

**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**

**YOUTH IN MALAYSIA:  
A Review of the Youth Situation and  
National Policies and Programmes**



**UNITED NATIONS**

New York, 2002

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*This publication has been issued without formal editing*

# Foreword

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) initiated a project on capacity-building in HRD policy-making for youth in Asia and the Pacific in collaboration with Queen's University, Canada, in August 1999. The project aimed to strengthen the capacity of governments to formulate and implement, in coordination with the non-governmental organization (NGO) and private sectors, national youth policies and programmes that address the human resources development (HRD) needs of young people in Asia and the Pacific.

In focusing on the needs of youth in the region, the project supports the belief of ESCAP that there are three key issues in providing a voice for youth in society: access and benefit, ability to influence and equity. These three issues are ultimately the pillars of youth participation – to ensure the rights of all youth to have access to opportunities and to play an active role in all spheres of society. This includes all youth, girls and boys, young men and women, rural and urban youth, youth with special needs and marginalized youth. The project recognizes the critical need for youth concerns and issues to be understood and addressed. The best way to do so is to give youth a voice through facilitation of their active participation.

The project included three components: (1) advisory services to the governments of Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam in the establishment or strengthening of national youth coordinating mechanisms for youth policy formulation and implementation; (2) analysis of the youth situation, policies and programmes in the four participating countries and drafting of policy alternatives; and (3) national youth policy dialogues among governments, NGOs and the private sector.

Research on the situation of youth and youth policy in each of the four countries was conducted by a national counterpart organization (NCO). These included the Malaysian Youth Council, Malaysia; the Department of Social Welfare and Development, Philippines; the National Youth Bureau, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand; and the Viet Nam Youth Federation, Viet Nam. This research formed the basis of four country monographs on the youth situation, policies and programmes as they relate to HRD issues of youth education and training, youth employment, youth health and youth rights and participation, including *Youth in Malaysia: A Review of the Youth Situation, Policies and Programmes*.

A series of national policy dialogues was subsequently held in the four countries to discuss the findings of the research. Participants in the dialogues included senior officials from government and non-governmental agencies concerned with youth development. The results of these dialogues have been incorporated in the recommendations section of each of the monographs.

The recommendations that have resulted from these studies will feed into the policy-making process of each of the participating countries. In the case of Malaysia, the research will contribute to the Plan of Action arising from the National Youth Development Policy. In Thailand and Viet Nam, the recommendations will provide input for the National Youth Policy of each country that is currently being drafted. Finally, in the Philippines, the study forms part of the on-going policy discussion process in the country.

This monograph was drafted by the Malaysian Youth Council and finalized by ESCAP and Queen's University, Canada. The process of finalization of the monograph was coordinated by Ms. Sheila Sukonta Thomson during her assignment as a consultant with ESCAP.

As part of ESCAP efforts to promote youth participation, an attempt was made to involve youth and to seek their opinions throughout the research process. In some countries, youth were the principle players in the NCO research teams and they represented their constituents in the national policy dialogues. In other cases, youth were interviewed and their opinions appear in quote form in the monograph. Canadian students from Queen's University also participated in the research process. Each NCO hosted one Canadian student, who carried out focus group discussions and interviews with the youth of that country. Some of the results of these discussions appear in the monograph.

The monograph has six chapters on youth development; youth education; youth health; youth employment; youth participation; and conclusions and recommendations. The first chapter, on youth development, provides an overview of youth participation in national development, followed by a review of the national youth policy and programmes. The chapters on education, health, and employment each begin with an analysis of policy and programmes; this is followed by a quantitative and qualitative analysis of youth issues in the concerned area.

The chapter on youth participation begins with a description of the various youth organizations operating in the country; this is followed by a section in which youth themselves discuss youth issues. The chapter also examines youth participation in politics and the media. Each of the first five chapters ends with a section on the challenges to youth policy in the relevant area. The final chapter of the monograph presents the conclusions and recommendations for further action that have resulted from the research and the national policy dialogues.

Given that the objective of the project was to strengthen the capacity of governments, in coordination with other sectors, to formulate and implement programmes that addressed the HRD needs of youth, it is hoped that, at the local, national, and regional levels, this monograph will encourage the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes and project implementation.

I would like to express our gratitude to Queen's University, Canada, our partner in conceiving and carrying out the project on youth policy-making in Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. We are grateful to Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for their financial support, without which the project would not have been possible. In addition, we would like to thank the Conference Board of Canada, which, as executing agency for the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) Phase II Project, was the mechanism that allowed CIDA to provide the funds for this project.



**KIM HAK-SU**

*Executive Secretary*  
*ESCAP*

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# Message from the Principal and Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University, Canada

I welcome the publication of this monograph on the youth situation and national policies and programmes in Malaysia with great pleasure. This is one of several important outcomes of the project on capacity-building in national youth policy-making in Asia and the Pacific.

Youth are key agents of socio-economic development and technological innovation in the Asia-Pacific region. Canada shares with the member countries of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) involved in the project, such as Malaysia, the view that the well-being of our youth should have a very high priority on the national agenda. Youth policy is an important instrument for promoting greater participation of young people in determining the direction of development in their societies. Identification of the current situation and needs of the youth, and the existing policies and programmes that directly and indirectly affect them, is an essential prerequisite to effective formulation and implementation of policy in which youth can play a positive and active role.

I am proud of this major outcome of the collaborative effort of Queen's University and ESCAP. It is an important contribution to the University's goal of increased internationalization of its programmes and scholarship.

Young Canadian interns and young people from the Asia-Pacific region have played an active role in the preparation of these monographs. My colleagues from Queen's University, who directed this project, along with their colleagues from ESCAP, have shown how a carefully planned and implemented project on a crucial area of concern both in the region and globally, can contribute to the shared objectives of Canada and the Asia-Pacific region, in ensuring a better, self-directed future for the young people of the world.

This monograph is, therefore, a prime example of successful and effective cooperation between a Canadian university committed to the goal of preparing leaders and citizens for a global society, a team of dedicated specialists from the United Nations responsible for promoting human resources development in the region, and host country institutions responsible for ensuring the active participation of youth in national development. I congratulate the Human Resources Development Section of ESCAP; my colleagues from Queen's University, Professor Jayant Lele, Professor Lorna Wright and Professor Audrey Kobayashi; the young Canadian interns associated with the project; and the Malaysian Youth Council for this excellent accomplishment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Leggett', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**WILLIAM C. LEGGETT**

*Principal and Vice-Chancellor  
Queen's University, Canada*



# Abbreviations

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>AIDS</b>    | Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome                               |
| <b>ASTRO</b>   | All-Asian Satellite Television and Radio Operator                |
| <b>AYC</b>     | Asian Youth Council  |
| <b>CAD</b>     | computer-aided design  |
| <b>CAE</b>     | computer-aided engineering                                       |
| <b>CAM</b>     | computer-aided manufacturing                                     |
| <b>CAYC</b>    | Committee for ASEAN Youth Cooperation                            |
| <b>CIDA</b>    | Canadian International Development Agency                        |
| <b>CUEPACS</b> | Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services |
| <b>CPR</b>     | Contraceptive Prevalence Rate                                    |
| <b>DOS</b>     | Department of Statistics   |
| <b>ESCAP</b>   | Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific          |
| <b>EXCO</b>    | Executive Committee  |
| <b>FOMCA</b>   | Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations                   |
| <b>GDP</b>     | gross domestic product   |
| <b>FELDA</b>   | Federal Land Development Authority                               |
| <b>HIV</b>     | Human Immunodeficiency Virus                                     |
| <b>HRD</b>     | human resources development                                      |
| <b>HRDC</b>    | Human Resources Development Canada                               |
| <b>HRDF</b>    | Human Resources Development Fund                                 |
| <b>IKBN</b>    | Institut Kemahiran Belia Negara                                  |
| <b>IPTS</b>    | private higher education institutions                            |
| <b>IT</b>      | information technology   |
| <b>IUD</b>     | intrauterine device  |

# Abbreviations

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>MASCO</b>  | Malaysian Standard Classification of Occupations |
| <b>MEASAT</b> | Malaysia East Asia Satellite                     |
| <b>MOE</b>    | Ministry of Education                            |
| <b>MORD</b>   | Ministry of Rural Development                    |
| <b>MTUC</b>   | Malaysian Trades Union Congress                  |
| <b>MYC</b>    | Malaysian Youth Council                          |
| <b>MOYS</b>   | Ministry of Youth and Sports                     |
| <b>NADI</b>   | National Drug Information System                 |
| <b>NCO</b>    | national counterpart organizations               |
| <b>NCWO</b>   | National Council of Women's Organization         |
| <b>NGO</b>    | non-governmental organizations                   |
| <b>NEP</b>    | new economic policy                              |
| <b>NYCC</b>   | National Youth Consultative Council              |
| <b>PSAT</b>   | Primary School Achievement Test                  |
| <b>RM</b>     | Malaysian Ringgit                                |
| <b>STD</b>    | sexually transmitted disease                     |
| <b>WAY</b>    | World Assembly of Youth                          |

