



COLUMN

Sustainable Development

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Developing Indonesia

Regional performance, in terms of GDP or any other benchmark, varies across the country and, like most countries, the contrast between the big urban centers and the remotest parts of the archipelago are considerable.

The big cities of Asia-Pacific are getting some 3.5 million new residents monthly, according to the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. In Indonesia this would equate on a *pro rata* basis to about one million per year, with a high percentage heading for Greater Jakarta.


It is easy to see the Jakarta metacity will have 50 million by mid-century and the overall urban population across Indonesia by then will be some 210 million or 70% of the total. Simultaneously, it will mean a decline of some 10% from today's rural population to about 90 million. The implications of this shift are important and far-reaching when considering the differing imperatives for cities and rural areas.

Much greater care will be required to ensure a resilient future in the use of water and food production, not only to overcome today's shortfalls but planning for greater output, since urban areas use more water and food resources than rural ones.

Much thought and research is going in how to make future cities greener and acceptably habitable, including the design and construction of more efficient buildings. These buildings should better use electricity and water and dispose of waste. They could also allow the growth of vegetables and fruits, within or beside the urban environment.

Solutions will also be required to accommodate changing demographics as people in a health-improving environment live longer on average and it will not be long before we can extend life significantly beyond the improvements that have already taken place over the past half century. This, in turn, will require the design and construction of different buildings and facilities to ensure that development is sustainable.

With the decline in the rural populations, which are important for growing and providing food for increasing urban demand as well as for their own needs, it is vital that greater attention be paid to water resources, their storage and efficient use, not only to supply increasing urban demand but also to support greater and more efficient food production. The importance of water resources has been recognized by the President and it is encouraging that he wants to accelerate the programs for the construction of key new dams for storage—an issue much discussed over the past decade and more, but with little implementation usually because of problems with land acquisition.

It is obvious that the agricultural sector could improve efficiency and produce more food. Apart from ensuring that the crop-water balance is correct for a given product, with the longer term decline in rural populations along with a steady rise in demand from expanding urban centers, there is a need and opportunity to improve farming with up-to-date practices, along with improved transport infrastructure with particular emphasis on the sea and land transport. This issue continues to be very urgent. 

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