

## Criticism of BIMP-EAGA Cooperation Through *Green City Action Plan* (GCAP) in Indonesia

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### Abstract

*This research aims to describe how the BIMP-EAGA Sub-Regional Cooperation works through the Green City Action Plan (GCAP) in Kendari City, Indonesia, which has been published since 2016, using the concepts of Sub-Regional Cooperation and Environmentalism. The type of data used is primary & secondary data through qualitative data analysis techniques. The research results show that the BIMP-EAGA collaboration through the Green City Action Plan in Kendari is realized through 5 priority programs ranging from improving the sanitation system to the tidal power plant in Kendari Bay which is a pilot. The Kendari Green City Action Plan program is designed to be completed in 2035. However, during its implementation until 2023, there have been no reports or news that publish the results or progress of the GCAP program for Kendari via the BIMP-EAGA Asia website, KESR, or even the Kendari City Government itself, so this research was born as a form of criticism of this collaboration.*

### Keywords

*BIMP-EAGA, Green City Action Plan (GCAP), Indonesia, Kendari, Environmentalism, Subregional.*

## 1. Introduction

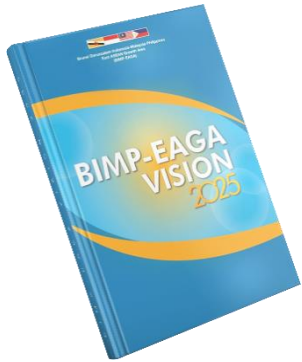
The Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) is a sub-regional economic cooperation forum established in 1994, covering the eastern part of ASEAN, geographically located between one country and another near the border. Its main

objective is to strengthen economic cooperation and integration between member states' regions to accelerate socio-economic development and welfare in underdeveloped and geographically remote areas of BIMP-EAGA member states (Riyanto, 2015).



*Source: East Kalimantan DPMPTSP*  
**Figure 1.** BIMP-EAGA Cooperation Map

The BIMP-EAGA sub-regional cooperation covers the entire sultanate of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia (15 provinces: West Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, South Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, North Kalimantan, North Sulawesi, Gorontalo, Central Sulawesi, Southeast Sulawesi, West Sulawesi, South Sulawesi, North Maluku, Maluku, West Papua and Papua), Malaysia (2 states and 1 Federal Territory: Sarawak, Sabah and Labuan Federal Territory), and the Philippines (Mindanao and Palawan) (Burhan, 2015; Niode et al., 2022; Saherimiko et al., 2021).



*Source: <https://bimp-eaga.asia/>*  
**Figure 2.** BIMP-EAGA Vision

In the 2017-2025 period, the guideline that BIMP-EAGA is relying on called BIMP-EAGA VISION (BEV) 2025 has a vision of "Resilient, Inclusive, Sustainable and Economically competitive (R.I.S.E.)". Indonesia is the lead country in the Environment Pillar which has Priority Infrastructure Projects (PIPs) called Green Cities Initiative (Faiz, 2016).

The Green Cities Initiative exists as an effort to improve management capacity in integrated planning and urban infrastructure in Indonesia to create smart, green, and livable cities through the adoption of the Green City Action Plan (GCAP) in BIMP-EAGA subregion cities (Bhattacharyay, 2016).

Kendari City has been actively participating in the Green City Program (GCP) since 2010 and in 2014, Kendari was also selected as a pilot project for the Green City Development Program (P2KH) by the Ministry of Public Works. Kendari City in 2020 has a vision to become a progressive, democratic, and prosperous "Garden City". The alignment of Kendari's vision with the Green Cities Initiative is a strong reason why Kendari was appointed as Indonesia's first pilot city in the Green City Action Plan (GCAP) in 2016 and is expected to be achieved by 2035. Identification of other pilot cities in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and the Philippines will be conducted in 2017 (Lord & Tantrongjita, 2016).

In its implementation, the Green Action City Plan (GCAP) has 5 Priority Programs that will be maximized in Kendari, ranging from improved sanitation to tidal power generation. The Green City Action Plan will make Kendari a pioneer for Green City in Indonesia and BIMP-EAGA region, reflecting the effort to balance economy and environment with social inclusion. Kendari's GCAP will be developed by the Green Working Group under the guidance of BAPPEDA & Mayor's Office, which has been publicized since 2016 and regularly facilitated by Asian Development Bank (ADB) consultants (Sandhu et al., 2016).

