

ASEAN Development Goals: Potentials and Lessons from the MDGs



ASEAN Briefs is a regular publications about current development on ASEAN regionalism, especially in the Political-Security, Economic as well as Socio-Cultural Pillars.

The Habibie Center
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SUMMARY

The year 2015 will see the dawn of the ASEAN Community— built upon the political, economic, and socio-cultural pillars. It is in this background that the 25th ASEAN Summit in Naypyidaw, Myanmar, produced the Naypyidaw Declaration on The ASEAN Community's Post-2015 Vision. Among the points considered within the declaration one interesting subject arises, that is the decision to “promote development of clear and measurable ASEAN development goals”.¹

The inclusion of this point in the declaration is interesting as it marks the collective decision of ASEAN member states to start formulating a set of development goals of their own, in addition to the already existing Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the subsequent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Indeed, the MDGs have been an important part of the development efforts in each ASEAN member states.

This edition of ASEAN Briefs will briefly explore the potentials that the ASEAN Development Goals (ADGs) can achieve. This will be conducted by first doing a general examination on the experiences of individual countries in implementing the MDGs agenda as a compass to formulate national development plans. Afterwards this edition of ASEAN Briefs will continue by offering a number of policy recommendations to promote the ADGs.

What are the ASEAN Development Goals?

The ASEAN Development Goals is a work in progress. It is a planned development agenda which according to the Naypyidaw Declaration will—alongside the post-2015 vision for ASEAN—be formally submitted at the 27th ASEAN Summit. Still following the Naypyidaw Declaration, the ADGs will be implemented at the very least during 2016-2025. The ADGs presumably lie under the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC), as the primary goal of the socio-cultural pillar is “to contribute to realising an ASEAN Community that is people-centred and socially responsible with a view to building an inclusive and cohesive society where the well-being, livelihood and welfare of the peoples are enhanced”.²

According to the Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Sihasak Phuangketkeow, the ADGs draw inspiration from the MDGs and will be implemented regionally to complete the “unfinished agenda” left by the MDGs even after its 2015 deadline has passed. The regional development agenda would be, “specific, measurable and yet practical goals that will be responsive to the needs and aspirations of the peoples on the ground”, and includes “...poverty eradication, inequality, disaster risk reduction and preparedness, better access to quality health care and universal health coverage.”³

While there are no clear signs of what will be inside the ADGs, former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono from Indonesia had delivered the idea that the ASEAN Development Goals should have two aspirational goals: first, double GDP across ASEAN from 2.2 trillion USD in 2014 to 4.4 trillion in 2030; and second, to halve poverty levels from 18.6% in 2014 to 9.3% 2030. The summit also saw ASEAN leaders agreeing to create synergy between ASEAN Development Goals and the post-2015 Development Agenda—the Sustainable Development Goals.⁴

Moreover, former Permanent Representative of Indonesia to ASEAN, Ngurah Swajaya, noted that ASEAN Development Goals is an important part of the vision to maintain the centrality of ASEAN in the region, as the measurable development goals would “make sure that the major issues in the region are addressed.”⁵ Therefore, the ADGs will not only be a development tool but also a political tool to ensure the continuing relevance of ASEAN in the Southeast Asia.

If the ADGs proposal is adopted at the ASEAN Summit, it will not be the first regional development agenda to do so—although it will be the most similar in nature with the MDGs. Another regional entity, the African Union, has approved a number of regional targets in the past years, such as setting out what its member countries should aim for in terms of women’s rights in the African Union Protocol 2003, countries’ health service spending

in the Abuja Declaration 2001, agricultural spending in the Maputo Agreement 2003, and other commitments on social protection, and water and sanitation.⁶

Inspiration from MDGs

The MDGs are a set of eight goals with 21 targets. It is set to reach its deadline in 2015, after which the SDGs will take its place as the global development agenda. The SDGs themselves, however, are yet to be formally announced.

