



Climate Actions Started to Blossom in Various Fronts Amid the Prolonged Covid-19 Winter

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By ACCEPT

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The Covid-19 pandemic is still ravaging the region, well into the third quarter of 2020. Struggling to patch the economic bust, ASEAN countries are churning out policies of economic recovery. Amid the struggle, we have seen potential climate actions blossoming in the region. As one of the most climate-vulnerable regions, the region started to get ready with more robust policies and strengthened commitments against climate change.

In policy front, policies are designed to be implemented in line with long-term green recovery. Proven to be resilient against disaster, renewable energy continues to be developed. Climate actions also span innovative technologies and measures, creative campaigns, and international supports. Although the end of the pandemic remains uncertain, we are surely positive that the hopes for ASEAN climate are still there.

As stronger climate policies are put in place

Despite the remaining struggle in tackling the pandemic, AMS is seemingly keen to update climate actions, whether through its updated national determined contributions (NDC) target or implementing the carbon reporting policy. As reported in [our previous climate insight of Q2](#), some countries already at the frontline in updating their NDC namely Indonesia and Singapore. Even though the target remains the same, but it is reported to cover broader aspect compare to the previous submission.

Following the step of Indonesia and Singapore in Q2, in Q3 [Vietnam has also updated their NDC commitment](#) with the target to reduce 25 per cent and 8 per cent of greenhouse gases from 2020 – 2030 with and without international funding support. [This impressive progress is attributed to the cooperative action among the stakeholders](#) including the private sectors who play their part in supporting the implementing climate actions such as [developing renewable energy \(RE\) industry that boosting countries RE in place](#).



Another story, Southeast Asia's oil-rich country, Brunei Darussalam, has shown their commitment as well in tackling climate change. Entering the Q3 of 2020, the [Bruneian Government has introduced the carbon reporting mechanism start in 2021](#). Through the National Council on Climate Change launches its first policy document to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for the industry sector. This carbon reporting mechanism aimed to monitor and promote the greenhouse gas emissions transparency and assisting Brunei's transition into a low-carbon nation through 10 key strategies formed in the policy documents.

From Indonesia, an action to deal with carbon management also speeding up as the [Government of Indonesia is also accelerating the global carbon trading regulation](#). This regulation will later stipulate three main issues namely guidelines and plans on carbon trading, carbon offsets, and the commodity market. The president of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, will consistently keep implementing the environmental-recovery programs to reduce greenhouse emissions to reach the target of reducing 29 per cent of greenhouse gases emission independently by 2030, and 40 per cent with international funding support.

And renewable energy is proven to be resilient amid the pandemic

In Q3 2020, the region sees positive progress in renewable energy development amid the pandemic. Moving away from the plague of delays in the early pandemic period, two key renewable energy projects in Indonesia, the 145 MW Cirata floating solar power in Java and 9 GW Kayan hydropower in Kalimantan [continue its progress and nearing the construction phase](#). In Malaysia, a [1.285 GW hydroelectric project in Sarawak is on track as well](#).

Solar projects are blossoming in the region. One of the key milestones is the successful completion of 1 GW solar tender in Myanmar, which gives the nation [the lowest bid of 0.0348 US\\$/kWh](#). The auction clearly showed the resiliency of renewable energy, noting that the auction started [during the pandemic in May 2020](#).

In Cambodia, a 30 MW solar power [is connected to the grid](#). Solar energy also [powered 7,000 people in remote areas](#) of northern Sarawak, Malaysia, noting the critical role solar energy can play in improving energy access. A total of [150 MW of solar is also to be installed on Luzon island](#), the Philippines.



The Koto Panjang hydropower plant in Riau. (JP/Rizal Harahap)



From wind power, Vestas exceeded [1 GW of a wind project](#), installed or under construction, in Vietnam. Inter-border renewable energy project is shown in the case of BCPG, the renewables unit of Thai oil firm Bangchak Corporation, which plans [to build 600MW wind power in Laos with a plan to sell the electricity to Vietnam](#). There is also 48 MW wind power [under construction by the Vietnam-Thailand consortium](#).

The region also starts to see higher involvement of private sectors in solar power projects. One of Singapore's main ports, [Jurong Port, mounted 9.65 MWp rooftop solar on its warehouse](#), noted as the world's largest solar installation in a port. Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) of Malaysia just [signed an agreement to install 2.21 MWp solar](#). In Vietnam, it is reported that many large enterprises [installed rooftop solar power systems](#).

As one of the main climate mitigation measures, it is encouraging to see that parts of the region commit themselves to renewable energy. Vietnam, for example, announced its plan to give renewable energy a [key role in its US\\$ 130 billion power spending](#) in the next ten years.

We've seen many innovative technologies and measures, keys to accelerate climate action

Accelerated climate action hinges on innovation, both in technology and measures. Some initiatives in the region include the recently launched Singapore Energy Grand Challenge (SEGC). SEGC invites proposals in the areas of energy-efficient technologies, optimisation of system design, and digitalisation [to improve energy efficiency in local industries by 50 per cent by 2030](#).