# Contents

|   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| <b>Foreword</b> .....   | iii  |
| <b>Message from the Principal and Vice-Chancellor<br/>of Queen's University, Canada</b> ..... | vii  |
| <b>Abbreviations</b> .....  | ix   |
| <b>I. Youth Development</b> .....   | 1    |
| A. INTRODUCTION .....   | 1    |
| 1. Background.....  | 1    |
| 2. Human resources development achievements .....   | 2    |
| 3. Disparities in equity and access .....   | 3    |
| B. YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK .....  | 4    |
| 1. Definition of youth .....  | 4    |
| 2. Structure and mandate .....  | 5    |
| 3. Youth development policies and plans.....  | 9    |
| 4. Programmes for youth.....  | 13   |
| C. CHALLENGES FOR YOUTH POLICY .....  | 14   |
| <b>II. Youth Education</b> .....  | 17   |
| A. NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY .....  | 17   |
| 1. Background.....  | 17   |
| 2. Education reform.....  | 19   |
| B. THE EDUCATION SYSTEM .....   | 20   |
| 1. Formal education .....   | 20   |
| 2. Non-formal education .....   | 22   |
| C. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS .....  | 22   |
| 1. Primary education .....  | 22   |
| 2. Secondary education .....  | 22   |
| 3. Higher education .....   | 23   |
| 4. Non-formal education .....   | 26   |
| 5. Literacy.....  | 26   |

# Contents

|   | PAGE      |
|---|-----------|
| D. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS .....                                   | 27        |
| 1. Student achievements .....                                   | 27        |
| 2. Education personnel .....                                    | 28        |
| 3. Learning approach.....                                       | 29        |
| E. CHALLENGES FOR EDUCATIONAL POLICY .....                      | 30        |
| <b>III. Youth Health .....</b>                                  | <b>31</b> |
| A. YOUTH HEALTH POLICY.....                                     | 31        |
| 1. Background.....  | 31        |
| 2. Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act 1998.....     | 32        |
| B. NATIONAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM.....                             | 32        |
| 1. Structure .....  | 32        |
| 2. Health care agencies .....                                   | 34        |
| 3. Government expenditure .....                                 | 34        |
| C. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS .....                                  | 34        |
| 1. Mortality .....  | 34        |
| 2. Reproductive health .....                                    | 36        |
| 3. Sexually transmitted diseases.....                           | 40        |
| 4. Substance abuse .....  | 44        |
| D. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS .....                                   | 47        |
| 1. Health personnel.....  | 47        |
| E. CHALLENGES FOR YOUTH HEALTH POLICY .....                     | 48        |
| <b>IV. Youth Employment .....</b>                               | <b>51</b> |
| A. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT POLICY.....                                 | 51        |
| 1. Background.....  | 51        |
| 2. Legislation relevant to youth employment.....                | 53        |
| 3. Government expenditure .....                                 | 54        |
| 4. Government initiatives on youth employment<br>promotion..... | 55        |

# Contents

|  | PAGE      |
|--|-----------|
| B. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS .....                                 | 57        |
| 1. Labour force.....   | 57        |
| 2. Employed youth labour force .....                           | 60        |
| 3. Unemployed youth.....                                       | 64        |
| C. CHALLENGES FOR EMPLOYMENT POLICY .....                      | 65        |
| <b>V. Youth Participation .....</b>                            | <b>67</b> |
| A. OVERVIEW .....  | 67        |
| B. YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS .....                                   | 68        |
| 1. Malaysian Youth Council.....                                | 68        |
| 2. Student organizations .....                                 | 68        |
| 3. Non-student youth organizations .....                       | 69        |
| 4. Mainstreaming youth participation<br>in civil society ..... | 69        |
| C. VOICE OF YOUTH.....   | 71        |
| 1. Youth .....   | 71        |
| 2. Education .....   | 72        |
| 3. Employment.....   | 72        |
| 4. Health .....  | 73        |
| 5. Participation .....   | 73        |
| D. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION .....                               | 74        |
| 1. Voting .....  | 74        |
| 2. Political representation .....                              | 74        |
| E. THE MEDIA.....  | 74        |
| 1. Youth-specific media.....                                   | 74        |
| F. CHALLENGES FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION .....                    | 75        |

# Contents

|  | PAGE      |
|--|-----------|
| <b>VI. Future Directions for Youth Development .....</b> | <b>77</b> |
| A. CONCLUSION .....                                      | 77        |
| B. POLICY GUIDELINES: A SUMMARY .....                    | 79        |
| C. RECOMMENDATIONS.....                                  | 82        |
| 1. National Youth Policy .....                           | 82        |
| 2. Education .....                                       | 82        |
| 3. Health .....  | 83        |
| 4. Employment.....                                       | 85        |
| 5. Participation .....                                   | 85        |
| <b>References .....</b>                                  | <b>87</b> |

## ESSENTIAL DATA FOR MALAYSIA

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Location</b>         | South-East Asia  |
| <b>Coordinates</b>      | 2 30 N, 112 30 E   |
| <b>Area</b>             | Total 329,750 sq km; land 328,550 sq km; water 1,200 sq km   |
| <b>Coastline</b>        | 4,675 km (Peninsular Malaysia 2,068 km, East Malaysia 2,607 km)  |
| <b>Terrain</b>          | Coastal plains rising to hills and mountains   |
| <b>Land use</b>         | Arable land: 3 per cent; permanent crops: 12 per cent; permanent pastures: 0 per cent; forests and woodland: 68 per cent; other: 17 per cent (1993 est.)   |
| <b>Irrigated land</b>   | 2,941 sq km (1998 est.)  |
| <b>Population</b>       | 23,171,000 (2000 est.)   |
| <b>Age structure</b>    | 0-14 years: 33 per cent; 15-24 years: 20 per cent; 60 years and over: 4 per cent (2000 est.)   |
| <b>Religions</b>        | Islam, Buddhism, Daoism, Hinduism, Christianity, Sikhism (Shamanism is practiced in East Malaysia)   |
| <b>Languages</b>        | Bahasa Malay (official), English, Chinese dialects (Cantonese, Mandarin, Hokkien, Hakka, Hainan, Foochow), Tamil, Telugu, Malalam, Panjabi, Thai (several indigenous languages - the largest of which are Iban and Kadazan - are spoken in East Malaysia.) |
| <b>Government</b>       | Constitutional monarchy  |
| <b>Capital</b>          | Kuala Lumpur   |
| <b>Administration</b>   | 13 states and 2 federal territories<br><br><i>Note:</i> the city of Kuala Lumpur is located within the federal territory of Wilayah Persekutuan  |
| <b>Executive branch</b> | <i>Chief of state:</i> Paramount Ruler Tuanku Ja'afar ibni Al-Marhum Tuanku Abdul Rahman (since 26 April 1994)<br><br><i>Head of government:</i> Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad (since 16 July 1981)  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Legislative branch</b>                | <p><i>Cabinet:</i> Cabinet appointed by the prime minister from among the members of Parliament with consent of the paramount ruler</p> <p>Bicameral Parliament consists of nonelected Senate (69 seats; 43 appointed by the paramount ruler, 26 appointed by the state legislatures) and the House of Representatives (192 seats; members elected by popular vote directly weighted toward the rural Malay population to serve five-year terms)</p> |
| <b>Judicial branch</b>                   | Supreme Court, judges appointed by the paramount ruler on the advice of the Prime Minister   |
| <b>Monetary unit and conversion rate</b> | Ringgit (MYR); 1 USD = 3.8 MYR (United Nations official conversion rate in November 2000)  |



# Youth Development I

## A. INTRODUCTION

### 1. Background

The youth of Malaysia have a critical role to play in the country's effort to achieve the status of a fully developed country by the year 2020. Malaysia's development plan, known as Vision 2020, aims to develop all aspects of the country including national unity, social cohesion, economy, social justice, political stability, system of government, quality of life, social and spiritual values and national pride and confidence.

