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POVERTY ASSESSMENT INITIATIVES IN SELECTED ASEAN COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

The paper seeks to assess poverty initiatives from selected ASEAN countries, namely Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia. The assessment was based on the government's action to deal with poverty. The measurement of poverty was determined according to each ASEAN countries. The findings indicated that countries' governments have struggled due to various problems; all know that this endeavor is difficult to achieve without the participation of all stakeholders in eliminating poverty. The government must consider all the technical implications of whether such modifications in the definition of poverty are necessary and in line with future development policies. Meanwhile, dynamic economic growth is continuously emerging, and the government is exerting efforts via long-term initiatives to ensure a consistent poverty reduction policy. The implications of these assessment reached in developing a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the SDGs through four platforms—government and parliament, academia and experts, civil society and the media, and charity and business—is one of the government's strategies for eradicating poverty.

1. Introduction

The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda provides an incentive for many countries to implement the sustainable development agenda as they progress toward high-nation status. At the end of 2015, 193 United Nations (UN) member nations agreed on an inclusive agenda of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as Global Goals, which are explicitly devoted to our future generations to improve the standard of living sustainably. These 17 goals include a wide range of topics, from inequality and poverty reduction to universal healthcare and education. If all of the SDGs were achieved by 2030, people's lives would be enhanced, equal opportunities would be open to everyone, and the world would be more pleasant and peaceful. Unlike previous development action plans, these SDGs recognized shared difficulties faced by nations worldwide and urged effective measures to tackle them. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which preceded the SDGs, did not reconcile economic, social, and environmental issues and instead focused only on the social aspects of development programmes.

SDGs are supreme goals that incorporate human rights and include social development, equitable economic growth, and sustainability. One of the objectives, i.e., Goal 16, focuses on ensuring equal access to justice for everyone by establishing effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. Poverty is a multidimensional issue, and combating poverty has been one of the primary goals of governments, particularly in developing countries. International agencies such as the World Bank, IMF, and OECD have prioritized poverty alleviation globally. Poverty entails significant deprivation in numerous fundamental facets of life.

When developing effective policies and initiatives to alleviate poverty, it is crucial to understand the characteristics of those living in poverty. There are several poverty characteristics, like family size and composition, household head and spouse education, occupation, housing and assets, community characteristics, and geographical region. The poor often have larger families than the middle class, are raised by parents who lack formal education, and reside in underdeveloped communities with substandard housing and transportation (Chamberlain, 2001). Analyzing and formulating policies to alleviate poverty are never-ending processes that must be constantly reinforced, updated, and adapted to reflect the new realities of the economy and the accessibility of government institutions. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to review the poverty assessment initiatives, the evolution of the production of poverty knowledge through measurement and assessment, and also to examine the issues and dilemmas involved in applying them in the context of poverty reduction policy processes in selected ASEAN countries namely Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, and Indonesia.

2. Definition of Poverty Assessment

In the recent decade, much discussion has been over how to define and measure poverty. These concerns have been the subject of much discussion and controversy. In a poverty study, two (2) questions must be addressed. The first problem is identifying the poor, and the second is aggregating the poverty gaps of various people to generate an overall indicator of the amount of poverty (Hagenaars & De Vos, 1988). According to Hagenaars and De Vos (1988), numerous poverty definitions were employed in poverty research and social policy. Fundamentally, all definitions fall into one of three categories:

1. Poverty is defined as having less than the objectively determined absolute minimum.
2. Poverty is defined as having less than others in society.
3. Poverty is defined as not having enough to get by.

Van de Ruit, May, and Roberts (2001) describe poverty evaluation as a simple, low-cost operational instrument used to evaluate the relative poverty levels of micro-loan recipients and a control group of non-recipients. This evaluation is a quick quantitative study that employs proxies for poverty levels based on several crucial factors. Assessment of poverty rates in ASEAN countries is not a new topic that has been studied and has been conducted since the 1990s (Sothirak, 1991; David, Asra, & de Castro, 1999; Gonzales, 2012; Jetin, 2016). Until now, the assessment of poverty in all ASEAN countries has been explored and addressed in stages in accordance with the appropriate benchmarks. Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to review poverty assessment efforts, the development of the production of knowledge about poverty through measurement and assessment, as well as to look at the challenges and ambiguities associated with using them in the context of poverty reduction policy processes in a few ASEAN countries, specifically Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, and Indonesia. Each of the four ASEAN nations determines its own method for assessing poverty, which will be covered in the following sections. This paper is written based on selected literature on poverty assessment initiatives and tools in selected ASEAN countries.

