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# SDGs DIGEST

The Voice of the IsDB Community of Practice (CoP) on SDGs

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## ACCELERATING SDGs IMPLEMENTATION DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES

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## Editorial: Amir Hamza Syed



### Dear Colleagues,

I hope you had a pleasant and a colourful Eid celebration.

I would like to begin by thanking you for taking out time in reading the 17th edition of the SDGs Digest. It is a pleasure to share with you the various articles from the Senior Management as well as the professionals across the Bank to shed

light in Accelerating SDGs Progress in Member Countries During Current Uncertainties.

Since the last edition, the IsDB Group has taken significant strides in supporting the Member Countries, the most important among which is the flagship approval of US\$10.4b worth IsDBG's Food Security Response Program. The program aims to support the member countries to address the issues related to food insecurity and to tackle the longer-term root causes, while working together on interventions that build capacity, resilience, and sustainability to deal effectively with future shocks. Furthermore, the Bank has taken steps to effectively channelize the financial and non-financial support to the Member Countries that are affected by the emergencies and natural disasters; notable of which is IsDBG's \$4.2b commitment to support Pakistan's climate resilience efforts and development agenda.

One of the most significant international engagements of the IsDBG was the participation in the 2022 G20 under the Indonesian Presidency. The G20 is one of the most prominent international platforms that shapes the global development agenda. Indonesia, one of the Bank's largest member countries – in terms of both GDP and population – led the G20 and the Bank contributed to almost all the work streams of the G20 and provided remarkable support to the different initiatives and diligent efforts of Indonesia's G20 Presidency.

Other significant engagements included the Conference of the Parties -27 (COP27) engagement in Egypt and as well as ongoing activities towards laying the groundwork for the upcoming COP28, which is once again going to be held in one of our member countries – the United Arab Emirates (UAE). An important announcement on Bank's commitment towards building a greener future is that in 2022 the Bank has approved approx. US\$1 billion worth of climate financing.

In this edition of the SDG Digest, the SDG-COP team has brought together rich contributions from external colleagues and internal staff that comprise thought pieces, case studies and write ups on a few major engagements of the Bank. Our Cover Story captures the Bank's participation in the SDG Moment Pavilion at the FIFA World Cup 2022 that shed light on the progress and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The IsDB Group was honored to be the Strategic Partner at the SDG Moment Pavilion. Articles from the Senior Management includes an article by the ICIEC CEO Oussema Kaissi on how digital transformation can support financing and investment to achieve the SDGs. Mr. Eric Lee from Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE) has contributed an article on the Singapore Story to build Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements. Other articles focus on the IsDB's engagement in the G20 as well as the 20th SDGs Open Dialogue. Tackling issues related to food insecurity is among the top priorities of the Bank and we have articles on biosaline agriculture, the interconnectedness between trade and food security, the nexus between covid-19, food security economic and energy shocks. Measuring progress while achieving SDGs is critical and this time, we have three articles that dwell on the various aspects of it namely the comprehensive poverty measure for an inclusive approach against poverty, the evidence-based policies in achieving SDGs and the use of non-traditional data sources to measure SDG progress.

A handful of articles focus on the sustainable strategies and technologies that could be adopted to achieve SDGs 7, 12 and 13. A special in focus article is the case study from the ground – Kano, Nigeria – that gives perspectives on how resilience shown by a few farmers has led to limiting the impact of future crises on agricultural production.

As we flock to the 2023 Annual Meetings, I wish a productive engagement with the visiting delegations that would encourage all participating organizations to collaboratively work with the Islamic Development Bank Group in realizing this year's theme – Partnerships to Fend off the Crises!

Thank you.

SDGs Digest is a Newsletter published by the SDGs Community of Practice (CoP) in IsDB Group. You can submit your articles, feedback, book reviews, reports and other topics related to the SDGs via [SDGsCoP@isdb.org](mailto:SDGsCoP@isdb.org)

# IsDB Scores in the SDG Moment Pavilion at the FIFA World Cup 2022



**Amir Hamza Syed**  
IsDB

The SDG Moments Pavilion, Scoring for the Goals, was launched alongside the opening of the FIFA World Cup. The event shed light on the progress and implementation of the 2030 Agenda where IsDB Group is honored as the Strategic Partner for the host Education Above All. The high level event was attended by H.H. Sheika Mouza, H.E. Macky Sall, the President of Senegal, and H.E. Paul Kagame, the President of Rwanda.

On this occasion, Dr. Al Jasser participated in the High-level Panel Discussion. Addressing the participants, the IsDB Group Chairman said: "Sport plays a significant role in achieving the SDGs as it is a powerful tool to promote peace, tolerance and understanding, bringing people together across boundaries, cultures, and religions. The World Cup presents to nations an opportunity to globally unify and unite under one language without barriers. The intrinsic values of Sports such as teamwork, fairness, discipline, and respect are understood all over the world and can be utilized in the advancement of solidarity and social cohesion." He then added: "By utilizing the power of football, the IsDB Group is planning to work with the best players to sponsor some of its programs supporting the most vulnerable groups."

Dr. Al Jasser elaborated on how IsDB Group has been actively supporting its 57 member countries in their efforts to achieve SDGs



through development interventions in various sectors including education, health, agriculture, infrastructure, water, climate action, and women and youth employment programs.

He said the Bank has been addressing the financing gaps through working more closely with several international development players including United Nations Development Agencies. "Among our other strategic partnerships, I can mention our close collaboration with key partners such as the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KS Relief), Qatar Fund for Development and Gates Foundation that has led to the establishment of the US\$2.5 billion Lives and Livelihoods Fund based on a shared vision of supporting and assisting the more disenfranchised communities in the Bank's member countries," he stated.

The IsDB Group Chairman also referred to the partnership between Qatar's Education Above All (EAA) with IsDB Group's Poverty Alleviation, the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development (ISFD) through an Out-Of-School Children Program financed by the EAA, ISFD, Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and other development partners. "In this regard, the EAA is a strategic partner, that has contributed US\$100 million to the program. The Bank and EAA are carrying out

the implementation of the program through member countries governments and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)," he said.

Elsewhere in his intervention, the IsDB President stated that to tackle the global challenges on Food- Security, IsDB Group has recently approved an ambitious comprehensive Food Security Response Program (FRSP) amounting to US\$10.54 billion to support member countries and, most importantly, scale up the Group's continued efforts to contribute to build resilience to food security shocks in the future.

The IsDB Group has supported the development of two state-of-the-art stadiums in Senegal and Cameroon; interventions that have contributed to a significant role to harness the power of football and sports and to promote social cohesion and inclusive sustainable development.

As announced by the Arab Coordination Group at the COP27 in Egypt, a US\$ 24 billion financing will provide for climate action over the next eight years. Of this amount, the IsDB will contribute a minimum of US\$ 13 billion. The purpose of this contribution, which will be made between 2023 and 2030, is to assist in financing adaptation and mitigation projects.

Finally, on this historic occasion, he called upon every football player to play their role in achieving the SDG targets through the #AdoptAnSDG initiative. Through the #AdoptAnSDG initiative, a football player can champion and embrace any one SDG that is close to his heart. It could be SDG 1 which calls for No Poverty, or SDG 16 which promotes Peace and Justice; or any of the 17 SDGs. This initiative can be a game-changer as international players possess the ability to empower hundreds of thousands of followers to collectively take action for achieving the SDGs.



## 20<sup>th</sup> SDGs Open Dialogue: Disability Rights and the SDGs



**Sharjeel Ahmad**  
IsDB Institute



The Sustainable Development Goals Community of Practice (SDGs CoP) organized the 20th SDGs Open Dialog on "Disability Rights and SDGs: A Conversation with Special Advisor on International Disability Rights" on January 22, 2023. The Open Dialog was jointly organized in collaboration with the SDGs Community of Practice and Resilience and Climate Action Department.

Br. Mohammad Jamal AlSaati, Special Adviser to The President, Islamic Development Bank, delivered the welcome remarks; and Ms. Sara Minkara, Special Advisor to the President of the United States on International Disability Rights, was the keynote speaker at the Open Dialog. The Open Dialog conversation was moderated by Sis. Rafiq Alam, Women Empowerment Specialist.

Br. AlSaati welcomed the audience and remarked that the theme of disability is of prime importance as it is very relevant to achieving the sustainable development challenges being faced by many of our Member Countries. It is evident from the fact that almost 15% - or 12 million - of world population is experiencing some sort of disability; and the higher scale of disability in developing countries amplifies the challenge.

Ms. Sara highlighted the significance of disability rights by opening a discussion on our identities as humans. "We are all different, but we are all humans ... we can all contribute as humans and as people with disabilities." Ms. Sara uncapped the Dialog by expressing concern about the fact that though we all genially feel the emotions of sympathy and inspiration for successful people with disability, we have not yet come to a point where we can expect people to normalize people with disability leading normal lives and contributing to the society. She remarked that we need to emphasize on normalizing people with disability to ensure we are not losing out on their value of contribution to the society. An interesting example that she extended to highlight this essence was how the ramps built for people with disability were also benefiting normal people with young children/toddlers in strollers.

While stressing on the crucial relationship between disability and sustainable development, Ms. Sara remarked that while we have the evocative slogan of "Leaving no one behind", people with disabilities are the main cases being left behind. As an example, she highlighted her experience of the Ukraine crisis, where she narrated how people with disabilities in Ukraine divulged to her team that they were perhaps one of the most severely impacted. The session saw many such sparking and spirited interactions between Ms. Sara and the audience about disability rights and sustainable development.

## IsDB Institute's 'Islamic Finance for the SDGs' Online Course Records Enrolment from 115 Countries



The Islamic Finance for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) offered by the IsDB Institute has recorded substantial enrolment since its launch in July 2022. The MOOC is a self-paced course primarily aimed at capacity development to bridge the financing gap in developing countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

The registration for the course was opened on August 1, 2022, and it currently has over 2,000 enrollments from 115 countries, with Nigeria, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and other IsDB Member Countries leading the count. Learners from other IsDB Member Countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Senegal, and Somalia have also shown significant enrollments in the MOOC.

In addition, the MOOC has attracted highly educated learners, with more than 50% of the learners enrolled in the course having Masters and other advance degrees.

The MOOC was developed by the Islamic Development Bank Institute, in partnership with the UNDP Istanbul International Center for Private Sector in Development (IICPSD), Durham University Business School, Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)'s Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Fund, and United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

The course includes comprehensive modules that bring theory and practice together with presentations from 27 internationally recognized subject matter experts from 11 countries and 3 continents. The Modules specifically spotlight the role of Islamic Finance in SDGs; modes and institutions of Islamic Finance; and perspectives of multilateral organizations in engaging with Islamic Finance. The course is publicly available on both IsDB Institute's edX channel and UNDP's Learning for Nature Platform.

# How Digital Transformation can Support Financing and Investment to Achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



**Oussama Abdel Rahman Kaissi**  
CEO, ICIEC

**D**igitisation, financing and investment, and achieving the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 are inextricably linked.

Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, digital technologies were increasingly driving e-commerce, retail services, trade, payment solutions, online banking, and insurance.

The pandemic accelerated the digitalisation trend, and harnessing digitalization for development through trade and investment is assuming convergence in post-pandemic recovery and towards meeting the SDGs because their objectives are largely similar.

Transformation in general is nascent and is country specific. It will be slow, measured, and dependent on resources, financial support, investment, and internet access penetration. Each country is adopting digital inclusion policies, strategies, and frameworks according to its own circumstances and capacities.

Uneven access to new technologies has already resulted in a digital divide, digital inequality, and digital exclusion. In many developing countries, the implementation of digital strategies remains at an embryonic stage, and access to the internet is severely restricted.

The UN SDG Agenda is ambitious. It was so even before the pandemic changed the world. The pandemic together with climate action, rising inequality, food insecurity, and failing health systems have affected the progress towards achieving the SDGs.

According to the UN and IMF, the world needs some US\$90 trillion of infrastructure investment by 2030, and US\$5-7 trillion annually to meet the SDG targets by 2030. There is a persistent SDG financing gap of US\$2.5 trillion each year.

Digital transformation can support financing and investment in pursuit of the UN SDGs in manifold ways.

- We have identified technology in trade and post-trade services as one of five key megatrends impacting global trade and investment going forward. They are already playing a crucial role in post-pandemic recovery. World Trade Organisation data shows that global trade has been more resilient during the pandemic than during the 2008 global financial crisis, reaching US\$6.2 trillion during the pandemic compared with US\$4.8 trillion during the crisis. Similarly, says the OECD, global FDI grew by 88% to US\$1,815 billion in 2021, which is 37% above pre-pandemic levels.
- Trade Finance is about global risk mitigation and funding availability for global transactions. It will also be about trade facilitation and digitisation to leverage various benefits and opportunity costs. TradeTech encompasses digital security, transaction integrity, digital LCs, and related Fintech solutions such as cryptocurrencies, digital payment gateways, and digital supply chain solutions which are all driving trade efficiencies. TradeTech and its impact on global trade and FDI flows will see transactions and interactions between clients, brokers, underwriters, insurers, reinsurers, and claims providers become seamless. This translates into a cheaper cost of financing and transaction costs, especially for exporters and importers in emerging markets.
- Fintech could be a key enabler in re-building OIC Member States' economies as they recover from the pandemic and global shocks. Trade Finance Innovation could be boosted by technologies such as AI, Robotics, API, Cloud, IOT, Optical Character Recognition (OCR), and Blockchain.
- Digitisation also enables ESG, SDG, and Sustainability considerations to be embedded in the technology and system processes. The role of ESG in future-proofing the trade finance industry, for instance, could be enhanced in achieving diversity in trade and supply chains to enable greater access to the global system for women and minority-owned businesses; and in tracking and proving sustainability compliance (ESG scoring for trade and investment).