Malaysia's GDP grew at an average rate of 8.4 per cent from 1991 to 1997, and youth were major contributors to this economic success. Rapid economic growth resulted in ample employment opportunities that contributed to higher incomes and improved quality of life, especially among the poor.

The Malaysian national government has demonstrated its commitment to youth through an increase in funds for youth development. The allocated budget for youth programmes rose from RM 1.05 billion under the Sixth Malaysian Plan to RM 2.74 billion under the Seventh Malaysian Plan that began in 1996. Despite this financial commitment, however, youth remain one of the most vulnerable groups in society. Such vulnerability was demonstrated by the impact of Malaysia's recent economic recession particularly on youth.



Malaysia was hard-hit by the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-98 that affected much of Asia. In 1998, Malaysia's GDP growth plummeted to negative 7.5 per cent and its unemployment rate reached 3.9 per cent. Youth were particularly affected by retrenchments due to their lack of seniority. Also, as retrenchment benefits increase with seniority, youth tended to be the first to lose their jobs.

Although economic recovery was underway by the second quarter of 1999 with a growth rate of 4.1 per cent, the Crisis exposed the vulnerability of youth in Malaysia.

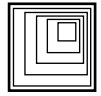
## **2. Human resources development achievements**

Malaysia adopted the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1970 in which reduction and eventual eradication of poverty, irrespective of community, was its main objective. This aim was realized through the adoption of free-market economic policies that embraced privatization and industrial development. Over two decades of sustained economic growth in Malaysia resulted in significant reduction of poverty throughout the country. The national incidence of poverty dropped from 32.1 per cent in 1980 to 6.8 per cent in 1997, with a decrease from 16.3 per cent to 2.4 per cent in urban areas and from 39.5 per cent to 11.8 per cent in rural areas over the same period. (EPU 1999a).

Other factors that contributed to the overall improvement in living conditions of the poor included the implementation of social service programmes to assist the poor in the areas of housing, education and training and income-generation by the Government, NGOs and state-based foundations. Basic social services have been expanded enabling 96.8 per cent of the population to have access to sanitation and 91.2 per cent to clean water in 1997 (DOS 1998a).

Development efforts in the area of education have also recorded considerable success. Malaysia has achieved basic education for all with a net primary enrolment rate of 99.9 per cent in 1997. However, the net enrolment rates were relatively low at 64 per cent at the secondary level in 1997 and 8.3 per cent at the tertiary level in 1998.

In the area of health, basic indicators have shown significant improvements. The infant mortality rate and the under-five mortality rate decreased from 46 and 63 deaths per 1,000 live births respectively in 1970 to 10 and 11 deaths



per 1,000 live births respectively in 1997. The maternal mortality rate in 1997 was also relatively low at 80 per 100,000 live births. Life expectancy also increased by 10.7 years from 1970 to 1997. Males lived to an average age of 69.9 years while females lived to an average of 74.3 years in 1997 (UNDP 1999).

### **3. Disparities in equity and access**

A second principal objective of the New Economic Policy (NEP) adopted by Malaysia in 1970 was to remove the identification of race with certain major economic functions. When Malaysia gained independence from Britain in 1957<sup>1</sup>, the three major ethnic groups of Malays, Chinese and Indians lived and worked as independent groups in society. The majority of the Malays were farmers and fishermen who lived in the rural areas, whereas a small Malay elite dominated the political and administrative structures of the country. The Chinese as largely businessmen and traders lived in the urban areas and largely controlled the economy while the Indians worked primarily on the rubber and subsequently the palm estates.

Although the Bumiputera or “the sons of the soil”, consisting of ethnic Malays and indigenous groups of Sabah, Sarawak, and Peninsular Malaysia, have always formed the majority of the population, they have registered the lowest average income of all the major ethnic groups. In 1997, the mean household income of the Bumiputera was RM 2,038, compared to RM 3,737 for the Chinese and RM 2,896 for the Indians. From 1995 to 1997, the income disparities between the Bumiputera and the Chinese as well as between the Bumiputera and the Indians widened, while the income gap between the Chinese and the Indians narrowed (EPU 1999b). One resulting implication was that the development needs of young Bumiputera are not necessarily the same as the needs of Chinese or Indian youths.

Regionally, economic development has concentrated in four major states: Kuala Lumpur in the services sector, and Selangor, Johor and Pulau Pinang in the industrial sector. As a result these states had the highest average monthly gross household incomes and the lowest incidences of poverty at 0.1 per cent, 1.3 per cent, 1.6 per cent and 1.6 per cent respectively in 1997.

---

<sup>1</sup> The 11 states of Malaya became independent from Britain in 1957. They were joined by the states of Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore in 1963 to form Malaysia from which Singapore broke away in 1965 to become an independent nation (DOI 1998).



In contrast, Sabah had the highest incidence of poverty at 22.1 per cent followed by Kelantan at 19.5 per cent, Terengganu at 17.3 per cent and Kedah at 11.5 per cent. The latter three states, together with Perlis, recorded the lowest average monthly gross household incomes in the same year (DOS 1999b).

By sector, the poorest groups included rubber and coconut smallholders, rice farmers, shifting cultivators, sago producers, fishermen, estate workers, new village residents, agricultural labourers, orang asli (indigenous peoples) and the urban poor (EPU 1999a).

Health services have been unevenly distributed by region, with the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak faring the worst. In 1997, Sabah had only one doctor per 4,195 population and Sarawak had one doctor per 2,722 population, compared with the national average of one doctor per 1,521 population and 1 doctor per 362 population in Kuala Lumpur.

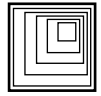
Gender inequalities, although narrowing in the sectors of education and health, still prevail in Malaysia. The female labour participation rate stayed constant between 1980 and 1991 at the low rate of 41.9 per cent, compared to the male rate of 83.8 per cent. Among single women, however, the rate increased from 51 per cent to 58 per cent between 1980 and 1991 (DOS 1995a), as young women have increasingly delayed marriage to enter the labour force. Once married, however, women are likely to leave the labour force to bear children and perform unpaid work in the household. Notably, the GDP per capita for women (USD 5,115) was only half that of men's (USD 11,081) in 1997 (UNDP 1999).

Despite the fast pace of economic and social development in Malaysia over the last 20 years, age, ethnic, regional and gender disparities continue to be significant. Youth are particularly vulnerable to all these points of disparity and continued attention is required to alleviate these gaps.

## **B. YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

### **1. Definition of youth**

The National Youth Development Policy of Malaysia defines youth as people aged between 15 and 40 years. It stipulates further that the main focus of youth development programmes and activities in the country should be young people aged 18 to 25 years (MOYS 1997).



The United Nations defines youth as persons aged between 15 to 24 years. Thus, for cross-country comparison, youth data in this monograph will be disaggregated into the 15 to 24 year and the 25 to 40 year age groups in order to accommodate both the national and the international definitions of youth.

**(a) Youth demographics**

In 2000, there were 10.1 million youth aged 15 to 40 years in Malaysia, an increase of 2.7 million since 1991. The proportion of youth in the population aged 15 to 24 years increased from 18.8 per cent to approximately 19.9 per cent from 1991 to 2000. The proportion of the 25 to 40 year age group grew slightly from 23.4 per cent to approximately 23.6 per cent of the total population in those years. Malaysia's corresponding total populations for 1991 and 2000 were 17.6 million and 23.2 million inhabitants, respectively (ESCAP 2000 and DOS 1995a).

Statistics from the last population census conducted in Malaysia in 1991 provide a breakdown of the youth population by sex, area, and ethnicity. For the 15 to 24 year age group, there were equal numbers of males and females, while in the 25 to 40 year age bracket, the proportion of males was slightly higher than females at 50.3 per cent and 49.7 per cent respectively (1995a).

The majority of youth aged 15 to 24 years old and 25 to 40 years old lived in urban areas at 53.5 per cent and 56.5 per cent respectively. There were equal proportions of males and females in both age groups in rural and urban areas (DOS 1995a).

Ethnically, Bumiputera formed the majority of the youth population at 57.9 per cent. Of that majority, 47.2 per cent of young people were Malay Bumiputera and 10.7 per cent were non-Malay Bumiputera. Of the remaining 52.8 per cent of youth, 24.9 per cent were Chinese, 7 per cent were Indian, 7 per cent were non citizens of Malaysia, and 3.2 per cent belong to other groups (DOS 1995a).

**2. Structure and mandate**

Youth development in Malaysia is managed primarily by three major organizations: the National Youth Consultative Council; the Ministry of Youth and Sports; and the Malaysian Youth Council.