3. Poverty Assessment Initiatives

3.1 Poverty assessment initiatives in Malaysia

Since the 1970s, Malaysia has made commendable progress in its ongoing effort to eradicate poverty. The country's journey toward poverty reduction came along the way beginning with a racial riot on 13th May 1969 which led to the construction of corrective measures in the form of New Economic Policy (NEP) 1970-1990. The NEP was designed with two distinct strategies - (i) to reduce absolute poverty and eventually eradicate poverty by raising income levels and employment opportunities for all Malaysian irrespective of race, and (ii) to restructure the society to correct economic imbalances and remove the identification of race based on their economic activities. The NEP focused on creating opportunities for the poor to improve their livelihoods such as relocating household to allocated land for farming via schemes under Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) and Federal land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (FELCRA). By 1990, 114,400 households had been resettled by FELDA to more than 500,000 hectares of new settlements.

The NEP reduced the poverty rate from 49.3 percent in 1970 to 16.7 percent in 1990 (New Economic Model for Malaysia, 2010). In 2016, poverty rates continued to drop to 0.4 percent of total households, or 24,700 households categorized as poor (EPU, 2016). Absolute poverty eradication was a top priority under NEP and National Development Policy (NDP) 1991-2000 before shifting the focus toward reducing income inequality as the country continues to chart significant economic development. Under NDP, the incidence of poverty was reduced to 7.2 percent of total households. In 2002, absolute hardcore poverty was further reduced from 3.9 percent in 1990 to 1.0 percent 2002. The fundamental stance to eradicate poverty via growth and equitable distribution continued in the National Vision Policy (2001-2010) and Vision 2020. The New Economic Model (2011-2020), on the other hand, focused more on inclusiveness as a measure to reduce relative poverty and income inequality since absolute poverty had almost been eradicated, but relative poverty and disparity between the richest and poorest segments of the society continue to rise.

Table 1 summarises the policies undertaken by the Malaysian government to combat poverty. The major poverty eradication programme prior to NEP is land consolidation and rehabilitation by various government agencies. The problem in the 1960s was low income due to small land holdings, which were both unsustainable in the long run and unable to feed the whole family. Resettlement of farmers allows for more economical farming and a more stable income stream for farmers. The NEP continued the existing land consolidation and resettlement efforts and, at the same time, enhanced poverty eradication by introducing more programmes such as the Irrigation and Drainage (IADP) programmes, Bumiputera Commercial and Industrial Community (BCIC), Orang Asli settlements, microcredit schemes. The NDP continued the programmes undertaken pre- and during NEP and added more Housing Assistance Programme (PPRT) and private sector engagement. The New Vision Policy (NVP) focuses more on specific poverty eradication programs. Programmes were targeted at Bumiputeras in Sabah and Sarawak and urban poverty. Finally, the NEM focuses more on overall inclusiveness, where prosperity is shared equitably.

