

Indo-Pacific Era Strategic Centre

Mapping the Geopolitics of the Next Indo-Pacific Century.

June 2024



Image Credit: Vecteezy.com

Planetary Health and the ASEAN Vision 2025

By Margareth Sembiring

Planetary health is a concept that emphasises the interconnectedness of human health and the health of our planet. For ASEAN, the positioning of human health at the heart of sustainability agenda directly supports the people-oriented, inclusive, sustainable, resilient, and dynamic pillars of the 2025 ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community [Blueprint](#), and the approach has been adopted and implemented more explicitly by the ASEAN Health Sector. Although the environment-health nexus has been acknowledged by the said sector, more can be done to streamline planetary health approach in the regional body's overall efforts to realise the ASEAN [Vision 2025](#) of “an integrated, peaceful and stable community with shared prosperity.”

Planetary Health in ASEAN

At present, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint treats health and environment agendas separately. Environmental issues fall under the sustainable component, while promoting a healthy and resilient community is part of the inclusive component. Considering that the planetary health concept [originated](#) from within the public health domain, it is not surprising that it was the ASEAN Health Sector has led efforts to bring the two elements together, envisioning a healthy, caring and sustainable community in the ASEAN Post-2015 Health Development [Agenda](#) (2015-2025).

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The proactive measure is evidenced in the Agenda's acknowledgment of the need "to prepare and respond to environmental health threats and other hazards, including the health impacts of climate change in the region" and the need to "strengthen the capacity of health and relevant sectors on health impact assessment and climate change adaptation in health." To achieve this objective, the ASEAN Health Sector develops the ASEAN Training Needs Assessment on Environmental Health for the ASEAN Member States, conducts ASEAN Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), Climate Resilience and Social Inclusion Situation Analysis and Policy Review, and strengthens existing Environmental Health Network and Health Impact Assessment.

Mainstreaming Planetary Health Further

While these efforts are commendable, focusing solely on preparedness and response is insufficient to preventing the emergence of environmental health threats. After all, biodiversity loss, pollution and climate change often stem from various factors including economic activities, and production and consumption patterns. Addressing the root causes of environmental degradation is as crucial as enhancing the health sector's capacity to prepare and respond to potential health threats. This is especially relevant in Southeast Asia given the region's economic development trajectory and the accompanying [increase](#) in material footprint and pollution. Additionally, incorporating a human health perspective into the ASEAN environment sector, which similarly focuses on responses to various environmental challenges, will strengthen the case for more robust sustainability measures.

Achieving ASEAN Vision with Planetary Health

In this regard, integrating the planetary health concept across other sectors is essential. This can be done by mainstreaming human health considerations into the agendas of the three pillars of ASEAN (the ASEAN Political Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community). To this end, raising awareness of planetary health among relevant stakeholders, and conducting extensive research to examine these linkages, will be necessary for formulating evidence-based policy actions and implementations. This will significantly facilitate achieving ASEAN's vision of a peaceful, stable and resilient Community.

SUGGESTED READINGS

ASEAN Secretariat. 2023. ASEAN Post-2015 Health Development Agenda (APHDA) (2021-2025). Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat.

M. J. Pongsiri and V. Arthakaivalvatee. 2020. Addressing the Environment and Health Nexus is a Strategic Approach to Advance the Sustainable Development Goals in ASEAN. In: Gatzweiler, F. (eds). Urban Health and Wellbeing Programme. Singapore: Springer, pp. 57-63.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). 2017. Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: A Framework for Action. Bangkok: UNESCAP.

CLIMATE CHANGE



NEWS & COMMENTARIES

S-E Asia tops global intake of microplastics, with Indonesians eating 15g a month: Study

South-east Asian countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines ingest the most microplastics among 109 countries. Indonesians, the top consumers of microplastics, were found to ingest about 15g of microplastics per month with the majority of plastic particles coming from aquatic sources such as fish and seafood.

Leow Wen Xuan

The Straits Times | 10 June 2024

ST Explains: Will climate change increase the likelihood of lightning strikes in Singapore?

Located near the Equator, Singapore has become a contender for the title of the world's lightning capital with its many thunderstorms. The country has one of the highest lightning strike rates in the world, with strikes occasionally harming people and infrastructure. Theoretically, soaring temperatures worldwide due to climate change could boost the odds of a thunderstorm.

Ang Qing

The Straits Times | 10 June 2024

Nitrous oxide emissions surge in climate threat: Study

Global emissions of nitrous oxide - a potent greenhouse gas - are outpacing expectations and putting climate change goals in peril. Nitrous oxide heats the Earth's atmosphere 300 times more effectively than carbon dioxide, scientists say.