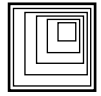
**(a) *National Youth Consultative Council***

The National Youth Consultative Council (NYCC), formed in 1972, is the principal body responsible for youth policy formulation in Malaysia. Chaired by the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS), the NYCC's membership consists of the following:

- Members of the Supreme Council of the Malaysian Youth Council (MYC);
- Members of the MYC's Executive Committee;
- Chairpersons of State Youth Consultative Councils;
- 10 representatives from other federal government agencies including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Human Resources, the Ministry of Entrepreneur Development, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism, the Ministry of Rural Development, the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development, and the Department of Islamic Development;
- 10 experts appointed by the MOYS;
- 3 resource persons on specific issues;
- Senior officers of the MOYS and Directors of State Youth and Sport Departments; and
- Joint Secretary and Director General of MOYS and Secretary General of the MYC.

The objectives of the NYCC are as follows:

- To monitor the implementation of the National Youth Policy;
- To advise the Minister of Youth and Sports in formulating policies on issues related to youth development;
- To act as a consultative and advisory body for youth organizations and the State Youth Consultative Councils; and
- To coordinate the planning and activities of all youth organizations and the State Youth Consultative Councils.



The NYCC convenes twice a year to discuss reports submitted from the participating members as well as other topics of interest.

**(b) Ministry of Youth and Sports**

The Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS), formerly the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, was established in 1964. The Ministry's main function is to contribute to the development of youth policy, through its position as chair of the NYCC, and to serve as the policy's key implementation body.

The MOYS is directed by three Members of Parliament: a Minister, a Deputy Minister, and a Parliamentary Secretary. The Ministry has a Secretary General, a Deputy Secretary General, and Officers from the administrative and the diplomatic corps. The two divisions of the Ministry include the Youth Division and the Sports Division, each headed by a Director General.

The Youth Division consists of the following departments:

- Skill Training Institutes, of which there are seven throughout the country;
- Youth Economic Development Department;
- Youth NGO Development Department; and
- *Rakan Muda* (Youth Partners) Program.

At the state level, the MOYS is represented by the Director of the State Youth and Sports Department. District Youth and Sports Officers are also present at the local level.

**(c) Malaysian Youth Council**

The Malaysian Youth Council (MYC) is a non-governmental voluntary organization, which was formed in 1948. It plays an active role in monitoring the implementation of the National Youth Policy as well as in the policy formulation process through the NYCC. The MYC is also the sole coordinating body for youth and student organizations in Malaysia.



MYC membership is open to national youth organizations and state youth councils which operate in at least 7 out of the 14 states in the country with a membership of at least 2,000 youth. Participating organizations must be voluntary and self-governing and support democratic principles.

The MYC currently has 35 national and state youth-affiliated organizations including student organizations, socio-economic organizations, religious organizations, uniformed organizations and state youth councils.

The student organizations comprise the Federation of Malay Students Unions and the National Union of Malaysian Muslim Students.

The seven socio-economic organizations include the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) Youth Council involving youth living on plantations; the 4B Youth Movement; the Tamil Bell Youth Club; the Young Malaysians Movement including a mix of ethnicities; the United Youth Movement of Malaysia, the Malaysian Youth Hostel Association and the Sabah National Youth Organization.

The religious organizations that form part of the MYC are the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, the Malaysian Hindu Youth Organization, the Young Buddhist Associations of Malaysia, the Young Christian Workers, the Young Men's Christian Association, the Young Methodists Fellowship of Malaysia and Puteri Islam.

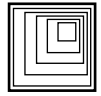
Uniformed organizations include the Boys Brigade, the Girls Brigade, the Girl Guides Association, St. John Ambulance and the Scouts Federation of Malaysia.

Finally, all of the states of Malaysia have a State Youth Council with the exception of Sarawak in which SABERKAS takes the place of a state youth council.

The following are objectives of the MYC:

- To uphold and strengthen the voluntary and democratic principles in the youth movement;
- To make representations and recommendations to the government, statutory bodies or other appropriate bodies on matters affecting youth;
- To establish and maintain relations with other national and international youth councils and organizations;





- To promote international respect, inter-communal understanding, co-operation and harmony through youth work; and
- To promote and encourage interest in the moral, intellectual and physical development of youth in the country among interest groups.

The MYC is affiliated with the World Assembly of Youth (WAY) and representatives of the MYC serve as the President of the Asian Youth Council (AYC) and the Chairperson of the Committee for ASEAN Youth Co-operation (CAYC).

### **3. Youth development policies and plans**

#### ***(a) National Youth Development Policy***

The National Youth Development Policy of Malaysia was first issued by the Cabinet in 1985 and revised in 1997. It serves as a framework for the planning and implementation of youth programmes in the country.

The 1985 Policy recognized youth as a resource with tremendous potential to contribute to the overall development of the country. It had the following principles:

- To uphold the principles of *Rukunegara* (Pillars of the Nation);
- To uphold the spirit of solidarity, volunteerism and autonomy;
- To develop leadership qualities;
- To encourage participation in the decision-making process at all levels;
- To develop high moral values and awareness of the importance of personal health and fitness; and
- To acquire broad knowledge in all relevant fields.

In 1994, the MOYS, the MYC and the Youth Development Unit of the then Malaysian Agriculture University began a review of the National Youth Development Policy of 1985. The review was commissioned for three reasons. First, the Policy, although national in scope, had been adopted by a limited number of groups including the MOYS, the MYC and a few other youth organizations. Second, there was a lack of coordination and focus



among the key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of youth development programmes. Finally, unnecessary competition and duplication of programmes resulted in wastage of resources.

The MYC had further justification for the establishment of a new National Youth Policy:

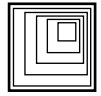
- To establish a holistic view, main objectives, focus and basic values of youth development;
- To identify major target groups in youth development;
- To provide common and mutual understanding on the importance and areas of youth development among all concerned groups and individuals;
- To provide a national framework for the development of youth programmes and determining of priorities; and
- To create a means by which progress in youth development can be measured.

The revised National Youth Development Policy was promulgated in 1997. The revision process involved all the main players in youth development work in the country, including the MOYS, the MYC and the NYCC, and received final approval from the Cabinet.

In September 1995, the MOYS presented a Draft of the Review of the National Youth Policy of 1985 that contained a proposal for the revised National Youth Development Policy. The draft was reviewed by some 100 individuals and organizations working in the area of youth development throughout the country.

With the MOYS draft, the MYC president convened a special discussion with the Executive Committee (EXCO) members. The MYC then produced an alternative policy paper that outlined the necessary formulation procedure.

The formulation process included the convening of several gatherings including a national youth dialogue, a MYC Special Exco meeting, a meeting between the MYC and the MOYS, a discussion with two groups of



university students at seminars, and consultations with some 30 students from three secondary schools. The MYC draft was approved at a Supreme Council Meeting held in December 1995.

A NYCC meeting was convened in the same month to review the MYC draft, and a NYCC Drafting Committee was subsequently formed to amend and finalize the MYC draft before submission to the Cabinet. The NYCC Draft was circulated by the MOYS to all relevant government ministries and agencies for comments.

The National Youth Development Policy was officially launched by the then Minister of Youth and Sports Tan Sri Muhyiddin Mohd Yassin at the NYCC Conference on 8 December 1997.

The National Youth Development Policy of 1987 has the following as its main objective:

*To establish a holistic and harmonious Malaysian youth force imbued with strong spiritual and moral values, who are responsible, independent and patriotic; thus, serving as a stimulus to the development and prosperity of the nation in consonance with Vision 2020.*

The Policy includes seven strategies:

- Enhancement of the knowledge base in various subjects to develop the competence of youth;
- Inculcation of moral values and development of a positive and creative attitude in youth;
- Equipping youth with state-of-art technical knowledge and vocational skills, as well as involving them in entrepreneurial activities in line with the demands of nation-building;
- Engagement of youth in societal and voluntary activities that lead to a healthy, active and dynamic lifestyle that would nurture youth into responsible leaders of high caliber;
- Encouragement of partnership and cooperation amongst government agencies, NGOs and the private sector for the benefit of youth development; and
- Encouragement of youth to further promote closer ties and international networking with international communities (MOYS 1997).