Table 1
Poverty eradication programmes

Policy	**Years**	**Main Programmes**	**OPP / Malaysia Plan**
Pre - NEP	1966-1970	Land Consolidation and rehabilitation by (i) FELDA (1956) (ii) FELCRA (1966) (iii) MARA (1966) (iv) MARDEC (1966) (v) JENGKA (vi) KETENGAH	1^{st} Malaysia Plan
NEP	1970-1990	(i) Rural Development Schemes - MADA (1970) - LKIM (1971) - RISDA (1973) (ii) IADP Programmes (iii) Microcredit schemes (iv) BCIC (v) Orang Asli Settlements (vi) Other schemes – scholarship, AIM.	OPP1 2^{nd}, 3^{rd}, 4^{th} & 5^{th} Malaysia Plan
NDP	1990-2000	(i) PPRT Programmes for hard-core poor (ii) Continued land consolidation and rehabilitation, commercialization of farms and enhance education and training (iii) Participation of private sector in poverty alleviation programmes	OPP2 6^{th} and 7^{th} Malaysia Plan
NVP	1. 2000-2010	More targeted programmes for: (i) Bumiputera minorities in Sabah and Sarawak (ii) Urban poverty (iii) Skill enhancing for vulnerable groups	OPP3 8^{th} and 9^{th} Malaysia Plan
Policy	**Years**	**Main Programmes**	**OPP / Malaysia Plan**
NEM	2010-2020	(i) Boost income & value creation - Retrain and re-skill existing labour force - Introduction of minimum wage of RM1,200 per month in 2020 - Removal of labour market distortions	10^{th} and 11^{th} Malaysia Plan

	(ii) Creating ecosystem for entrepreneurship (iii) Promoting equal and fair access to opportunities

Notes: OPP – Outline Perspective Plan.
Source: Outline Perspective Plan, Malaysia Plan (various issues) & NEAC (2010).

In summary, the Poverty Line Income (PLI) is the benchmark that must be upgraded to depict the level of minimum sustenance over the years. The PLI should match the improved living standards required for a person to fulfill his or her basic needs. These basic needs have evolved over the years. In the 1970s, basic needs may include food, clothing, and shelter, but in 2020, basic needs cover food, clothing, shelter, education, health, transport, and communication. Since basic needs have evolved, the PLI must also be upgraded to include a current definition of basic needs. Failure to incorporate the ever-evolving basic needs may make policymakers think that the poverty level has decreased. However, it decreased according to the level in the 1970s but has not fallen below the acceptable level in 2020. Using a new methodology that leads to higher PLI is a positive step taken by the Malaysian government to address this tautological issue appropriately.

However, improved poverty measure does not lead to a reduction in poverty but provides a basis for more accurate and targeted policy making. In the near future, fiscal policies on assistance to the poor should be tailored to a different segment of society. Another issue in Malaysia is that several households are vulnerable to falling into the B40 category. However, they are currently in the M40 bracket due to a lack of savings and low social protection. An income shock such as COVID-19, which causes job losses, may significantly impact these vulnerable households.

Similarly, the customized Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is also subjected to the same criticisms where both PLI and MPI are inadequate compared to other upper middle-income countries' benchmarks. The MPI is also criticized for not considering statistically invisible' communities such as persons with disabilities, Orang Asli (indigenous locals), foreign workers, and refugees (UNSR Report, 2019).

3.2 Poverty assessment initiatives in Thailand

Thailand's economy grew at an average of 7.5% annually in the boom years and 5% during the Asian Financial Crisis from 1998 – 2005 (Bank, 2020). This growth created millions of jobs that helped pull millions out of poverty. Gains along multiple dimensions of welfare have been impressive, more children are now getting more years of education, and virtually everyone is now covered by health insurance. In contrast, other forms of social security have expanded. However, economic growth in Thailand is expected to fall in the year 2020 due to the enormous impact of the Pandemic COVID-19 outbreak, and it is showing the decline in external demand as well as domestic demand that will affect trade and tourism, supply chain disruptions, and weakening domestic consumption.

According to the World Bank, poverty declined substantially over the last 30 years, from 65.2% in 1988 to 9.85% in 2019 (based on national estimates). However, the growth of household incomes and consumption growth both have stalled nationwide in recent years. Thailand's Annual Household Income per capita reached USD 3,322 in 2017, compared with the previous value of USD 3 276 in 2015. For a record, the average annual household income per capita is USD 1,090 from 1981 – 2016. This situation resulted in a reversal in the progress of poverty reduction in Thailand, with the number of people living in poverty rising. Between 2015 and 2018, the number of people living in poverty increased from 7.2% (4.85 million) to 9.8% (6.7 million) in respective years. Inequality increased between 2015 and 2017 (The World Bank). During this period, average household consumption per capita grew, but the household consumption of the bottom 40% of the population shrank.