## **1.1 Analysis Framework**

### *1.1.1 Concept of Sub-Regional Cooperation*

According to the Directorate General of ASEAN Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, in the context of ASEAN in accordance with the Agenda for Greater Economic Integration, the formation of sub-regional economic cooperation is based on the principle of openness in regional development (open regionalism) and not on the formation of a closed regional block (building block) (Kussanti, 2017).

The implementation and objectives of the establishment are to benefit and complement each other in accelerating economic development through increased investment flows, infrastructure development, natural and human resource development, and industrial development. Meanwhile, the main purpose of the formation of growth sub-regions is to combine the strengths and potentials of each bordering region so that it becomes a dynamic growth area.

Min Tang and Myo Thant define sub-regional cooperation as a sprawling transnational economic zone with specific boundaries, encompassing three or more countries with regional proximity where differences in enabling factors are exploited to promote external trade and investment (Tang & Thant, 1994).

According to Siow Yue Chia, sub-regional cooperation has key advantages and benefits that are closely related to the limitations of cooperating at an overall regional level. First, sub-regional cooperation is considered an alternative to the constraints of regional economic integration faced by member states, related to different stages of economic development as well as different economic and political systems. Second, sub-regional cooperation is considered politically more manageable and functionally more flexible due to its more limited scope. This smaller scope of cooperation is an alternative solution to the difficulties and constraints that may arise from the

complex and risky framework of economic and political cooperation at the regional level. Third, sub-regional cooperation is considered to make it easier for policy makers to focus more on developing economically underdeveloped and marginalized regions by linking them with more developed regions. Fourth, sub-regional cooperation focuses on economic complementarity in attracting investment (Yue, 1997).

### *1.1.2 The Concept of Environmentalism*

Environmentalism is the implementation of liberalism in environmental issues where it accepts the existing political, economic, social, and normative structures of world politics and seeks to solve environmental problems within these structures. This approach supports the state system and takes the position of a liberal institutionalist. The focus is on the emergence of international environmental regimes, assuming that state systems can respond effectively to environmental problems.

The environmentalism perspective is based on the *green movement*, which is the awareness that the development of human civilization has a negative impact on the environment. This thinking comes from the facts in society, namely the many environmental crises such as global warming, deforestation, and nuclear waste. Contemporary environmentalism is a turning point in the evolution of modern culture and produces a new cultural orientation that replaces the concept of ecology for industrialism with a basic cultural model in modernization (Paterson et al., 2006).

The concept of environmentalism involves three main interrelated aspects. First, environmentalism is closely related to the philosophy of nature, which addresses the nature of the relationship between humans and the environment. This philosophy of the environment not only explains harmonious behavior towards nature, but also identifies behavior that can disrupt the balance of the environment. Second, environmentalism is a concept associated with struggles based on the ideology of the environment. This ideology becomes the basis for activities carried out by individuals or groups, with efforts to apply the ideology in the minds of the wider community to act in everyday life. Thirdly, environmentalism is also closely related to the design of environmental safeguards, where authorities based on the ideal of environmentalism seek to apply these principles in all aspects of life. Thus, the concept of environmentalism includes philosophical views, ideology-based struggles, and design efforts to maintain environmental sustainability (Devall & Sessions, 1984; Peters, 2017; Smith, 2019).

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Realization of BIMP-EAGA Cooperation in the Field of Transportation in the Eastern Asean Region" by Nur Asiah in 2018**

BIMP-EAGA is a sub-regional economic cooperation initiative established to foster socio-economic development in less developed and remote areas of its member countries and narrow the inter-regional and regional development gap.

The results showed that the realization of BIMP-EAGA cooperation on connectivity programs in the fields of air, land and sea transportation has not been fully realized and only exists in some areas in BIMP-EAGA member countries. through the framework of the BIMP-EAGA Roadmap to Development 2006-2010, there has been a realization of a connectivity program in the field of

land transportation that connects the cities of Pontianak - Kuching - Bandar Seri Begawan - Kota Kinabalu along the western Kalimantan Island in 2008.