Figure 1. MDGs Goals and Targets

No	Goals	Targets
1.	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	• Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1.25 a day • Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people • Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger
2.	Achieve universal primary education	• Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling
3.	Promote gender equality and empower women	• Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015
4.	Reduce child mortality	• Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate
5.	Improve maternal health	• Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio • Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health
6.	Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other diseases	• Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS • Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it • Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

Figure 1. MDGs Goals and Targets

No	Goals	Targets
7.	Ensure environmental sustainability	• Integrate the principle of sustainable development into country policies and programme and reverse the loss of environmental resources. • Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss • Halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation • Achieve, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers
8.	Develop a global partnership for development	• Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system • Address the special needs of least developed countries • Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing states • Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries • In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries • In cooperation with the private sector, make available benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications

Globally, these targets can be considered as a relative success. The UN has highlighted a number of facts to support this point, such as the decline in the proportion of people living in extreme poverty—where there is severe deprivation of basic human needs—by half at the global level in 2013.⁷ Primary education enrolment in developing countries reached 90 per cent in 2010 for both male and female students.⁸ The number of people newly infected with HIV also continues to decrease, dropping 33 per cent from 2001 to 2011.⁹ Finally, the level of official development assistance given throughout the world reached \$126 billion in 2012.¹⁰

This does not mean that the MDGs are successful on all fronts, indeed there are legitimate critiques that have been made. In its autumn years, stakeholders reflected on the success of the MDGs and its challenges during the formulation of SDGs. For example, a number of civil society organizations mentioned that the global partnership created under the banner of MDGs was still construed as an inequitable relationship between donor and partner countries, as well as lacking accountability and transparency.¹¹

Additionally, a bigger challenge is in the methodology that lies behind the MDGs. A recent research titled the ‘Power of Numbers’ highlights a flaw in the way the MDGs encapsulated “simplicity, measurability, and concreteness” of the goals as they proved to distract development from other equally important goals.¹² As the MDGs tried to garner support and focus attention to the eight critical issues that need to be addressed to improve the lives of peoples throughout the world, the research shows that not all the goals have had the intended effect. Indeed, the research notes that funding among the eight goals, 21 targets, and the associated indicators are varied with some receiving more while others are treated as “poor cousins”. A notable example of this issue is the little attention given to food, agriculture, and nutrition agenda before the 2008 so-called food crisis—despite the inclusion of a hunger target in the MDGs.¹³

The MDGs also produced an unintended consequence as they become a diversion that marginalized a number of other agendas not included in the MDGs framework. The research shows that MDG 2—achieving Universal Primary Education—had sidelined the “Education for All” agenda, an education focused international development agenda that was signed by 160 countries. Meanwhile MDG 3—to promote Gender Equality and Empower Women—had reduced and narrowed the global gender equality agenda, particularly the one that had emerged from the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women, which had been adopted by 90 countries.¹⁴

In light of these findings, it should be noted that the authors of the research concluded by stressing that, “[the findings] do not contradict the consensus assessment of the positive effects of the MDGs in highlighting the importance of poverty reduction, and the focus on human well-being.” What the project shows is that after 2015 it is truly time to go beyond MDGs: to create a new set of goals and targets with the MDGs as the stepping stone.

Formulating the ADGs

It is clear that there are a number of things that the post-2015 development goals should address to improve the MDGs, both globally and regionally. However, the two settings are inherently different and they should be treated as such. The 'Power of Numbers' research has shown the difficulties in having a one size fits all quantitative development agenda throughout the world.