3.2.1 Measuring poverty in Thailand

Thailand has attempted to study the measurement of poverty since 1962 through technical support from the World Bank. Subsequently, the poverty assessment technique has been continually developed per the existence of data in each period. Previously, the study of poverty incidence could not yield adequate details due to data and technical limitations. To analyze poverty, the measurement of the economic welfare of each household in the society becomes the primary formula to get the correct indicator. Although monetary income is widely used to measure economic welfare, it has many serious drawbacks. The major drawback is that it excludes several in-kind transfers, imputed rent, home production, voluntary leisure, and net worth or wealth.

The income concept is used fairly comprehensively; it includes (i) wages and salary, tips, bonuses, etc., (ii) net profits from farming and non-farming, (iii) property income such as land rent, (iv) royalties, interest and dividends (v) current transfers received such as assistance payments, pensions, scholarships, and grants (vi) non-money income (income in kind) which includes the value of goods and services received as part of pay, home-produced and consumed (including the rental value of the owner-occupied dwelling or received free from other sources (Kakwani & Krongkaew, 1996). The economic welfare of households is determined not only by their income but also by their needs. Since households differ in terms of size, age composition, and other characteristics, it is expected that they will have different needs. Then, the measurement of economic welfare should consider the differing needs of the households.

3.2.2 Thailand's government policies toward poverty

As the Thailand government is keen to promote and increase the well-being of their society, much effort has been initiated to ensure each group of communities contributes to economic development. The role of government policies can be reviewed based on three major categories. First is the series of the national economic and social development plan; second, the three significant macroeconomic policies are industrial, exchange rate, and tax. The last is a more specific measure announced to battle poverty, the Agricultural Land Reform. The following discussion is as follows:

i) The national economic and social development plans

Since the 1960s, economic development in Thailand has been under the guidance of a series of national plans known as the National Economic and Social Development Plans. Each plan covers five years. Thailand's development plan's main objective is to steer the country towards security, prosperity, and sustainability. The plans are as follows:

- The 1st Plan (1961 – 1966)
- The 2nd Plan (1967 – 1971)
- The 3rd Plan (1972 – 1976)
- The 4th Plan (1977 – 1981)
- The 5th Plan (1982 – 1986)
- The 6th Plan (1987 – 1991)
- The 7th Plan (1992 – 1996)
- The 8th Plan (1997 – 2001)
- The 9th Plan (2002 – 2006)
- The 10th Plan (2007 – 2011)
- The 11th Plan (2012 – 2016)
- The 12th Plan (2017 – 2021)

ii) Macroeconomic policies

Macroeconomic policies focus on three crucial functions of the economy, covering the allocation of resources, economic stability, and redistribution of income. Industrial Policies, introduced in 1972, aim to promote the industrial sectors. More incentives were given to the exporting industries, including exempting export duties and business taxes. This policy has given tremendous working opportunities to the local community

iii) Agricultural land reform

The agricultural policy is the direct policy for poverty alleviation especially in rural areas. The main objectives of this policy are:

1. to enable farmers to have their land for cultivation,
2. to increase agricultural productivity, and
3. to reduce the income gap between the rural and urban population.

As a result of this programme, Thailand's agricultural industry was revamped entirely between 1977 and 1980. The government has implemented Rural Agricultural Credit policies to boost the rural loan market. This situation enables the rural community to benefit from this policy