- Digitisation can drive SME growth, another key SDG. SMEs are the backbone of economies accounting for over 90% of economic activities, 50% of jobs globally, and some 50% of GDP in developing countries. In OIC countries, 54 enterprises per 1000 population are SMEs.
- Digitisation would also enhance financial inclusion by narrowing the gap between the formal and informal sectors, but the digital transition must be creative and coupled with retraining.

The establishment of digital infrastructure frameworks that can support cross-border regulatory harmonization is vital for e-commerce and mitigating cybersecurity, KYC, credit history, and AML issues. From a public policy perspective, encouraging innovation while protecting consumers is important for ensuring inclusive economic growth and advancing the digital economy. The regulatory environment is becoming more complex and fragmented. This has implications for digital economic growth since digital barriers could reduce GDP growth by restricting trade output and slowing productivity.

Here, the imminent adoption of the UK Electronic Trade Documents Bill is of huge significance and could become the governing law for digital trade in the international market. It puts electronic trade documents on the same legal footing as paper documents. The ICC estimates that digitisation would bring UK£25 billion to the UK in new GDP growth by 2024, and free up UK£224 billion in efficiency savings.

The ICIEC-led OIC Business Intelligence Centre (OBIC) initiative similarly will play a key role in enabling digitization of the credit ecosystem in the Member States that will ultimately facilitate further cross-border financing. Cross-border credit registry connected credit bureau services, data compilation, and coordination are all part of the OBIC initiative.

Digital technologies have an enormous potential to unlock economic opportunities in trade,

investment, agriculture, manufacturing, and services in support of achieving the SDGs.

But as a recent report reminded us, despite the ubiquity of digital technology, value creation only flows from combining multiple components of the economic ecosystem!

# Addressing Food Insecurity is Critical for Achieving the SDGs



**Aamir Ghani Mir**  
IsDB

Food insecurity affects millions of people worldwide, particularly in developing countries, and the SDGs aim to end hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition by 2030. Unfortunately, as of 2021, around 2.3 billion people in the world were moderately or severely food insecure, and 11.7% of the global population faced food insecurity at severe levels. In past 3 years, Food insecurity is rising in Africa and Asia, which has significant impacts on the achievement of the SDGs, as it is closely linked to several goals, including no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, and decent work and economic growth.

There is an acute food crisis worldwide, caused by a combination of factors, including long neglect of the agriculture sector, the continuing negative impacts of COVID-19 pandemics, climate change, recurrent conflicts, and ongoing wars in Ukraine creating disruptions in production, markets, and value chains, leading to shortages and higher costs of critical food items. These crises have reversed gains made in poverty reduction and affected the lives and livelihoods of millions of people worldwide, with over 820 million people already suffering from chronic hunger, and approximately 2 billion people lacking regular access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food to meet their dietary requirements.

The IsDB has 28 member countries (MCs) classified by the FAO as food deficit countries. In addition five of the top 10 world countries with high food price inflation are IsDB MCs, namely Lebanon, Iran, Egypt, Türkiye, and Suriname. The food and agriculture industry is critical across IsDB's 57 MCs as it contributes

US\$650 billion to their GDP annually. However, despite the availability of 29% of total agriculture land, financial resources, water and fertilizer, many of MCs are food deficient. Fertilizer prices are also high due to export restrictions and affecting approximately 20% of global fertilizer trade. Impacting smaller farmer in Sub-Saharan Africa facing difficulty in securing fertilizer thus resulting in a decline in output.

Addressing the food crisis requires a comprehensive approach that includes strategic investments in expanding agriculture, research and development for increasing productivity, improving production mechanisms using innovative tools and technologies, and building robust markets and supply chains, mitigating the impact of climate change, and addressing conflicts. It is essential to focus on both short and medium-term measures, providing immediate relief to the most vulnerable segment of society while investing in sustainable agriculture programs, ensuring the availability of agriculture inputs, water for irrigation, and machinery, access to markets for agriculture produce, and reducing food waste in harvesting, storage, and transportation and using adaptive technologies.

IsDB Strategy Alignment aims at inclusive human capital development and food

security is critical element. In response to the global food crisis in 2022, MDBs, including IsDB, approved food security programs with substantial investment to support developing countries. IsDB Group approved a \$10.54 billion comprehensive Food Security Response Programme (FSRP) to support the agriculture sector in MCs and address ongoing food insecurity. In addition, IsDB and its major traditional partners, the Arab Coordination Group, agreed to co-finance food-security projects worth USD 10 billion.

To manage the food security crisis, a multifaceted approach is required that includes improving agricultural practices, addressing socio-economic disparities, promoting food value-chains, increasing smallholders productivity and market access, and rural livelihood support programs, livestock and fisheries development, and building essential food reserves and food-safety nets for poor and marginalized segments of society. Collaboration among various stakeholders, including researchers, technologists, farmers, private sectors, and food industries, is crucial in ensuring a sustainable future for agriculture. It is essential to use financial resources effectively to deliver sustainable solutions to these recurrent challenges around food security and achieve SDGs by 2030.



# Exploring Innovative Solutions to Promote Peace, Prosperity, and Self-Reliance in Afghanistan



**Farid Khan**  
IsDB

Afghanistan continues to face a myriad of challenges including widespread poverty and uneven development. The country's lack of well-developed infrastructure also makes accessibility a key issue, especially for mountainous remote rural communities. In a bid to explore innovative solutions, several physical visits have been undertaken by the Regional Hub of Türkiye to Afghanistan in the past year. The focus of these visits has been to meet the humanitarian and relief partners, present on the ground to explore possible areas of cooperation. Meetings have also been held with the local community members who have emphasized a greater need for:

- Creation of local **Employment Opportunities** to facilitate **Self-Reliance**, especially in **Agriculture** to enhance Crop Yield/Productivity to promote **Food Security**
- Development financing for provision of **basic needs**, e.g. clean water, education and health, particularly in un(der)served **rural communities**

Based on the feedback received from the local community members, IsDB is presently engaged in formulation of several small pilots to explore innovative solutions to address the humanitarian crisis and provisioning of basic needs. The aim is to partner with and leverage, instead of competing with and crowding out private sector, to increase local ownership, enhance impact and ensure long term sustainability.

Pilot operations are being formulated to promote Sustainable and Inclusive Transformation of Agrarian Economies in Rural Afghanistan, to

- Improve agricultural production,
- Create income generation opportunities in rural communities,
- Build capacity of rural households to resolve their problems collectively, and
- Offer micro-loans to facilitate the self-development of Rural Households in a sustainable manner.

Another key challenge being faced in Afghanistan is inadequate supply of qualified teachers, especially in rural communities. Discussions are ongoing to explore the possibility of optimally leveraging technology to Smart Schools to enhance the accessibility to quality education through virtual means. The pilot project design will involve creating the necessary linkages with the online educational platforms and educational hubs (schools, colleges, universities etc.) to protect, preserve, and promote the human capital of the students, particularly girls. A partnership is being explored with the leading private sector mobile operator in Afghanistan to provide the technological support needed for establishment of a smart school. In addition, collaboration and partnership opportunities will be explored with leading global engineering universities and philanthropies to help optimize the design of the pilot. The unique mixture,

combining experience and knowledge of a Multilateral Bank, international leading humanitarian agencies and philanthropies, best global engineering universities, as well as local private sector enterprise, will facilitate the most optimal co-creation of the Smart School Design and its long-term sustainability.

Afghanistan also continues to face a shortage of well qualified doctors, especially in rural communities. Consequently, operations are being developed to explore the potential of most optimally leveraging the midwives to increase access to essential Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) services in un(der)served remote rural communities, in a sustainable manner. The first e-health pilot, focusing on maternal and child healthcare, by optimally facilitating doctor to doctor consultations by setting up Tele-medicine facilities in six Afghanistan cities including Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Herat, Mazar and Khost, is presently under implementation. The project will also arrange in-person trainings for Afghani doctors in Pakistan with the support of Dow University of Health Sciences, a leading medical University in Pakistan. The project is an example of South-South Cooperation being promoted by the Bank.



# Kano – Post-Covid Resilience and Farmers' Sustainability



**Ameen K. Yassar**  
IsDB



**Ahsanul Kibria**  
IsDB

Indeed in Nigeria, like in most countries across the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in various critical health and socio-economic challenges which have impacted the lives of the people. The impact of the current pandemic on farmers in Nigeria especially in Kano state, the country's foremost agricultural and commercial hub cannot be overemphasized. Farmers' means of livelihood were threatened by the pandemic thereby worsening food and nutrition security, raising unemployment and aggravating poverty.

The lockdown enforced by the State and Federal Governments affected all segments of the society and hindered agricultural activities such as farming and livestock development, since there was no fodder for the animals, thus, making farming households more vulnerable.

Specifically, farmers in Kano could not generate income, suffered production losses and hardly got access to agro-inputs and labor. And since there was a travel ban, they could not get access to markets in cities and towns, to sell farm produce, livestock and products like milk and butter. For their families, the situation was also miserable as the pandemic resulted in a shortage of food, reduction in food diversity and reliance on support from donor

organizations. The incidence of malnutrition worsened especially among the children.

***The sad experience provides important lessons for strengthening the resilience of the agro-pastoral system in the State, and the livelihoods of households that depend on it.***

Given the foregoing scenario, there is imperative to find ways to step up the resilience of the farmers for faster economic recovery, by improving income, mitigating poverty, creating more jobs as well as effectively tackling food and nutrition security concerns.

In this regard, The Kano State Agro-Pastoral Development Project also known as KSADP (NGA1007), financed by the Islamic Development Bank and the Lives and Livelihood Funds, initiated, and completed repairs of the Watari dam and Irrigation Scheme, which is 962 ha and has the potential to provide direct jobs to over 3,848 farmers and 15,392 non-farmers service providers.

The dam and its irrigation infrastructure, constructed over 40 years ago had not undergone any major repairs for more than twenty years. Consequently, parts of the downstream infrastructure especially the canals, embankment and reservoirs have become silted and, in most cases, broken down. Non-repair infrastructure caused more than 1,847 farmers to lose their means of livelihood, as only about 52 percent can cultivate their crops twice a year, while the rest of the farmers can only cultivate their crops during the wet season as a result.

Again, out of the existing 962 hectares of farmland covered by the irrigation scheme, about 45 percent of the land is not in use due to the dilapidation of the irrigation infrastructure, leading to huge economic loss for thousands of farmers. The situation was worsened by COVID-19.

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Farmers in Kano could not generate income, suffered production losses and hardly got access to agro-inputs and labor. And since there was a travel ban, they could not get access to markets in cities and towns, to sell farm produce, livestock and products like milk and butter.



Apart from renovating the dam, KSADP has concluded arrangements to develop an additional 1,000 hectares of irrigation land in the area for irrigation farming. This development will enable more than **4,000** farmers in the area to engage in both wet and dry season farming activities which will enhance their income, standard of living and increase food production.

At the moment, 1,847 farmers from Dawakin Tofa, Bagwai and Bichi local government areas are benefitting from the renovated project, Planting Rice, Tomato, Onions, Maize, Wheat, Cucumber, Cowpea, Groundnut, Cabbage and Watermelon apart from hundreds of food vendors, input dealers, transporters, farm laborers.

The cost of hiring of renting a farm in the irrigation scheme has increased from N170, 000 per ha to N280, 000 per ha now. The cost of paddy before COVID has increased from N13, 000 to N18, 000 now, while middlemen who collect N700 only as commission, per bag of paddy, now collect N1500 for the same service.

**Production of rice also increased from 60 bags per ha to nearly 110 bags of paddy after the repairs.** Thanks to the KSADP-SAA technical cooperation aimed at enhancing farmers' capacity to produce more. More rice millers, agro products dealers, cloths and phone repairers have sprung up in the area owing to increased production.

The dam repairs have also provided ample opportunity for jobs for youths and women in crop production, processing and marketing. Many of them no longer travel to Kano city for menial jobs while some have gotten married and purchased water pumping machines, motorcycles, standing fans, television sets and generators, as indicators of their new status in the society.

Besides, under the KSADP-SAA crop value chain intervention, 450, 000 smallholder farmers in Kano will benefit from access to extension services – information on best practices, input access, market access and skills/ technology development, which are intended to help them to improve their productivity and living standards. More 112, 000 farmers, formed into groups in 20 local government areas of the state, have started to benefit and six new mini rice mills have been established and are being managed by the farmers.

The KSADP has also signed an MOU with Kano State Agricultural and Rural Development Authority, to impact 100, 000 farmers

across the legumes value chain. This includes a special training component for women in agriculture, to teach beneficiaries the significance of adequate and quality nutrition on pregnancy outcomes and child development, highlight the benefit of proper nutrition and teach women how to prepare nutritious foods from locally harvested agricultural products.

To address challenges Livestock issues against the backdrop of COVID-19 Challenges, KSADP initiated a livestock vaccination exercise in 2021 where 701, 042 cattle and 663, 570 sheep and goats were vaccinated. The endeavor was conducted by 520 inoculators and several volunteers, under the supervision of 25 Veterinary doctors.

