

Strengthening Cross-Border SDG Collaboration: APPGM–SDG at the International Summit 2026 in Chennai

From 18th to 23rd February 2026, the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM–SDG) participated in the **International Summit 2026 on SDG Knowledge and Education** held at Nazareth College of Arts and Science in Avadi, Chennai. The summit brought together academics, practitioners, policymakers, and grassroots leaders to advance dialogue and action on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for People, Planet, and Prosperity.



The APPGM–SDG delegation was led by Prof. Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria and comprised dedicated staff Mr Paniirselvam Jayaraman, Madam Tpr. Nurul Syaza Mazelan, Mc Jeanet Lempisik @ Marx, Mr Karuppiah Palaniandy, Dr Thanaraj Murudi, and local coordinators Mr Arunagiri Subramanian, Madam Santhradevi Munusamy and resource person Mr Gunapathy Arumugam, and Rita Shanthini D Jayaratnam who collectively represented Malaysia’s grassroots-driven SDG model. The primary objective of participation was twofold: to share Malaysia’s APPGM–SDG issue-mapping framework and to learn from India’s community-based development experiences and best practices.



Immersion Before Dialogue: Grounding Knowledge in Community Realities

The summit commenced on 18th February with a pre-visit village immersion programme designed to anchor academic discussions within lived community realities. Participants were divided into four groups and assigned to villages in the Thiruvallur District of Tamil Nadu: Arikampattu, Kalpattu, Meyyur, and Malandur.





Each village represented distinct socio-economic characteristics, ranging from indigenous tribal settlements to semi-rural agrarian communities. This structured exposure enabled participants to observe development dynamics first-hand examining livelihoods, access to education, infrastructure gaps, and community resilience mechanisms.

Knowledge Exchange: Sharing the Malaysian Issue-Mapping Model

On 19th February, APPGM–SDG conducted a pre-conference workshop for Nazareth lecturers, department teams, and social work students. The session introduced the Malaysian APPGM–SDG issue-mapping methodology as a systematic framework for identifying local needs and translating them into policy recommendations.



The workshops focused on:

- **Mapping Local Needs in Urban and Rural Poor Communities**
- **Developing Grassroots Policy Solutions**

Through facilitated discussions and group presentations, participants analysed findings from the village immersion programme, identifying core development concerns and aligning them with relevant SDGs. This interactive approach demonstrated how structured community engagement can bridge local realities with national and global policy frameworks.





International Summit 2026: Dialogue, Plenary and Policy Reflections

The International Summit was officially inaugurated on 20th February by the Convenor and Chairperson of Summit 2026, marking the beginning of formal academic and policy engagements. With approximately 150 abstracts submitted from across India and Malaysia, the summit reflected strong regional commitment to SDG scholarship and practice.



A highlight of the summit was the special address delivered by Prof. Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria, who contextualised SDG implementation within the broader United Nations framework and emphasised measurable social development outcomes.

The village immersion programme continued in the afternoon, allowing all summit participants to deepen their field engagement before reconvening for analysis and presentations on 21st February.

Key Community Insights from Village Immersion

Across the four villages, several recurring SDG-related challenges were identified:

- Limited access to education and skills development opportunities
- Low income from traditional and seasonal livelihoods
- Inadequate transportation infrastructure
- Delays in administrative responsiveness to local concerns

Despite these challenges, strong community-led best practices were observed:

- **Arikampattu:** An Irular tribal hamlet of 36 families demonstrated remarkable community cohesion despite limited economic resources.
- **Kalpattu:** A vibrant network of self-help groups (SHGs), educational tutoring initiatives, and participation in India's 100-day employment scheme reflected social resilience.
- **Malandur:** Notable for its public library and strong unity, with relatively higher male literacy rates.
- **Meyyur:** A robust SHG ecosystem empowering women through tailoring, micro-enterprises, bank management, and collective action during crises such as water scarcity.

These insights reinforced the importance of participatory governance, women's empowerment, and social capital in advancing SDGs at the grassroots.