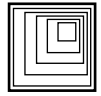
The National Youth Development Policy identifies an Action Plan to achieve its stated goals. The plan has eight main steps:

- To provide knowledge-based training programmes jointly organized by public sector agencies, youth organizations, NGOs and the private sector;
- To strengthen leadership and self-development programmes that can further develop self-sustaining familial, religious and social institutions, thus enhancing the efficiency of roles played by youth;
- To upgrade skills development training and to create entrepreneurial and commercial opportunities that will propel youth to become independent, competent, and capable of pursuing successful careers;
- To empower youth organizations so that they capture the interests, commitment and enthusiasm of young people and activities planned by the society;
- To provide opportunities and facilities for the self-development of young people in social and economic functions;
- To enhance the spirit of volunteerism and patriotism through voluntary social work;
- To ensure the understanding of youth in matters of globalization and the importance of international networking and partnership with governmental agencies, NGOs and the private sector; and
- To provide the necessary infrastructure and mechanism for youth activities relating to research, assessment and evaluation (MOYS 1997).

**(b) Seventh Malaysian Plan**

The Seventh Malaysian Plan adopted in 1996 was the country's first development plan to include a specific chapter on youth. According to the Youth in Development chapter of the Plan, the thrust of youth development would be to provide youth with the necessary skills to increase their participation and contribution to nation-building, as well as to develop their leadership qualities and inculcate positive values among them.

The aim outlined in the Plan was to nurture a generation of youth who are educated, skilled, disciplined and imbued with leadership qualities. Also youth should possess high moral values.



Youth participation in sports and culture would also be enhanced according to the Plan to provide a vehicle for solidarity, comradeship and esprit de corps among the various ethnic groups. Also, sports and culture could serve to promote the country at the international level.

Development programmes to be implemented as outlined in the Plan include provision of greater accessibility to youth through capacity-building of existing educational and training facilities; implementation of distance education programmes in various tertiary institutions; enhancement of non-formal education; and promotion of awareness on the importance of and opportunities for lifelong education. These programmes are aimed at improving opportunities for youth including those currently employed, to pursue their education and training through formal and non-formal means.

#### **4. Programmes for youth**

Several youth development programmes have been implemented by the Government, NGOs and the private sector during the period of the Seventh Malaysia Plan from 1996 to 2001. Efforts have been made to strengthen the management and implementation capacity of public sector agencies responsible for youth development in order to ensure that programmes are effectively implemented.

The role of youth organizations is to be broadened, particularly to promote the spirit of voluntarism among youth. Youth organizations would be entrusted to mobilize youth to fulfil the objectives of national unity and economic and socio-political stability while concurrently preserving the cultural heritage and maintaining national security.

Further research would be conducted, in collaboration with institutions of higher learning, on various aspects of youth development. These research efforts would assist the Government to formulate policies, strategies and programmes for youth development.

Youth development programmes listed under the Seventh Malaysia Plan includes leadership training, skills training, entrepreneurial development, healthy lifestyle programmes, sports programmes, cultural programmes, and preventive and rehabilitative programmes.

An ongoing healthy lifestyle programme is the Rakan Muda (Young Friends) programme that is aimed at providing options for youth to practice a healthy lifestyle and to utilize their free time productively.



Between 1995 and 1998, about 762,000 youths participated in nine Rakan Muda lifestyle programmes. Of the total, 56 per cent were female and 41 per cent were from rural areas.

The development programmes are implemented by various ministries, departments and agencies.

### **C. CHALLENGES FOR YOUTH POLICY**

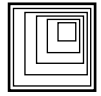
Malaysia's rapid economic growth over the past several decades has resulted in improved living conditions for its citizens, including the youth. Overall, the incidence of poverty has dropped, basic social services have expanded, educational attainment has risen, and basic health indicators have improved.

Disparities in equity and access to resources, however, still exist in the country. Although the majority of the population is Bumiputera, followed by Chinese and Indians, the highest income levels are found among the Chinese, followed by the Indians and the Bumiputera. By region, Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Johor and Pulau Pinang are the most developed area, whereas Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah, Perlis and Sabah are the poorest. Gender differences also remain with the average GDP for males twice that of females. All of these disparities have had a significant impact on youth.

In order to achieve the status of a developed nation, the Government of Malaysia must continually focus on equitable economic growth and development.

The National Youth Development Policy of 1997 established a framework for strengthened planning, implementation and evaluation of youth development programmes in the country. The Plan of Action contained within the Policy could be further strengthened through setting time frames for development targets.

The development process of the National Youth Development Policy was comprehensive involving all of the major national youth development organizations that in turn engaged youth groups throughout the country in discussions. The monitoring of policy implementation should be equally participatory with youth involved in the process.



The Seventh Malaysia Plan represented a breakthrough for youth, as a youth chapter was included for the first time in a national plan of the country. The inclusion of the youth chapter as well as a budget increase designated for youth, from RM 1.05 billion to RM 2.74 billion, demonstrate the Government's commitment to youth development. However, the monitoring of the youth development plans and programmes will continue to be important in order to track the ability of these initiatives to improve economic, education and health status of the majority of youth who are Bumiputera. The distribution of resources to ensure equitable development among youth particularly requires continued attention.

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# Youth Education

# II

## **A. NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY**

### **1. Background**

Malaysia's national education policy has been formulated in the context of the country's aim to attain developed nation status by 2020. The education system has been reformed to ensure the development of a highly educated, highly skilled and strongly motivated professional workforce.

The Government has facilitated changes and sought innovative approaches to expand the educational base. The strategies for growth and development of the education sector under the Seventh Malaysian Plan (1996-2000) represented a significant departure from previous plans. In the past, the Government emphasized professional over technical education which contributed to an oversupply of professionals and academics and shortage of technicians. The current plan provides more attention to technical training and vocational education as well as to science and technology. In order to develop qualified human resources to carry out research and development activities in the fields of science and technology, the Strategic Action Plan of the Ministry of Education has set the target of achieving a ratio of 60 to 40 between science and technology and arts students at the tertiary level.

Information technology has also been incorporated in education. The Ministry of Education has undertaken an initiative to establish a Smart School programme, which comprises schools equipped with computers to promote information technology among students.



The Government has also adopted a Malaysia Incorporated approach to education in order to encourage the private sector to participate in education. This strategy has resulted in an increase in educational opportunities at the tertiary level, including degree, diploma and certificate level courses. In recent years, the Government has promoted the establishment of public and private institutions of higher learning to fulfil Malaysia's desire to become a centre of educational excellence. Large corporate organizations, such as Tenaga Nasional, Telekom Malaysia and Petronas, have been encouraged to establish universities to promote science and technology. By building a world-class system that is flexible and innovative, the Government hopes to create in Malaysia a regional education hub that is a centre for educational excellence.

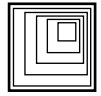
In keeping with its objective of providing highly skilled human resources necessary for the development of the nation, the Government has accorded high priority to education. The Seventh Malaysia Plan allocated RM 11.1 billion over five years to the education sector. Furthermore, during the mid-term review, this budget allocation was raised to RM 16.8 billion, an amount constituting 18.7 per cent of the total public development budget. This upward adjustment reflected the priority given to the development of human resources by the Government (EPU 1999b).

The highest proportion of the education budget was allocated to tertiary education (see Table 2-1). Following the mid-term review, the share given to tertiary education increased from 25.4 per cent to 31.1 per cent. Secondary

**Table 2-1: Budget allocation under the Seventh Malaysia Plan for Education in both the original and the revised plans, 1996-2000 (in per cent)**

| <i>Education</i>                      | <i>Original</i> | <i>Revised</i> |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Pre-school                            | 1.2             | 0.7            |
| Primary education                     | 12.1            | 13.7           |
| Secondary education                   | 23.8            | 21.1           |
| Government & government aided schools | 16.2            | 14.6           |
| MARA junior science college           | 3.4             | 2.6            |
| Technical & vocational schools        | 4.2             | 3.9            |
| Tertiary education                    | 25.4            | 31.1           |
| Teacher education                     | 4.1             | 2.0            |
| Other educational support programmes  | 9.6             | 10.3           |
| Total                                 | 100             | 100            |

**Source:** EPU 1999b



education received 21.1 per cent of the budget. Government and government aided schools received 14.6 per cent, and primary education was allocated 13.7 per cent of the total education budget.

## **2. Education reform**

The Government's attempts to make the Malaysian education system increasingly market-centred have been facilitated by the promulgation of several bills. These include the Education Act (1996); the National Council on Higher Education Institutions Act (1996); the Private Higher Education Institutions Act (1996); the National Accreditation Board Act (1996); the Universities and University Colleges (Amendment) Act (1996); and the National Higher Education Fund Board Act (1997). The first three of these laws are discussed below.