This resulted in a tremendous improvement in livestock health leading to improved milk and beef production in the state. This encouraged the project to organize another vaccination in 2022, to guarantee an ample supply of milk and meat, which provide a vital source of nutrition for the populace, especially vulnerable groups such as children and sick people.

*Given the foregoing outcomes, it is clear that improving the resilience of agricultural production may significantly contribute to ensuring that future crises have a more limited impact on the lives and livelihoods of the people of Kano, Nigeria and support the country in achieving the SDG targets.*

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Apart from renovating the dam, KSADP has concluded arrangements to develop an additional 1,000 hectares of irrigation land in the area for irrigation farming. This development will enable more than 4,000 farmers in the area to engage in both wet and dry season farming activities which will enhance their income, standard of living and increase food production.



# Why is Biosaline Agriculture Essential for Global Food Security



**Dr. Augusto Becerra Lopez-Lavalle**  
Communication Specialist, KSADP



**Mr. Abdumutalib Begmuratov**  
Head of Knowledge Management  
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Center for Biosaline Agriculture

Soil and water salinization is a major constraint on agriculture and food production on marginal lands, parts of the world often characterized by water scarcity, drought, and other unfavorable factors. It is estimated that 1–2 percent of agricultural land is lost to salinity every year, with arid and semi-arid areas being affected the most<sup>1</sup>. To put things into perspective, 1.128 billion hectares of land is degraded by salinity and sodicity to varying degrees worldwide, with the Middle East and North Africa

having the largest area of salt-affected land, or roughly 34 percent of the total<sup>2</sup>.

While it is a serious environmental challenge, soil and water salinization also has a great economic impact. The global inflation-adjusted annual cost of salt-induced land degradation in some 310 million hectares of irrigated areas is reckoned to be 27.3 billion USD because of lost crop production only<sup>3</sup>. And it is reported that water salinity causes average global food losses enough to feed over 170 million people every day, each year<sup>4</sup>.

As bad as this situation already is, it is made worse by water scarcity and climate change.

Globally, around 4 billion people experience severe water scarcity during at least one month of the year<sup>5</sup>. But again, the Middle East and North Africa ranks top of the list of the most water-stressed regions. Twelve out of the 17 most water-scarce countries are in this region<sup>6</sup>. Although the region is hot and dry and water supply is low to begin with, growing demands have pushed countries further into extreme stress.

Climate change is complicating matters further. According to the World Bank, the region has the greatest expected economic



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losses from climate-related water scarcity, calculated at 6-14 percent of GDP by 2050<sup>7</sup>. Projections also suggest that by 2050 renewable water will fall below 500 cubic meters per capita and arable land to 0.12 hectares per capita in Arab countries<sup>8</sup>.

While many sectors will take a hit, agriculture and food production will bear the brunt of climate change. Recent studies raise the alarm about future and in some cases current declines in yields of staple crops. One study, for example, notes that without effective adaptation, each degree-Celsius increase in global mean temperature would, on average, reduce global yields of wheat by 6.0 percent, rice by 3.2 percent, maize by 7.4 percent, and soybean by 3.1 percent<sup>9</sup>.

In Arab countries, crop yields are projected to drop by 30 percent with a 1.5 to 2.5 degree-Celsius increase in temperature and by 60 percent with a 3 to 4 degree-Celsius increase, with geographical variation and without considering adaptation. In North Africa, a 3 degree-Celsius temperature increase could cause rainfed maize yields to drop by 15 to 25 percent by 2080<sup>10</sup>.

These figures are particularly alarming as wheat, maize and rice make up nearly 60 percent of the global protein and calorie intake. What is more, the latest crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine have shown how vulnerable net food importers in the Middle East and North Africa are to global food supply shocks. As many countries depend on wheat imports from Russia and Ukraine, which together account for about 29 percent of the global wheat exports<sup>11</sup>, the prospect of food insecurity looms large.

Against this backdrop, the question is how to build back better and build resilience and sustainability into agri-food systems.

One approach that holds considerable promise is biosaline agriculture. It is based on the principle that salt-affected land and water resources can be effectively and sustainably used for agriculture and food production. It specifically taps into the potential of agrobiodiversity as just about 150 plants are cultivated around the world on a significant scale out of some 30,000 known to be edible<sup>12</sup>.

Not only does biosaline agriculture help to grow food and feed on marginal lands using salt-, heat- and drought-tolerant crops and appropriate agri-technologies, but it also aids in halting their further deterioration. For instance, saline soil and water could be improved through bioremediation using microorganisms.

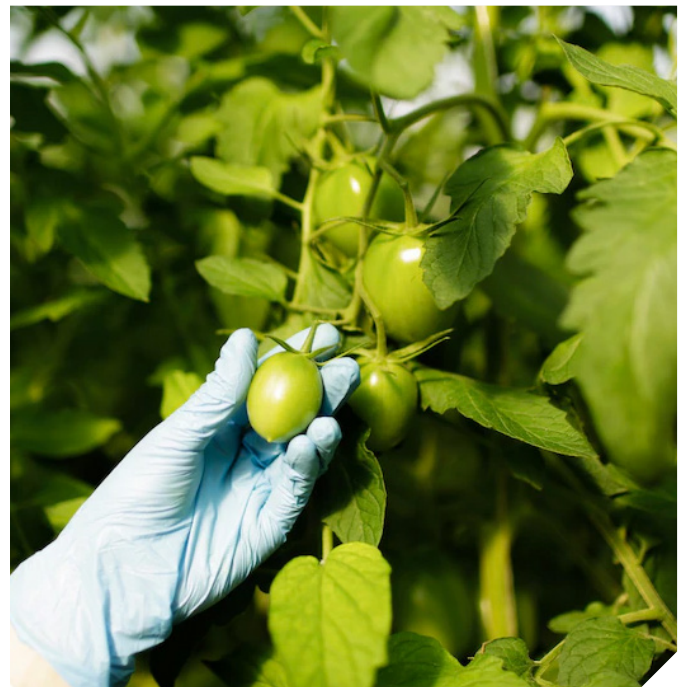
In this way, land and water resources degraded by salinization and other factors are treated as assets rather than liabilities.

This rationale has guided the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture's (ICBA) research and development for more than two decades. In particular ICBA has focused its efforts on identifying and developing solutions ranging from salt-tolerant crops like quinoa and Salicornia to resource-efficient agri-technologies such as integrated agri-aquaculture and protected agriculture systems. Scientists use both traditional and innovative approaches for different purposes, including crop improvement. For example, along with classical breeding, ICBA harnesses the power of genomics to discover genes responsible for, among other things, salt, heat, and drought tolerance in plants. In recent years the center has also worked with public- and private-sector partners in Egypt, Morocco, and the UAE to develop value chains for quinoa and Salicornia.

All this work is based on partnership and collaboration and geared towards contributing to a number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), including SDGs 1, 2, 6 and 15.

As the world faces multiple crises today, it is more important than ever to develop and adopt alternative solutions and technologies to ensure food security. And biosaline agriculture has a lot to offer to do that.

The world is changing, and so should ways to produce food with diminishing resources.



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# Covid-19, Food Security, Economic and Energy Shocks: Insights into Multidimensionality and Interconnectedness of Resilience



**Elmoiz Mahmoud**  
IsDB

The IsDB Resilience Forum was implemented as an in-person side event during the 47th IsDBG annual meeting. The Forum was timely, since the shocks and challenges imposed by both COVID-19 and the fallout of the situation in Ukraine tested, globally, the resilience of states and systems. These shocks also resonated across the interconnectedness of various dimensions of resilience (economic and livelihood; food security; environment; energy and natural resources; human security and displacement and health) with pressure in one dimension cascading across each of the others. The Forum also discussed the need to improve the knowledge on interconnectedness of resilience dimensions as requirement to invest in resilience and preparedness for compound risks especially in fragile and conflict affected contexts. Moreover, the Forum also included the launch of the IsDB 2nd Resilience Report "IsDB Resilience Report 2021 – Pandemic Recovery and Preparedness". In this context, the issues discussed in the Forum are surely critical for pursuing recovery and preparedness for future shocks and staying the course of sustainable development.

H.E. Dr Mansur Muhtar, the Vice President, Operations - IsDB explained in his statement which was delivered by Br. Amer Bukvic, Director General—Global Practice and Partnerships in IsDB that IsDB supports its member countries response to the current global economic, energy and food security shocks without losing focus on addressing the need to address resilience building. The Forum was also addressed by H.E. Mrs Kaba Nialé, Minister of Planning and Development, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire (IsDB Governor for Republic of Cote d'Ivoire) who shared with the audience the experience of Cote d'Ivoire in resilience building through interventions in critical sectors such as agriculture and education and the lessons learned from these interventions.

The Forum included a panel of high-level

officials and executives including the IsDB Alternate Governor- Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the CEO, Education Above All Foundation, Qatar, the Under Secretary General for Global Relations, Humanitarian Diplomacy and Digitalization at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the General Director, Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCCPA) and the Chief Executive Officer, SPARK International Organization.

In the panel, Br. Syed Husain Quadri, Director (Ag), Resilience and Social Development Department, IsDB underlined the importance of considering both incremental and transformative approaches for resilience building and understanding how to engage the private sector and unconventional partners in funding resilience building initiatives. The discussion in the panel also revealed key messages and outcomes including the need to focus on strengthening national plans related to resilience building and align international and regional cooperation with member countries to these plans. The discussion also revealed the need to work more on operationalization of peace and development nexus and peace building and climate finance.

On the lessons learned from the Covid-19 experience regarding preparedness to shocks, the discussion revealed that vulnerabilities can be exposed by shocks and may lead to aggravating man-made conflicts. The discussion also pinpointed, from Covid-19 experience, the interactions of Covid-19 experience at sectoral level such as in education where it has been witnessed that increasing spending in education not only needed but also crucial since options to respond to shocks such as offline learning and personalized learning require infrastructure and substantial resources.

As regards the role of civil society in building resilience, the discussion noted the growing

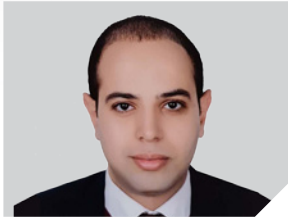
global trend of localization of development cooperation towards more national NGOs implementation instead of international NGOs implementation. EU and USAID are currently advocating for localization of development cooperation to be implemented with national NGOs and USAID is advocating for setting targets for this localization. The discussion also revealed that social protection proved to be, during Covid-19 crisis, a main resilience building instrument in face of shocks; this was evident in the case of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan as reflected in the discussion by H.E., IsDB Alternate Governor- Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The panel discussion also produced several recommendations related to the IsDB member countries, the Bank and the IsDB Group entities. Recommendations to the IsDB member countries included the focus on health sector infrastructure and capacities for paramedics and experts. Moreover, government budgets of member countries should consider allocating more resources to health care and social protection and to improve the national capacities on social protection data, beneficiary registration, verification and M&E in member countries besides focusing on the implication of climate change on food security.

The recommendations to IsDB included innovating more options for funding interventions in member countries (such as sukuk). Studying the prospects of the growing global trend of localization of development cooperation work to be implemented by national NGOs instead of international NGOs. Preparation of programme framework for interventions in Social Protection as a multidimensional and multisectoral resilience building tool in face of future shocks. The forum also shared recommendations that are relevant to other IsDB Group entities such as the need to innovate an approach to leverage buying of insurance premiums.



# Next Frontier in Evidence-Based Policies for Achieving SDGs



**Mohamed Elsaket**  
IsDB



**Sadik M. Teyeb**  
IsDB



**Ibrahima Thierno LO**  
IsDB

It has been a while since the global community has reached a consensus that public policies and strategies should be guided by data/information and evidence instead of being dependent on intuitions, common sense, ideology, or leaders' intentions. Evidence-based (informed) policy (EBP) entails that policy decisions should be based on, or informed by, thoroughly established objective evidence. To simplify it, EBP replaced ideology and opinion-based decision making with decisions based on high-quality and reliable evidence.

EBP starts by compiling rigorous evidence of what works, including costs and benefits which will be implemented in programs/policies. After execution, the programs/policies' impact will also be assessed to measure their effectiveness. This assessment helps improve the initiatives by using the accumulated evidence for budget/fund reallocation and prioritizing interventions that proved to be more efficient and effective.

On the sidelines of the 47th annual meetings of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) group in Sham El Sheikh, the IsDB has conducted an event under the title "Next Frontier in Evidence-Based Policies: Charting A Path Forward". The event brought together key stakeholders to shed light on the role of evidence-based policies in the developmental agenda by defining the concept in the context of the SDGs, post covid-19, and discussing a proven model that helps build the required ecosystem for evidence-based policies to flourish.

The need for timely, relevant, and reliable data/information and evidence has been more evident during the recent COVID-19 Pandemic not only for the clinical management of cases but for the overall and coordinated response crosscutting

policy decisions in social, economic, and security arenas. The Pandemic has spotlighted not only the need for quality, credibility, relevance, timeliness, and feasibility of data/evidence but also the urgency for its fast infusion into policy directives. Accordingly, the Pandemic has taught the global community that multi-sectoral collaboration and coordination transcending geographic, political, and ideological bureaucracies is a must if for achieving the SDGs.

