaysia SDG Roadmap and the Twelfth Malaysia Plan, which are intended to cascade SDG priorities downward. This is operationalised through local development plans and council budgets that are, in theory, aligned with these national frameworks. Technical support and guidance for this process are provided by agencies such as Urbanice Malaysia, which offers training, open data platforms, and planning assistance to local authorities.

A particularly impactful bridging mechanism is APPGM-SDG, which funds and monitors community-based projects across parliamentary constituencies, creating a direct channel for local issues and solutions to inform national policy and for national priorities to be contextualized at the grassroots level.

Furthermore, the federal government engages local representatives through the National SDG Council and the VNR process, providing a structured, albeit high-level, platform for coordination.

Despite these established mechanisms, a significant gap persists between national policy ambition and local implementation capacity. This disconnect is rooted in several critical areas. Financially, local governments operate with severe constraints. They rely heavily on federal transfers, and only a small proportion of national SDG-related funding is directly allocated to local authorities (PBTs). This lack of financial autonomy leaves them poorly equipped to implement or scale up SDG-aligned programs, a challenge acutely felt in poorer districts and rural areas. Compounding this financial shortfall is an unevenness in technical expertise and human capacity, particularly at the district and local levels. While support is available, it does not consistently reach all local authorities, leading to fragmented monitoring and reporting practices and a general lack of the specialised skills needed to translate broad SDG targets into concrete local programs.

The inclusivity of the SDG localisation process is another area where intention has not fully matched outcome. Structured opportunities for participation do exist, such as consultation sessions and thematic working groups that involve civil society organizations (CSOs), academia, and community representatives. However, this engagement is not yet systematic or uniformly applied across all states and districts.

The participation of marginalised groups, including the poor, indigenous communities, and other vulnerable populations, is often ad hoc and mediated through CSOs rather than being embedded as a fundamental component of local government planning and decision-making. This results in a process that, while increasingly consultative, falls short of being truly participatory and transformative, risking the perpetuation of existing inequalities in the very process designed to eliminate them.

Key groups who face being left behind

In the Malaysian context, marginalisation and discrimination are not isolated phenomena but rather deeply embedded structural issues that affect a wide cross-section of society, with the most acute impacts falling upon groups who often face intersecting layers of exclusion based on ethnicity, geography, legal status, gender, and socioeconomic standing. Based on our extensive grassroots mapping and constituency-level evidence, a consistent pattern of vulnerability emerges, highlighting populations that are systematically left behind in the nation's development trajectory, thereby posing a significant challenge to the achievement of the SDGs' core pledge to leave no one behind.

Foremost among these groups are the Indigenous communities—Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia and Orang Asal in Sabah and Sarawak. Their marginalisation is profound and multi-faceted, rooted in geographic isolation, cultural alienation, and the persistent threat to their customary land rights due to logging, agricultural expansion, and other development projects. This physical separation from mainstream infrastructure translates into severely limited access to basic services; many indigenous villages struggle with inadequate supplies of clean water, unreliable electricity, and poor

road connectivity that impedes access to healthcare, education, and markets. The consequence is a cycle of persistent poverty, high school dropout rates, and the erosion of cultural identity, as external pressures and a lack of culturally sensitive policies undermine their traditional ways of life.

Closely linked to the plight of indigenous peoples are the challenges faced by rural communities more broadly, including smallholder farmers, coastal fishers, and small island communities. These populations contend with a stark urban-rural development gap, manifesting in lower incomes, inferior infrastructure, and limited economic opportunities. Farmers and fishers face declining income security due to climate shocks, market volatility, marine pollution, and high operational costs, often feeling excluded from subsidy and assistance programs. The situation is particularly dire for small island communities, where residents describe living in conditions reminiscent of "the 90s era," characterised by a lack of bridges or regular transport, forcing reliance on boats and motorcycles, with only primary schooling available and frequent disruptions to essential utilities like water and electricity.

A particularly severe form of exclusion is experienced by stateless individuals and undocumented migrants, with a significant population in Sabah. Without documentation, they exist in a legal limbo, formally denied access to public education, healthcare, and legal employment. This legal invisibility creates intergenerational poverty and profound social stigma, leaving entire communities, such as the Bajau Laut. Similarly, refugees and documented migrant workers face significant barriers, with the latter often tied to specific employers through temporary visas, creating dependencies that heighten vulnerability to exploitation and limit access to social protection.

Economic and gender-based discrimination further compounds these challenges. The bottom 40% income group (B40), including many urban poor living in public low-cost housing projects (PPR), faces a high cost of living, low wages, and unstable employment, trapping them in a cycle of poverty with limited prospects for social mobility. Women, and single mothers in particular, shoulder a disproportionate burden, confronting a persistent gender wage gap, workplace discrimination, and the overwhelming demands of childcare without adequate social support. This economic vulnerability is often exacerbated for female-headed households, limiting their economic mobility and increasing their risk of poverty.

Other groups facing systemic barriers include PWDs, who encounter face challenges in accessing employment and education, and a lack of accessible public facilities and assistive technology, leading to social isolation and low labour force participation. Youth, especially from rural and indigenous backgrounds, grapple with unemployment and underemployment, often due to a mismatch between their skills and market demands, while the elderly population in rural areas frequently lacks financial security and access to formal caregiving services. Ultimately, the marginalisation of these groups is perpetuated by a combination of legal gaps, inadequate and geographically uneven service delivery, limited disaggregated data that masks their specific realities, and policy approaches that are sometimes insufficiently nuanced to address their unique and

overlapping vulnerabilities, leaving them consistently behind in Malaysia's development narrative.

Part 2: SDG Assessment

| Scoring Scale Specifications* | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| -5 (very significant reduction) | -4 (large reduction) | -3 (medium reduction) | -2 (limited reduction) | -1 (very limited reduction) | 0 (no progress) | +1 (very low progress) | +2 (low progress) | +3 (medium progress) | +4 (high progress) | +5 (very high progress) |

* **Note:** NA indicates the issues covered under the target did not emerge in our mapping activities.

| Nr. | Target | Average Score | Comments |
|--------------------------|--|---------------|---|
| SDG 1: NO POVERTY | | | |
| 1.1 | Eradicating Extreme Poverty People living in extreme poverty experience severe deprivation, struggling to meet their basic needs. The \$1.25-a-day threshold is the global standard to identify extreme poverty. Is the country on track to ensure that no one lives in extreme poverty by 2030? | 1.90 | The lived experience of poverty and vulnerability remains significant for many, despite the official presence of numerous aid schemes. A central and acute pressure is the high cost of living, where the prices of basic food and essential goods are rising faster than incomes. This economic strain forces households to adopt survival strategies, such as taking on multiple jobs, while simultaneously pushing some small businesses to close. Compounding this economic fragility are critical gaps in the social protection system. Grassroots communities report significant barriers to accessing aid, including unclear eligibility criteria, unsuccessful repeated applications, and technical hurdles related to digital platforms that disproportionately exclude older persons and those with |
| 1.2 | Reducing Poverty in All Dimensions Poverty has various dimensions beyond income, including access to education, healthcare, and social services. This target aims to improve access to these, fostering overall well-being. Is the country on track to reduce poverty in all its dimensions by 2030? | 1.80 | |