Singapore also decided to [collaborate with four companies to develop carbon capture, utilisation, and sequestration \(CCUS\) technologies](#) as part of its climate action. Another key technology for renewable energy, [peer-to-peer trading, is being demonstrated in Singapore](#). Previously, a similar effort was [noticed as well in Thailand](#). This technology would be critical to flourish the renewable energy market, especially if combined with renewable energy certificates.

Technology is said to be the [driving force in renewable development](#). From the solar sector, Malaysia is on the way to install [its first bifacial-plus-trackers solar plant](#). From the transportation sector, Singapore is seeking ways to pursue [the electrification of small ships](#), which are utilised heavily in its ports.

This is in addition to its plan to [install 10,000 EV charging points](#) on the island.

Innovation is also critical to open up new avenues of inter-sectoral and international solutions. This is exhibited by the [new cooling technology](#) that could protect against severe heat (climate concern) and viral spread (Covid-19 concern). An ambitious plan has also been announced to deliver solar-based clean electricity from Australia through a [3,700 km undersea cable to Singapore and Indonesia](#).

One way to advance innovation is through start-ups, of which the region has seen some interesting developments. A solar start-up in Indonesia, Xurya, has become the [first recipient of the South East Asia Clean Energy Facility \(SEACEF\)](#). In Malaysia, the state-owned gas and oil company, Petronas, diversified its core business and [invested in a solar energy startup, SOLS Energy](#). A local start-up in Myanmar, RecyGlo, developed a gasification system to [turn horse manure into energy](#).

Innovation also blossomed in other fronts of climate action. Thailand backed a [new initiative to improve rice farming to be more climate-friendly](#). A pilot program by a start-up in Vietnam applied Internet of Things (IoT)-driven technologies in rice farming, which could potentially be scaled up in the country. Similar initiatives can [also be found in Brunei and Cambodia](#).

Coupled with creative campaigns to address climate change-related issues

The vital roles of government and industry in addressing environmental issues can be accelerated through the support from society. For instance, in Thailand, the [Boon Rueang Wetland Forest Conservation Group \(BRWFCG\)](#) was able to prevent the authority's plan to transform a wetland forest into an economic zone. The community showed how important the wetland forest was in mitigating disaster, such as floods, through advocacy, academic research, and social media campaigns.

Digital technologies are deemed effective in delivering messages to the society. The recent findings from [We Are Social and Hootsuite](#) shows that about 51 per cent of the global population was using social media, as of July 2020. That means the huge potential flourishing from the internet can be utilised for raising public awareness, especially during the pandemic when people mostly spend their days at home.



With the massive amount of information available in the media, [communication should be done uniquely](#) to catch individuals' attention. An example was seen in an [Indonesian radio](#) which held a series of interactive talk shows focusing on the climate crisis. Not only stopping the messages in the forms of voices, but the discussion then being broadcasted into video format. They also engaged blogger influencers to write about their virtual events and promote them on various channels.

Such climate campaigns can also be performed in traditional ways, to reach audiences who are not too familiar with the online platforms. A [Wayang community](#) in Bali, Indonesia, educated people about the threat of climate change to the coral reef ecosystem through art performance of shadow puppets. In addition, individual actions, such as [collecting plastic trash on the beach](#) and [planting trees](#), can also invoke other people to follow and join the movement.

Synergising with optimisation of international support in green recovery

The Covid-19 pandemic somehow has slowly shifted people's lifestyle into sustainability. In a study about the Covid-19 impact on consumer behaviors, the [Global Web Index](#) reported that 71 per cent of their survey respondents worldwide think it is now more important for them to reduce their carbon footprint.

Policymakers should tap this window of opportunity to framing [green agenda](#) in ramping up climate actions. [Thailand](#), for example, has included renewable energy development as one of the Energy Ministry's stimulus packages.

Despite the pandemic, ASEAN also remains an attractive region for multinational supports to combat climate change. The [Government of Indonesia](#) has recently granted a fund from Norway to fasten greenhouse gas emissions reduction in the country by 26 per cent in 2020 and 29 per cent in 2030. [Laos](#) also is cooperating with China to reduce CO₂ emissions by developing a specific development zone with sustainable public utilities, including transportation, water and waste management.

Not only from other states but international organisations are also keen to support sustainable development in the ASEAN region. World Bank, for example, has funded \$5 million to [Thailand](#) in beating ozone-depleting chemicals and protecting the climate. On the other hand, the financial institution also signed a \$3.45 million agreement with [Myanmar](#) to provide electricity to rural areas produced from off-grid solar.

ASEAN countries could accelerate their progress in reaching their climate targets, provided by adequate measures from different sectors. These include stronger policy frameworks in the government, innovative solutions from the industry, creative campaigns from media and individuals, and optimising international green support in the region.

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