

SDG Beyond Borders: When Borders... Become Starting Points

A Journey Diary of Students from PSU Pattani in the SDGs + Mobility MaPs 2025 Project



Image 1: Students departing from PSU Pattani, heading to Bangkok

▶ The Beginning of the Journey

At 7:30 AM on July 27, 2025, the wheels of a small van slowly rolled away from the gates of Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus (PSU Pattani). Morning sunlight bathed the road, while shadows of academic buildings and roadside trees gradually passed by their eyes.

Inside the van sat six students from the English Language program of the Faculty of Education, surrounded by luggage filled with clothes, laptop bags, iPads, and small items that contained their dreams within. Some had clear dreams, others held only vague images, but all shared the same destination—Hat Yai Airport, heading north to Bangkok.

This was the first step of a distant journey that might change their lives. Some had never traveled abroad before. Some were uncertain what they would encounter at their destination. But what everyone knew for certain was... this was an opportunity they shouldn't let slip away.

▶ Connecting Hearts at Don Mueang



On the morning of July 28, 2025, soft morning light filtered through the large windows of Don Mueang Airport. The six students from PSU Pattani, met with faculties and students from Mahidol University for the first time. Despite coming from different institutions, different regions, different dialects, and different backgrounds of belief, the smiles and small conversations that began somewhat awkwardly gradually unfolded into a natural warmth, as if everyone had known each other before.

We must thank Mahidol University for opening doors of opportunity, inviting faculty and students from the far south to participate in this valuable project.

After brief greetings and introductions, the entire group began their important journey—from Don Mueang to Jakarta, Indonesia, followed by several more hours by bus into Bandung, a city surrounded by mountains, with fresh air and vibrant life from people of diverse cultures. Stepping out of their comfort zone this time was not merely changing locations, but beginning a path of bonds and friendship that would gradually shape the important foundation of their lives and learning together—memories that would stay with them throughout the entire project and perhaps much longer.



Image 2: Students taking their first group photo at the airport before continuing their journey by bus in Jakarta



▶ Cross-Cultural Classroom



July 29, 2025, was the first day they experienced a cross-cultural classroom officially. Inside the academic building of Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB), students from Thailand and Indonesia gathered enthusiastically. The sounds of conversation blended into diverse languages. The English spoken may have had unclear words or unfamiliar accents, but what was clearest was the energy of young people wanting to understand the world more deeply than before.

During the morning, they learned from experts about Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) concepts, exchanged ideas with international friends, and most importantly—they overcame their fears, dared to step up to the front of the room to share their thoughts, confidently presented ideas, and dared to try even knowing they might make mistakes. Because in this place, "every mistake is not judged, but seen as another step of learning."



Image 3: Students listening to SDG lectures at ITB



Each segment of activities that day was not merely sitting and listening quietly, but truly participating. Students from PSU Pattani took the stage to exchange ideas with friends from ITB and Mahidol University, presenting their own concepts and projects amid the attentive eyes of faculty and experts ready to provide open feedback.

Some might feel nervous, some might stumble in their speech, but these did not become limitations. On the contrary, it made this place a "safe space" where everyone dared to experiment, dared to grow, and learn together.

In the afternoon, the atmosphere remained full of energy. Both Thai and international students worked seriously in groups, from analyzing social and environmental problems, designing solutions, to brainstorming answers that connected with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in real community contexts.

In a classroom where there were no "right" or "wrong" answers, different ideas were not obstacles, but gifts that helped expand each other's perspectives.

During the presentation session, students from PSU Pattani presented two projects from Pattani Province:

- A project to transform food waste from the cafeteria into mosquito repellent products
- A project using Black Soldier Fly larvae to manage organic waste for producing fertilizer and animal feed

Both concepts reflected a simple yet powerful Waste-to-Value thinking approach, and importantly—they didn't arise from textbook pages, but came from listening to community voices, understanding the world, and daring to think and take action.



Image 4: Students presenting SDG projects and exchanging perspectives with friends from different cultures





▶ Listening to the Lebak Siliwangi Community Voice

On July 30, 2025, students visited the Lebak Siliwangi community, a small neighborhood full of life, community ways of living, and stories hidden around street corners. They didn't come here as experts or people with ready-made answers, but as "listeners," "observers," and "learners."

The morning was time for sitting and talking with villagers, asking about their way of life, challenges they faced, and small hopes of people in this area. Every answer received didn't come from textbook interviews, but from simple and sincere conversations.

In the afternoon, each group chose their own path to explore the city:

- Some groups walked along the river, watching small boats and trees casting shadows on the water
- Some groups wandered through alleys decorated with paintings and local artwork
- Some groups chose to capture images of large trees or old wooden houses that, despite being quietly peaceful, were full of unique charm

This exploration walk was filled with smiles, pointing things out, exchanging opinions, and small excitement when discovering things never noticed before. It wasn't just "sightseeing the city," but training both eyes and hearts to be open to "beauty in simplicity"—that might once have been overlooked.



Image 5: Students exploring community ways of life





▶ Gathering Lessons and Preparing for the Next Step

On the morning of July 31, 2025, warm sunlight shone through the bus windows. Thai students from both Mahidol University and PSU Pattani, began the day with actual fieldwork, collecting data for their projects. They walked amid the conversations of villagers, surveyed places with their eyes and hearts, opened notebooks to record every piece of advice from experts, and paused to observe surrounding nature—green forests, rivers, and landscapes that told community stories better than any book.