3.3 Poverty assessment initiatives in Philippines

Asian Development Bank (2009) highlighted several causes of poverty in the Philippines. Among others, the country’s poverty rate is attributed to the economic failure to generate quality employment for the poor, low growth elasticity of poverty reduction, an increase in food prices which led to food inflation, the country’s failure to manage population growth, high levels of income, land, and regional inequality, regular shocks and exposure to conflicts, natural disasters, and environmental poverty, and economic crisis. Other causes were also related to less access to credit, lack of good quality health facilities, and lack of institutional support (Mina & Imai, 2016). Besides, chronic poverty was also attributed to the younger and less educated head of the family and large household size. The heads of families are self-employed or work as laborers or smallholder producers. Most low-income families rely on farming or fishing for income. They live in rural areas and some informal live-in settlements in urban areas. Poor communities often have large numbers of family members. Lack of access to health services and sex education has resulted in an increasing number of children without good family-economic planning. This sequence continues in the same family, causing the cycle of poverty impossible to be broken (World Bank, 2018). The World Bank (2018), in their report “Making Growth Work for the Poor: A Poverty Assessment for the Philippines,” also highlighted three prominent factors that delayed poverty reduction efforts. The factors were; a lower pace of growth that slowed down poverty reduction, high-income inequality related to limited access to quality education and healthcare, and risks of natural disasters and conflicts.

3.3.1 Poverty scenarios in Philippines

The Philippines benefits from diverse biodiversity and plentiful natural resources, despite its susceptibility to natural disasters such as earthquakes and typhoons. With a population of more than 100 million, the Philippines’ economy is evolving from an agricultural-based to more attentive service and manufacturing-based economy. The Philippines’ economy is thriving, the 34th largest economy in the world (Imf.org, 2020). Such emerging market conditions also mean that some businesses will develop faster and more robust than others. Those who are not currently impoverished will likely become so if they are unable to adapt. Figures (2019) reported that 26%

of the Philippines' population lived below the national poverty line in 2005. The numbers slowly decreased to 21.6% in 2017 and further reduced to 16.6% in 2018 (Asian Development Bank, 2020). The progress toward poverty eradication has been relatively slow, and the country still has the highest poverty rate among ASEAN countries (Asean Secretariat, 2019).

In the Philippines, 51% of the population resides in rural areas. They are the rural economy's drivers, including agriculture, hunting, forestry, and fishing. Fishermen and farmers have the most effective poverty rate due to decreased agricultural production, unproductive small farming operations, and unsustainable agricultural techniques (Romana & Leonardo, 2017). Other obstacles confronting impoverished rural farmers include a lack of infrastructure, transportation services, and insufficient road and port facilities. The number of poor households increased from 3.3 million to 3.9 million in 2009 (Mina et al., 2016).

3.3.2 Poverty assessment tools used in Philippines

3.3.2 (a) Poverty assessment tools (PAT)

PAT is a free and easy assessment tool used to compare and track changes in poverty levels. The United States Agency developed it for International Development (USAID). In August 2011, the Philippines underwent a PAT-based poverty assessment (USAID Poverty Assessment Tools, 2011). There are mainly two components of PAT. The first component consists of specific household indicators considered the best predictors of poverty in the country. The poverty line value used for reporting is 9060 pesos per capita per year. There are ten indicators in this first component. The indicators include the number of people in the family who are under the age of 17, the type of construction materials used for the house's outer walls and roof, the types of toilet facilities, the number of children attending school, information about family members with salaried employment, and the number of house appliances owned by the family. The second component is automatically connected to data entry templates called Epi Info and CSPro. This component estimates the share of households living below the applicable poverty line. The results derived from PAT will be in the percentage of people living beyond or below the poverty line.

3.3.2 (b) Simple poverty scorecard – Poverty assessment tool

The Simple Poverty Scorecard was developed to estimate the probability of selected households with income below the poverty line (Schreiner, 2016). It consisted of ten low-cost indicators from the Philippines 2009 Family Income and Expenditure Survey, which were straightforward, verifiable, and can be used by the non-specialist. It was reported that using The Simple Poverty Scorecard; data can be collected in ten minutes (Schreiner, 2016). The scorecard can be used to assess three crucial pieces of information. Firstly, it can help predict 'poverty likelihood,' which refers to the likelihood that the household's per-capita salary is below the poverty line. The scorecard can also assess the average poverty likelihood in the group of households. Besides that, the scorecard can estimate the changes in poverty for a group of households. The scorecard assesses household information such as; the number of family members in a household, number of children attending school, work information of the family members, education background of the female head/spouse, type of construction materials of the house's outer walls, information of household possessions of furniture, kitchen equipment, and electrical appliances.