The framework was followed by the BIMP-EAGA Implementation Blueprint 2012-2016, where improvements in airport infrastructure, roads, ports, and other facilities were continuously promoted. Until the end of the Implementation Blueprint in 2016, the realization of transportation connectivity has connected 5 air lines connecting 8 cities in the BIMP-EAGA region namely Pontianak, Tarakan, Bitung in Indonesia; Kuching, Tawau and Kota Kinabalu in Malaysia; Bandar Seri Begawan in Brunei Darussalam and Davao City in the Philippines. In addition, in the field of sea transportation, a passenger crossing line has been realized connecting Zamboanga City, Philippines with Sandakan in Malaysia.

In Nur Asiah's research entitled "Realization of BIMP-EAGA Cooperation in the Field of Transportation in the East Asean Region" the realization in the field of connectivity is explained in detail how land, air and sea transportation is intertwined in each region even though not all regions have been reached. How this effort answers the main purpose of the establishment of BIMP-EAGA, the author can explain how important the field of connectivity is to pave the way for the progress of areas that are considered underdeveloped and far from the central government so that they can slowly open various economic opportunities. In addition, the author is also able to reduce the major obstacles in the field of connectivity caused by the autonomous elements of the country. Furthermore, the Concepts of Connectivity and Inconnectivity help the author explain how BIMP-EAGA develops programs that are born through aspects that consider and address the problems present in the field (Asiah, 2018).

However, this study does not explain the impact of the program on the growth of each region, especially East ASEAN. Although the author uses the concept of regional growth, there is still no explanation that discusses the realization of this BIMP EAGA cooperation to what stage the East Asean regions have passed, while in the concept of regional growth to 5 stages that affect regional growth internally.

After looking at the research written by Nur Asiah with the title "Realization of BIMP-EAGA Cooperation in the Field of Transportation in the East Asean Region", it is necessary to see the similarities and differences between Nur Aini's research and the author's research. The similarities that can be seen in these two studies are the focus of researchers who both want to explain how cooperation is established or the realization of BIMP-EAGA subregional cooperation. In addition, how the concept of subregional cooperation is present as an answer to efforts to narrow the gap in areas that are far or left behind from the center of government (Asiah, 2018).

However, the big difference arises in the field of cooperation and the scope of the area carried out with BIMP-EAGA. The research conducted by Nur Asiah focused on the field of transportation in the East Asean region while the author focused on the environmental field specifically the green city plan in one of the provinces in Indonesia, namely Kendari. Furthermore, previous researchers used two other concepts, namely, Connectivity and Interconnectivity and Regional Growth while the author used one other concept, namely Environmentalism which is sustainable with the field of cooperation to answer the problem formulation (Asiah, 2018).

### 3. Methods

This type of research uses qualitative descriptive research. According to Sugiyono (2013), descriptive research is research conducted to determine the value of independent variables, one or more variables (independent), without comparing or relating other variables to other variables. The reason the author uses a qualitative research method is because this research will describe how the BIMP-EAGA Sub-Regional Cooperation is implemented through the Green City Action Plan (GCAP) in Kendari City, Indonesia. This research uses primary and secondary data sources. Primary data is obtained from the first source, namely report documents by BIMP-EAGA on the action plan to transform Kendari into a smart, green, and livable city, and secondary data sources are books, journals, papers, or research results, as well as news articles and information related to the research.

### 4. Result

Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation (SEEC) is a forum for economic cooperation between geographically close cross-border regions that aims to accelerate and increase trade, investment and tourism in areas that are underdeveloped or far from the center of government. Through the above definition, BIMP-EAGA falls into the type of cooperation that exists due to geographical proximity and the common goal of reducing regional disparities in the sub-regional region of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

BIMP-EAGA fulfills Siow Yue Chia's principle of limited cooperation at the regional level, making sub-regional cooperation easier for policy makers to focus on developing economically underdeveloped and marginalized regions by linking them with more developed regions. In addition, sub-regional cooperation focuses on economic *complementarity* in attracting investment.