### **(a) Education Act (1996)**

The objectives of the Education Act of 1996 include the following:

- To develop the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner;
- To produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God;
- To produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being as well as of contributing to the betterment of the society and the nation at large.

These objectives are embedded in the National System of Education that provides for the national language as the main medium of instruction, a national curriculum, and standardized examinations. The Education Act of 1996, apart from outlining a National System of Education, provides for a varied and comprehensive education that is expected to fulfill Malaysia's needs and promote national unity through cultural, social, economic and political development.



***(b) Private Institutions of Higher Learning Act (1996)***

The Private Institutions of Higher Learning Act provides for the regulation of establishment, registration, management, supervision and control of private institutions by the Ministry of Education.

***(c) Universities and University Colleges Act (1996)***

The Universities and University Colleges (Amendment) Act provides for, among other things, the establishment, maintenance and administration of universities and university colleges. The Act also imposes certain prohibitions on students and their organizations. This topic is further addressed in Chapter V on Youth Participation.

**B. THE EDUCATION SYSTEM**

**1. Formal education**

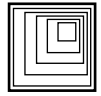
***(a) Structure***

The National Education System, as stipulated in the Education Act of 1996, encompasses pre-school, primary, secondary, post-secondary and higher education. Pre-school consists of one to two years and primary school comprises Grades 1 to 6. Secondary school is divided into two levels: lower-secondary, which lasts for three or four years in the case of students who take a Remove Class;<sup>1</sup> and upper-secondary, which is two years in duration. Post-secondary school lasts for two years and prepares students for higher education in colleges, polytechnics, universities and other institutions of higher learning.

The age of admission to the first year of primary education is six years. Promotion to the next grade is automatic. Continuous school-based assessment is done at all levels. At the end of primary school, students take a public examination.

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<sup>1</sup> A Remove Class is a preparatory year prior to University for those students who have not undergone schooling in the national language. Students who have studied in Chinese and Tamil schools, for example, often take a Remove Class before entering university.



There are three types of primary schools in Malaysia: National Schools, National-type Chinese Schools and National-type Tamil Schools. National Schools use the national language as the main medium of instruction as well as the national curriculum as prescribed by the Minister of Education. The Chinese and Tamil schools use Chinese and Tamil respectively as their main medium of instruction, but the national language and English are compulsory subjects of instruction in these schools.

Pupils who complete the six years of primary education at the Chinese and the Tamil schools are automatically admitted to national schools. In most cases, however, they have to undergo a one-year adjustment period (Remove Class), before enrolling in the first year of the mainstream secondary school.

For gifted students, an assessment examination was introduced in 1996 to allow students in Grade 3 to skip Grade 4 if they obtain a high score on the test. Successful students move on to Grade 5 in the following year.

After three years at the lower-secondary level, students are required to pass an exam in order to enter upper-secondary school. There are two fields of study at the upper-secondary level, academic (including technical) and vocational. After upper-secondary school, students must pass an examination to obtain a Malaysian Certificate of Education or a Malaysian Certificate of Vocational Education. These students can then proceed to post-secondary school for a two-year period. Passing the exam at the culmination of that level grants students a Higher School Certificate, allowing them to become eligible to apply for admission into colleges, polytechnics, universities and other institutions of higher learning.

### ***(b) Responsible government agencies***

The Ministry of Education is the primary ministry responsible for the education and training sector in Malaysia. Other ministries are also involved in education and human resources training. These ministries include the Ministry of Youth and Sports; the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment; the Ministry of Information; the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development; the Ministry of Human Resources; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism; the Ministry of Rural Development; and the Ministry of Entrepreneur Development.



The National Education System has three categories of educational institutions: those established and maintained by the Minister of Education; those that receive financial aid from the Government; and those that are established and maintained by private organizations.

## **2. Non-formal education**

Unemployed and out-of-school youth can attend skills training centres that have been set up to meet their needs. These centres, which are managed by various government agencies, provide formal and non-formal training to both youth and adults between the ages of 15 to 40 years whose education ranges from primary to tertiary level.

The centres conduct training courses with the aim of imparting technical know-how to the participants in order that they may qualify for employment in various industries or initiate their own businesses.

## **C. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS**

### **1. Primary education**

#### **(a) Primary net enrolment rate**

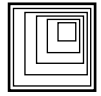
With a net primary enrolment rate of 99.9 per cent in 1997, Malaysia has been successful in ensuring primary education for all its youth. The total number of students enrolled at the primary level increased from 2.8 million in 1995 to 2.89 million in 1998 (EPU 1999b).

#### **(b) Primary cohort survival rate**

Some 96 per cent of students who entered Grade 1 in 1989 completed Grade 6. This figure improved further to 97.4 per cent by 1993 (EFA forthcoming). The system is sufficiently flexible to allow some students to drop out of the public school system to enroll in private schools. The Malaysian government does not publish statistics on drop-out rates, however, and disaggregated data by region, sex or ethnicity for the primary cohort survival rate is unavailable.

### **2. Secondary education**

The policy of Ministry of Education (MOE) policy of extending access to basic education has made 11 years of basic education free and accessible to all students. Although education is not compulsory, this policy assures



every student in primary school a place in secondary school. High transition rates from primary to secondary education have therefore been observed in Malaysia (EFA forthcoming).

**(a) Secondary net enrolment rate**

The net secondary school enrolment rate was 64 per cent in 1997 (UNDP 1999). Of the remaining youth eligible for secondary education, some have dropped out while others have chosen to continue their studies at either religious or private Chinese schools. Statistics on such educational preferences are not maintained by the government.

Enrolment in government and government-aided schools at the secondary level increased from 1.63 million in 1995 to 1.74 million in 1998 (EPU 1999b). Data on secondary school cohort survival rates, drop-out rates, survival rates and completion rates were unavailable.

**3. Higher education**

The minimum qualification required for entry into institutions of higher learning is the successful completion of the Malaysian Certificate of Education or the Malaysian Higher School Certificate or its equivalent.

**(a) University participation rate**

The university participation rate improved from 1.6 per cent of the population in 1980 to 8.2 per cent in 1998. The total enrolment in public universities for the 1997 academic session increased significantly to approximately 200,000 enrollees from about 36,000 enrollees in 1980. In addition, the number of students reported registered for the distance learning programme rose from 757 in 1980 to 24,987 in 1997 (EPU 1999b).

The higher rate of participation resulted from the increased capacity of public universities, as well as from the introduction of the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act of 1996, which provided for the establishment of private universities. Student enrolment at the first degree level at public institutions increased from approximately 79,000 in 1995 to nearly 137,000 in 1998. At the certificate and diploma levels, reported student enrolment increased from 60,036 in 1995 to 83,837 in 1998.



Arts courses (including arts and humanities, economics and business, and law) remained the most popular degree courses at local public educational institutions, constituting 53 per cent of all student enrolment in 2000. The proportion of students enrolled in arts courses decreased from 60 per cent in 1995 to 55 per cent in 1998. In contrast, enrolment in science courses and technical courses increased from 24 per cent in 1995 to 27 per cent in both 1998 and 2000 (see Table 2-2). This increase reflects the Government's increased focus on science and technology.

**Table 2-2: Proportional enrolment for first degree courses at local public educational institutions, 1995-2000**

| <i>Course</i>   | <i>Enrolment</i> |               |               |
|---|------------------|---------------|---------------|
|   | <i>1995 %</i>    | <i>1998 %</i> | <i>2000 %</i> |
| Arts (Arts & humanities <sup>1</sup> , Economics & business <sup>2</sup> , Law)   | 60               | 55            | 53            |
| Science (Medicine & dentistry, Agriculture & related sciences <sup>3</sup> , Pure sciences <sup>4</sup> , Others <sup>5</sup> ) | 24               | 27            | 27            |
| Technical (Engineering, Architecture & town planning, Survey, Others <sup>6</sup> )   | 16               | 18            | 20            |
| TOTAL   | 100              | 100           | 100           |

**Source:** EPU 1999b

**Notes:**

- <sup>1</sup> Includes art and design, Islamic studies, languages, library science, literature, Malay culture, social science, education, arts and communications.
- <sup>2</sup> Includes accountancy, agri-business, business management, resource economics and mass communications.
- <sup>3</sup> Include human science and human development.
- <sup>4</sup> Refers to biology, chemistry, mathematics and physics.
- <sup>5</sup> Includes applied science, environmental studies, food technology, pharmacy and science with education.
- <sup>6</sup> Includes property management.