AFP

The Business Times | 12 June 2024

Climate change funding talks stuck ahead of COP29 summit

Countries cannot agree on the size of a global funding bill to help the developing world fight climate change - let alone how to split it. The decision is set to dominate the COP29 climate talks in Azerbaijan in November, where countries need to agree on a new annual financing target for helping poorer countries cut their emissions and protect their societies in a harsher, hotter world.

Kate Abnett

Reuters | 14 June 2024

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

WMO global annual to decadal climate update 2024-2028

There is an 80 percent likelihood that the annual average global temperature will temporarily exceed 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels for at least one of the next five years. Short-term (annual) warming does not equate to a permanent breach of the lower 1.5°C Paris Agreement goal. Likely that at least one of next five years will be the warmest on record, beating 2023.

World Meteorological Organization

2024

Climate change and the escalation of global extreme heat: Assessing and addressing the risks

Using World Weather Attribution criteria, the study identified 76 extreme heat waves that span 90 different countries. These events put billions of people at risk, including in densely populated areas of South and East Asia, the Sahel, and South America. Over the last 12 months, human-caused climate change added an average of 26 days of extreme heat (on average, across all places in the world) than there would have been without a warmed planet.

Climate Central, Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, World Weather Attribution

2024

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Global Dialogue on Sustainable Ocean Development

This event will consider the role of complex, trans-disciplinary approaches in moving towards a sustainable blue economy, including sessions on sustainable ocean planning and environmental economic accounting.

Bali, Indonesia

1-5 July 2024

ENERGY SECURITY



NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) in Indonesia and Vietnam: Implications for Southeast Asia

JETP implementation in Vietnam and Indonesia faces challenges such as significant financing gaps, criticisms regarding the attractiveness of financing packages, difficulties in aligning donor and recipient countries' expectations, the complex political-economic landscape of the coal industry, and concerns over the social impacts of energy transitions.

Melinda Martinus

ISEAS Perspective | 4 June 2024

Southeast Asia seen attracting \$70 billion on hydro battery boom

Capacity for pumped hydro, which uses water and gravity to save excess power until it's needed, will increase nearly eightfold and hit 18 gigawatts by 2033.

Bloomberg

Energy Connects | 17 June 2024

International partners fall short in supporting Southeast Asia energy transition

Climate-related funding from international partners – including foreign governments such as the United States, Japan, and Australia as well as multilateral institutions like the World Bank – was less than US\$11 billion in 2022, with only a small proportion going to projects fully dedicated to combating climate change.

Alexandre Dayant, Roland Rajah

Lowy Institute | 18 June 2024

Southeast Asia's pumped hydro capacity to reach 18 GW by 2033

Thailand is leading in terms of existing capacity, but the Philippines is poised to surpass its neighbour with around 5.7 GW of capacity in the pipeline.

Simon Hyett

Asian Power | 18 June 2024

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Nuclear cogeneration for climate change mitigation and sustainable development goals

The scope of this publication consists of the insights gathered from several Member States that have experience or are planning for nuclear cogeneration projects to support climate change goals.

International Atomic Energy Agency
2024

Tracking SDG7: The energy progress report, 2024

This report summarises global progress on energy access, energy efficiency, renewable energy, clean cooking, and international cooperation to advance SDG 7.

IEA, IRENA, UNSD, World Bank, and WHO
The World Bank | 2024

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

International Conference on Nuclear Knowledge Management and Human Resources Development 2024

The purpose of the event is to review global developments related to nuclear knowledge management and human resources development; consider the current and future challenges and opportunities; provide participants with practical solutions that they can use at organisational, national and international level; and develop and maintain the human resources needed to support safe and sustainable nuclear power programmes.

Vienna, Austria
1-5 July 2024

FOOD SECURITY



NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Timely tweak of RTL hoped to tame NFA debt, inflation

Amidst rising international prices, the Philippines is exploring restructuring its National Food Authority (NFA) yet again, to allow the NFA to sell rice domestically. Such powers were removed previously when the Rice Tariffication Law was passed that removed the barriers to entry of cheaper rice imports to cool domestic prices.

Reine Juvierre Alberto

Business Mirror | 16 May 2024

Giving up on '30 by 30' might prove better for Singapore's agricultural push

Amid the closing in recent years of food production operations of selected vegetable and fish farms in Singapore, the author argues that it may be important not to hold on to the target of 30% self-sufficiency by 2030 "at all costs" but rather to explore tweaking the said policy. Another concern is that the basis for the 30% target is unclear, and the baseline "nutritional self-sufficiency" level is unknown either. Nonetheless, it is an "aspiration" worth pursuing.