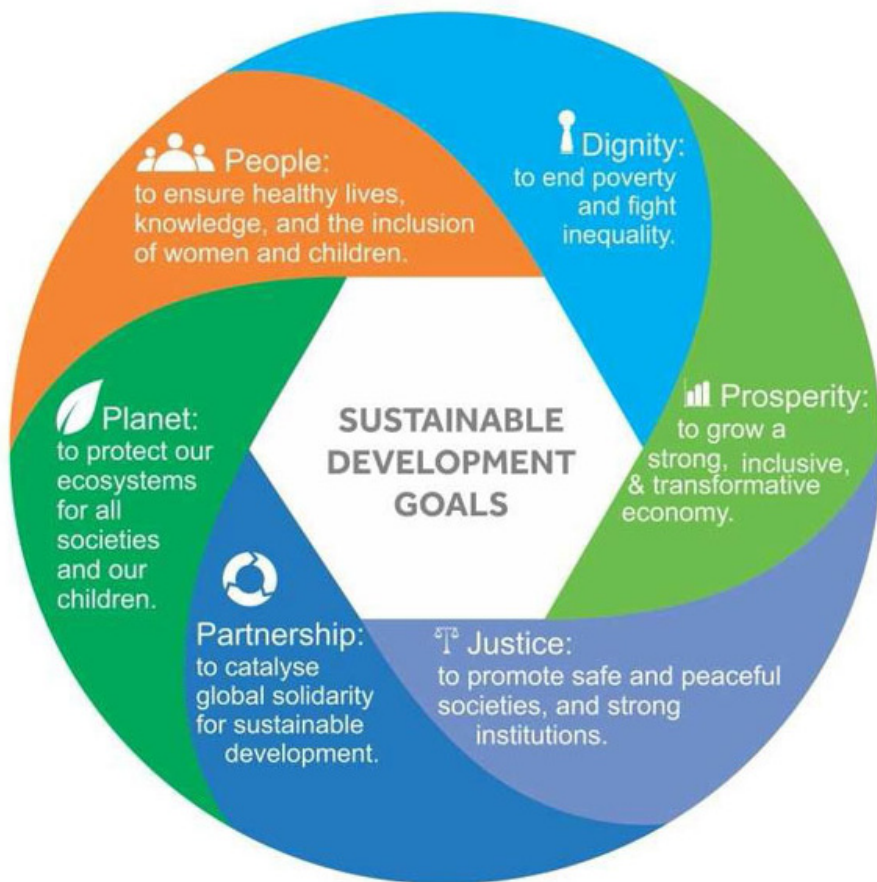
Furthermore, to give the ASEAN Development Goals reasons for their existence, in some ways they should address the shortcomings of both the MDGs and SDGs. If the goals included in the ADGs fully mirror the MDGs or SDGs, it can dilute and narrow the goals even further as their flaws are reverberated and the ADGs' potentials are diminished.

Since the ADGs exist in a regional setting, one of the issues that can and should be addressed by the ASEAN

Development Goals is ones that resulted from having too many countries and stakeholders in a vast consultation process. The greater number of actors involved increases the complexity in accounting for the dynamics of power and politics between stakeholders during the formulation of the development goals. Indeed, such dynamics are often what determined which targets are preferable and feasible.¹⁵

As regional development goals, they have potentials to achieve this. Region-specific development goals can provide a room for more focused discussions and stronger partnerships which are difficult to facilitate in the broad reaching MDGs or the SDGs. Regional development goals can have deeper and overall more influence towards countries' national development planning compared to a global one, especially where regional identity among member countries is stronger.¹⁶ Henceforth they can address development issues that are not, or just cannot be, facilitated in the MDGs and SDGs.

Figure 2. Essential elements for delivering the SDGs¹⁷



To this end, the process for defining goals must be transparent, participatory, and inclusive. The framework of the ASEAN Development Goals should be formulated under extensive consultation involving stakeholders at local, national, and regional level. Marginalized groups who found difficulties in joining the MDGs and SDGs consultations—especially due to constraint of resources on their part—should be encouraged and promoted to join the process.¹⁸

The UN has conducted a global consultative process which can serve as the basis for similar consultation during the formulation of SDGs, albeit on a regional level. The consultative process conducted by the UN managed to reach almost 100 member states, involving multiple stakeholders in each country including governments, civil society and the private sector, media, academia, and think tanks. The ‘Global Conversation’, as the UN puts it, managed to invite constructive responses from stakeholders where they called for an ambitious agenda to address important challenges such as rising inequality, exclusion of vulnerable groups, youth development, and environmental sustainability.¹⁹

The aim of such a process during the formulation is not to directly adopt the suggestions from the process in the ADGs. Instead, the process should serve as a way to engage stakeholders in each member countries, especially the non-governmental ones. As Claire Melamed, Director of Poverty and Inequality Programme from the UK’s Overseas Development Institute argued, a consultative process can open up debates and discussions on the path that the development agenda should take.²⁰ Healthy and constructive discussions will also open up new information and potentially link together stakeholders from different countries during the process.