Countries need to have an enabling ecosystem that promotes evidence and knowledge-driven policy-making. An effective evidence-based ecosystem will be vital for governments in designing, implementing, and evaluating policies to achieve national objectives. For evidence and evaluation to contribute materially to the selection of policies, it first requires institutional frameworks that encourage, disseminate and defend good evaluation and make the most of learning opportunities.

Furthermore, establishing a sustainable government-research partnership is essential in improving evidence in policy decision-making. A partnership that implies well-designed scientific research and articulated research results addressing the decision makers' needs. A clear framework and direction of policy-research agenda facilitate allocating and mobilizing needed resources. Another underlying principle of the efficient ecosystem is the availability of high-quality data. Therefore, governments should invest in strengthening the generation and use of existing data systems. Using these data sets in creative and innovative ways to evaluate progress in the developmental agenda is vital to improving outcomes.

Conducting regular Impact evaluations is instrumental for mainstreaming evidence-based practices. The evaluation adequately measures the outcomes of a particular program or policy. It helps test different variations in one program to learn what's most effective. It is also used in comparing various programs to understand which one best improves outcomes of interest. Finally, the evaluation results are used to inform future improvements and scale decisions.

The central pillar in the ecosystem's success is building local capacities to use rigorous evidence to strengthen policy/program design and delivery. Capacity-building programs should include all stakeholders to become better producers and users of evidence, including; Local researchers, government policymakers, program implementers, and monitoring and evaluation professionals.

Egypt Impact Lab (EIL)<sup>1</sup> is an excellent example of institutionalizing government-researcher partnerships to strengthen the evidence-based policy ecosystem. Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab(J-PAL) has established the Lab with the Egyptian Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MPED). It was founded with a clear structure and long-term government commitment and ownership from the outset, including having staff from MPED. The Lab also has a defined agenda and targets driven by Egyptian national priorities (social protection, family development, and employment policy). In addition, all relevant governmental partners have formal representation to ensure inclusiveness and smooth implementation.

Considering the economic, social, and political diversity in the IsDB member countries(MCs), EBP practices and its different tools might not be directly transferable. However, there is no doubt that experience sharing and transferring knowledge and skills among MCs would be a critical catalyst in expediting the adaption of best EPB practices to fit different country contexts. To this end, the reverse Linkage (RL) Program of IsDB should be efficiently and effectively exploited. In addition, partnerships with J-PAL and similar institutions must be enhanced and sustained to accelerate the culture of EBP in MCs.

1. <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/egypt-impact-lab>

# IsDBG's Engagement in the 2022 G20 summit: A Firm Commitment to the SDGs



**Dr. Houssein Eddine Bedoui**  
IsDB



**Dr. Bassem Haikal**  
IsDBG



The G20 is considered one of the most prominent international fora to develop global policies addressing the most critical global development issues. In 2022, the Republic of Indonesia assumed the presidency of this important forum, putting forth an ambitious agenda titled "Recover Together, Recover Stronger", which focused on three primary topics: Global Health, Digital Transformation, and Energy Transition. This agenda was founded on three main pillars: 1) promoting global productivity towards a balanced recovery of the global economy, 2) supporting the resilience and stability of the global financial and monetary system, and 3) ensuring sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The agenda also attached special importance to addressing the global food and energy crisis that erupted over the course of the year.

The G20 plays a prominent role in forming the international economic and financial agenda. Additionally, Indonesia is one of the Bank's largest member countries in terms of GDP and population size. Considering this, the IsDBG Group (IsDBG) was keen to actively participate in the works of the G20 during 2022 to provide the necessary support to the Republic of Indonesia.

In addition to supporting Indonesia's G20 presidency, the Bank was committed to strengthening its engagement in the G20 to advocate for two main causes. Through the G20, the IsDBG is better positioned to influence the global development agenda to voice the development need and priorities of the IsDB's 57 member countries, especially the fragile and least developed ones, and to emphasize the need for

During the summit, H.E. addressed the leaders of G20 members, guest countries, and international organizations twice to stress the bank's engagement in the G20, as a south-south multilateral development institution.

In his first intervention, H.E. focused on the ongoing global food and energy crisis, showcasing IsDBG's efforts towards achieving the 2030 Agenda, particularly SDG1: Ending Poverty, SDGs 2: Zero Hunger, SDG7: Affordable and clean energy, and SDG13: on Climate action. In this context, H.E. pointed out IsDB's recent strategy realignment aiming to strengthen the bank's commitment to Boosting Recovery; Tackling Poverty & Building Resilience; and Driving Green & Sustainable Growth. Moreover, H.E. outlined some of the bank's related flagship initiatives such as: 1) the launching of the 10.5-billion USD Food Security Response Program to rebuild food stocks in the short-term and to support sustainable and resilient food systems in the long run; 2) IsDB's contribution to the 10-billion USD Arab Coordination Group (ACG)'s initiative launched recently to support food and fertilizers imports in the Arab region; and 3) The bank's contribution of US\$ 13 billion in ACG's US\$ 24 billion cumulative climate financing package that was announced during the COP27 in Egypt, to address the global climate crisis by 2030. In addition, H.E. stressed that IsDB will spare no effort in unlocking the great potential of Islamic Finance to help in scaling up global development funding towards achieving the SDGs.

Furthermore, H.E. addressed the G20 summit a second time to emphasize IsDBG's commitment to Digital transformation, in line

a stronger global commitment and larger financing to achieving the 2030 development agenda. Additionally, the IsDBG views the G20 as an indispensable global platform to highlight the important developmental role Islamic finance could play as an innovative financing mechanism that contributes to financing sustainable development and green transformation in IsDB's member and non-member countries.

Against this backdrop, the IsDB Group has been committed to supporting the Indonesian G20 presidency throughout 2022 by engaging in the group's different work streams. This commitment culminated with the participation of H.E. IsDBG Chairman Dr. Muhammad Al Jasser in the G20 Leaders' Summit that was held on 15-16 November in Bali.

with the bank's commitment to achieving 2030 agenda goals such as SDG4: Quality education; SDG8: Decent work and economic growth; SDG9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure; SDG10: Reduced inequality; SDG11: Sustainable cities and communities; and SDG13: Climate action. In this context, H.E. pointed out the unique opportunity presented by the rapid global digital transformation to support the development of resilient, inclusive, and sustainable economies. H.E. emphasized IsDBG's commitment to supporting digital transformation efforts in its 57 member countries and efforts to develop the necessary and sufficient digital infrastructure to contribute to bridging the Digital Divide and achieving the digital inclusion of developing and least developed countries.

**At the G20 Leaders Summit**  
H.E. Dr. Muhammad Al Jasser  
President of IsDB

While recovering from the pandemic, the geopolitical crisis, and climate change catastrophes, are posing serious threats to food and energy security, especially in highly indebted countries.

The progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs has been tremendously hindered, in particular, SDG1: to end poverty and SDG2: to end hunger.

To adapt to the needs of our countries we have realigned our strategy to focus on three objectives:

- 1) Boosting Recovery,
- 2) Tackling Poverty & Building Resilience, and
- 3) Driving Green & Sustainable Growth.

We recently launched a \$10.5-billion Food Security Response Program to rebuild food stocks in the short-term and to support sustainable and resilient food systems in the long-run. We have also contributed to the 10-billion USD Arab Coordination Group's initiative to support food and fertilizers imports.

IsDB will spare no effort in unlocking the great potential of Islamic Finance to help in scaling up global development funding.

**At the Digital Transformation Session G20**  
H.E. Dr. Muhammad Al Jasser  
President of IsDB

The rapid global digital transformation is a unique opportunity to help and support the development of resilient, inclusive, and sustainable economies.

Amid those challenging times, technology was the key to helping students adapt their learning processes.

Unfortunately, many students in developing and least developed countries did not have the same advantage because of the lack of sufficient digital infrastructure.

At the Islamic Development Bank, we place a high priority on supporting the digital transformation efforts of our 57 member states.

We are collaborating with international organizations to deepen our engagement with key stakeholders and contribute significantly to bridging the digital divide.

# Comprehensive Poverty Measures for an Inclusive Approach Against Poverty



**Dr. Areef Suleman**  
IsDB Institute



**Dr. Mustafa Yağcı**  
IsDB Institute

United Nations member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, which outlines 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to achieve the shared aspiration of member states for “peace and prosperity for people and planet.” The first SDG (SDG 1) provides that goal to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. To achieve SDG 1 and effectively design interventions to tackle poverty, we need to measure poverty in a systematic and reliable manner. A systematic and reliable measurement of poverty is one that is comprehensive (i.e., accommodates various dimensions) and comparable across time periods.

## Monetary Measure of Poverty

One of the most common measures of poverty is developed by the World Bank with the 1990 World Development Report on poverty.<sup>1</sup> This report introduced the dollar-a-day poverty line, which uses purchasing power parities (PPPs) to derive an international poverty line and thereafter estimate global poverty.<sup>2</sup> The use of PPPs allows to put each country's income and consumption data in globally comparable terms. In other words, PPPs are used to convert national poverty lines as well as the value of households' income and consumption — the backbones of global poverty measurement — to a common currency across countries.

With this background, the international poverty line has been updated by the World Bank from \$1 a day in 1985 PPPs, to \$1.08 with 1993 PPPs, to \$1.25 with 2005 PPPs, and to the \$1.90 line with 2011 PPPs that is used today. With the \$1.90 poverty line, the global extreme poverty rate in 2018 is estimated to be 8.6%, down from 9.1% in 2017. This translates into approximately 652 million people living in extreme poverty worldwide in 2018; 420 million of them in Sub-Saharan Africa, 148 million in South Asia, and 22 million in Middle East and North Africa. Moreover, if we adopt a \$3.35 per day poverty line for a wider coverage than extreme poverty, people living in poverty is estimated to be 1.9 billion in 2018.<sup>3</sup> With the surge of inflation and rising food, fuel, and commodity prices, The World Bank has announced that the threshold for extreme poverty has been raised to \$2.15 per day and this threshold will be used for poverty estimations starting from fall 2022.<sup>4</sup>

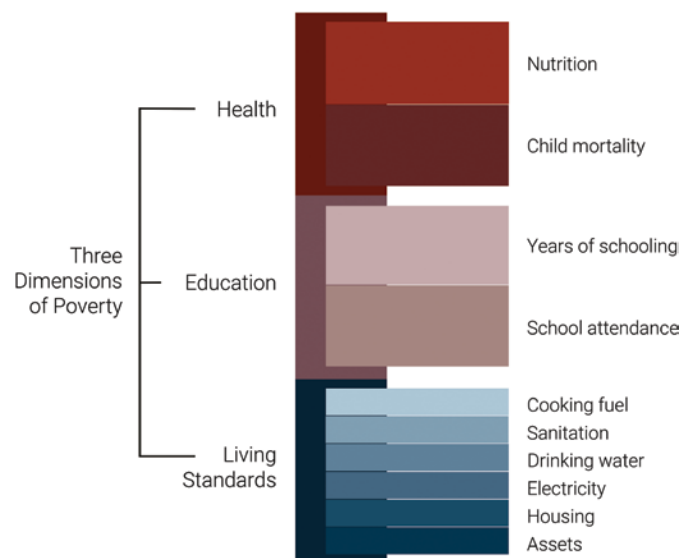
## Multidimensional Poverty Index: A Non-monetary Measure of Poverty

Monetary measurement of poverty based on income and consumption provide useful information, however it does not comprehensively capture the deprivations experienced by poor people. Poverty comes in different forms and dimensions including lack of education, health, housing, empowerment, employment, personal security and more. In other words, monetary measures of poverty (income and consumption) may not capture these non-monetary dimensions of poverty.

To overcome these limitations, the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) together with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) designed the global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) to reflect the multiple deprivations of people unable to reach minimum standards in the dimensions of health, education, and living standards.<sup>5</sup> Each dimension of multidimensional poverty is measured using quantitative indicators on nutrition, child mortality, years of schooling, school attendance, access to cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, and assets (Figure 1).

The MPI assesses poverty at the individual level. If a person is deprived in a third or more of ten (weighted) indicators listed in Figure 1, then the global MPI identifies them as MPI poor. The intensity of their poverty is also measured through the percentage of deprivations they are experiencing.

**Figure 1: Global Multidimensional Poverty Index: dimensions and indicators of poverty**



Source: <https://ophi.org.uk/multidimensional-poverty-index/>

1. 1990 World Development Report, <https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/epdf/10.1596/0-1952-0851-X>.

2. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/adjustment-global-poverty-lines>.

3. World Bank Poverty and Inequality Platform, <https://pip.worldbank.org/home>.

4. An adjustment to global poverty lines, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/adjustment-global-poverty-lines>.