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| 1.3 | <p>Implementing Social Protection Systems The aim is to ensure the establishment of social protection systems, providing safety nets (like pensions, healthcare, and unemployment benefits), with a particular focus on supporting vulnerable populations. Is the country on track to establish social protection systems that cover every person by 2030?</p> | 1.40 | <p>limited digital literacy. Furthermore, perceptions of unfairness in aid distribution persist, with specific groups like youth and single mothers often being excluded due to assumptions about their employability, which overlooks the structural challenges they face.</p> |
| 1.4 | <p>Ensuring Equal Rights and Access This target emphasizes equal access to resources and services (ownership, inheritance, natural resources, financial and micro-financial services, technology), regardless of gender or socio-economic status. Is the country on track to ensure equal rights and access for all by 2030?</p> | 0.30 | <p>This vulnerability is deepened by issues of housing insecurity, with rising rents for low-income families and those living on informal land holdings being ineligible for housing repair aid. Livelihoods for lower-income groups, such as small-scale fishers, remain fragile due to falling earnings and limited local job opportunities, which can trigger out-migration. Finally, recurrent climate shocks like floods, coupled with slow progress on mitigation, are heightening the exposure of these already vulnerable households. In essence, while official poverty metrics may be low, a complex interplay of affordability shocks, inaccessible aid, insecure housing, fragile livelihoods, and climate risks sustains a state of significant daily vulnerability for a substantial portion of the population.</p> |
| 1.5 | <p>Building Resilience and Reducing Vulnerability Vulnerable populations are disproportionately affected by disasters and climate change. Building resilience implies helping them cope better. Is the country on track to enhance resilience and reduce vulnerability by 2030?</p> | 0.90 | |
| SDG 2: ZERO HUNGER | | | |

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| 2.1 | End Hunger and Ensure Access to Nutritious Food: This target aims to eliminate hunger and ensure that everyone, especially vulnerable populations like infants and the poor, has access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food throughout the year. Is the country on track to end hunger and provide access to nutritious food for all? | 2.20 | Based on grassroots issue mapping and national data, Malaysia's agricultural sector and food security face a multi-layered crisis. At the production level, farmers and fishers are caught in a severe cost-price squeeze. Soaring costs for essential inputs like seeds, fertiliser, pesticides, and fish feed are severely eroding profit margins. This financial strain is exacerbated by volatile farm-gate prices that are misaligned with production costs, undermining income stability for small-scale producers. |
| 2.2 | End All Forms of Malnutrition: Malnutrition includes stunting, wasting, and other deficiencies. The target focuses on achieving internationally agreed-upon targets for children under 5 years old and addressing the nutritional needs of specific adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons. Is the country on track to eliminate all forms of malnutrition and meet the nutritional needs of vulnerable populations? | 1.20 | Compounding these economic pressures are critical systemic weaknesses. Resource constraints are widespread, with farmers facing water and irrigation bottlenecks due to damaged infrastructure, dry-season shortages, and environmental degradation like river-sand extraction. Access to vital technology, finance, and extension services remains uneven, particularly for smallholder and indigenous farmers. These challenges are increasingly amplified by climate-related disruptions, creating a cycle of declining resilience and yields. |
| 2.3 | Double Agricultural Productivity and Incomes: This target emphasizes equal access to resources, knowledge and markets for small-scale food producers (especially women, indigenous peoples, and family farmers), to increase productivity and incomes. Is the country on track to double | 1.50 | The consequences of this agricultural decline are manifested in rising food insecurity and negative health outcomes. Households report difficulty obtaining affordable staple foods like local rice, signalling a strain on year-round access to nutritious food. There is also an increase in child stunting, with the prevalence rising from 16.6% in 2011 to |

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| | agricultural productivity and incomes for small-scale food producers? | | 21.2% in 2022, putting Malaysia far off-track to meet its 2030 target. |
| 2.4 | Ensure Sustainable Food Production Systems: Sustainable agriculture practices are essential. This target focuses on enhancing productivity through ecosystem maintenance, climate adaptation, and soil quality improvement. Is the country on track to implement resilient agricultural practices that enhance productivity while maintaining ecosystems? | 1.80 | Underpinning this crisis is a long-term threat to the sector's sustainability: a lack of interest among younger generations in agricultural work, driven by the sector's precarious profitability. While policy steps exist, their uneven implementation fails to reverse the overall negative trend, pointing to a critical need for more effective and resilient agricultural strategies. |
| 2.5 | Maintain Genetic Diversity of Seeds and Plants: Genetic diversity is crucial for food security. This target calls for well-managed seed and plant banks to preserve genetic resources and the traditional knowledge that fosters them. Is the country on track to maintain genetic diversity and promote equitable sharing of benefits from genetic resources? | 0.78 | |

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| SDG 3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | | | |
| 3.1 | Maternal Health Access to high-quality care during pregnancy and childbirth, skilled health professionals attending births, and timely management of complications are crucial to achieving this target. Is the country on track to reduce maternal deaths during pregnancy and childbirth? | 2.30 | Healthcare delivery faces significant systemic challenges, characterized by uneven and inadequate access for local populations. A primary concern is the misalignment between health services and demographic needs, manifesting in long wait times for treatment and consultation, limited emergency coverage, and a distribution of facilities that fails to keep pace with evolving community trends. Financial and logistical barriers further exacerbate this, with payment mechanisms excluding people with limited access to banking services and elderly residents, deepening existing health inequities. |
| 3.2 | Child Health By 2030, the aim is to end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age. This involves improving healthcare access, nutrition, and disease prevention for young children. Is the country on track to reduce neonatal and under-5 deaths? | 2.30 | Compounding these access issues is a shift in health risks within communities. Mental health concerns are rising alongside notable patterns of drug and substance abuse, including the use of <i>ketum</i> , vape products, and hallucinogenic mushrooms, reflecting increased social and lifestyle pressures. Concurrently, the healthcare system is grappling with a growing and underserved need for elderly care, where a shortage of infrastructure and trained caregivers leaves a significant gap, particularly in rural and remote regions. These challenges are further amplified by |
| 3.3 | Disease Control By 2030, the objective is to end epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and neglected tropical diseases. Additionally, efforts should strive to combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases, and other communicable diseases. This involves | 1.80 | |