A similar research project to the ‘Power of Numbers’ will also be invaluable as a stock taking exercise in the ASEAN context. Such research can be directed to evaluate the ASEAN experience throughout the implementation of the MDGs. As the ‘Power of Numbers’ project shows, during its implementation the MDG hid details that would otherwise elude common observations. An ASEAN version of this research would unveil these details.

At first glance, an ASEAN based research to evaluate the MDGs should aim to enable stakeholders to

set a “specific, measurable, yet practical” set of development goals for the region. It would provide the numbers that is best suited in accordance to the capacity of ASEAN member states. Moreover, as the MDGs potentially diverted attention from certain development agenda, such research can also point out if there are any critical agenda in the region which were forgotten in favour of the MDGs.

Still in line with the importance of research, Peter Newell argues that international development agenda is only important if it is used by local actors as they pursue their own domestic agenda.²¹ In this light, it is therefore quite surprising that there is a wide gap in researches on MDGs that analyses the link between the international development agenda and actual policy adoption among countries. While there are countries who have appropriated the language used within the MDGs discourse, it is not yet clear whether this is followed by actual practice—especially in the developing world.²² It is therefore not clear which goals made the most policy impact.

A research to evaluate the MDGs can also focus on finding out which agenda had made the most impact in the region, and why. Such exercises will sketch out the political dynamics in the region, and shows what goals are most likely to be adopted by ASEAN member states. It will also allow civil society organizations to use the ADGs more effectively as an advocacy tool as well as to mainstream the neglected issues.

Finally, the main component of a successful ADGs formulation is to conduct an ASEAN wide research to evaluate the MDGs. This cannot be helped as there seems to be too little information on the impact of MDGs in the Southeast Asian region. A critical evaluation of the ASEAN MDGs experience would prove to be the basis of a strong and coherent development agenda that truly keeps human well-being at its core. Without such research, ASEAN countries will only walk blindly as they move towards creating a regional development agenda.

Recommendations

Bearing in mind the formative stage of the ADGs, this edition of ASEAN Briefs would like to make a number of policy recommendations based on the aforementioned explanations:

First, policy priority should be put on conducting critical evaluations of the implementation of the MDGs in the Southeast Asian region. This will provide a better picture regarding the successes and failures of the MDGs in the region that will help formulate effective ADGs.

Second, during this formative period ASEAN member states should work together to push for a regional and national consultative process which involves multiple stakeholders including government institutions, civil society and the private sector, media, academia, and think tanks. The technical aspects of such consultative process can be borrowed from the one conducted during the formulation of the SDGs.

Third, improvement of data infrastructure and transparency should also be one of the main priorities. This will allow greater accountability and monitoring of progress after the ADGs is implemented.

Fourth, the ADGs should form part of the bigger global post-2015 development goals picture. This means it should parallel the SDGs although it does not necessarily mean it should fully copy the SDGs.

The ADGs should parallel the SDGs to capitalize on the attention that countries give to the SDGs, and will help ASEAN countries to focus development priorities and funding on the ADGs. At the same time, as ASEAN countries conduct regional and national consultative process, they should not mirror the SDGs but instead put them on a regional context based on the previously mentioned research and the consultative process.

The ADGs hold high potentials to push forward development in the Southeast Asian region. It can promote development that will truly increase human well-being and overall make the region more liveable even for the most marginalized communities. It is therefore important that ASEAN countries take firm first steps to ensure that they are heading in the right direction by involving the peoples of ASEAN, and paving the way to go beyond 2015 together with them.

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ENDNOTES

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About ASEAN Studies Program

The ASEAN Studies Program was established on February 24, 2010, to become a center of excellence on ASEAN related issues, which can assist in the development of the ASEAN Community by 2015. The Habibie Center through its ASEAN Studies Program, alongside other institutions working towards the same goal, hopes to contribute to the realization of a more people-oriented ASEAN that puts a high value on democracy and human rights.