Enrolment at private higher educational institutions (IPTS) increased from approximately 129,000 students in 1995 to about 173,300 students in 1998, an increase by 32.6 per cent. In 1998, non-Bumiputera students made up 65.5 per cent of total enrolment at IPTS whereas only 32.8 per cent comprise





Bumiputera students (see Table 2-3). The proportion of Bumiputera students enrolled in IPTS was much lower than their proportion at 60.6 per cent of the general population, according to the 1991 Census. Chinese students accounted for 28.1 per cent of the IPTS population; Indian students made up 7.9 per cent; and other non-designated students accounted for the remaining 3.4 per cent.

**Table 2-3: Private higher education student enrolment by ethnicity, as of 31 December 1997**

| <i>Ethnicity</i> | <i>Students enrolled</i> | <i>Proportion of total enrolments</i> |
|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Bumiputera       | 48,072                   | 32.89                                 |
| Non-Bumiputera   | 95,731                   | 65.51                                 |
| Foreigners       | 2,339                    | 1.60                                  |
| TOTAL            | 146,142                  | 100                                   |

**Source:** MOE 1999

On average, IPTS tuition fees were much higher than the public institutions of higher learning. Generally, the fees for IPTSs located in the Central Zone, including Klang Valley, were higher than the fees for IPTSs in other locations.

The most popular course of study at IPTSs was Business and Management. Computer and Information Technology was the second most popular subject, followed by Engineering and Technical Skills.

**(b) Vocational training**

Under the Seventh Malaysian Plan, a total of 4,072 youth were trained in various vocational fields, including hospitality and information technology (IT), at the national youth training institutes of the Institut Kemahiran Belia Negara (IKBN). Another 12,000 youth undertook short training courses in various trades offered by the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS) (EFA forthcoming).

**(c) Barriers to accessing higher education**

In March 1998, all public universities were corporatized with the objective of providing these institutions with greater autonomy in management and operations, as well as increased flexibility in the recruitment and



remuneration of teaching staff. Newly incorporated institutions were also allowed to seek funding from external sources based on business plans approved by the Government.

#### **4 Non-formal education**

Activities under the Adult Education Programme include work-oriented classes for women in technical fields traditionally dominated by men, including crop production, animal rearing, aquaculture and other new vocational skills (EFA forthcoming).

Various literacy programmes, provided for adults, have been generated in support of life-long education goals. A multi-pronged approach has been adopted to eradicate illiteracy with the extension of universal education to 11 years of schooling. (EFA forthcoming).

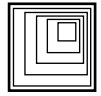
Among the efforts to reduce adult literacy is the implementation of the adult functional literacy and the reading habit promotion programmes (Gerakan Membaca). These have been made readily available by the government through the Ministry of Rural Development (MORD) and other ministries. The programmes are specifically designed to meet the needs of lower income groups. There are neither age limits for entrance into these programmes nor restrictions based on sex (EFA forthcoming).

Malaysia has introduced a special functional literacy curriculum designed to meet the needs of the target group. In addition to the curriculum, literacy programmes are incorporated with other socio-economic programmes as the sole provision of educational services has not proven to be a sufficient incentive for the poor to learn. It is important to note that income-generating programmes have been more successful as the point of entry for successful literacy programmes (EFA forthcoming).

In states such as Sabah and Sarawak, remoteness, and poor communication infrastructure have deterred some people from attending literacy classes. In other states as well, extreme poverty of certain isolated communities has also been a discouraging factor for literacy programmes (EFA forthcoming).

#### **5. Literacy**

Youth-specific literacy rates are unavailable in Malaysia. Among the general population, any person above ten years of age is considered literate if he or she can read and write a simple letter in a particular language. The literacy rate has increased significantly from 72.2 per cent in 1980 to 93.7 per cent in 1998 (EPU 1999b).



The Education for All (EFA) 2000 Assessment for Malaysia found a high level of literacy among those aged 15 years and above throughout the country. Improvements in literacy levels can be attributed to increased participation and retention rates in primary education as well as the effect of government programmes to expand literacy (EFA forthcoming).

In 1991, the Department of Statistics (DOS) found that the literacy rate for Bumiputeras was 85 per cent, compared with 88 per cent among Chinese and 89 per cent among Indians. Literacy rates were higher in urban areas than in rural areas at 90 per cent and 80 per cent respectively. For Bumiputeras, the literacy rate was 80 per cent in rural areas, and 93 per cent in urban areas. The urban-rural differentials in literacy rates did not vary significantly among Chinese and Indians citizens.

A considerable difference in literacy rates also existed by state, with higher literacy rates in the more urbanized areas such as Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Penang and lower literacy rates in the more rural states of Sabah, Sarawak and Kelantan in 1991.

Non-Malaysian citizens, including migrant labourers, had relatively lower literacy rates than those of Malaysian citizens (DOS 1995a).

## **D. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

### **1. Student achievements**

#### ***(a) Primary schools***

Learning achievement at the national level has been measured through the Primary School Achievement Test (PSAT) that is administered at the end of primary school education. In 1997, approximately 96 per cent and 81.4 per cent of all enrollees exceeded the minimum level of achievement in reading and writing respectively. This represented an improvement from 1994, when the rates were 95 per cent and 78.3 per cent respectively. Female pupils recorded higher averages than males in the PSAT.

An upward trend in numeracy skills began in 1994, when some 88 per cent of all enrollees achieved the national minimum level of mastery. This figure increased to more than 92 per cent in 1995.

Science performance was first assessed in 1997, with 76.3 per cent of students exceeding the minimum level. In 1998, this proportion increased slightly to 76.5 per cent (EFA forthcoming).



**(b) Secondary schools**

The performance of students in science and mathematics is to be enhanced through the development of improved teaching and learning materials and methods. In addition, the establishment of some 2,250 additional science laboratories has been planned, and a further 3,750 science and mathematics teachers will be recruited. Computer education and training will also be further intensified (EFA forthcoming).

**(c) Tertiary schools**

A shift towards higher qualifications for entrance into tertiary schools was evident in Malaysia between 1980 and 1991. The average annual growth rates were the highest among the population with higher education for those possessing diplomas/certificates and degrees.

By ethnic group, certificates were held by 51 per cent of the Indian population, 41 per cent of the Chinese population, and 30 per cent of the Bumiputera population. At the higher certificate levels<sup>2</sup>, however, the Chinese recorded the highest rate at 6 per cent, while only 4 per cent of the Bumiputera and the Indians held such qualifications (DOS 1995a).

**2. Education personnel**

**(a) Teacher training**

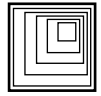
Graduates of teacher training colleges, holding a certificate or a diploma in teaching, are qualified to teach in primary schools, whereas only university graduates with a post-graduate diploma in teaching can teach in secondary schools.

Currently there are two categories of teachers in primary schools: untrained teachers and trained teachers. Untrained teachers are those with academic qualifications who have not undergone any teacher training, while trained teachers have undergone teacher training.

There was a steady increase in the percentage of trained teachers between 1991 and 1998; in 1998, only five per cent of teachers were untrained (EFA forthcoming).

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<sup>2</sup> See Section B.1.a for definition of higher certificate.



The largest proportion of untrained teachers was located in Sabah and Kelantan. Both of these states are large and contain several isolated schools which are unpopular among teachers. Staff quarters have been built in those areas in an effort to attract more trained teachers.

The Government has plans to intensify in-service training programmes and to expand opportunities for teachers to pursue further studies at the diploma and degree levels. Teachers are also encouraged to upgrade their skills in the use of multimedia and computers in teaching and learning processes. It is unclear, however, how these plans would be achieved given the cutback in funding for teacher training under the revised Seventh Malaysia Plan (see Table 2.1).

**(a) *Teacher-student ratios***

The quality of education has been influenced by the teacher-student ratio in primary and secondary schools. The primary school student-teacher ratio improved from 27.3 to 18.7 students for every teacher between 1980 and 1998. Similarly, the student-teacher ratio for secondary schools improved from 22.5 to 18.5 students for every teacher between 1980 and 1998 (EPU 1999b).

**3. Learning approach**

As part of the effort to improve the quality of education, the Ministry of Education has initiated the Smart School Programme to produce a new generation of IT-literate Malaysians who are creative and innovative, adept in new technologies, and able to access and manage information. Schools and universities are taking up the challenge of globalization by adjusting their curricula and programmes as well as their delivery systems.

The Ministry has encouraged the use of multimedia and other materials in teaching and learning processes. The computer-in-education programme has equipped several schools with computer laboratories.

The Ministry has also tried to ensure that the quality of the teaching is maintained and enhanced. In this connection, it plans to intensify in-service training programmes and to expand opportunities for teachers to pursue further studies at the diploma and the degree levels.