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| | public health strategies that foster prevention and improve access to treatments. Is the country on track to combat these diseases and prevent their spread by 2030? | | persistent environmental and safety threats, including localised pollution, occupational hazards, and road-traffic injuries. Collectively, these factors point to a healthcare landscape where foundational access barriers and emerging public health risks are creating compounding vulnerabilities for populations across different regions in the country. |
| 3.4 | Non-Communicable Diseases and Mental Health By 2030, the target is to reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by one third. This includes promoting mental health and well-being. Prevention and effective treatment play a key role in achieving this goal. Is the country on track to reduce premature deaths from non-communicable diseases and promote mental well-being? | 1.40 | |
| 3.5 | Substance Abuse Prevention The focus is to strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful alcohol use. Public health measures that foster awareness and support are essential in addressing substance-related issues. Is the country on track to address substance abuse effectively? | 1.40 | |
| 3.6 | Road Safety The aim is to halve the number of deaths and injuries resulting from road | 1.30 | |
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| | traffic accidents. Road safety measures, infrastructure improvements, and awareness campaigns contribute to achieving this target. Is the country on track to reduce road traffic accidents and injuries by 50%? | | |
| 3.7 | Sexual and Reproductive Health By 2030, the goal is to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services. This includes family planning, information, education, and integrating reproductive health into national strategies and programs. Is the country on track to provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services for all? | 0.60 | |
| 3.8 | Universal Health Coverage The objective is to achieve universal health coverage, which includes financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services, and availability of safe, effective, quality, and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all. Is the country on track to provide quality health care and essential medicines to everyone? | 1.90 | |
| 3.9 | Environmental Health By 2030, the focus is on substantially reducing deaths and | 0.80 | |

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| | illnesses caused by hazardous chemicals, air pollution, water pollution, and soil contamination. Environmental, industrial and agricultural regulation is critical in achieving this goal. Is the country on track to reduce pollution-related illnesses and deaths significantly? | | |
| SDG 4: QUALITY EDUCATION | | | |
| 4.1 | Quality Education for All By 2030, the goal is to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education. This means that every child should have access to good-quality education that prepares them effectively for life. Is the country on track to ensure that all girls and boys complete primary and secondary education by 2030? | 2.30 | Malaysia's education and skills development landscape faces significant systemic gaps that hinder equitable opportunity and labour market readiness, which are evident in our issue mapping activities. A primary concern is the weak transition pathway for youth after secondary education, particularly in moving to post-SPM programmes and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). This is compounded by a persistent digital divide and affordability constraints, which limit access to upskilling. Consequently, lifelong learning opportunities remain insufficient to meet labour-market demands, leading many youths to prioritise immediate work over further education due to low awareness of local programmes and a lack of clear, job-relevant guidance. |
| 4.2 | Early Childhood Development By 2030, the aim is to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education. This implies providing a strong foundation for learning before formal schooling begins. Is the country on track to provide quality early childhood education so | 1.90 | These structural challenges disproportionately and severely impact the most vulnerable learners, compounding their exclusion. Among Orang Asli children, a profound lack of interest in completing primary education |

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| | that children are ready for primary education? | | <p>significantly elevates the risk of early school dropouts, perpetuating intergenerational disadvantage. In urban settings, the absence of cultural education within curricula continues to undermine the development of truly inclusive learning environments. Furthermore, for youth with disabilities, the transition process within Community-Based Rehabilitation Centres (PDK) is poorly managed and structurally weak, raising serious concerns about their long-term sustainability and capacity to provide adequate support. Collectively, these issues reveal an education system where broad structural weaknesses are intensified for marginalised groups, threatening both individual social mobility and the nation's broader human capital development.</p> |
| 4.3 | Equal Access to Higher Education By 2030, the goal is to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including universities. This implies making higher education accessible and affordable for everyone. Is the country on track to provide equal access to higher education for both women and men? | 1.90 | |
| 4.4 | Skills Development for Employment By 2030, the aim is to substantially increase the number of youth and adults with relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills. This implies equipping people with practical skills needed for work. Is the country on track to enhance skills training and prepare youth and adults for employment and entrepreneurship? | 2.00 | |
| 4.5 | Gender Equality in Education By 2030, the goal is to eliminate gender disparities in education. This means ensuring that both girls and boys have equal access to all levels of education, including vocational training. There is a specific focus on | 1.70 | |
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| | vulnerable groups like persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples. Is the country on track to eliminate gender disparities in education and provide equal opportunities for all? | | |
| 4.6 | Literacy and Numeracy By 2030, the aim is to ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults achieve literacy and numeracy. This means being able to read, write, and perform basic mathematical operations. Is the country on track to improve literacy and numeracy skills for both youth and adults? | 2.30 | |
| 4.7 | Education for Sustainable Development By 2030, the aim is to ensure that all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. This includes education for sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, peace, global citizenship, and cultural diversity. Is the country on track to provide education that fosters sustainable development, cultural understanding, and global citizenship? | 1.20 | |
| SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY | | | |

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| 5.1 | Ending Discrimination The goal is to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere. This means ensuring that they are treated fairly and equally, regardless of their gender. Is the country on track to eliminate discrimination against women and girls? | 1.30 | <p>Significant gender inequalities persist in Malaysia, underpinned by deeply entrenched social norms and inadequate structural support. A central issue is the unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work, which remains largely unacknowledged in public discourse and is not shared equitably between men and women. This burden falls most heavily on single mothers and female-headed households, who shoulder heavy childcare responsibilities that constrain their economic participation. These caregivers depend on insecure incomes and face substantial barriers to assistance, including digital exclusion that hinders their ability to apply for aid. While women's entrepreneurship is growing, systemic support mechanisms remain fragmented and insufficient.</p> <p>Empowerment programs and skill-building schemes are inconsistently implemented, with women in grassroots communities reporting limited access to information and a lack of sustained support to ensure their ventures are sustainable. A critical gap is the absence of affordable and accessible childcare, which continues to be a primary obstacle to income generation for single mothers. Furthermore, services addressing gender-based violence and those designed for women's economic empowerment are critically under-scaled.</p> <p>Ultimately, these challenges are compounded by a governance structure that lacks gender sensitivity. There is</p> |
| 5.2 | Ending Violence By 2030, the aim is to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in both public and private spheres. This includes addressing issues like trafficking, sexual exploitation, and other types of violence. Is the country on track to eliminate violence against women and girls? | 1.40 | |
| 5.3 | Ending Harmful Practices By 2030, the goal is to eliminate harmful practices, such as child, early, and forced marriage, as well as female genital mutilation. This means protecting girls from harmful traditions and ensuring their well-being. Is the country on track to end harmful practices affecting women and girls? | 1.40 | |
| 5.4 | Recognizing Unpaid Care Work By 2030, the aim is to recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work. This involves | 0.60 | |