3.3.2 (c) Progress out of poverty index (PPI) TM

The Progress out of Poverty Index (PPI) is an assessment tool used to measure the number of households living below the poverty line while assessing the performance of intervention programmes. PPI can also be used to track changes in the poverty line. There are ten indicators in PPI. The indicators tend to measure household composition, the educational background of family members, housing conditions, and ownership of durable goods. It was reported that PPI is a simple and user-friendly tool and is cost-effective and timely (Desiere, Vellema, and Haese, 2015). PPI for the Philippines was generated in May 2018 by Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA). Indicators were based on the 2015 Philippines Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES) (Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), 2020).

3.3.3 The Philippines government initiatives

From 2006 to 2015, the drivers for poverty reduction were; an increase in wages, emphasis on employment other than agriculture, government transfers, and remittances from domestic and foreign sources (World Bank, 2018). Government transfers, for instance, helped reduce 25% of poverty. This was done via cash grants given through social assistance programs. Nevertheless, the most comprehensive initiative for poverty reduction in the Philippines is AmBisyon Natin 2040, which reflects a long-term vision to eradicate poverty and improve the livelihoods of the poor (Natin, 2017). Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2020, a blueprint developed based on AmBisyon Natin 2040, aimed to reduce the country's poverty rate to 13.15% by 2022. The entire plan has seven parts: an overview of the economy, development challenges, development strategies explained in various chapters: enhancing the social fabric, inequality-reducing transformation, increasing growth potential, enabling and supportive economic environment, and foundations for inclusive and sustainable development (National Economic & Development Authority, 2017).

3.4 Poverty assessment initiatives in Indonesia

Indonesia is an agricultural country with a population of 260 million. Moreover, 11% represents the percentage of poor people, 5.6% represents the jobless, and the Gini Ratio of the country is 0.397. The Gini ratio is a statistical measure of the degree of variation or inequality represented in a set of values, used primarily in analyzing income inequality. Most of the poor are in rural areas with farming livelihoods. The percentage of farm households decreased from 53% (the year 2003) to 40.2% (the year 2013), which was equal to 25,751,256 households (Censuses *et al.*, 2013). The data by the Ministry of Agriculture of Indonesia showed that 68.8% of farm households cultivate their food crops, and 55.3% are smallholder farmers who work as farmers with less than 0.25 hectares of wetlands.

Susilastuti (2018) found that Indonesia's agricultural industry consists of state-owned, privately held, and smallholder plantations. Large farms concentrate on primary export commodities such as palm oil and rubber, while small farmers concentrate on rice, soybeans, corn, and fruits and vegetables. Less fortunate individuals can only perform small-scale farming compared to farms that generate a substantial profit. Even though Indonesia is an agricultural nation, Susilastuti (2018) argued that agricultural production has no significant effect on the Gross Regional Product growth rate and has not been able to reduce poverty. In contrast, the Gross Regional Product growth rate has a significant effect and is the prevalent factor in poverty reduction.

Apart from that, Adiprasetyo *et al.* (2015) stated that organic farming practices can potentially increase the income of horticultural farmers. Their study also showed that the factors that constrained the development of horticultural organic farming were limited knowledge of organic practices, access to market, financial and risk management services, or support. They suggested that sustainable agriculture, such as horticultural organic farming practices, could reduce poverty. They also believed that the government should concentrate on sustainable agriculture and, at the same time, reduce poverty among farmers. Besides, Zainal and Maya Aprita Sari (2020) found that there is a positive and significant correlation between social capital and the level of poverty. Famers who have a higher stock of social capital are found to be lower in the poverty rate. For instance, Dahliah, Kurniawan, and Putra (2020) had come out with the regional economy of the Bantaeng Regency of Indonesia. The district is dominated by the agricultural sector, especially food crop agriculture, the sub-sector of the plantation, livestock sub-sector, and fishery sub-sector. As a result, the local economic competitiveness and development in Bantaeng District's efforts to lift people out of poverty are not fully effective.