Doha Declaration, Multidimensional Poverty and Social Solidarity

A plenary session featuring APPGM–SDG delegates examined the relevance of the Doha Declaration in strengthening social development strategies. Discussions emphasised:

- The importance of the **Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)** in capturing poverty beyond income metrics
- Its relevance for indigenous communities such as the Orang Asli in Malaysia
- The role of the Social Solidarity Economy
- Faith-based organisations as critical multi-stakeholder partners in SDG implementation

This session reinforced the need to move beyond income-based poverty measurements and to adopt integrated frameworks that reflect lived vulnerabilities.





The summit concluded with academic paper and poster presentations addressing SDG challenges, causal factors, alignment strategies, and innovative solutions, followed by awards, certification, and a vote of thanks.

Exposure Visit: Learning from ASSEFA's Grassroots Development Model

Following the summit, APPGM–SDG undertook a two-day exposure visit (22nd–23rd February 2026) to projects implemented by Association for Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA).

ASSEFA's origins in the Bhoodan Movement have evolved into a holistic rural development model centred on empowerment of poor and vulnerable communities, especially women.



Education Transformation

The delegation visited a model school in Manihottam, Uthiramerur, where innovative teaching approaches, supplementary night classes for underachieving students, and value-based enrichment programmes such as Abacus training and cultural curriculum were implemented. Teacher identification, customised student development, and talent nurturing were integral to the model.



Safe Water Access

At Puliur, delegates observed a community Reverse Osmosis (RO) water plant serving 13 surrounding villages an intervention directly addressing SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation).



Financial Inclusion and Women's Empowerment

Engagements with Sarvodaya Mutual Benefits Trust institutions revealed an integrated financial inclusion model providing:

- Microcredit access
- Wage loss compensation for pregnant women
- Life insurance support
- Health camps
- Water and sanitation assistance
- Livelihood enhancement programmes

With disbursements reaching approximately INR 30 million, surplus funds are reinvested into community welfare initiatives.



Sustainable Livelihoods and Organic Dairy

The delegation also observed a collaborative initiative between ASSEFA and Akshayakalpa Organic, which promotes sustainable dairying and agricultural development demonstrating how social enterprise partnerships can strengthen rural income generation while maintaining environmental responsibility.



Reflections and Strategic Significance

The International Summit 2026 and subsequent exposure visits provided APPGM–SDG with invaluable comparative insights into grassroots SDG implementation in India. The experience reaffirmed that sustainable development is most effective when grounded in:

- Community participation
- Women-led economic empowerment
- Integrated poverty measurement frameworks
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships

The cross-border exchange between Malaysia and India strengthened institutional networks and deepened understanding of how localised models can inform national policy frameworks.

As APPGM–SDG continues to advance Malaysia’s SDG agenda, the Chennai Summit 2026 stands as a testament to the power of knowledge exchange, community immersion, and collaborative regional solidarity in shaping a more inclusive and sustainable future.

SDGs summit held at Nazareth college



Academicians from various colleges took part in the meet.

Nazareth Arts and Science College organised a two-day International Summit on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) themed “People, Planet and Prosperity” under the banner of SDG Knowledge and Education on February 20 and 21.

According to a press release, the summit brought together academicians from 20 colleges, policy experts, development practitioners and community leaders to deliberate on inclusive and sustainable development aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The event marked the release of the Book of 122 Abstracts, compiling research papers and innovative practices presented

collaborative networks in strengthening community-based development initiatives.

Henry Maris, Secretary, Nazareth Arts and Science College, reaffirmed the institution’s commitment to sustainable education and social responsibility.

The Principal Dr. Mary Angeline delivered a comprehensive address on the significance of the Summit on SDG Knowledge and Education, highlighting its role in shaping sustainable futures.

The chief guest, Prof. Datuk Dennison Jayasooria, Head of Secretariat, APPGM-SDG, emphasised the need for policy integration, local governance participation and community engagement in achieving the SDGs.

A key highlight of the summit