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| | acknowledging the essential role of caregiving (often done by women) and providing support through public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies. Is the country on track to recognize and support unpaid care work? | | limited institutional recognition of these specific needs, resulting in policies and support systems that fail to adequately address the realities of unpaid care work or provide the targeted, structured assistance required to achieve meaningful gender equality and fulfil the goals of SDG 5. |
| 5.5 | Women’s Participation and Leadership By 2030, the aim is to ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all decision-making levels—whether in politics, economics, or public life. Is the country on track to promote women’s leadership and equal participation? | 1.20 | |
| 5.6 | Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights By 2030, the aim is to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. This includes family planning and comprehensive health services. Is the country on track to provide universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and rights? | NA | |
| SDG 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION | | | |
| 6.1 | Sanitation and Hygiene By 2030, the aim is to achieve adequate and equitable | 1.60 | Our issue mapping findings show that communities across Malaysia face significant and interconnected challenges |

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| | <p>sanitation and hygiene for everyone. This includes ending open defecation and paying special attention to the needs of women, girls, and vulnerable populations. Is the country on track to provide proper sanitation facilities and hygiene education to all, especially considering the needs of women and vulnerable groups?</p> | | <p>regarding water security, sanitation, and environmental infrastructure. A central issue is the serious under-investment in resilient water and sanitation systems, which manifests in several critical ways. Many local areas, particularly in small islands, suffer from a direct lack of access to clean and safe water. In other areas, the water that is available is often compromised, appearing rust-coloured and undrinkable, which poses direct health risks.</p> |
| 6.2 | <p>Water Quality Improvement By 2030, the goal is to improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating hazardous dumping, and minimizing untreated wastewater. Recycling and safe reuse of water are also essential. Is the country on track to improve water quality, reduce pollution, and promote safe water reuse globally?</p> | 1.20 | <p>These access and quality issues are driven by deteriorating and poorly maintained infrastructure. Leaking pipes and outdated systems not only limit the reliability and availability of water but also lead to disproportionately high utility bills, creating a severe financial burden for low-income households. The situation is further exacerbated by persistent environmental pollution. Long-standing contamination from sources like livestock effluent continues to degrade river quality, a problem compounded by inadequate wastewater regulation and lax enforcement, especially in industrialized zones.</p> |
| 6.3 | <p>Water-Use Efficiency and Scarcity Reduction By 2030, the aim is to substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors. This implies using water more efficiently in agriculture, industry, and households. Additionally, ensuring sustainable withdrawals and freshwater supply is crucial to address water scarcity. Is the country on track to improve water-use efficiency, address water scarcity, and</p> | 0.90 | <p>Ultimately, these systemic issues in water management and environmental protection underscore a broader infrastructure deficit. The lagging state of drainage and solid-waste systems, combined with recurrent flooding and coastal erosion, reveals a critical lack of investment in building community resilience, leaving populations</p> |

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| | reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity? | | vulnerable to both everyday hardship and environmental shocks. |
| 6.4 | Integrated Water Resources Management By 2030, the aim is to implement integrated water resources management at all levels. This involves coordinated planning and management of water resources to ensure sustainability, including through transboundary cooperation. Is the country on track to manage water resources effectively and collaborate with neighboring countries for sustainable water use? | 1.00 | |
| 6.5 | Ecosystem Protection By 2020, the goal is to protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers, and lakes. These ecosystems play a vital role in maintaining water quality and availability. Is the country on track to protect and restore water-related ecosystems to safeguard water resources? | 1.50 | |
| SDG 7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY | | | |

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| 7.1 | <p>Universal Access to Affordable, Reliable, and Modern Energy Services This target aims to ensure that everyone has access to electricity and clean cooking solutions. Lack of energy access hinders human and economic development. Is the country on track to provide universal access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy services by 2030?</p> | 1.50 | <p>The transition to a sustainable and equitable energy future in Malaysia faces significant hurdles, with access to clean, reliable, and affordable energy remaining uneven across the country. While general grid connectivity is stable in most regions, this stability masks underlying infrastructural vulnerabilities, as evidenced by persistent electricity disruptions in areas like Hulu Selangor and Tuaran. The pace of a just energy transition is being slowed by several critical barriers, including the high upfront costs of renewable technologies, constrained financing options, and limited local maintenance capacity.</p> <p>A particularly notable finding is the absence of major renewable energy initiatives at the community level. This points to a significant gap in the bottom-up adoption of sustainable energy solutions. Our issue mapping findings reveal a general stagnation in transformative energy development on the ground, with minimal progress observed in the shift toward decentralized or community-owned sustainable energy systems. This indicates that the national energy transition is not yet translating into tangible, localised projects that could enhance resilience and empower communities. The overall picture is one of a protracted transition, where existing infrastructure shows weaknesses and the move toward a more sustainable and democratised energy model remains limited.</p> |
| 7.2 | <p>Increasing the Share of Renewable Energy Renewable energy sources (like solar, wind, and hydropower) are crucial for sustainability. This target encourages the deployment of more renewables in the energy mix. Is the country on track to substantially increase the share of renewable energy by 2030?</p> | NA | |
| 7.3 | <p>Doubling Global Energy Efficiency Improvement Improving energy efficiency means using less energy to achieve the same results. Doubling the rate of improvement is essential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Is the country on track to double the global rate of energy efficiency improvement by 2030?</p> | 0.90 | |

SDG 8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

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| 8.1 | <p>Sustaining Per Capita Economic Growth This target emphasizes maintaining economic growth per person (per capita) while considering national circumstances. In least developed countries, achieving at least 7% annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth is seen as key. Is the country on track to sustain per capita economic growth?</p> | 1.70 | <p>Our mapping findings reveal a significant deficit in decent work opportunities which is driving a cycle of regional imbalances and economic precarity. A primary concern is the out-migration of youth from rural areas, who relocate to urban centres in search of better prospects due to limited local industry, skills mismatches, and a lack of viable employment pathways in their hometowns or villages. This trend weakens the sustainability of local economies and underscores the under-leveraged potential of sectors like micro-enterprises and tourism.</p> |
| 8.2 | <p>Increasing Economic Productivity Economic productivity refers to how efficiently resources are used to produce goods and services. Diversification, technological upgrades, and innovation contribute to higher productivity. Is the country on track to achieve higher economic productivity?</p> | 1.60 | <p>For those who remain, work is often characterised by informality and insecurity. The slow pace of productivity upgrades and MSME bottlenecks stifle local job creation, entrenching a reliance on gig or informal economy. While there is discussion about formalisation, a significant barrier is the fear among informal workers that registering their businesses will disqualify them from government aid.</p> |
| 8.3 | <p>Promoting Development-Orient ed Policies This target focuses on policies that support productive activities, job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation. It also encourages the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through improved access to financial services. Is the country on track to promote policies that</p> | 2.20 | <p>This landscape of economic vulnerability is further compounded by the exclusion of specific groups, such as army veterans, who face pension gaps and a lack of recognition for their skills, hindering their meaningful re-entry into the workforce. Collectively, these factors signal an urgent need for targeted, place-based investment and value-chain development to create stable, local</p> |