The increase in urban water demand forces the stakeholders like government, academia, and communities to come forward and discuss the importance of water sensitivity. The Indonesian government has targeted universal access to water supply and sanitation. According to Soedjono et al. (2018), water sensitive city is a very significant issue for the development of future cities. The quality of water resources is an essential basic need that ensures the poor get clean and quality water. Their study showed that the concept of water sensitive city was likely to be possible and not easily implemented in Surabaya.

Additionally, it was not easy to be implemented because of the difficulty in handling basic human needs like poverty eradication, education, and sanitation in this area. Therefore, the government used a top-down approach to implement its development targets. The community proposes the developmental priority they need in the bottom-up approach. Soedjono et al. (2018) also stated that the government already understands the concept of a water-sensitive city from the centre to the bottom. It is not enough to be taught only as a concept. It must be involved the attitude of the society and put this attitude to their daily lives and bring the city's society to give more attention to water-related issues. Water sensitivity is not only an issue in Indonesia, but it is also a global issue in many other countries. In addition, the issue of clean water is often a problem that relates to the lower-class community in rural or urban areas.

Moreover, the Indonesian government is proactive in its efforts to assist disabled individuals. According to Byrnes et al. (2007), people with disabilities (henceforth PWD) are the largest population in the world and one of the most disadvantaged minority groups. Twenty percent of the world's poorest population are people with disabilities. According to the World Health Organization (2011), persons with disabilities account for about 15 percent of the worldwide population; consequently, it is crucial to implement a programme that focuses on reducing poverty among this population segment. Bella and Dartanto (2018) investigated the effects of disability, kinds of disability, and sources of impairment on a household's poverty status and poverty gap index. According to their research, families with a handicapped head are 1.3 percentage points more likely to fall into poverty and have a poverty gap score of 2.6%. Poverty reduction initiatives for individuals with disabilities in Indonesia lag due to a lack of available data and a lack of research based on solid facts. Further, Sytsma Jordan and Mayville (2003), Kavanagh et al. (2015), and Smith (2007) discovered that various kinds of disability might result in a variety of socioeconomic circumstances. As we already know, disability will lead to both a cause and a consequence of poverty. Bordieri and Drehmer (1988) and Florian (1978) conducted two further studies in which they came to the same conclusion: diverse causes of disabilities affect job enrollment. Therefore, the responsible parties should have several policy options available that might significantly impact people with disabilities from now.

Poverty reduction has become a significant policy initiative in Indonesia since the economic crisis in 1997/1998. According to Suryahadi *et al.* (2010), the Indonesian government established the social safety net (JPS) program, covering food security, health, education, employment creation, and community empowerment since the economic crisis hit in the year 1997/1998. The JPS agenda became the government's first poverty reduction and social protection program post-crisis. The government strategy for poverty reduction is articulated through clustering poverty reduction programs into three clusters. The first cluster is social assistance, intending to provide direct assistance to poor households to ease the burdens of meeting necessities. The second cluster is community empowerment, which aims to provide social funds to poor communities. The third cluster is microenterprise empowerment, to provide access to credits for microenterprises without being hindered by the requirement of having to provide collaterals. The study proposed three areas of reform, namely are:

1. Institutional Capacity in Managing Reduction of Poverty and Vulnerability
2. Quality of Poverty Database and Targeting Mechanism
3. Integration and Quality Improvement of Social Assistance, Community Empowerment, and Micro-Enterprise Empowerment Programs

In order to accelerate government efforts to reduce poverty and encourage community development in Indonesia, in the year 2006, President Yudhoyono announced the launch of the National Programme for Community Empowerment [Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat] (PNPM). This programme act as the policy and operational umbrella for the country's programmes. Oktarina, Sachnaz Desta & Furuya (2016) examined the determinants of village budget allocation of PNPM Mandiri investments from its first earmarked in 2007 and 2011. The study by Oktarina, Sachnaz Desta & Furuya (2016) showed that the villages-specific endowment prior to PNPM Mandiri establishment. Therefore, it was suggested to have a reasonable contribution to endogeneity on villagers' decision to select particular allocations. And the allocation of investment was relatively significant in alleviating the village's poverty.