This is clearly implemented in BIMP-EAGA how cooperation is built to minimize disparities between regions in the BIMP EAGA subregion. How BIMP-EAGA member countries are maximized in the BIMP EAGA work guidelines for 2017-2025 which are structured and sustainable in the *BIMP-EAGA VISION* (BEV) 2025 with the vision of "*Resilient, Inclusive, Sustainable and Economically competitive* (R.I.S.E.)".

This vision is focused on achieving three key outcomes that serve as the foundation for sustainable development. First, the vision emphasizes the development of a manufacturing sector that is not only competitive but also environmentally sound, with the aim of significantly adding value to production. Second, the vision emphasizes the creation of an agriculture and fisheries industry that is sustainable, highly competitive, and able to face climate challenges. Third, as part of this vision, a multi-country approach to tourism is promoted, with the hope of positively impacting less developed regions. Thus, the vision illustrates a commitment to stimulate economic growth through strategic sectors that are oriented towards sustainability and climate resilience.

To design the development path to 2025, five long-term strategic thrusts were identified that will serve as key guides. First, there is an effort to improve connectivity within and beyond the BIMP-EAGA region, recognizing the importance of robust infrastructure in supporting economic

growth. Second, focus is placed on developing the subregion as a major source of food in ASEAN and the rest of Asia, emphasizing the region's role in providing a sustainable food supply. Third, the strategy includes the promotion of BIMP-EAGA as a major tourist destination, recognizing the potential of tourism as an economic driver. Fourth, the strategic thrust places the importance of sustainable natural resource management as one of the key pillars, reflecting a commitment to environmental preservation. Finally, the fifth strategy is to promote people-to-people connectivity through socio-cultural understanding and enhanced mobility, creating a close network of relationships among the BIMP-EAGA community (Tiong, 2022).

The above description tells us that BIMP-EAGA is making significant efforts to achieve their goals while fulfilling the principle of subregional cooperation where complementary economies exist. How BIMP-EAGA member countries are modeling each other's projects. One example is Kendari, being the first city in Indonesia to implement the *Green City Action Plan* which will eventually become a benchmark or reflection to continue the program in other BIMP-EAGA member subregions.

Thanks to strong ownership and commitment, as demonstrated by the financial, human, and technical resources provided by member governments, BIMP-EAGA has flourished over the past 27 years. Despite the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis, the subregion's macroeconomic fundamentals remain strong. The BIMP-EAGA economy contracted by 3.5% in 2020 with the subregion's combined gross domestic product (GDP) at \$322.8 billion. Before the pandemic, the subregion posted GDP growth of 6.9%. Total trade in goods fell 11.4% to \$95.3 billion last year from \$107.6 billion due to weak demand. However, foreign direct investment rose nearly 32.0% to \$12.8 billion in 2020 from \$9.7 billion in 2019. Domestic investment also increased to \$9.2 billion last year, up 33.3% from \$6.9 billion in 2019 (Ahmad, 2020).

The data outlined above proves that BIMP-EAGA has succeeded as a subregional cooperation forum. How the efforts to equalize the welfare of the subregional regions of the joining countries were successful is evidenced by the foreign investment that skyrocketed by almost 32.0% to \$12.8 billion in 2020 from \$9.7 billion in the previous year, 2019.

The limitations of regional cooperation have led to the creation of sub-regional cooperation that seeks to catch up with the region and complement each other according to the Siow Yue Chia principle. In this regard, BIMP-EAGA has succeeded in doing so through its programs set out in BEV 2025 and continues to work towards it within the stipulated time.

#### **4.1 BIMP-EAGA on the Environment**

According to Environmentalism, solving the world's environmental problems requires political, economic, social, and other normative structures. How countries together form an order or joint efforts to solve these problems.

In this case, seeing BIMP-EAGA present during various problems of each country as one of the answers to problem solving. BIMP-EAGA is clear evidence that countries such as Brunei Darrussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines believe that environmental problems can be solved through a cooperative arrangement that involves the state as a facilitator.