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| | foster productive activities, job creation, and SME growth? | | employment and reverse the disparity trend between the different regions in Malaysia. |
| 8.4 | Improving Resource Efficiency Resource efficiency involves using resources wisely in economic activities to minimize the depletion of natural stocks. The goal is to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation. Is the country on track to improve resource efficiency and reduce environmental impact by 2030? | 1.20 | |
| 8.5 | Achieving Full and Productive Employment This target aims to provide decent work for everyone, regardless of gender or ability. Equal pay for equal work is essential. Is the country on track to achieve full and productive employment for all, including equal pay? | 1.20 | |
| 8.6 | Reducing Youth Unemployment Youth not in employment, education, or training face challenges. This target aims to reduce their proportion. Is the country on track to substantially reduce youth unemployment? | 1.50 | |
| 8.7 | Eradicating Forced Labor and Child Labor Immediate action is needed to end forced labor, modern slavery, and child labor. By | NA | |
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| | 2025, child labor in all forms should cease. Is the country on track to eradicate forced labor and end child labor by 2025? | | |
| 8.8 | Protecting Labor Rights and Safety Ensuring safe working environments and protecting labor rights, especially for migrant workers and women, is key. Is the country on track to protect labor rights and promote safe working conditions for all workers? | 1.40 | |
| 8.9 | By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products | 2.20 | |
| 8.10 | Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all | 2.00 | |
| SDG 9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE | | | |
| 9.1 | Developing Quality, Reliable, and Sustainable Infrastructure This target emphasizes creating infrastructure that is robust, sustainable, and accessible. It includes regional and cross-border infrastructure. Is the country on track to develop reliable and sustainable | 1.50 | Infrastructure development across various regions is marked by significant shortcomings that hinder equitable access, safety, and sustainable economic growth. A primary concern among the people we meet is the state of transport infrastructure, where poor road quality, inadequate signage, and a lack of last-mile public transport options constrain mobility for residents. This limits their |

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| | infrastructure that supports economic development and well-being for all? | | safe access to essential services and reduces market access for local goods. These issues are particularly acute in areas such as Orang Asli villages, where roads often remain untarred, further compromising connectivity and safety. |
| 9.2 | Promoting Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialization can drive economic growth and job creation. Doubling industry's share in least developed countries is seen as important. Is the country on track to significantly raise industry's share of employment and GDP through sustainable industrialization? | 1.50 | Concurrently, the expansion of digital and physical infrastructure is progressing in an uneven and sometimes counterproductive manner. While digitalisation is underway, its coverage and local uptake remain patchy, creating a digital divide that particularly impacts micro-scale farmers and small industries. These businesses face significant barriers to growth due to limited access to digital marketing platforms and unstable supply chains, preventing them from scaling up. Furthermore, infrastructure planning often falls short of supporting long-term sustainability, with upgrades in some areas conflicting with conservation priorities in ecologically sensitive zones. This indicates a broader disconnect between infrastructure development, environmental stewardship, and the specific needs of local communities, ultimately impeding inclusive and resilient economic progress. |
| 9.3 | Increasing Access to Financial Services for Small-Scale Enterprises Small-scale enterprises need affordable credit and integration into value chains. This target aims to enhance their access. Is the country on track to improve financial services for small-scale enterprises? | 2.40 | |
| 9.4 | Upgrading Infrastructure and Industries for Sustainability Retrofitting industries and making infrastructure sustainable involves resource efficiency and clean technologies. Is the country on track to upgrade infrastructure and industries for sustainability by 2030? | 1.30 | |

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| 9.5 | Enhancing Scientific Research and Technological Capabilities Encouraging innovation and increasing work on research and development are vital for industrial progress. Is the country on track to enhance scientific research, technological capabilities, and innovation by 2030? | 1.70 | |
| SDG 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES | | | |
| 10.1 | Income Growth for the Poorest 40% This target aims to ensure that the income of the poorest 40% of the population grows faster than the national average. This is important because it helps improve wealth redistribution by reducing income inequality, which is a key aspect of sustainable development. Is the country on track to ensure that the income of the poorest 40% of the population is growing faster than the national average? | 1.40 | Despite ongoing policy efforts, systemic exclusion remains a fundamental barrier to achieving inclusive development in Malaysia. Vulnerable groups, including women, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities (PWDs), remote communities, and migrants, continue to face significant access barriers to essential services, political representation, and economic opportunities. These inclusion gaps are most severe for stateless and undocumented individuals, particularly in Sabah, where the inability to obtain citizenship legally excludes them from public education, healthcare, and formal employment, perpetuating deep cycles of poverty and marginalisation. |
| 10.2 | Inclusion and Equality By 2030, the aim is to empower and promote social, economic, and political inclusion for all, regardless of factors like age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic status. Is the country on track to achieve inclusive empowerment for all its citizens by 2030? | 1.60 | These challenges are compounded by critical implementation issues within governance systems. Policy impact is consistently undermined by fragmented coordination, short-term and insufficient funding, and weak last-mile delivery mechanisms. A lack of comprehensive and granular data further obscures the realities of |

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| 10.3 | <p>Equal Opportunity and Reduced Inequalities</p> <p>The goal is to ensure equal opportunities and reduce disparities in outcomes. This involves eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices. Is the country on track to ensure equal opportunities and reduce inequalities of outcome by addressing discriminatory laws and policies?</p> | 1.40 | <p>marginalized communities, hindering effective targeting and monitoring of interventions. This is especially true for undocumented populations, who remain invisible in official statistics.</p> <p>Furthermore, persistent land insecurity and the absence of robust institutional mechanisms to resolve documentation and tenure issues create a foundation of legal and economic precarity. This systemic exclusion from social protection, political processes, and the formal economy not only deepens existing inequalities across ethnicities and regions, notably in Sabah and Sarawak, but also fundamentally undermines the nation's commitment to reducing inequality and ensuring that no one is left behind.</p> |
| 10.4 | <p>Policies for Greater Equality By 2030, countries should adopt policies (including fiscal, wage, and social protection policies) that lead to greater equality. Is the country on track to adopt and implement policies that progressively achieve greater equality?</p> | 1.70 | |
| 10.5 | <p>Financial Market Regulation The focus here is on improving the regulation and monitoring of financial markets and institutions. Is the country on track to enhance the regulation and monitoring of financial markets?</p> | NA | |
| 10.6 | <p>Representation and Voice in Global Decision-Making Developing countries should have an enhanced voice in decision-making within global international economic and financial institutions. Is the</p> | 1.90 | |