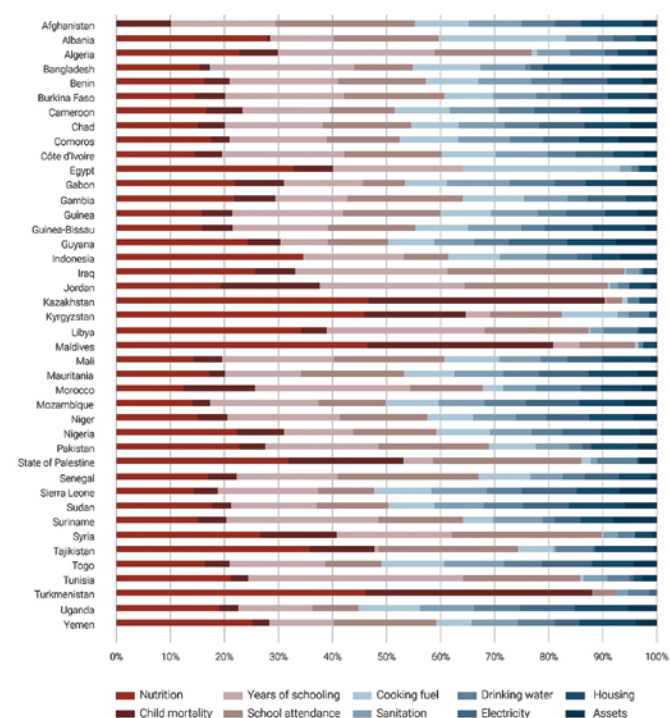
5. Global MPI, <https://ophi.org.uk/multidimensional-poverty-index/>.

## Global MPI in IsDB Member Countries

The Islamic Development Bank Institute (IsDBI) and the OPHI conducts joint research on measuring the global MPI in IsDB member countries (MCs). The IsDBI-OPHI collaboration finds that in 2020, a total of 464 million people in IsDB MCs live in multidimensional poverty. This means that almost one in every three people in our MCs are living in multidimensional poverty.

The global MPI allows for more granular analysis, such as measuring MPI across urban-rural areas and across age groups among many disaggregations. It is found that 83% of people who are multidimensionally poor in IsDB MCs live in rural areas. Moreover, children under the age of 18 make up 44% of the population in IsDB MCs, and 55% of them are poor. Figure 2 illustrates the drivers of multidimensional poverty in IsDB MCs.

**Figure 2: Percentage contributions of MPI indicators for IsDB Member Countries**

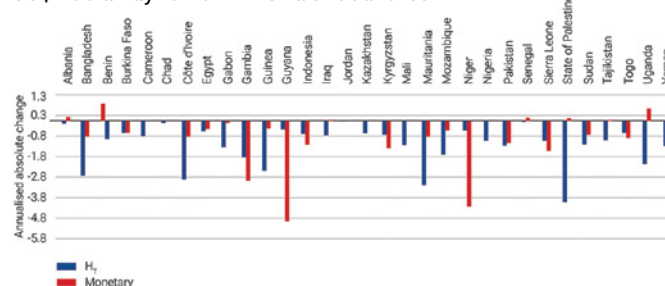


Source: IsDBI-OPHI Briefs 1: Exploring Multidimensional Poverty Across IsDB Member Countries Using the Global MPI, available at [ers.isdb.org](https://ers.isdb.org).

We also observe that multidimensional poverty trends do not perfectly match monetary poverty trends (in US\$1.90 a day headcount) and Gross National Income (GNI) per capita growth, suggesting different drivers and highlighting the added value of estimating MPIs.<sup>6</sup> For instance, Figure 3 depicts the annualized absolute rates of change in the incidence of multidimensional headcount ratio (HT) and US\$1.90/day poverty for the 31 IsDB MCs. If income and multidimensional poverty measures were perfectly correlated, and if they both identified the same people as poor, there would be no need for two separate measures. Instead, we observe important variations between both rates and, at times, the direction of change of these two poverty measures. This suggests that multidimensional poverty trends are not tracking with monetary poverty trends, and we must look at both measures to understand the character of poverty around the world.

From a policy perspective, income poverty could be high, and multidimensional poverty, low; if adequate social services that target education, health, and standards of living are being availed by poor households. The returns of these social services, say education, in terms of additional income will take years to be realized, hence the divergence. In other words, households may be income poor, but they are not as multidimensionally poor, and vice versa. Therefore, having monetary and nonmonetary measures of poverty complement each other and provide a more comprehensive picture of poverty in IsDB MCs.

**Figure 3: Annualized absolute change in incidence of HT and US\$1.90 a day for IsDB Member Countries.**



Source: IsDBI-OPHI Briefs 1: Exploring Multidimensional Poverty Across IsDB Member Countries Using the Global MPI, available at [ers.isdb.org](https://ers.isdb.org).

## Key Recommendations to Tackle Poverty in IsDB MCs

The 2022 IsDB Group Annual Meeting provided an avenue for the IsDBI and the OPHI to showcase their joint research for multidimensional poverty in Egypt during the 16th IsDB Global Forum on Islamic Finance: Social Entrepreneurship for Shared Prosperity. Among key subjects discussed are the challenges faced by increasing poverty levels in IsDB MCs and how to address them using a data-driven and evidence-based approach.

The starting point of an effective policy against poverty is transparency and honesty. Government and policymakers need to recognize the problem of poverty, including its various dimensions. This is especially important because the concept of poverty is multifaceted, with each facet interlocked with another.

Once the issue is acknowledged, a comprehensive approach must be taken, beginning with agreeing on a systematic measure of poverty. A monetary measure of poverty is not sufficient to design a comprehensive policy against poverty, and nonmonetary measures such as the global MPI (or the national MPI, if available) is needed. A comprehensive policy will target poverty in its various dimensions. When scaled up at the national level, such policy will target the most needy so that no one is left behind.

Islamic finance can also be utilized to address the poverty challenge, given that the core of Islamic Finance is social in nature. More than Zakat, we see the confluence of Islamic Finance on fintech to close gaps in poverty policies, in terms of empowering individuals to raise their own living standards.

As comprehensive as policies against poverty are, multiple partnerships are necessary to build coalitions to address the pressing challenges of poverty and social development. These partnerships can form synergies, in which institutions and ministries can specialize on the design and implementation of policies where they can make the most significant impact.

6. IsDBI-OPHI Briefs 1: Exploring Multidimensional Poverty Across IsDB Member Countries Using the Global MPI, available at [ers.isdb.org](https://ers.isdb.org).

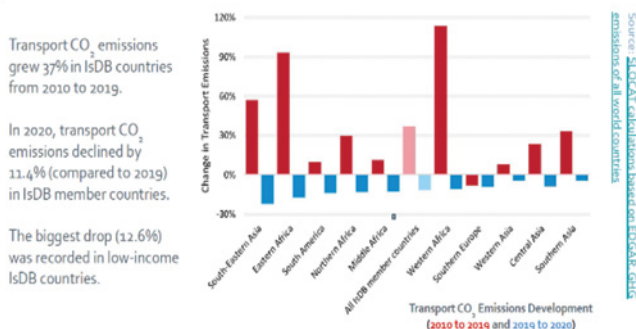
# Sustainable Transport Supporting Covid-19 Recovery Strategies in IsDB Member Countries



**Atiq Ahmad**  
IsDB

The transport sector contributes to economic activities, livelihood, and well-being of people by ensuring access to goods, services, and social networks. It is also linked to critical issues and development challenges. The negative externalities of transport, notably CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, is a growing concern with regards to climate change impacts and sustainability. However, improvement of air pollution, congestion, travel safety and accompanying progressive decarbonization offer significant local benefits and overall reduction in global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the key role and importance of an efficient, effective, integrated and harmonized transportation system was noticed and recognized by everyone across the globe.

## Decline in transport CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in IsDB member countries during the pandemic has exceeded the global average.

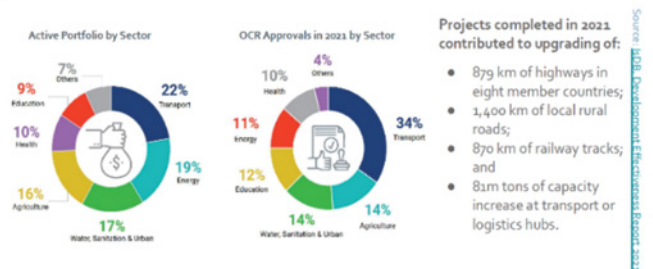


Covid-19 pandemic imposed unprecedented challenges and changes to transportation activities (a) cities came to a standstill as lockdowns were imposed worldwide, (b) international travel dropped to record lows, as the borders were closed, (c) freight and logistic services managed extremely urgent demands, and (d) transport cost increased due to shortage of supply and higher demands. Overall transportation activities reduced substantially. Freight transport adapted swiftly and kept essential goods flowing internally and across borders. The public transport provided necessary mobility and emergency services. The Covid-19 pandemic has offered an unanticipated opportunity for rethinking and forging a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable way forward. Now the transport sector, need to play a crucial role in

mitigating the negative impacts of Covid-19 pandemic and at the same time prevent the adverse effects to our society, climate, and sustainability.

The sector accounts for over a third of the Bank's total infrastructure investment in term of volume of financing. It is an essential sector for the Bank and the MCs. The years ahead

## Transport received the greatest sectoral share of IsDB investments in 2021.



present a unique opportunity to IsDB and its Member Countries (MCs) to (a) engage in activities along the transport, climate, and sustainability nexus, (b) align the increasing investment demands and the MC's economic recovery strategies with the Bank's new strategic priorities of boosting recovery, tackling poverty & resilience, and driving green economic growth, and (c) develop Bank portfolios aligned with Paris Agreement targets. In May 2022, a transport sector side event, aligned with the theme of the 47th Annual Meeting of IsDB titled "Beyond Recovery: Resilience and Sustainability", focused on "Sustainable Transport Supporting Covid-19 Recovery Strategies in IsDB Member Countries". The virtual side event offered a platform to key stakeholders in IsDB member countries, to discuss how sustainable transport can support and complement the Covid-19 recovery strategies and help the MCs in meeting the challenges confronted. Transport sector focus, in the post Covid-19 pandemic recovery initiatives, is to turn the challenges into opportunities for advancing economic growth, enhancing resilience and sustainability, ensuring inclusiveness, and fostering green development.

## Increased capacity building and South-South cooperation can increase efficiency and innovation in creating social resilience.



Investment in **upstream capacity building** for sustainable, low carbon transport policy can increase pipelines of bankable projects across sectors.



Cross-border transport facilitation and **joint regional transport projects** sharing of resources and harmonisation of regional integration can reduce the cost of capital intensive investment.

The 256.5 km long Bereket-Etrek Railway project contributes to socioeconomic development and integration between **Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran**.



**Enhanced cooperation** between countries to share know-how, best practices and lessons learnt on policy practising and investing on public transport.

IsDB is funding a rural road construction pilot project in **Senegal** with technology from **Malaysia**, an example of the South-South transfer of expertise and technology.

The event presented some key findings, lessons learned, and emerging trends, in IsDB MCs, which relate to the role and importance of improved universal access, better connectivity, sustainable rural and urban mobility, rapid access to financing, enhanced participation of private sector, mainstreaming of low carbon initiatives and inclusive development actions in post Covid-19 recovery efforts in formulating practical recommendations. However, the emergent need to articulate more sustainable, resilient, most modern and cost-effective transport strategies and development of more balanced multi-modal transportation system were also well recognized. The role of partnerships, effective collaboration and decision making was also found vital in accelerating the development pace.

## Expanded financing sources are needed to fill gaps in infrastructure investment in sustainable, low carbon transport.



It is found that the effectiveness of future transport sector developments and sustainability would largely depend on (a) the availability of improved accessibility of transportation facilities and services to all; (b) development of harmonized transport policies aligned with the economic recovery and sustainability; (c) enhancing regional connectivity and cross-border transport facilitation; (d) ensuring inclusiveness in the recovery efforts – Government; societies and the private sector need to come together to share responsibilities; (e) building capacities and reinforcing the multi-modal transport system and harmonizing their operations; (f) developing urban transportation facilities; focusing on mass transportation, land use and low carbon modes; (g) utilizing Intelligent Transport Systems, Artificial Intelligence, GIS; ICT facilities to improve the efficiency of transport sector, its performance and responsiveness; (h) adapting innovation; modern technologies and cost-effective solutions to transport, logistic and environmental challenges; (i) formulating and adopting policies and strategies to support green; more resilient; low carbon; and sustainable transport systems; and (j) working collectively to enhance access to development financing, prioritizing funding and expanding partnerships

Almost all the findings, suggestions and innovations presented are closely align with the policy pillars and enablers of IsDB transport sector policy and strategy. This will greatly help IsDB in formulating benefiting development plans, programs and projects for its MCs. Transport sector will remain an important sector for the IsDB and its MCs in post Covid-19 recovery and restoration era. Specifically, on green economic growth, going forward, the Bank will further promote green, resilient, inclusive economic growth that is compatible with environmental and climate goals of the MCs and inclusive human development initiatives. This is to be built upon a foundation of green, resilient, and sustainable Infrastructure.

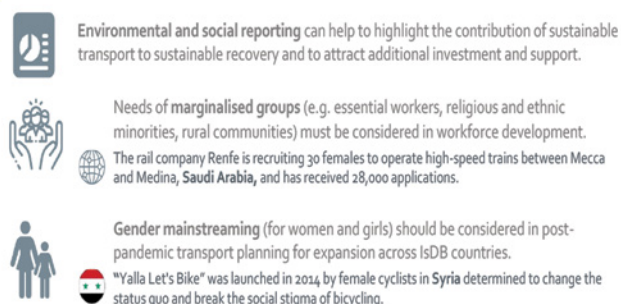
## A shift away from conventional transport investments is needed to maximise recovery of passenger and freight transport activity



The Bank has increased investment in low carbon transport with substantial demonstration of modal shift and ultimate reduction in emission and increased resilience. The key examples include the Dakar Light Rail Project, Ankara-Konya High Speed Railway Project and 10 HST train projects etc.