Elysia Tan

Business Times | 23 May 2024

China food security law comes into force, aims for absolute self-sufficiency

China has taken a hard line on its food self-sufficiency objective, through a law that holds "central and provincial governments accountable for incorporating food security into their economic and development plans." Apart from leveraging science and technology to boost productivity, the new law also stipulates the "formation of a national grain emergency plan and a food security monitoring system."

Mei Mei Chu

Reuters | 3 June 2023

Commentary: Time to rethink Singapore's '30 by 30' food resilience, amid local farm setbacks

Following through from the earlier article in this curation, the author agrees that the '30 by 30' target was not clearly defined, and that there is no baseline nutritional self-sufficiency to be able to track progress. Nonetheless, if the '30 by 30' target was a dream, then such "setbacks should not distract Singapore from (its) dream", although this will require reconsidering how resilience is defined and achieved in food.

Paul Teng

Channel News Asia | 8 June 2024

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

A systematic review of the evolution of food system resilience assessment

This review finds that the definition of food supply resilience has tended to evolve in response to extreme global and regional shocks causing large-scale impacts. Considering four spatial levels of resilience, namely household, community, sub-national and national, it finds that the national level has received most attention. It encourages the tracking of comprehensive food-systems level resilience as opposed to specific factors only.

Ujjwal, KC, et al.

Global Food Security, Vol. 40, 100744 | 2024

Macroeconomic structural change likely increases inequality in India more than climate policy

This paper examines the factors that are likely to speed up India's structural transformation, defined as its shift from a predominantly agricultural economy to an industry- and service-based economy with higher wages. It finds that the macroeconomic impacts of carbon pricing strategies tend to slow the pace of industrialisation in India, by raising production costs of industrial more than agricultural products. Thus carbon pricing implies a larger agricultural sector at the expense of industrial sectors.

Leimbach, M, et al.

Environmental Research Letters 19, 044070 | 2024

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Policy Options for Asia and Global Community in the Face of Export Bans (Recording)

This webinar highlighted the importance of multilateral dialogue in achieving a world with less volatile food prices. It also touched on multilateral approaches currently being applied from a regional perspective under the ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserves; from a development perspective at the Asian Development Bank; and from a United Nations perspective, at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

Recorded Webinar

29 May 2024

HEALTH SECURITY



NEWS & COMMENTARIES

“All for Health, Health for All” sets the stage for the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly

The World Health Organization (WHO) launched the "All for Health, Health for All" event at WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland to convene on existing global health challenges such as HIV, measles and polio, amidst the climate emergency and the rise of conditions like hypertension and obesity.

World Health Organization

23 May 2024

Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly - Daily update: 31 May 2024

In a resounding call to action, the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly has recognised climate change as an imminent threat to global health, passing a resolution which underscores the urgent need for decisive measures to confront the profound health risks posed by climate change.

World Health Organization

31 May 2024

Making 2024 a watershed year for worldwide equitable action on antimicrobial resistance

Member States, Members of the Global Leaders Group on AMR (GLG), partners, youth leaders and survivor advocates came together at a Strategic Roundtable to chart a new path forward for global action against antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

World Health Organization

31 May 2024

Strengthening military-civilian relations and partnerships on global health security

The Australian Defence Force, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency co-hosted the Military Civilian Health Security Summit in Sydney, June 16-17, bringing together stakeholders to facilitate improved coordination and collaboration for the management of health security threats.

U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Public Affairs

16 June 2024

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Mapping the international health regulations monitoring and evaluation framework: An expert consultation, triangulation cross and quantitative analysis

The IHRMEF aims to synergize its four independent components, using expert consultation and crosswalk analysis, to better measure and strengthen IHR core capacities.

Robert Nguni et al.

BMJ Global Health, 2024;9:e013675 | 2024

Biosecurity infectious diseases of the returning Indonesian migrant workers

Biosecurity is vital in a globalised world to prevent infectious disease spread across borders. In Indonesia, inconsistent biosecurity policies for migrant workers pose health risks, particularly in Tanjung Pinang.

Wahyudi, I. et al.

Global Health Security: Health, Science and Policy, 9(1) | 2024

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Global Health Security Conference (GHSF)

From June 18 to 21, 2024, the third Global Health Security conference returns to Sydney, Australia. As the COVID-19 pandemic remains ongoing, the health challenges people confront from a changing climate, zoonotic pathogens, microbial resistance, conflict, and the social, political and economic determinants of health that exacerbate poor health, exposure to disease, and an inability to access affordable healthcare services, can seem insurmountable at times. GHSF will bring together multiple stakeholders from across disciplines and professions to share and exchange policy learnings, innovation, and solutions.