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| | country able to participate fully in global economic and financial institutions? | | |
| 10.7 | Orderly and Safe Migration The goal is to facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility through well-managed policies. Is the country on track to implement planned and well-managed migration policies? | 0.00 | |
| SDG 11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | | | |
| 11.1 | Safe and Sustainable Transport Systems The aim is to provide safe, affordable, and accessible transport systems for all. This involves expanding public transport and prioritizing the needs of vulnerable groups such as women, children, persons with disabilities, and older persons. Is the country on track to provide safe and sustainable transport systems by expanding public transport and improving road safety? | 1.50 | Urban and peri-urban areas face a complex set of interconnected challenges that significantly impact liveability, safety, and equity. A primary concern is the acute vulnerability to flash floods, driven by undersized, poorly maintained drainage systems, unplanned housing layouts, and increased rainfall intensity. This environmental risk is compounded by significant gaps in basic urban safety and mobility, including insufficient street lighting, unsafe road sections, and chronic traffic congestion, which affect accessibility and residents' security. |
| 11.2 | Inclusive and Sustainable Urbanization By 2030, countries should enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization through participatory, integrated, and sustainable planning and management. Is the country on track to achieve inclusive and | 0.40 | In the realm of housing, while government commitment to upgrading informal settlements is noted, persistent barriers remain. Vulnerable households such as those residing on others' or <i>wakaf</i> (Islamic endowment) land face eligibility and tenure issues that exclude them from low-cost housing schemes and repair assistance, even as rising rental costs |

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| | sustainable urbanization by involving communities in planning and managing cities? | | <p>strain low-income families. Furthermore, the reliability of essential urban services is uneven, with communities reporting repeated water-supply interruptions, irregular waste collection leading to overflowing bins, and a lack of well-maintained public recreational spaces.</p> <p>Underpinning these physical infrastructure and service deficits is a governance challenge in urban planning. Although civil society participation is increasingly visible, its effectiveness remains constrained by limited access to information, a lack of understanding of planning mechanisms and procedures, and insufficient influence over final decisions. While there are isolated bright spots of successful local interventions, the overall implementation of solutions is patchy and slow, and does not keep pace with the urgent needs of communities for resilient, inclusive, and well-serviced urban environments.</p> |
| 11.3 | Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage Efforts should be strengthened to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage. Is the country on track to protect and preserve its cultural and natural heritage by 2030? | 0.70 | |
| 11.4 | Disaster Risk Reduction The goal is to significantly reduce the number of deaths and people affected by disasters (including water-related disasters) and decrease direct economic impact. Special attention should be given to protecting vulnerable populations. Is the country on track to reduce disaster-related deaths, protect the poor, and minimize economic impact by 2030? | 1.90 | |
| 11.5 | Environmental Impact of Cities By 2030, countries should work to reduce the adverse environmental impact of cities. This includes paying attention to air quality and effective waste management. Is the country on track to reduce the environmental impact of cities, | 0.80 | |

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| | especially in terms of air quality and waste management? | | |
| 11.6 | Universal Access to Green and Public Spaces The goal is to provide universal access to safe, inclusive, and accessible green and public spaces. These spaces should cater to the needs of women, children, older persons, and those with disabilities. Is the country on track to ensure universal access to green and public spaces for all citizens by 2030? | 0.40 | |
| 11.7 | By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities | 1.00 | |
| SDG 12: RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION | | | |
| 12.1 | Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns: This target aims to promote responsible consumption and production practices. It involves using resources efficiently and minimizing waste. Is the | 0.70 | Sustainable waste management in Malaysia remains underdeveloped in many areas, characterised by deficiencies in both collection infrastructure and environmental enforcement. Our issue mapping findings reveal that persistent gaps in everyday services are evident at the local level, including overflowing and undersized |

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| | country on track to promote responsible consumption and production patterns? | | bins, irregular collection schedules, and a complete absence of bins in some areas. This failure in basic service delivery leads to widespread littering and public nuisance, reflecting slow progress on waste reduction and low community compliance with recycling efforts, which remain minimal due to limited infrastructure and participation. |
| 12.2 | Sustainable Management of Natural Resources: This target focuses on using natural resources wisely and sustainably to avoid degrading and depleting natural stocks. It includes protecting ecosystems, reducing pollution, and ensuring long-term resource availability. Is the country on track to achieve sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources by 2030? | 1.00 | These local challenges escalate into significant environmental degradation, with instances of garbage being dumped directly into rivers and the sea. This, combined with ongoing pollution from sources like livestock effluent, continues to harm aquatic ecosystems and local livelihoods. The situation highlights a systemic lack of structured waste management systems and weak enforcement and accountability mechanisms. While proposed solutions such as biogas treatment and stricter regulations exist, they are often still in negotiation or early enforcement phases. The collective picture underscores an urgent need for stronger policy direction, clearer implementation mechanisms, and more inclusive public awareness strategies to shift current practices toward responsible consumption and effective environmental stewardship. |
| 12.3 | Reducing Food Waste: This target aims to cut down food waste at retail and consumer levels. It also addresses losses in production and supply chains. Is the country on track to halve food waste by 2030? | 0.00 | |
| 12.4 | Environmentally Sound Chemical and Waste Management: This target focuses on managing chemicals and waste throughout their life cycle. The goal is to minimize their impact on human health and the environment. Is the country on track to achieve environmentally sound management of chemic | 0.40 | |

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| 12.5 | Waste Reduction: This target emphasizes preventing waste, reducing it, recycling, and reusing materials. The goal is to minimize the overall generation of waste. Is the country on track to substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling, and reuse? | 1.30 | |
| 12.6 | Sustainable Practices by Companies: This target seeks to encourage businesses, especially large ones, to adopt sustainable practices and include sustainability information in their reports. Is the country on track to encourage companies to integrate sustainability practices and reporting? | 0.70 | |
| 12.7 | Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities | 1.00 | |
| 12.8 | By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature | 1.10 | |
| SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION | | | |
| 13.1 | Strengthen Resilience and Adaptive Capacity to Natural Disasters: This target aims to enhance the country's ability to | 1.00 | Communities across Malaysia are experiencing increasingly severe and tangible impacts from climate change, with local resilience failing to keep pace with the |

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| | withstand and adapt to climate-related risks, including natural disasters. This involves adopting comprehensive policies and allocating adequate resources. Is the country on track to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters? | | growing hazards. The primary manifestations include increasingly erratic weather patterns, such as intense hot spells and sudden, heavy downpours. These patterns are directly harming public health, disrupting daily life, and affecting key economic sectors. In agriculture, unpredictable rainfall and droughts are causing crop losses and soil degradation, while small-scale fisheries face falling yields due to shifting sandbars and changing marine conditions. |
| 13.2 | Integrate Climate Change Measures into National Policies, Strategies, and Planning: This target emphasizes incorporating climate change considerations into a country's policies, strategies, and planning processes. Is the country on track to integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies, and planning? | 1.10 | A critical and frequently reported vulnerability is the high exposure to flash flooding. This is driven by a combination of climate-linked heavy rain and significant local infrastructural failures, including undersized, poorly maintained, and clogged drainage systems. Human activities are exacerbating these risks, with communities citing sand mining and large-scale infrastructure projects like the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) as factors that obstruct natural water flow and intensify flood damage. While high-level policy recognition of these issues exists and mitigation plans are discussed, follow-through on the ground is often slow or unclear to residents. This implementation gap, coupled with a lack of robust local capacity-building, undermines confidence in adaptation efforts and leaves livelihoods and local food systems highly vulnerable to climate variability. |
| 13.3 | Improve Education, Awareness-Raising, and Capacity on Climate Change: This target focuses on educating people, raising awareness, and building capacity related to climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning. Is the country on track to improve education, awareness, and capacity regarding climate change? | 0.90 | |