The Bank's transport sector strategy places emphasis on inclusion with a focus on provision of access and connectivity for vulnerable and disadvantaged population groups, especially in the least developed member countries of the Bank. The green, resilient, inclusive and sustainable development approach is employed as a systematic method to focus on the synergistic interdependencies of economic growth, sustainability, resilience, and inclusiveness.

## Investments in next-generation transport infrastructure and services must reflect social investment needs and priorities.



For the countries to recover from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, restore economic activities, achieve the targeted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to act on climate change challenges, the transport sector remains key enabler and curtail instrument to materialize the needed socioeconomic transformation and sustainable development.

## Countries must set electrification targets, and ideally set phaseout targets for sales of fossil fuel-powered road vehicles.

### Current e-mobility targets in IsDB countries

	Afghanistan	(2030) 10% of new light and heavy duty vehicles EV/alternative fuel
	Brunei Darussalam	(2025) 50% increase in hybrid vehicles, and electric vehicles
	Indonesia	(2040) only sell electric-powered motorcycles (2050) only sell electric-powered cars
	Turkey	(2030) 1 million electric vehicles in operation
	Uzbekistan	(2035) 30% share of electric vehicles

# Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements - The Singapore Story



**Eric Lee**  
Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE)

Sustainable development has been the cornerstone of the Singapore Story. The Singapore Story as many has come to learn of, has been shared and retold many times over, to different audiences and at different platforms, over the last 50 years. Regardless of the timing of its delivery, there seems to be concurrence from its recipients that having a strong regulatory and legal framework, a clean and efficient government, highly skilled workforce, a pro-business environment, were some of the critical success factors that carried Singapore to where and what it is today.

But it was a totally different landscape more than half a century ago when Singapore was first thrust into independence on 9 August 1965. Then, Singapore was filthy and polluted, lacked proper sanitation, had a huge proportion of unskilled and uneducated labour force, and unemployment numbers were high. This new nation had to depend on external sources for food, energy, and water. Many were sceptical that Singapore could survive on its own, let alone prosper.

It took the sheer determination and vision of one man – founding Prime Minister Mr. Lee Kuan Yew – and his pioneer team of leaders to transform Singapore into a viable nation-state. With limited land and resources, our pioneer leaders had to balance between addressing immediate priorities such as education, security, infrastructure, healthcare, and housing and the need to be prudent and adopting a long term strategic perspective in policymaking. The leaders also put in place systems and structures for successive generations of leaders to continually re-invest the resources generated from the economy into the development of human capital, R&D, and the identification of new areas of growth. This has helped create a new generation of Singaporeans that continuously strive to

create and add value, and are well-equipped with the knowledge and skills to take on the jobs of the day.



## SDG-11: Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable

As a city-state with limited land and a high population density, it is imperative for Singapore's urban planners to exercise prudence and take a long-term planning approach to the usage of land to ensure that Singapore continues to be developed sustainably, in tandem with its increasing population and economic growth. To effectively develop and implement these plans, Singapore adopts a Whole-of Government (WOG) approach. The WOG approach allows for the sharing of information among public agencies, which widens agencies' worldviews and uncovers emergent challenges and opportunities. In the example given above, various stakeholders come together to discuss on policies such as public housing for the majority of Singaporeans, and an integrated transport network, while incorporating green spaces throughout its landscape, with the aim of creating a pleasant environment for all Singaporeans to work, live, play and learn.

The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted global supply chains and brought about unprecedented challenges and changes to the world, including Singapore. To a certain extent, the pandemic has given our urban planners an opportunity to review long-held

planning assumptions and mind-sets, and ways to infuse resiliency into their plans for Singapore. With remote work – now a tried and tested modality during the Covid-19 pandemic – made possible through digital technologies, our urban planners are fast tracking the work on the design and re-purposing of the CBD, regional centers, homes and public transport networks that they have started prior to the pandemic. The pandemic has also accelerated the adoption of digital solutions on a global scale and Singapore will continue to invest in its digital infrastructure and integrate them in our planning.

The pandemic has also raised the importance of being able to access amenities without having to travel too far, especially during lockdowns. The careful curation of social and recreational amenities within each of the townships in Singapore have provided much relief to its people during these difficult times. Moving ahead, and in keeping with global trends, more co-working spaces will be provided for those whose homes might not be conducive for remote work.

Another important aspect of building resilience is to provide buffers in our urban fabric to enable rapid responses to crises. During the pandemic, Singapore converted major meeting and convention venues into temporary care facilities or accommodations and community spaces were repurposed into vaccination centres.

In a post-Covid future, it is imperative for urban planners to keep abreast of and anticipate the emerging trends. A good



understanding of the implications of these trends will be critical in shaping planning given that their work has a lasting impact for many decades. "Green recovery" has been singled out by many as the key to rebooting the economy. Sustainable development is not new to Singapore. Singapore's founding Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew drove the vision of a Garden City in our early years and transformed Singapore to one of the cleanest and greenest cities in the world. The Singapore Green Plan 2030, which was unveiled in 2021, is a whole-of-nation movement to advance Singapore's national agenda on sustainable development. It also serves to strengthen Singapore's commitment under the UN's 2030 sustainable development agenda and the Paris Agreement.

The Green Economy is one of the key initiatives under the Singapore Green Plan. Renewable energy and the circular economy are some of the new areas identified in the Singapore Green Plan, where businesses and workers can find a myriad of growth and job opportunities. These new areas will be key economic drivers for Singapore and the region in the decades ahead, as more people are made aware of the importance of sustainability. Singapore has embarked on an ambitious plan to halve its peak emissions by 2050, and achieve net zero emissions as soon as viable in the second half of the century. These will be supported by its government's efforts in expanding its R&D and Innovation.

### Resilient and sustainable society

Everyone has a role in the construct of a sustainable and resilient society. At the individual level, we are seeing more and more people making changes and sacrifices to their lifestyle such as reducing energy consumption, paying more for certain environmentally friendly products and making efforts to reuse and recycle waste. At the enterprise level, we are seeing more and more enterprises incorporating Sustainable Development Goals into their corporate strategy, such as transforming their business models, R&D and supply chains. Collectively, all of us share a common purpose and play a part in the creation of a resilient and sustainable society. The Singapore government is committed to working with all Singaporeans on this journey by adopting an open mind to the ideas, feedback and partnerships offered by its citizenry. The Emerging Stronger Conversations offered Singaporeans the opportunity to reflect and share their views on the pandemic with the Singapore Government with the aim of creating a more caring and resilient society.



### SDG-6: Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for All

Water has always been an existential issue for Singapore and is an extremely precious resource to this city state. In a report published by the World Resources Institute in 2015, Singapore was classified as being water scarce and as the most water-stressed country in the world. Despite its limited land area for the collection and storage of rainwater, Singapore has achieved universal access to affordable and high quality water as well as modern and accessible sanitation for all. Singapore's water policies are guided by long-term planning, and the desire to achieve water sustainability to support the growth of its population and economy. Today, Singapore has adopted an integrated closed-loop approach to water management with the integration of its water supply, sewerage and drainage functions to manage the entire water cycle, and also to harness opportunities for water reuse through wastewater reclamation technologies and innovation. Singapore's approach to water management is to ensure that not a single drop of water is wasted. This is achieved through the following strategies: 1) collecting every drop of rain that falls on Singapore; (2) recycling and reusing wastewater; and (3) turning sea water into portable water through desalination. The Singapore Government also invests heavily on technology, innovation and R&D in its quest for water sustainability.

Over the years, Singapore's "Four National Taps" strategy has been shared with friends across the various regions. This strategy helps ensure the security and sustainability of its water supply to meet the needs of its growing population and economy. In recent years, Singapore has also expanded its local catchment areas to two-thirds of Singapore's land area by cleaning and damming rivers. During dry periods, NEWater – Singapore brand of ultra clean, high quality reclaimed water, is also added to its local reservoirs to strengthen its drinking water supply.

Due to the unpredictable weather patterns as a result of climate change, there is an ever pressing need for reliable and sustainable water sources. To this, the Singapore Government is looking to build capacities in weather resistant water sources such as desalination and NEWater. Technological advancements have helped to reduce the cost and energy for desalination. Desalination has also become a viable option for producing fresh water, as improvements in membrane technology have reduced the cost of desalination significantly. The Singapore Government

will continue to look for solutions that are both energy and cost efficient to extract freshwater from seawater.

### Moving Forward

Sustainability is a journey, not a destination. It is not an end in mind but rather, staying committed to the cause and paying attention to the opportunities and challenges the journey brings. Resiliency on the other hand is about having the tenacity to adapt quickly to existential and circumstantial challenges, and to push through these challenging landscapes. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us even more clearly how interconnected we all are. What happens in another part of the world, has an impact to us – directly or indirectly. Countries must build deep links with one another, to collaborate and tackle complex challenges. As a Global-Asia node, Singapore is well positioned to foster collaborations and partnerships across countries. We should continue to bring together ideas to confront our common challenges, share solutions, and forge new partnerships.

The Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE) was setup in 2006 by the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Singapore Ministry of Trade and Industry. Charged with the mission to lead in public sector collaboration projects with foreign countries, SCE is positioned as the single gateway to respond effectively to the multitude of requests from foreign governments that are interested in Singapore's development experience. SCE works closely with Singapore's 16 ministries and over 60 statutory boards and also partners with International Organisations and Multilateral Development Banks such as the Islamic Development Bank (ISDB) to scope out and tailor possible solutions to match the needs of foreign governments, and help meet their development objectives. In doing so, SCE aspires to build long-term partnerships with foreign governments and generate economic spin-offs for Singapore's private sector.



**Sustainability is a journey, not a destination. It is not an end in mind but rather, staying committed to the cause and paying attention to the opportunities and challenges the journey brings**

# Interconnectedness Between International Trade and Food Security



**Nazar Mohamed Eltahir Diab**  
IsDB

## SDG Goal 2 “ZERO HUNGER”

Food security is related to all of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Sustainable Development Goal to “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”, (SDG2) recognizes the inter linkages among supporting sustainable agriculture, empowering small farmers, promoting gender equality, ending rural poverty, ensuring healthy lifestyles, tackling climate change, and other issues addressed within the set of 17 SDGs. The SDG Goal 17 “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development” and its indicators 17.10, 17.11 and 17.12, recognize international trade as an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction, and an important means to achieve SDGs

### The Role of Trade in Food Security

It is agreed that trade, along with domestic production, plays a vital role in improving global food security in all its dimensions and enhancing nutrition.

Historically, international trade has helped reduce food insecurity by connecting regions with limited agricultural potential and large populations to regions with comparative advantages in agriculture. It has also provided consumers access to a more diversified and nutritious food basket. As per the World Trade Organization (WTO), each year the international trading system moves enough wheat, maize, rice and soybean to feed approximately three billion people around the globe. Meanwhile, 190 million tons of

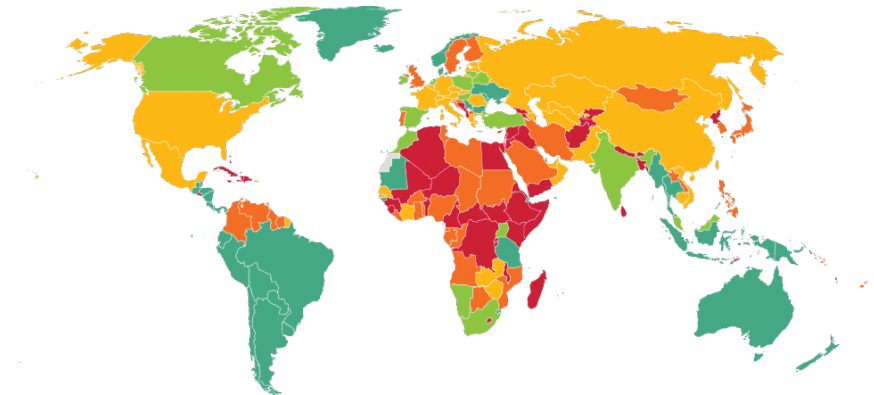
fertilizer applied to farmland annually play a key role in helping us grow enough food to sustain our expanding population, with much of it traded on the international stage.

### Food Trade Imports

The value of food imports has tripled since the beginning of the century, and today about 80% of the world's population is fed in part by imports - <https://unctad.org/news/trade-and-food-security-when-agreement-delayed-becomes-human-right-denied>.

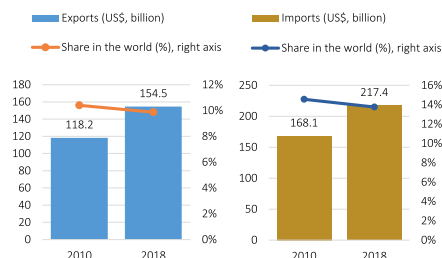
The figures reflect the reality of many OIC MCs and their dependency on food imports. As per SESRIC Agriculture and Food Security Report 2020(link below), the value of agricultural imports in OIC countries climbed up from US\$ 168.1 billion in 2010 to US\$ 217.4 billion in 2018. Nevertheless, the share of the OIC group in the world total agricultural imports went down from 14.6% to 13.8% in the same period. The OIC countries, as a group, generated trade deficits

■ Severe import dependence ■ Import dependent ■ In balance ■ Exporter ■ Strong exporter



in agricultural products in 2010 and 2018 as the value of imports exceeded the value of exports. In other words, OIC countries, as a group, continued to stay as a net importer in agricultural trade.