One of the concepts of environmentalism is closely related to the struggle based on the ideology of nature. Ideology refers to a doctrine believed by an individual or a group that becomes the basis for the activities carried out. The struggle based on the ideology of the environment

seeks to implement this ideology into the minds of the wider community as an agenda for action in the field of life. This clearly illustrates how BIMP-EAGA operates through a vision or idea that they believe is closely related to the struggle for nature and all things related to sustainable development.

BIMP-EAGA's 2025 vision sets out three key outcomes on which to focus development. First, the vision mandates the development of a manufacturing sector that is not only competitive but also environmentally friendly, with the aim of significantly increasing production value. Second, it emphasizes the creation of sustainable, highly competitive, and climate-resilient agriculture and fisheries industries to ensure food security, promote exports and create jobs. Third, the vision intends to make BIMP-EAGA a sustainable, well-developed multi-country entity and a major tourist destination. As such, it is geared towards providing significant economic benefits to less developed regions in the BIMP-EAGA region (Yong, 2022).

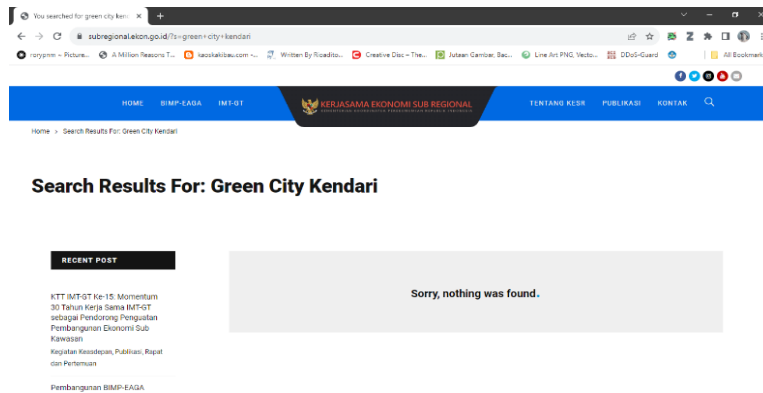
Applied to all areas of cooperation within BIMP-EAGA, in Kendari's Green City Action Plan, this ideology is manifested through a series of priority programs that aim to address the city's problems. First, the program "Green Waste-Action Plan: Improvement of On-Site Sanitation System" program focuses on improving the on-site sanitation system. Second, through the program "Green Water-Action Plan: Urban Drainage and Flood Control," improvement of urban drainage and flood control are sought. Furthermore, the program "Green Water-Action Plan: Increasing the Efficiency and Supply of Drinking Water" aims to increase the efficiency and supply of drinking water. The fourth program, "Green Waste-Action Plan: Community Solid Waste Management," focuses on community solid waste management. Finally, "Green Energy-Action Plan: Tidal Electric Power Generation in Kendari Bay (pilot)" is a pilot initiative to generate electrical energy using tidal power in Kendari Bay. All these programs are strategic measures geared towards realizing Kendari as a Green City (Sulistyaningsih et al., 2023).

Through the 5 Programs above, we can see how environmentalism is the driving force of the vision and programs presented to solve environmental problems experienced by a country. This proves that BIMP-EAGA countries are engaged in this issue based on the concept of environmentalism.

#### **4.2 Critique of BIMP-EAGA Cooperation through Green City Action Plan (GCAP) in Kendari City, Indonesia**

The Green City Action Plan (GCAP) in Kendari City has been published since 2016 with 5 priority programs. Unfortunately, these programs are only limited to plans because we have not been able to see the direct development of each program that has been projected, no reports or news related to the progress of the formation of Kendari Green City have been found.