SDG 14: LIFE BELOW WATER

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| 14.1 | <p>Marine Pollution Prevention By 2025, the goal is to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds. This includes pollution from land-based activities, such as marine debris and nutrient pollution from agriculture. Is the country on track to prevent and significantly reduce marine p</p> | 0.60 | <p>Marine ecosystems and the coastal communities that depend on them in Malaysia face a complex set of interconnected threats, with conservation efforts advancing unevenly against mounting pressures. Key stressors include ongoing declines in coral reef health from bleaching, persistent habitat damage from illegal and destructive fishing practices like nearshore trawling, and chronic pollution from land-based waste and industrial runoff that severely impacts water quality and aquaculture.</p> |
| 14.2 | <p>Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Management By 2020, the aim is to sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems. This involves avoiding significant adverse impacts, strengthening resilience, and taking action for restoration to achieve healthy and productive oceans. Is the country sustainably managing and protecting marine and coastal ecosystems?</p> | 0.20 | <p>These environmental challenges are compounded by significant socio-economic and governance gaps. A central paradox exists where Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), designed to ensure long-term ecosystem resilience, are often perceived by local fishers as threatening their immediate livelihoods by restricting access to traditional fishing areas. This highlights a critical lack of community education, awareness, and inclusive decision-making in conservation planning. Furthermore, small-scale fishers grapple with licensing challenges and unclear procedures, while siltation of channels and river mouths disrupts landing access and safety, with remediation efforts like dredging often constrained by funding.</p> |
| 14.3 | <p>Ocean Acidification The focus is on minimizing and addressing the impacts of ocean acidification (decreases in seawater pH due to the absorption of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere, which impact biodiversity and ecosystem functions, threatening fisheries, coral reefs, and marine habitats). Enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels is essential. Is the</p> | 0.00 | <p>Overall, while positive steps such as occasional enforcement crackdowns and patrols occur, they are not consistently deterrent. The combination of weak</p> |

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| | country minimizing and addressing the impacts of ocean acidification? | | enforcement, inadequate progress on pollution source control, and the failure to fully integrate coastal communities into conservation strategies means that the twin goals of protecting marine biodiversity and ensuring sustainable, equitable livelihoods for fisherfolk are not yet being met. |
| 14.4 | <p>Fish Stock Restoration and Responsible Fishing The objective is to effectively regulate harvesting, end overfishing, illegal fishing, and destructive practices. Science-based management plans should be implemented to restore fish stocks to sustainable levels. Question: Is the country effectively regulating harvesting and ending overfishing, illegal fishing, and destructive practices?</p> | 0.40 | |
| 14.5 | <p>Coastal and Marine Conservation By 2020, the goal is to conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine areas. This conservation should align with national and international laws and be based on the best available scientific information. Is the country conserving at least 10% of coastal and marine areas?</p> | <p>NA (Did not emerge in our mapping activities, but concerns from fisherfolk indicate issues that are possibly connected with this target)</p> | |

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| 14.6 | By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organization fisheries subsidies negotiation | 0.70 | |
| 14.7 | By 2030, increase the economic benefits to small island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism | 1.10 (Observed in the context of small island communities in Malaysia) | |
| SDG 15: LIFE ON LAND | | | |
| 15.1 | Combating Desertification and Promoting Land Restoration By 2030, the objective is to combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil (including areas affected by desertification, drought, and floods), and strive for a land degradation-neutral world. | 1.10 | Malaysia's terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems face intensifying pressures from human activity, with conservation efforts struggling to keep pace with the scale of degradation. A primary driver is ongoing land-use change, including the significant historical and continuing loss of humid primary forest, particularly in Sarawak, due to |

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| | Is the country taking action to combat desertification, restore degraded land, and achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030? | | activities like logging. This deforestation and development at forest edges are directly linked to rising human-wildlife conflict, as animals such as monkeys and wild boar increasingly enter croplands and residential areas due to habitat loss and fragmentation. |
| 15.2 | Conservation of Mountain Ecosystems By 2030, the goal is to ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity. These ecosystems provide essential benefits for sustainable development. Is the country ensuring the conservation of mountain ecosystems and their biodiversity? | 0.50 | Simultaneously, riverine and freshwater ecosystems are experiencing severe degradation. Key issues include riverbank erosion and subsidence, often linked to sandmining and channel deepening works, which lead to bank collapse, water discolouration, and erosion of aquatic life. Freshwater quality is further compromised by pollution, notably livestock effluent, leaving stretches of river in a degraded state that harms biodiversity and the livelihoods of communities dependent on these waters. While some mitigation measures like biogas treatment or dredging are proposed, their execution is often slow and uneven. |
| 15.3 | Biodiversity Protection and Species Preservation Urgent action is needed to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt biodiversity loss, and protect threatened species. Efforts should be aimed at preventing species extinction. Is the country taking significant action to protect natural habitats, prevent species extinction, and halt biodiversity loss? | 0.90 | Despite existing biodiversity policies and commitments, their on-the-ground effectiveness remains questionable. The persistence of land degradation, deforestation, and frequent community reports of wildlife disruptions points to critical gaps in enforcement, land-use planning, and the establishment of clear conservation boundaries. These challenges underscore an urgent need for more robust, consistently enforced policies and the development of truly inclusive biodiversity strategies that actively involve local communities to address the interconnected crises of habitat loss and ecosystem decline. |
| 15.4 | Equitable Sharing of Genetic Resources The goal is to promote fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources (these genetic resources can come from various | NA | |

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| | sources, including plants, animals, microbes, and other organisms). Is the country promoting fair access to genetic resources and ensuring equitable sharing of benefits? | | |
| 15.5 | Ending Poaching and Illegal Wildlife Trade Urgent action is required to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna. Both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products need to be addressed. Is the country taking urgent action to stop poaching, protect endangered species, and combat illegal wildlife trade? | 0.50 | |
| 15.6 | Invasive Alien Species Control By 2020, measures should be introduced to prevent the introduction of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems. Efforts should also significantly reduce their impact, and priority species should be controlled or eradicated. Has the country implemented measures to prevent invasive species and reduce their impact on ecosystems by 2020? | 0.20 | |
| 15.7 | Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and | 0.50 | |