The objective of the ASEAN Studies Program is not merely only to conduct research and discussion within academic and government circles, but also to strengthen public awareness by forming a strong network of civil society in the region that will be able to help spread the ASEAN message. With the establishment of ASEAN Studies Program, The Habibie Center aims to play its part within our capabilities to the ASEAN regional development.

About Talking ASEAN

Talking ASEAN is a monthly public dialogue held at The Habibie Center in Jakarta. Covering a wide array of issues related to ASEAN, Talking ASEAN addresses topics of: Economic Integration, Socio-cultural, & Democracy, human rights and regional peace, among others. Featuring local and visiting experts, Talking ASEAN is one of a series of twelve dialogues regularly held each month and open to a target audience consisting of ASEAN officials, foreign ambassadors & diplomats, academics, university students, businesses, and the media.



The Habibie Center was founded by Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie and family in 1999 as an independent, non-governmental, non-profit organisation. The vision of The Habibie Center is to create a structurally democratic society founded on the morality and integrity of cultural and religious values.

The mission of The Habibie Center are **first**, to establish a structurally and culturally democratic society that recognizes, respects, and promotes human rights by undertaking study and advocacy of issues related to democratization and human rights, and **second**, to increase the effectiveness of the management of human resources and the spread of technology.



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OUR PUBLICATIONS



Issue 3/April 2014
Migrant Workers Rights
The AEC 2015 and Free Movement of Labor: Case Studies of Indonesia and the Philippines

ASEAN Briefs is a bi-monthly publication about current developments in ASEAN region, especially in the Political Security, Economic as well as Socio-Cultural Pillars.

SUMMARY

This issue of ASEAN Briefs examines the issue of the ASEAN Economic Community 2015, the free movement of labor and migrant workers' rights. In particular, it addresses the concerns that the upcoming ASEAN Economic Community which is premised on the free movement of labor, will bring about a boom in the number of migrant workers moving in the region. However with the vast majority of ASEAN's migrant workers operating in the informal sector (and very little to indicate that this will change once the ASEAN Economic Community is in place), there are serious worries that incidents of migrant workers' abuse will worsen.

As such this issue of ASEAN Briefs seeks to explore how ASEAN intends to cope with these serious worries, what progress it has made towards addressing those worries, and how, as its member-states, we can help ASEAN to address these policy issues resulted in this book.



Issue 4/May 2014
Small and Medium Enterprises' Access to Finance in ASEAN Countries: Innovations and Regional Cooperation

ASEAN Briefs is a regular publication about current developments in ASEAN region, especially in the Political Security, Economic as well as Socio-Cultural Pillars.

SUMMARY

Access to finance for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is vital for development. State-led programmes in Southeast Asia countries have been a common practice in microfinance and built a foundation especially in agriculture sector. However, many of the government initiatives in SMEs financing have not been sustainable, since state budgets were allocated for many programmes and not just for SMEs financing. Besides that, governments have limitations on projecting business sustainability on those initiatives were not efficient and profitable in their operations. Therefore, innovations are needed for responding to these problems.

Innovations in providing more financial services in the ASEAN region should focus on those following issues: private sector development in exploring the potential market in SMEs' financing; sufficient government intervention on regulatory and supervisory framework; focus on export financing partnerships with social organizations; and providing financial literacy to consumers.



Issue 5/June 2014
The Bali Concord III: Towards a More Common ASEAN Platform on Global Issues

ASEAN Briefs is a regular publication about current developments in ASEAN region, especially in the Political Security, Economic as well as Socio-Cultural Pillars.

SUMMARY

This issue of ASEAN Briefs examines the Bali Concord III which was adopted by the ten member-states of ASEAN in 2001. One of the key documents produced during Indonesia's 2011 Chairmanship of ASEAN, the Bali Concord III pledged ASEAN to a number of commitments to be achieved by 2025. Chief among them was to: (a) increasingly speak in a common voice on international matters of mutual concern at related international forums; and (b) to enhance ASEAN's capacity to respond and contribute solutions to those global matters.

