

# 1. Executive Summary

This study aims at exploring Indonesia's preparedness in carrying out the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With a strong belief that the SDGs can only be achieved with meaningful participation by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Local Governments (LGs), the study is primarily an attempt to identify channels or ways to improve the participation of CSOs and LGs, including the necessary enabling environment that the national government needs to create.

For the above purposes, the researcher interviewed informed persons from relevant national government agencies, selected local governments, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders. A focus group discussion (attended by around 30 people of various backgrounds) was also specifically conducted for this purpose. A desk review and participation in a number of other seminars and discussion sessions have added more information to the study. The study is also partially a "participant-observation" because the researcher himself has also been actively involved in promoting the MDGs (and later, the SDGs) in Indonesia since 2005 and has been working closely with various CSOs and LGs in Indonesia since 1990s.

Indonesia is marked by its diversity of geographic, cultural, social and economic conditions. Some parts of the country are socio-economically much more advanced than other parts, hence the different levels of achievement of the MDG/SDG-related indicators within the country. Since the Agenda 2030 embodies the spirit of "leaving no one behind," the growing inequality in Indonesia—as indicated by the alarming increase of the Gini coefficient from 0.31 in 1990 to 0.41 in 2015—should be a source of great concern. On the other hand, Indonesia's experience and relative success in implementing the MDGs—78% of the targets have reportedly been achieved—are a strong basis for the implementation of the SDGs.

In the more democratized and decentralized governing environment that Indonesia has been moving toward since the start of the "Reform Era" in the late 1990s, CSOs and LGs in Indonesia have been enjoying more room to participate in public matters and development processes. Some CSOs have

been actively involved in the promotion of MDGs (and now SDGs) or working at the community and local levels to "fill the gaps" in public services and other government functions. Others work as advocacy/pressure groups or produce critical "shadow reports" on the achievement of the MDGs. Almost all provinces and some LGs have developed their own MDG Action Plans and mainstreamed the MDGs into their development plans, including aligning some of their annual programs to achieve the goals. Some LGs and CSOs—along with the corporate-social responsibility (CSR) programs of some private corporations—have also been collaborating in MDG/SDG-related endeavors. Nonetheless, many challenges remain and have become even more complicated now with the implementation of the more all-encompassing SDGs.

In light of the above development, it is deemed crucial to have a legal basis for more coordinated implementation of SDGs in Indonesia. In this regard, a presidential regulation on SDG implementation has been drafted but has not yet been enacted due to the lack of agreement among major stakeholders. Government officials in charge of the matter have been preparing an institutional architecture that is similar to what was used for MDG implementation, with *Bappenas*—the National Planning Agency—playing the coordinating role within an inter-ministerial National Coordinating Team and directly overseeing a National Secretariat for the SDGs. Meanwhile, civil society groups have been lobbying vigorously for more multi-stakeholder representation in those coordinating bodies as well as in all working groups for individual global goals. In the meantime, LGs have been calling for stronger recognition of their roles and therefore arguing for a cluster of their own, not to be "lumped together" in the "government and parliament" cluster. On the other hand, the private sector and philanthropic groups prefer not to be rigidly coordinated, although they are willing to regularly report to the national government.

It is partly due to this intense "squabbling" that the presidential regulation has not been finalized and signed at the time of this writing. Given this situation, there have been suggestions that stakeholders should start to focus their energy on



implementation in their individual fields without having to wait for the coordinating presidential regulation. The enactment of presidential regulation, while important, is only one of several ways to ensure coordinated implementation and better use of the limited resources of the global goals.

One of the immediate actions that can be taken is to embed the SDGs in the national and local development plans, including through the formulation of national and local SDG action plans. This action will help direct national and local budgets to programs that can effectively contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. A few provinces and LGs have started initiating the process of developing such local action plans without having to wait for the national regulation that is supposed to provide guidance and coordination.

Another action that can be taken without having to wait for the proposed presidential regulation to be signed is to support, strengthen and replicate existing collaborative actions involving CSOs, LGs, the private sector, line ministries and other stakeholders. Examples of such works exist in the areas of education, health, energy, water, sanitation and slum upgrading. While most of these initiatives are still at an initial phase, the model can already be replicated in other SDG fields/sectors.

The stakeholders (and participants of the FGD) interviewed also agree that CSOs and LGs still need assistance in building their own capacities to participate meaningfully in the implementation of the SDGs. The urgently needed capacity building of CSOs and LGs should not be limited to financial support, but should also involve strengthening CSOs' and LGs' technical and managerial capacities in order to reduce their dependency on external assistance and increase their effectiveness. The ability to build more strategic - and less case-by-case - partnerships between CSOs, LGs and the private sector is also generally seen as imperative. However, what this "strategic partnership" should look like remains a big question.

In summary, the study found: (i) as a very diverse developing country that is undergoing various transformations, Indonesia faces enormous challenges to meet its commitment to achieving the SDGs; (ii) there are both positive factors that help Indonesia's preparedness in implementing the global goals and negative factors that may hinder achieving them; (iii) both democratization and decentralization can be seen as "double-edged swords" in this regard: opening up space for the participation of civil society and LGs but also complicating efforts to take more concerted action; (iv) building on the experience of implementing the MDGs, the enactment of a presidential regulation to address SDG coordination can provide a crucial legal basis. However, differences among stakeholders on the institutional architecture have delayed the signing of the regulation; (v) without waiting for the presidential regulation, and building on the past momentum of developing local MDG action plans, LGs can start - and a few of them actually have started - working on developing local SDG action plans; (vi) there are examples of collaborative, multi-stakeholder initiatives that can be further supported and expanded; and finally (vii) the EU can help strengthen CSO and LG capacities both in Indonesia and within the framework of cooperation with ASEAN.