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| | fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products | | |
| 15.8 | By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species. | 0.40 | |
| 15.9 | By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts | 0.90 | |
| SDG 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS | | | |
| 16.1 | Combating Illicit Financial Flows and Organized Crime By 2030, we aim to significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, recover stolen assets, and combat organized crime. Is the country on track to tackle illegal financial activities and organized crime? | NA | Communities face significant challenges related to safety, governance, and access to justice, which collectively undermine public trust and social cohesion. Local safety concerns are prominent, with residents reporting theft risks and suspicious activities linked to poorly lit areas and insecure public infrastructure. While targeted police operations in hotspots show some success, responsiveness to complaints is often uneven. These issues are compounded by deeper governance deficiencies, including weak building management, poor maintenance of public facilities, and limited engagement from local leaders. A perception of bureaucratic |
| 16.2 | Fighting Corruption and Bribery The goal is to substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms. Is the country on track to minimize corruption and bribery? | 0.70 | |

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| 16.3 | Building Effective and Transparent Institutions The target aims to foster institutions that are accountable, transparent, and effective at all levels. Is the country on track to develop institutions that work well and serve the people? | 0.60 | gatekeeping and unfair “cronyism” in selection in services further erodes confidence in institutional fairness. |
| 16.4 | Inclusive Decision-Making The target aims at promoting responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels. Is the country on track to involve citizens in decision-making processes? | 0.50 | Access to justice and grievance mechanisms, while formally available through hotlines and e-complaint (e.g. <i>e-aduan</i>) platforms, suffers from critical delivery gaps. Vulnerable groups encounter substantial institutional barriers due to limited understanding of procedures, inadequate outreach, and a lack of accessible information. This is particularly evident in social welfare and assistance, where unclear eligibility criteria and repeatedly unsuccessful applications create transparency deficits and exclude those in need. |
| 16.5 | Legal Identity for All By 2030, everyone should have legal identity, including birth registration. Is the country on track to ensure legal identity for all its citizens? | 1.30 | Specific social vulnerabilities are intensifying these challenges. For example, our focus group discussions reveal that domestic violence are sometimes unreported due to fears of damaging family reputation. Furthermore, communities in border regions face heightened exposure to illegal activities like smuggling. The combination of these safety risks, governance shortcomings, and institutional barriers leaves vulnerable populations with diminished recourse and reinforces cycles of marginalisation. |
| 16.6 | Access to Information and Fundamental Freedoms The target aims to foster public access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms (freedom of speech and expression; freedom of worship; freedom from want; freedom from fear). Is the country on track to safeguard citizens’ right to information and freedom? | 0.90 | |

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| 16.7 | Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels | 1.10 | |
| 16.8 | Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance | NA | |
| 16.9 | By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration | 0.90 | |
| 16.10 | Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements | 1.70 | |
| SDG 17: PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS | | | |
| 17.1 | Strengthen Domestic Resource Mobilization: This target aims to improve a country's ability to collect taxes and other forms of revenue within its own borders. Is the country on track to enhance its capacity for tax collection and other revenue generation? | 1.80 | Malaysia has established a foundational infrastructure for multi-stakeholder partnerships, evidenced by active formal dialogues between government agencies, civil society, and communities, alongside digital citizen feedback channels. This aligns with the collaborative spirit of SDG 17. However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms is significantly undermined by systemic fragmentation and operational gaps. A major weakness is the lack of structured coordination among stakeholders; initiatives often operate in silos, leading to duplicated efforts, overlapping scopes, and missed synergies. This is exacerbated by unclear local governance channels and |
| 17.2 | Official Development Assistance (ODA) Commitments: Developed countries have committed to providing financial aid (ODA) to support development in other nations. Is | NA | |

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| | the country on track to receive the committed ODA from developed nations? | | <p>limited feedback mechanisms, which create uncertainty for communities and challenge the sustainability of NGO partnerships.</p> <p>Furthermore, resource mobilisation faces its own constraints. While there is some collaboration with financial institutions for micro-support, the overall approach to mobilising funds lacks diversity and is often reactive, such as primarily responding to humanitarian crises, rather than being strategically embedded in long-term development planning. The flow of information is also a critical bottleneck. Despite available platforms, many of our respondents report low awareness of aid mechanisms, indicating a failure in last-mile communication. This is compounded by uneven internet access in some localities, which digitally excludes segments of the population.</p> <p>Finally, while data is recognized as crucial, local data capture and feedback loops are still maturing, with agencies often requiring more precise, case-level information to inform targeted interventions. Collectively, these gaps in coordination, diversified financing, inclusive communication, and data utilization hinder the potential impact of otherwise positive partnership frameworks.</p> |
| 17.3 | Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources | NA | |
| 17.4 | Long-Term Debt Sustainability: Developing countries often face debt challenges. This target emphasizes coordinated policies to ensure long-term debt sustainability, including debt financing, relief, and restructuring. Is the country on track to manage its debt sustainably? | NA | |
| 17.5 | Adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries Technology | NA | |
| 17.6 | Enhance Cooperation on Science, Technology, and Innovation: This target emphasizes collaboration between countries (North-South, South-South, and triangular) to improve access to science, technology, and innovation. It also aims to enhance knowledge-sharing through better coordination among existing mechanisms. Is the country benefiting from cooperation and knowledge-sharing in science, technology, and innovation? | 1.80 | |

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| 17.7 | Promote Environmentally Sound Technologies: Developing countries need access to environmentally friendly technologies. This target encourages the development, transfer, and dissemination of such technologies on favourable terms. Is the country on track to benefit from the transfer of environmentally sound technologies? | NA | |
| 17.8 | Fully operationalize the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity-building mechanism for least developed countries by 2017 and enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology | NA | |
| 17.9 | Enhance Capacity-Building Support: Developing countries need effective capacity-building to implement all SDGs. This target emphasizes international support through North-South, South-South, and triangular cooperation. Is the country receiving effective capacity-building support for SDG implementation? | 1.60 | |
| 17.10 | Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral | NA | |

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| | trading system under the World Trade Organization, including through the conclusion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda | | |
| 17.11 | Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020 | NA | |
| 17.12 | Realize Duty-Free and Quota-Free Market Access: Least developed countries (LDCs) should have lasting duty-free and quota-free access to global markets. This target emphasizes transparent and simple rules of origin. Is the country on track to benefit from lasting duty-free and quota-free market access? | NA | |
| 17.13 | Enhance global macroeconomic stability, including through policy coordination and policy coherence | NA | |
| 17.14 | Enhance Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development: Policy coherence ensures that different policies and sectors work together to achieve sustainable development goals. Is the country on track | 1.70 | |

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| | to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development? | |
| 17.15 | Respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development Multi-stakeholder partnerships | 2.10 |
| 17.16 | Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries. | 2.30 |
| 17.17 | Enhance Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships: These targets emphasize collaboration among various stakeholders (public, private, civil society) to support SDG achievement. Is the country on track to enhance the global partnership and encourage effective multi-stakeholder partnerships? | 2.80 |
| 17.18 & 17.19 | Improve Data, Monitoring, and Accountability: These targets focus on capacity-building for data collection, | 1.50 |

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| | disaggregation, and developing alternative measurements of progress beyond GDP. Is the country on track to enhance capacity for high-quality, timely, and reliable data? Is it also working on alternative progress measurements? | | |
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