One of the programs that aim to reduce poverty rates in Indonesia is the provision of housing for the community, especially the underprivileged. Moreover, it is a million houses program proclaimed by the Ministry of Public Works and People's Housing. This program is interrelated with the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), especially within goal number 11: sustainable cities and communities. The presence of the global agenda can provide new insight into a country's development. SDGs (Formerly known as MDGs – Millenium Development Goals) aim to build and expand the coverage of the MDGs that ended in the same year when SDGs launched, and this international platform tries to integrate economic and social development with environmental sustainability. Six factors influence the achievement of SDGs, specifically, converging agendas, collaborative partnerships, well-established poverty reduction programs, and alternative funding through Zakat, the innovation of databases, and learning from best practices (Rassanjani, 2018). Rassanjani (2018) also stated that the Indonesian government is trying to cultivate a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for SDGs by developing collaboration across four platforms: government and parliament, academia and experts, civil society and the media, and philanthropy and business.

4. Conclusion

Malaysia had successfully reduced its absolute incidence of poverty over the years through various government policies and initiatives. Pockets of poverty still exist in specific areas and communities, which are being addressed through more targeted and specific approaches such as infrastructure development for rural poor, more income-generating activities, and micro-credit schemes for urban poor. In the future, there will be many areas for improvement in assessing Malaysia's level and rate of poverty. Whether PLI or MPI is used as the definition and tool for poverty measurement, both methods must correspond to the country's present state of development and requirement for sustenance. Failure to account for the current state of needs would result ineffectiveness in addressing the needs of bottom 40 percent and absolute poverty. In due time, Malaysia may want to modify its official definition of poverty standards in line with other upper-middle-income countries. The Malaysian government must account for all the technical implications and whether such modifications in the definition of poverty are necessary and in line with the future development policies in Malaysia. With due respect, governments, the public, and the private sector must communicate their respective expectations to ensure all segments of society are accurately and adequately addressed.

Thailand has a relatively good record of poverty re-education compared to other developing countries. Since the early 1960s, the proportion of poor and local communities has been declining. The trend of an improving poverty incidence coincides with the impressive growth of the economy. Since the end of the Second World War, Thailand has proved that its economy has achieved steady and high economic growth based on agriculture. Agriculture production in Thailand grew quite impressively in the past. Agriculture has transformed Thailand's social and economic sector into one of the most booming sectors in the region. Thailand is successful in utilizing its large resource base. Primary agricultural production is diversified and gains stability. The Philippines' dynamic economic growth is continuously emerging, and the government is exerting efforts via long-term and short-term initiatives to ensure consistent poverty reduction. Poverty in the country is based on many factors, mainly inequality, the provision of health and education facilities, and the availability of quality employment.

Efforts to assess poverty in Philippines were made via several assessment tools. The most widely used were the Poverty Assessment Tools (PAT), the Simple Poverty Scorecard – Poverty Assessment Tool, and the Progress out of Poverty Index (PPI). The assessment tools measure the probability of households living below the national poverty line. Indicators were mainly focused on assessing families' composition, employment information, ownership of household appliances, and children's educational background.

Although poverty rates in Indonesia have shown a slight decline, the Indonesian government and other responsible parties should come forward and work together to eradicate poverty. The Indonesian government is trying to cultivate a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for SDGs by developing collaboration across four platforms: government and parliament, academia and experts, civil society and the media, and philanthropy and business. Furthermore, the government's one-size-fits-all approach to alleviating poverty in Indonesia (allocating cash and distributing rice to the poor people) cannot solve some regions' poverty problems.

The data for the poverty rate in the aforementioned nations are still present, but they are decreasing. The assessment of this poverty is subjective and cannot be compared to methodologies used in other nations, particularly in European nations. This is due to the varied sources of national income and consequently, there are various ways to approach the issue of poverty. It is advised that future research explore the primary causes of poverty in a specific location in greater detail using the qualitative approach, such as structured interview. The researcher may have better results with this approach if they use primary data. The contribution of this research has reach into developing countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand can, in general, adapt programmes implemented in adjacent nations whose goal is to eradicate poverty by fostering economic development in their individual country.

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