<https://sesricdiag.blob.core.windows.net/sesric-site-blob/files/article/748.pdf>



### The Multilateral Trading System efforts

A few years ago, trade negotiators of the WTO would not have expected a war in Europe, a global pandemic, and a global food crisis to dominate discussions at a WTO Ministerial Conference.

The WTO Agreement on Agriculture explicitly recognizes the need to take account of food security - both in the commitments that WTO members have made to date, monitored in the Committee on Agriculture, and in ongoing negotiations. However, for trade to improve food security for the greatest number of people, greater international cooperation is necessary. Such cooperation has twice failed to materialize since 2000: First with

the World Trade Organization's (WTO) failure to successfully negotiate the Doha Development Agenda since 2001 and second with the surge in international food prices in 2007-2008.

### Food Security in the WTO 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12): Geneva Package

Trade ministers agreed to a decision exempting food from export restrictions when procured for humanitarian purposes by the World Food Program (WFP). They also agreed on a Ministerial Declaration on the Emergency Response to Food Insecurity, the first such declaration on this topic adopted by trade ministers at the WTO.

Finally, trade can improve food availability where it is scarce — and can also improve economic access to food by creating jobs and raising incomes. A more predictable trading system can also improve stability, another key component of food security. The absence of clearer disciplines for export restrictions and prohibitions seems to contribute little to prepare WTO members for food crises. The WTO 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13), to be convened between December 2023 to March 2024, efforts needs to be continued in delivering good outcomes on food security, clarifying the extant disciplines on export restrictions and prohibitions might be a possible way forward. The aim of the negotiations should be a more equitable, efficient agricultural trading system that will contribute positively to food security and sufficiency.

Each year the international Trading system moved:

- Food to feeds 3 billion people worldwide
- 190 million tons of fertilizers

OIC Value of food imports increased from US\$ 168.1 billion in 2010 to US\$ 217.4 billion in 2018

# Using Non-Traditional Data Sources to Measure SDG Progress



**Sharjeel Ahmad**  
IsDB Institute

The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022 released by the United Nations recounted a new data paradigm as a major retainer for measuring SDG progress during the COVID-19 pandemic. While essentially the pandemic resulted in an abrupt spasm of traditional in-person data sources, the national statistics offices (NSOs) around the world quickly transmuted to non-traditional data sources like mobile phone data, satellite imagery, and citizen-generated data to bridge the data gaps. One such example in the use of non-traditional data sources was the partnership between the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD), and the Government of Senegal.

The distinctive partnership between IsDB, GPSDD, and Government of Senegal focused on using satellite imagery and other non-traditional data sources to measure the progress of agricultural productivity, deforestation, and water extend and quality, primarily targeting SDGs 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15. Satellite imagery data from the Africa Regional Data Cube (ARDC), in combination with other data sources, was used as the primary non-traditional data source in this exercise. It may be noted that the *“ARDC is a technological innovation made available in five countries across Africa through a partnership between the GPSDD, NASA, Amazon Web Services, and country governments.”*

Non-traditional data sources might form an integral and critical basis for measuring SDG progress in the years to come, as also highlighted by the Workshop on **Data and Statistics for Evidence**

## Based Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs),

conducted by the United Nations Statistics Division in 2019. The workshop highlighted the immense potential of the untapped non-traditional data sources like geospatial data, digital interactions, and sensing data. Some illustrious examples of using non-traditional data sources included using mobile phone data to measure mobility and tourism, supermarket scanner data to evaluate consumer price index (CPI), and geospatial data to measure rural access to roads.

Non-traditional data sources promise to overcome the ubiquitous lack of resources encountered while using traditional data sources, and offer more frequently, timely, and objective data – with the propensity to exponentially reduce the time taken for data collection and analysis. They often transcend their data outreach to ensure most difficult data points, otherwise not traceable by traditional data sources, are fathomed easily. In essence, mobile phones and other transaction data sources like social media insights and Google and Amazon data sets promise to become cogent and expressive non-traditional data sources for measuring SDG progress.

However, as promising as it may sound, the non-traditional data source paradigm is replete with its own challenges. Even with traditional data sources, measurement of SDG progress demands a taxing convergence of diverse quality statistical frameworks and ecosystems. Traditional data comes with some inherent traditional challenges – data

privacy, confidentiality, and data gravity being a few to name. In contrast, non-traditional data sources have their discrete set of challenges, ranging from skewed and dispersed data ownership to non-standard data vocabulary as well as untrusted sources.

The challenge with measuring SDG progress is even more eccentric. To begin with, SDGs have a huge proliferating set of global indicators, which sometimes makes their measurement unfathomable at the country level. Specifically, if the country is not well-equipped with effective and operative national data quality assurance frameworks. Disaggregation of the global indicators is another repugnant obstruction at the country level. To this end, managing the national statistical system and statistical processes and ecosystem is itself a prodigious challenge for many countries.

Given these existing challenges, use of non-traditional data sources for measuring SDG progress might as well result in selection bias – since most of these data sources may not be representative of the entire population. It has also been argued that imprudent use of non-traditional data sources might in fact yield more inequality and exclusion than the benefits at the hindsight. The key to the solution lies in revamping the data quality assurance standards and making them graciously responsive to the non-traditional data sources – and ensuring *right data is available for the right problem*. This might stimulate some optimism yonder as we await the finale of 2030.



# Environmental, Social and Corporate Safeguards (ESG): At the Crossroads



**Altaf Abdul Gaffar**  
IsDB

Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG) are a mainstay in the financial, banking, and investment world today. With an estimated US\$ 39 trillion of financial assets globally under it in 2020 and is considered as one of the fastest-growing segments of the asset management industry, with expectations that it would exceed the value of non-ESG assets by 2024. The origins of the term ESG can be traced back to 2004, when a UN report called for “better inclusion of environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) in investment decisions”, this happened against the backdrop of many corporate scandals of that era, including Enron, WorldCom, and the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

ESGs, although not a part of the SDGs, are closely aligned with the objective of creating sustainable development. The ESGs which can be related to many of the SDGs, including Climate Action, Gender Equality, Affordable and Clean Energy, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Responsible Consumption and Production, etc., also help to create awareness and an enabling environment in the corporate sphere for SDGs.

The IsDB, has also successfully utilized its own ESG framework, to successfully issue Green-Sukuk in recent years to the market, where they have been not only well received by the investor community but was also

able to get a better pricing than some of the previously issued “conventional” Sukuk.

However, in the recent past the world of ESGs has been rocked by several scandals, such as the German government’s probe of “Greenwashing” allegations against DWS, a large asset manager, which resulted in the resignation of its CEO. Greenwashing is a process of conveying a false impression or providing misleading information on how one’s products and services, align with ESGs. A similar investigation was also launched by the US Securities and Exchange commission against Goldman Sachs.

Others working in the investment industry, including a then chief investment officer for sustainable investing at BlackRock, have raised many concerns about how ESG frameworks are employed in the corporate world, especially as a method to smooth over the actual environmental and social impacts of their investments to make them more palatable to investors, i.e., “marketing hype”.

Furthermore, the war in Ukraine, has raised the question as to what exactly should count as ESG investments? Many defense and hydrocarbon investments previously frowned upon under ESGs, are now being looked upon more favorably, as they viewed as essential to both national and energy security. In the European region a strong proponent of ESG, there has been an increasing focus and encouragement towards defense and hydrocarbon investments. Similarly, rising energy prices have resulted in ESG champion asset managers like Blackrock and Vanguard, to also realign their investment focus on fossil fuel related industries again.

Another challenge facing ESGs is the lack of a universally acceptable, reliable, and objective framework for rating them. Researchers from MIT and the University of Zurich examined the data from six prominent

ESG rating agencies and found that the correlations between their assessments are weak (ranging between 0.38 and 0.71), when compared to correlations between credit rating agencies (0.92). Due to this, regulators in many jurisdictions, are now actively working on their scrutiny of ESG claims made by funds and ESG rating agencies.

While ESGs continue to play an important role in steering the world towards sustainable development, and addressing climate change, these recent developments and challenges mentioned here have called in to question the credibility of the ESGs. Therefore, urgent action is needed from all ESG stakeholders restore their fast-eroding credibility, as they are still one of the best mechanisms available to us to address these global challenges.

H.E. Dr Mansur Muhtar, the Vice President, Operations - IsDB explained in his statement which was delivered by Br. Amer Bukvic, Director General—Global Practice and Partnerships in IsDB that IsDB supports its member countries response to the current global economic, energy and food security shocks without losing focus on addressing the need to address resilience building.



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# The Role of Regional Cooperation and Integration (RCI) in Achieving the SDGs

17 PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS

**Imed Drine**  
IsDB



**Kadir Basboga**  
IsDB

There is a growing recognition that regional cooperation and integration (RCI) can complement existing national efforts towards achieving the SDGs. Many of the SDG targets are not only interrelated but also transnational by their nature. Transboundary challenges such as climate change, food security, energy security entail regional actions while cross-border infrastructure plays a key role in ensuring the continuity of trade flows. Therefore, RCI emerges as a viable approach to ensure harmonization between national plans and the SDGs.

RCI has long been a tool for boosting trade, promoting growth and sustainable development as well as improving livelihoods, and as such represents an opportunity for countries to recover from various crises and get back on track to achieve the SDGs. It also provides opportunities for lasting growth outcomes as well as for solving problems of collective interest to participating countries. Moreover, experiences show that when RCI develops successfully, the space for political fragmentation and tensions is significantly reduced.

Recognizing the potential for economic transformation of countries through RCI, the SDGs explicitly make reference to planning and cooperating at the regional level. To give concrete examples, the SDGs and their associated targets include the promotion of regional economic integration and interconnectivity by developing regional and trans-border infrastructure to support economic development and human well-being (Target 9.1) as well as South-South and regional cooperation on access to science, technology, and innovation with a focus on knowledge sharing (Target 17.6). Therefore, both physical connectivity (hard infrastructure) and knowledge sharing (capacity building) aspects of RCI are equally covered in the SDGs policy framework.

The economic gains from intra-regional trade and investments can be translated into social gains at all levels of society including the disadvantaged. Likewise, enhanced cross-border transport, energy and ICT connectivity directly contributes to several goals including affordable and clean energy (Goal 7), decent work and economic growth (Goal 8) as well as industry, innovation, and infrastructure (Goal 9). The scope of RCI for the SDGs extends well beyond trade, investments and economic integration and includes joint actions to address development issues such as multidimensional poverty, inequalities, food insecurity, gaps in access to education, health, public services, and digital connectivity<sup>1</sup>. As environmental problems and incidences of diseases and natural disasters do not respect the administrative boundaries of nation-states, RCI is indeed a must to come up with effective policies in addressing such vulnerabilities.

IsDB's RCI Policy brings together all the above-mentioned priorities as it is built around four pillars, namely: (i) strengthening border connectivity, (ii) improving the investment climate and foreign direct investment, (iii) promoting Islamic trade and finance, and (iv) supporting regional public goods. Since these pillars are aiming at assisting member countries to achieve their development goals, the RCI Policy is considered as one of the central pieces of the Bank's overall policy framework to help them overcome development challenges and progress towards the SDGs.

In times of international crises and conflicts, RCI can also provide a lifeline to national economies. When insecurity and logistical difficulties in conflict-affected countries make it excessively costly to trade with far away countries (based on the assumption that trade costs grow as a function of increasing distance to destination markets in such a scenario), trade preferences often change in favor of immediate neighbors. This puts RCI at the forefront of external trade and economic development policy to keep up with the momentum of progress towards the SDGs. Though this is an example of necessity-driven economic integration (instead of opportunity-driven economic integration in an ideal case), it makes a strong case for considering RCI as an instrument to improve the resilience of national economies to external shocks. Findings from IsDB's new Integration Index Report support this argument for conflict-affected countries. The full report is planned to be launched in the third quarter of 2022 for public dissemination.

Given the critical role of RCI in achieving the SDGs, some regional level initiatives have been launched to ensure coordination between national plans and the SDGs. The UNESCAP's Regional Roadmap for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, and the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development are few examples of such initiatives in the developing world. In this regard, there is a huge potential for regional cooperation organizations (RCOs) to assume a greater role in fostering regional dialogue and peer learning for the SDGs considering their strong convening power. To bridge any capacity gaps for the sake of reinforcing the role of RCOs as a follow-up platform for the SDGs, multilateral development banks can play a more substantial role by utilizing South-South Cooperation modalities. This will enhance accessibility to knowledge, technology, and resources in an efficient way on the basis of solidarity and shared ownership.



1. UN ESCAP. Leveraging Regional Cooperation for Achieving the SDGs in South Asia. September 2021.

# Sustainable Finance Impact and Opportunity



**Mohsin Sharif**  
IsDB

As a AAA-rated supranational, the Islamic Development bank (IsDB) has raised almost US\$ 43 billion from the global capital markets since 2009. These proceeds have been deployed towards ethical and sustainability-linked projects in IsDB Member Countries. This also includes more than US\$ 5 billion worth of Green Sukuk and Sustainability Sukuk issuances.

The proceeds of the debut Green Sukuk of €1 billion (November 2019) were fully allocated to eleven (11) green projects across Member Countries, in alignment with the Climate Change Mitigation and Climate Change Adaptation environmental objectives. These include projects for renewable energy, clean transportation, energy efficiency, pollution prevention and control, environmentally sustainable management of natural living resources and land use and sustainable water and wastewater management.