The next day, they packed their bags, preparing to bid farewell to Bandung. The bus moved along winding roads, gazing through high mountains and wide fields. The green of trees alternated with orange house roofs. The several hours on the bus were filled with laughter, exchanging ideas, and sometimes silence when someone was contemplating what they had learned over the past several days.

On August 2, 2025, in Jakarta, students sat in a circle with advisory teachers. The sound of pens writing on paper mixed with laughter when new ideas emerged. They organized data from fieldwork, preparing for the final presentation. Then everyone discussed and reflected on what they had received—both intentional listening, working with people from different cultures, and viewing problems through perspectives connected to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

These three days might have been just a short period before completing their mission, but they were like assembling puzzle pieces to completion—the big picture of learning that came from taking action, listening to others' voices, and viewing the world with open hearts.



Image 6: Atmosphere of fieldwork data collection for projects



Image 7: Students discussing and reflecting on experiences with project advisors



▶ From Indonesia to the World Stage



On August 4, 2025, when the learning mission in Indonesia ended, students returned to Thailand on August 3 with bags full of small souvenirs and hearts filled with stories, experiences, and friendships that didn't exist in any lesson.

But just the next day, they had to step into a new chapter with a new stage larger than before, with people from various countries waiting to listen. That was The CUPT-CRISU Webinar 2025, an international platform for exchanging sustainability concepts, held online, connecting universities in networks from both Thailand and abroad.

Although it changed from the real classroom at Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB) to computer screens, the power of exchange remained the same. In this virtual meeting room, there were professors, researchers, experts, and students from various regions talking together as equals.

In this event:

- Assistant Professor Dr. Bordin Waelateh was invited as a keynote speaker on "Bridging Sustainability: Integrating ESG into Thai and Indonesian Higher Education," conveying perspectives and experiences connecting sustainability with higher education management in both countries
- Miss Gulwanee Toh-iso, student representative from PSU Pattani, was honored to take the stage on "From Plate to Planet: The Waste Reality," sharing experiences of food waste management projects from the perspective of a student who had worked in real communities in Pattani

From walking narrow alleys in Lebak Siliwangi community to listen to people's voices, to speaking on a virtual stage with audiences from around the world, this journey proved that knowledge, friendship, and inspiration accumulated along the way could enable them to cross geographical borders and cultural differences to become true "change makers" on the world stage.



Image 8: Presentation at The CUPT-CRISU Webinar 2025

From small community stages to international academic platforms—student voices began extending far beyond classrooms. Projects that were once just concepts from a small group of students had now become important conversations in educational circles. Change always starts from small points, but when given opportunities, confidence, and space for expression, that voice can travel farther than anyone expected. Because sometimes, the most valuable thing education gives us may not be just a diploma... but the "voice" we never dared to speak out—until the day we realize that every word we say has meaning.

Student Reflections

Mr. Muhammad Shareef Mayuso, participating student: "Participating in this project in Indonesia made me realize that SDGs are not limited to just environmental issues, but connect to every aspect of our lives. As a young person, I believe everyone should have a role in driving society to improve, and as a future teacher, I hope to bring this knowledge and inspiration to plant in my future students."

Miss Gulwanee Toh-iso, participating student: "Participating in this project taught me how using SDGs as part of social care management creates so much good... This would be impossible without cooperation between educational institutions, communities, and government to develop quality of life for village people. This example shows me that we can develop our home too. What we need, extracted from what I learned from Indonesia, is effort, continuity, and understanding."

Miss Yameela Aming, participating student: "...Change starts from ourselves. The community people I met, they didn't wait for someone to tell them or order them, but chose to change their own behavior... When many people start doing activities together, bigger change can occur. Small things we do every day can drive the world to be better too."

Miss Ninada Haniseng, participating student: "The journey to Indonesia this time was not just visiting a foreign land, but opening new perspectives about sustainable development that doesn't need to start from grand policies, but can begin from small things. This experience made me realize that all 17 goals are not distant or the responsibility of any single agency, but our shared responsibility..."

Miss Nureesun Meesayalong, participating student: "...The journey to Indonesia this time made me dare to dream of a better world, because throughout the time there, I was among people who realized the importance of environmental problems and were committed to developing projects for sustainability..."

Mr. Anupong Maneechot, participating student: "...From seeing examples of communities with strong internal management systems and continuous cooperation between educational sectors, communities, and government, I realized that if we have effort, continuity, and understanding of problems in our own community, we can develop our locality and university society to be sustainable and livable in the same way."

Conclusion

The journey of these six students from the far south, though lasting only a few days, brought them lessons that don't exist in any textbook. They learned that change begins with "listening with an open heart" before thinking of solving problems for anyone. They saw beauty in small things once overlooked and understood that "sustainability doesn't come from going as far as possible, but from looking as deeply as possible."

Moreover, the experience from this journey resulted in all of them learning that... borders... for many people might be just dividing lines... but for them, borders are starting points of journeys that made them see the world more broadly, understand others and themselves more, and discover that... "Great change... can start from ordinary people who dare to step out from where they were."

Despite being just a small group of students from a southern border university, the power of daring to think, daring to take action, and daring to listen made their story travel farther than imagined—and perhaps this itself might be one definition of "education for sustainability."

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August 17, 2025