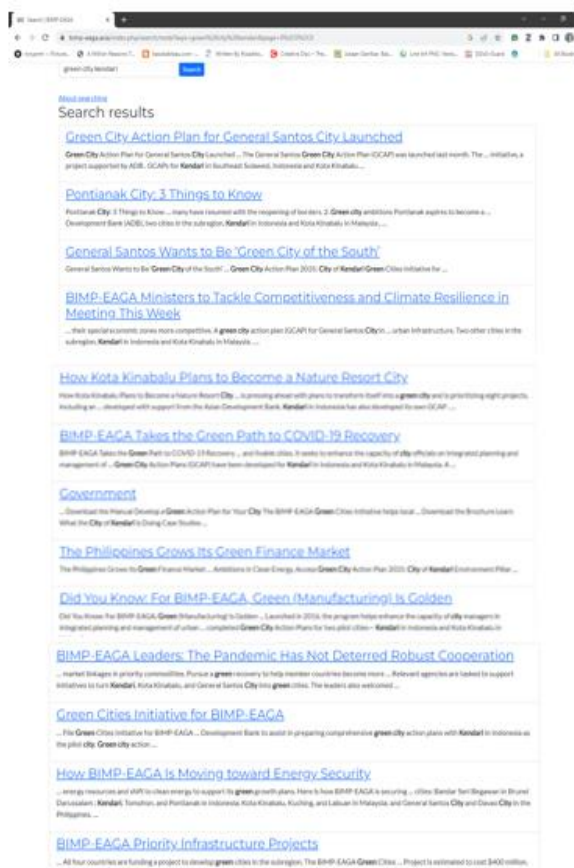




*Source: <https://subregional.ekon.go.id/>*

**Figure 3.** KSR website

In the image above, we can see Indonesia's Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation (SEEC) website, which is a forum for economic cooperation between geographically close regions, including IMT-GT and BIMP EAGA. However, we did not find any information related to the Green City Action Plan: Kendari, even though Kendari's GCAP is overseen by BIMP-EAGA and KESR is supposed to monitor and share information related to the cooperation, but nothing.



source: bimp-eaga.asia

Figure 4. BIMP-EAGA website

Furthermore, the picture above shows the website of BIMP-EAGA (bimp-eaga.asia) with not a single report on the implementation or progress related to the Green City Action Plan program in Kendari. In this case, BIMP-EAGA Asia has only once published a report on the draft GCAP program and strategy in Kendari in May 2016 and no further reports or news on the implementation of these programs were found.



*source: kendarikota.go.id*

**Figure 5.** Kendari City website

Including the Kendari City website (kendarikota.go.id), there is only one news report that the Mayor of Kendari attended the Green City forum in 2020. The rest, there are no more reports or news about the implementation of the Green City Action Plan (GCAP) program, especially in Kendari. So far, I can conclude that large-scale cooperation programs will be difficult to achieve because there are many processes that must be passed and end up in forums or meetings between countries. In addition, the implementation of regional level cooperation programs will go through many stages that make the program hampered, not to mention the effects of COVID-19, many adjustments must be made in the program design that has been made.

## **5. Conclusion**

The Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) cooperation can generally be said to be pursued every year. How they continue to update the cooperation guidelines and the various programs that have been planned in addition to the large increase in investment each year. How it is an effort to equalize the welfare of the sub-regional regions within it. However, during the program that has been designed and started to be published since 2016 until 2023, the results have not been seen to the fullest, in this case the Green City Action Plan (GCAP) Kendari which became the first pilot area in Indonesia.

Through the file GCAP 2035: City of Kendari, we can see that GCAP has 5 priority programs ranging from Improving Sanitation System, Improving City Drainage and Flood Control, Improving Drinking Water Efficiency and Supply, Community Solid Waste Management to Tidal Power Plant in Kendari Bay (pilot).

However, in its implementation until 2023, no reports or news have been found that publicize the implementation of GCAP programs in Kendari through the websites of BIMP-EAGA Asia, KESR, and even Kendari City itself. From this, we can judge the lack of transparency in terms of information, we can indirectly conclude that this cooperation has not gone well in recent years.

Kendari's Green City Action Plan program has been designed to be completed by 2035, so it will take time to see the full results. However, by 2023 we should be able to see progress as the program has been publicized since 2016. It has been about 6 years since the project started, but there is not a single report or news related to the implementation of the program directly in Kendari. On the Kendari City website, there is only one news report that the Mayor of Kendari attended the Green City forum in 2020. From there, we can see that so far, the cooperation still revolves around forums or meetings between countries, not to mention the impact of COVID-19 which certainly affects the program design that has been made for a long time. However, there should still be adaptive actions as well as reports that can be accessed by the public to find out whether this cooperation is running effectively.

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