Through these proceeds, roughly 12 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were avoided annually in the energy sector, and more than 3 giga-watts of clean energy was generated per annum, among hundreds of other positive results.

The proceeds of the debut COVID-19 Sustainability Sukuk, worth US\$ 1.5 billion (June 2020), were fully earmarked for IsDB's COVID-19 projects of 'access to essential services' and 'SME financing and employment generation'. The Sukuk issuance supported IsDB's contribution in the Group-wide Strategic Preparedness and Response Programme (SPRP). Sample results include benefitting more than 80 million people with out-patient services annually and reaching more than 25 million people through massive awareness campaigns on health.

In March 2021, the largest Sustainability Sukuk, also the largest issuance of the Bank ever, mobilized US\$ 2.5 billion from the global capital markets. 90% of the proceeds were allocated to social projects and 10% to green. Results achieved through these proceeds include, among others, the installation/upgrade of 634 km of water supply



networks and the training of more than 3 million health personnel.

Strong and long-lasting impactful results like these only reaffirm the breadth and depth of impact that every dollar of invested capital can make, when directed through the IsDB Sustainable Finance Framework that has sustainability at its heart.

There is no denying that we live in an age of extreme temperatures and catastrophic events triggered by the impact of climate change. Some of the Member Countries are even located in the most water-stressed regions of the world.

On the other hand, it is also true that these events have pushed 'environment-consciousness' and 'social responsibility' to the top of investors' agendas around the world. This has opened up new segments of 'ESG-focused investing' and 'socially responsible investments' etc. These types of investors have proven that achieving a positive impact through investing and earning a financial return on such investments is not mutually exclusive anymore.

This kind of investor response should drive more issuers to venture into the sustainable finance space and leverage this excellent opportunity. Green Sukuk, Sustainability Sukuk, Transition Sukuk, Resilience Sukuk. Such 'labelled' Sukuk can also have a wider reach in the global capital markets as they would cater to both "Islamic" as well as "conventional" investors who are looking for climate- and society-positive impact. Especially investors that are focused on ESG-driven investing and socially responsible investments.

Sustainable development is for all. For everyone who wants to achieve it, the opportunity of exploring and scaling up sustainable finance awaits.

# How Islam Paves the Roadmap Towards Achieving SDG 12



**Abdul Baquee Mohammad**  
IsDB

## Introduction

SDG 12 addresses the issues related to excessive and irresponsible consumption of natural resources. In this article I intend to shed some light on how Islamic values and teachings play an instrumental role in addressing the issues and challenges related to SDG 12. These challenges face countries, societies and individuals face due to irresponsible consumption of natural resources. In my view, the unique holistic approach with which Islam addresses SDG 12 challenges can be found nowhere under secular and materialistic worldviews. Here I am attempting only to scratch the surface.

## Islam and SDG 12

**First**, the Quran makes it very clear that all the resources we enjoy on earth (and the entire universe) belongs to Allah.

Read Surah al-Maedah verse 17

**To Allah 'alone' belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and everything in between. He creates whatever He wills. And Allah is Most Capable of everything.**

**Second**, the Quran makes it clear that we – son of Adam – were sent to this world as Allah's "Khalifa" or viceroy, who successively inherit the resources of the earth from one generation to other. This noble title entails responsibility and taking care of our environment.

Allah said in Surah al-Hadid verse 7:

**Believe in Allāh and His Messenger and spend out of that in which He has made you successive inheritors.**

**Third**, the Quran teaches us that all the natural resources are gifts from Allah to mankind. Allah has subjected these bounties to us so that we consume them responsibly and use them in a way that yields no harm rather bring benefit to us.

Allah says in Surah al-Jathiyah, verses 12 and 13:

**Allah is the One Who has subjected the sea for you so that ships may sail upon it by His command, and that you may seek His bounty, and that perhaps you will be grateful.**

**He 'also' subjected for you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth—all by His grace. Surely in this are signs for people who reflect.**

Combining the three above facts entails that we have a noble role to play on earth. We cannot mess-up with what Allah has given us in this world because we will have to eventually meet Him on the Day of Judgement, and we will be held accountable. This accountability attached with bounty is a unique value-system under Islam that brings harmony and responsibly

between human and environment in terms of sensible consumption.

**Fourth**, the Quran links irresponsible consumption of Allah's gifts (and showing ingratitude) with decline of that society and subjecting them to economic and political instability in the form of hunger and fear. This is evident in verse 112 from Surah an-Nahl. As a footnote, this surah often is given the nickname of surah an-Nearm (the surah of bounties) as it lists all sorts of bounties Allah bestowed to mankind.

**And Allah sets forth the example of a society which was safe and at ease, receiving its provision in abundance from all directions. But its people met Allah's favors with ingratitude, so Allah made them taste the clutches of hunger and fear for their misdeeds.**

**Fifth**, Islam does not promote asceticism where one abandons food, drink, and material enjoyment, yet it regulates these consumptions to be within boundaries.

Allah said in Surah al-A'raf, verses 31 and 32

**O Children of Adam! Dress properly whenever you are at worship. Eat and drink, but do not waste. Surely, He does not like the wasteful.**

**Ask, 'O Prophet, ' "Who has forbidden the adornments and lawful provisions Allah has brought forth for His servants?" Say, "They are for the enjoyment of the believers in this worldly life, but they will be exclusively theirs on the Day of Judgment. This is how We make Our revelations clear for people of knowledge."**



*The Prophet -peace be upon him - said, "the son of Adam has never filled a vessel worse than his stomach. It would be enough for a person to take morsels of food that would keep his energy. If he insists to eat, then let him keep one third for food, one third for drink and leave one third for breathing". (Narrated by Tirmidhi (2380), an-Nasai (6769), Ibn Majah (3349), and Ahmad (17186))*

**Sixth**, the Quran did not leave us with theoretical guidelines alone, rather it went to tell us stories of societies and individuals who were perished due to their irresponsibility towards Allah's gifts and bounties. Through these stories, Allah conveys key lessons for later generations and warns them that the same fate will befall them if they repeat the same behavior.

For example, read what has befallen the people of Saba who enjoyed food security, prosperous trade and political stability, but they were irresponsible towards Allah's gifts.

Surah Saba, verses 15-17.

**Indeed, there was a sign for 'the tribe of' Sheba in their homeland: two orchards—one to the right and the other to the left. 'They were told: ' "Eat from the provision of your Lord, and be grateful to Him. 'Yours is' a good land and a forgiving Lord."**

**But they turned away. So, We sent against them a devastating flood, and replaced their orchards with two others producing bitter fruit, fruitless bushes, and a few 'sparse' thorny trees.**

**This is how We rewarded them for their ingratitude. Would We ever punish 'anyone in such a way' except the ungrateful?**

**Seventh**, one of the often-repeated term in the Quran is "*fasaad*" or "corruption/ mischief" on earth. Some of the common manifestation of this corruption is irresponsible consumption of natural resources, the spread of harmful materials, the polluting the environment.

We read the story of Qarun in Surah al-Qasas (verses 76-83) who symbolizes a hedonistic ultra-rich who did not use Allah's gifts in a responsible way. His advisers warned him that his ingratitude to Allah's favors and irresponsible consumption was a form of "*fasaad*" on earth. Read what they said to him in verse 77:



**Rather, seek the 'reward' of the Hereafter by means of what Allah has granted you, without forgetting your share of this world. And be good 'to others' as Allah has been good to you. Do not seek to spread corruption in the land, for Allah certainly does not like the corruptors."**

Thus, irresponsible consumption by the super-rich is - according to the Quran- a form of corruption on earth.

In another location, Allah describes vividly the acts of a corrupted person in the following verse (no. 205 of Surah al-Baqarah).

**Whenever he attains authority, he goes about the earth spreading mischief and laying to waste crops and human life, even though Allah (whose testimony he invokes) does not love mischief.**

**Eighth**, through its unique style, Surah al-Ma'un opens with describing the characters of a person who denies the Day of Judgement. This person behaves badly with the orphan, he does not feed the poor, he shows-off and is unmindful of his prayer, and finally he refuses "neighborly needs". These neighborly needs are further explained in books of tafsir as the basic needs that a person goes and borrows from his neighbor, like (in our times) screwdriver, an USB charger, an utensil, and so on. Thus, Islam promotes recycling, reuse, optimal utilization of unused resources, sharing, and so on.

**Ninth**, unlike the consumer capitalism who nudge the population towards irrational consumption, Islam promotes a responsible consumption. It brands those who spend wastefully as "Satan's brothers" (as in Surah al-Isra' verse 27) and honors those who spend neither wastefully nor stingily as "chosen servants of Allah" (as in Surah al-Furqan verse 67).

**Tenth**, through the story of the Prophet Yousef in the Quran, Allah gave later generations a lesson on how governments play vital role in setting responsible austerity plans around rationalizing consumption during the time of crises.

## IsDB and SDG 12

Given the above sketch of Islamic view on achieving SDG 12, here are few humble suggestions to integrate SDG 12 at the Bank.

1. IsDB Institute can commission research on the subject portraying the holistic solution of Islam in addressing SDG 12. The research will bring not only the rich contents from Quran and Hadith but also the practical solutions adopted by the early Islamic Caliphates in maintaining a responsible consumer society. The research can be structured such that to appeal for both Muslim communities as well as non-Muslim audience. The Bank can own this research and campaign its mass publication as one of its niche contributions to SDGs where other MDBs can benefit from.
2. Enlightened by the above research, the Bank can launch – in collaboration with interested countries - randomized control trials on pilot projects that adopt SDG 12 solutions inspired by Islamic values. Design of these projects should have well defined M&E system to evaluate the SDG 12 results.
3. Charity begins at home. The Bank can introduce good corporate practices and culture that portrait mature consumer behavior and environment friendly cultures.

## Conclusion

The world today is passing through difficult times. The COVID-19 health crises followed by the war in Ukraine created a perfect storm that brought a very grimy outlook on food production and income inequality. The SDG 12 is more relevant than ever in such hard times. Islam came up with its unique holistic solution that the entire mankind can benefit from. These solutions promise stability, security, prosperity, and development. It is about time that we take these holistic Islamic solutions seriously and give them a chance to bring our societies back to its glorious golden ages.

# Halfway Towards Achieving the 2030 Agenda: Is There Hope for the SDGs?



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Back in 2015, 193 Heads of States signed on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs. This was one of the most hopeful manifestations of the global intention to come together to save the planet, eradicate poverty and leave no one behind!

Just 4 years into the implementation, in 2019, the voice of critics and skeptics was intensifying and raising doubt. This was countered by sincere and relentless efforts by the UN leadership and development enthusiasts worldwide, gearing up for a "Decade of Action" to make this dream come true.

Then, hell broke loose! COVID-19 hits paralyzing the economies of world, sending over 100 million people back into extreme poverty and shattering over 250 million jobs in a very short period of time. As the world got its act together and began to see the light towards recovery, the Russian-Ukrainian war stunned the world with significant global ramifications. Developing countries are forced to deal with a looming food crisis, higher commodity prices and inflationary

pressures; and not to mention an ever-increasing levels of debt and limited fiscal space to cater for basic development needs for their people.

IMF issued SDR 640 billion – ironically, as the per the quota, the largest chunk has gone to advanced economies who, few months into the pandemic, have issued over \$17 trillion themselves and really did not need this kind of help. In fairness though, several countries decided to re-channel a percentage of their SDR allocations for the benefit of poor countries through a special resilience and poverty fund, set up by the IMF.

If all of the above is not gloomy enough, let's keep in mind the much-anticipated global recession in 2023 and the rise of protectionism and anti-globalization movements. After all, the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs was meant to be a concrete demonstration of the good fruits of globalization, where the entire world commits toward the common goals of saving the earth and leaving no one behind.

If you ask experts at the UN and other development institutions and thinktanks, they will honestly tell you that we will not achieve all the SDGs for all the countries. But they are not ready to give and let go! Despite of the mixed bag of achievements, the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs are still the best universal framework that we have today. It presented a common reference and a reasonable benchmark for development plans and helped in unifying the language of development practitioners to a large extent.

If anything, let's see what the HLPF in July and the UN Summit on the SDGs in September will bring. Will there be an adjustment of the SDGs towards adopting a more realistic and achievable set of targets? Or the world will hold steady and stay the course, hoping to achieve the maximum possible and draw lessons for the next global agenda; probably some sort of a 2050-vision of how the world should look like then?

Regardless of the course of action the global development community decide to pursue, we should not lose sight of the facts on the ground and the problematic realities in our member countries. The reality, for us at IsDB, is that 30 out of our 57 member countries are suffering from fragility and about 23 of them are classified as Least-developed countries. Over 500 million people in our countries are still poor, and achievements on most SDGs are still modest, at best, for the majority of our member countries.

We should strive to do whatever is possible to improve human conditions wherever we can with whatever means we have. I can't help but remembering the hadith that never cease to motivate us to work: "If the Final Hour starts to happen and in the hand of one of you is a palm shoot or seeding; then if he's able to plant it before the Hour happens, then let him plant it."

"إذا قامت الساعة وفي يد أحدكم فسيلة،  
فإن استطاع أن لا تقوم حتى يغرسها،  
فليغرسها"