Sydney, Australia

18-21 June 2024

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF



NEWS & COMMENTARIES

China, 5 Central Asian nations establish emergency management cooperation mechanism

With the memorandum of understanding signed, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have in effect established a China-Central Asia emergency management mechanism. This will work to strengthen communication and coordination between the states in this area.

Xinhua

Chinese Government | 31 May 2024

UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2025

The UN Refugee Agency estimates that more than 2.9 million refugees worldwide will need resettlement next year, a 20 per cent increased compared with this year. This estimate is based on the likely prolongation of mass displacement situations, the emergence of new conflicts and the impacts of climate change.

UNHCR

5 June 2024

Denial of humanitarian assistance is a death sentence in Myanmar

The constant and continued disruption of basic services in Rakhine are causing challenges in accessing necessities such as food, healthcare and shelter for people in need. This is further compounded by the already tense ethnic dynamics on the ground.

Nimrat Kaur

The New Humanitarian | 11 June 2024

Industry underestimated impact of natural disasters

Worries of potential regions becoming uninsurable as a result of natural disasters seem to be bearing out as indicated by Swiss Re. This seems to be due to multiple factors including the underestimation of extreme weather event costs as a result of inadequate data on current exposure and risk values.

Kenneth Araullo

ReInsurance Business | 14 June 2024

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Accelerating action on gender equality in disaster risk reduction by 2030

This report analyses the gender and social inclusion priorities in the various country, regional and thematic reports prepared for the midterm review of the Sendai Framework.

UNDRR | 2023

Where next for feminist foreign policy on humanitarian response?

There is a need for states to meaningfully engage with tensions around what feminism means for humanitarian response or how to implement it effectively. This includes the articulation of what a feminist humanitarian response might entail and making it a key part of humanitarian reform.

Megan Daigle

ODI | 2024

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Web Talk on Investing in Disaster Risk Reduction with the Topic of Direct and Indirect Costs of Disasters

This webinar will explore the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction's approach to Disaster Risk Reduction Finance by providing a comprehensive overview of its financial framework for states. By understanding the direct and indirect costs of disasters, states are able to compare the costs of reducing risks with the resources already spent on disasters by addressing the damages (direct costs), as well as on the broader impact in the economy (indirect costs).

Webinar

25 June 2024

MIGRATION



Photo Credit: UN Women on Flickr.com/Creative Commons

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Special pass of migrant worker in loan shark case not extended further despite last-minute appeal
Singapore's authorities have decided not to extend the special pass of Bangladeshi migrant worker Md Sharif Uddin. ICA and MOM said that the appeal was not granted as he had been given sufficient time upon the termination of his work permit to seek employment under the Temporary Job Scheme.

Sherlyn Sim

The Straits Times | 31 May 2024

Gulf social security reforms create opportunities for protection for Bangladeshi migrant workers

Following COVID-19, recent reforms in social protection systems in the Gulf have created new opportunities for sending countries such as Bangladesh to strengthen the social protection coverage for migrant workers.

ILO

6 June 2024

Economy, migration, war top voters' concerns in EU election – Survey

Improving the economy and reducing inflation ranked highest among citizens in influencing their vote, followed by international conflict and war, and immigration and asylum seekers. Provisional results showed gains for nationalist and euro-sceptic parties.

Reuters

10 June 2024

'Super-skilled' domestic workers in Singapore earn 10% more pay as demand rises

As Singapore's population ages, demand for "super-skilled" domestic workers that are equipped to care for employers with chronic health conditions has risen up to 30 per cent in the last few years. A third more employers also wanted to hire domestic workers with paper qualifications or certified skills. Employers are willing to pay 10 per cent more to secure their services.

Rebecca Metteo and Louisa Tang

CNA | 10 June 2024

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Asia-Pacific Employment and Social Outlook 2024: Promoting decent work and social justice to manage ageing societies

As the Asia Pacific is the fastest ageing region in the world, labour force participation rates and economic dependency ratios are projected to change significantly by 2050. Economic, financial and social challenges are exacerbated by persistent decent work deficits such as insufficient social protection, a high incidence of low labour incomes, gender inequality and age discrimination.

International Organization for Migration
2024

Submissions to the 88th Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

This report assesses the treatment of migrant domestic workers (MDWs) and Singapore's obligations under CEDAW. The recommendations include addressing the exclusion of MDWs from the Employment Act, lack of definition of rest days as 24 continuous hours, inadequate insurance coverage and access to healthcare.

Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics
2024

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Unlocking Reintegration: Insights from Recent Research Across Stakeholders

This webinar examines recent research findings and perspectives on the return and reintegration of migrant workers.

Representatives from the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) presented their research.

Recorded Webinar

29 April 2024