However, the commitments raised some question marks given the extreme diversity that exists in the ASEAN region. ASEAN countries are divided not only in terms of history, culture, geography, economic development, and language but crucially also in their political systems. How possible is it to get all ten ASEAN member-states, each with their own individual national interests, to adopt a common regional position and implement a unified policy on global issues?



Issue 6/July 2014
The AICHR and NHRI Effectiveness in Its Implementation of Human Rights Protection in The Region. Case Studies: The Philippines and Thailand

ASEAN Briefs is a regular publication about current developments in ASEAN region, especially in the Political Security, Economic as well as Socio-Cultural Pillars.

SUMMARY

This edition of ASEAN Briefs examines the effectiveness of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), the importance of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) and the implementation of human rights protection in ASEAN Member States. This ASEAN Briefs addresses the current situation and development of human rights protection in ASEAN, which is premised on the presence of a human rights body at the regional level and human rights commission at the national level to bring better protection of human rights in ASEAN. However with existence of various unresolved cases of human rights violations such as enforced disappearance, use of violence by the military and police against civilians, and extrajudicial killings, etc., there are concerns that human rights violations in the region will continue to take place.

As such this issue of ASEAN Briefs seeks to explore how ASEAN deals with these serious human rights violations, whether the regional human rights mechanism can work effectively per states sought to human rights at the regional level of ASEAN Briefs.



Vol. 2 / Issue 1 / September 2014
Strengthening Regional Security Architecture: Ensuring ASEAN Centrality through the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

ASEAN Briefs is a regular publication about current developments in ASEAN region, especially in the Political Security, Economic as well as Socio-Cultural Pillars.

SUMMARY

Strengthening regional security architecture by ensuring ASEAN centrality is a major agenda for Asia-Pacific's stability. The changing nature of power distribution in the region becomes a major underlying factor to form a solid security platform to create regional stability. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is one such security platform in the Asia-Pacific. Accordingly, ASEAN as the driver of the ARF wants to form the regional security architecture with ASEAN Centrality being the core equilibrium.

Yet, this ASEAN Briefs found the ARF still faces several weaknesses in shaping the regional security agenda. First, the ASEAN approach in leading the ARF as a multilateral diplomatic process still heavily relies on consensus. Second, the ARF has structural problems, where each ARF members have their own perception of the security agenda in the region. Third, there is scepticism among the ARF members about ASEAN leadership itself.

In order to ensure ASEAN Centrality within the ARF, this ASEAN Briefs conclude three main policy recommendations: (1) ASEAN should focus more on strengthening and improving the "ASEAN Way", moving beyond its comfort zone of non-interference and "the pace comfortable to all"; (2) ARF should focus on pursuing a problem-oriented agenda that could lead to the formation of Conflict-Resolution Mechanisms in the ARF; and (3) ARF should have leadership consistency, in which the establishment of a permanent ARF Secretariat becomes one of the concrete options.



Vol. 2 / Issue 2 / October 2014
Removing Infrastructure Bottlenecks to Increase Indonesia's Competitiveness towards the ASEAN Economic Community

ASEAN Briefs is a regular publication about current developments in ASEAN region, especially in the Political Security, Economic as well as Socio-Cultural Pillars.

SUMMARY

Facing the ASEAN Economic Community, which takes into effect on December 31, 2015, requires high competitiveness in order to gain the benefits from it. Among ASEAN member countries, Indonesia is one of the countries which have low competitiveness. This is due to insufficient infrastructure in Indonesia. The government of Indonesia is facing many obstacles in developing infrastructure. This edition of ASEAN Briefs shows that there are at least four main problems hindering infrastructure development in Indonesia, namely: financing issue, land acquisition problem, lack of capacity in implementing projects, and lack of coordination. If the upcoming government does not resolve these problems, Indonesian companies will struggle to compete with other ASEAN member-states when the ASEAN Economic Community takes place.

Therefore, this ASEAN Briefs will (1) examine Indonesia's current state of readiness ahead of the ASEAN Economic Community 2015 in terms of infrastructure and competitiveness, (2) the obstacles and challenges facing the new government in developing infrastructure, and (3) give possible recommendations to the new government in order to increase Indonesia's infrastructure and competitiveness ahead of the ASEAN Economic Community 2015.