## **E. CHALLENGES FOR EDUCATIONAL POLICY**

Malaysia has made significant advances in the area of higher education that are in keeping with the needs of its economy. IT has been introduced into the school curricula, and enrolment in the fields of science and technology has increased in recent years. Investment in tertiary education has commanded the highest proportion of the national budget for education. Issues of equity and increased access to education, however, need to be addressed beyond the primary level, the only level wherein universal education has been achieved.

There is also a need to differentiate among groups which have benefited from educational reforms and those which have not. Disparities in access to education are difficult to ascertain, however, since educational statistics are currently not disaggregated to reveal the gaps in the system. Net enrolment rates, completion rates and drop-out rates should be published. Furthermore, these data should be disaggregated by sex, region, and ethnicity.

# Youth Health

# III

## **A. YOUTH HEALTH POLICY**

### **1. Background**

The National Health Policy in Malaysia pertains to youth as part of the general population, but no youth specific health policy yet exists. The Government's primary aim in the area of health is to ensure that all individuals attain and maintain a health status that will enable them to pursue a socially and economically productive life.

The Government's main health care objective is to continually improve the quality of health care services provided to the general population in both urban and rural areas, and in all the states. It has implemented preventive programmes and expanded health facilities to widen coverage and accessibility of curative and rehabilitative health services in the country.

Health services for the general public have been expanded through the creation of new hospitals, as well as through a strategy to decentralize outpatient services by establishing clinics in both urban and rural areas. Increasing demands for human resources in an expanding health sector have been met by various training programmes and through the expansion of existing facilities.

As an integral part of the preventive and promotive health programme, the Healthy Lifestyle campaign has been implemented with the co-operation of various agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The campaign



has emphasized the prevention of diabetes in 1996, promotion of healthy diet and nutrition in 1997, and exercise and fitness in 1998. A health programme, Program Sihat Tanpa AIDS Untuk Remaja (PROSTAR), designed to promote a healthy lifestyle and prevent HIV/AIDS infection among youth has also been organized.

The Government has expanded the coverage of safe water and proper sanitation throughout the country. In 1997, 91.2 per cent of the rural population had access to a safe water supply, while 96.8 per cent of them had access to of sanitary facilities. The increase in the coverage of safe water and proper sanitation helped to reduce the incidence of waterborne diseases such as cholera and typhoid from 2,209 and 906 cases in 1995 to 391 and 836 cases in 1997, respectively (DOS 1998b).

## **2. Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act 1998**

The Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act was introduced in 1998 to replace the Private Hospitals Act of 1971. The 1998 Act reinforced the changing role of the Ministry of Health from a facilitator to that of a regulator of health care facilities and services.

The 1998 Act empowered the Ministry to regulate the maintenance of safety and the distribution of services, quality care and fees. The Act requires private sector health care providers to adopt a caring concept and provide a wider scope of affordable health care.

## **B. NATIONAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**

### **1. Structure**

Malaysia has an efficient health care system that extends to all areas of the country. From 1993 to 1998, health services, such as health clinics<sup>1</sup> and rural clinics<sup>2</sup>, were expanded considerably in order to render health services accessible to people living in rural areas. Private hospitals and medical services, concentrated in urban areas, have also been upgraded.

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<sup>1</sup> Health clinic refers to main health centres and health sub-centres.

<sup>2</sup> Rural clinics refers to midwives clinics cum quarters and clinics located in rural areas.





The private to public hospital ratio was as high as 22.5 to 1 in Kuala Lumpur, 5 to 1 in Selangor, and 4.6 to 1 in Pulau Pinang. In Sarawak, Sabah, Terengganu, Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis and Pahang, however, public hospitals outnumbered private hospitals (see Table 3-1).

**Table 3-1: Number of health clinics, rural clinics, public hospitals and private hospitals by area in 1997**

|                 | <i>Health clinics</i> | <i>Rural clinics</i> | <i>Public hospitals</i> | <i>Private hospitals</i> |
|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Johor           | 87                    | 271                  | 11(a)                   | 39                       |
| Kedah           | 54                    | 225                  | 9                       | 12                       |
| Kelantan        | 58                    | 199                  | 8                       | 2                        |
| Kuala Lumpur    | 14                    | –                    | 2(f)                    | 45                       |
| Melaka          | 27                    | 63                   | 2                       | 7                        |
| Negeri Sembilan | 38                    | 105                  | 5                       | 7                        |
| Pahang          | 66                    | 227                  | 9                       | 7                        |
| Perak           | 84                    | 256                  | 15(b)                   | 16                       |
| Perlis          | 9                     | 29                   | 1                       | –                        |
| Pulau Pinang    | 27                    | 61                   | 5                       | 23                       |
| Sabah           | 90                    | 188                  | 17(c)                   | 11                       |
| Sarawak         | 118                   | 97                   | 21(d)                   | 13                       |
| Selangor        | 61                    | 136                  | 7(e)                    | 35                       |
| Terengganu      | 39                    | 132                  | 5                       | 2                        |
| Total           | 772                   | 1,989                | 117                     | 219                      |

**Source:** DOS 1998 a

- a Including special institutions (Hospital Permai);
- b Including special institutions (Hospital Bahagia);
- c Including special institutions (Hospital Bukit Padang);
- d Including special institutions (Mental and Raja Charles Brooke Memorial Hospital);
- e Including special institutions (National Leprosy Centre);
- f Including special institutions (National Tuberculosis Centre).

Under the curative health programme, planning and design works were undertaken for the implementation of new hospitals and construction of hospital projects in Bintulu, Kinabatangan, Selayang and Slim River. The facilities to be provided in these new hospitals included day care and rehabilitative services. Between 1995 and 1998, existing hospitals were renovated and upgraded and three hospitals, in Johor Bahru, Kota Bharu and Melaka, were expanded.



Access to curative health services in rural areas was further increased by the construction of 38 new health clinics with expanded services such as alternative birthing centres and day care facilities. Outpatient clinics in hospitals were decentralized to health clinics in order to increase the scope of coverage.

## **2. Health care agencies**

The Ministry of Health is the main governmental organization responsible for health services and health care in Malaysia.

## **3. Government expenditure**

The national health development expenditure accounted for 12.9 per cent of the Government's Development Expenditure for Social Services in 1999, at RM 900 million. The budget allocation for 2000 was RM 908 million, or 12.5 per cent of the development budget for social services (MOF 1999).

# **C. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS**

## **1. Mortality**

In 1997, deaths of youth aged 15 to 40 years accounted for 13 per cent of all deaths in the country. Young people between the ages of 15 to 24 years made up 4.5 per cent of the total deaths. In that age group, the ratio of male deaths to female deaths was 3.5 to 1. This sex ratio decreased slightly to 2.5 to 1 among youth aged 25 to 40 years.

The major causes of death among youth in Malaysia can be grouped into two categories: medically certified or inspected causes and uncertified causes. In 1997, among medically certified deaths or inspected causes, the five most prevalent causes of death among male youth aged 15 to 24 years were accidents and adverse effects, violence, disease of the circulatory system, infectious and parasitic diseases, and malignant neoplasms (see Table 3-2).

Among females aged 15 to 19 years, the most prominent causes of death were accidents and adverse effects, followed by violence, infectious and parasitic diseases, diseases of the circulatory system and malignant neoplasms. In the 20 to 24 year age category for females, accidents and adverse effects were the primary cause of death followed by diseases of the circulatory system, infectious and parasitic diseases, violence, and obstetric causes and conditions in the perinatal period.



**Table 3-2: Deaths by medically certified or inspected causes by sex and by age group in 1997**

|   | <i>Male</i>        |                    | <i>Female</i>      |                    |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|   | <i>15-19 years</i> | <i>20-24 years</i> | <i>15-19 years</i> | <i>20-24 years</i> |
| Accidents   | 582                | 655                | 90                 | 75                 |
| Violence  | 280                | 312                | 54                 | 41                 |
| Diseases of the circulatory system                      | 69                 | 100                | 25                 | 55                 |
| Infectious and parasitic diseases                       | 50                 | 66                 | 32                 | 46                 |
| Malignant neoplasms                                     | 35                 | 46                 | 22                 | 25                 |
| Obstetric causes and conditions in the perinatal period | –                  | –                  | 17                 | 28                 |

**Source:** DOS 1998c

The single leading cause of death by medically certified or inspected causes among both male and female youth aged 15 to 24 was motor vehicle traffic accidents, which took a total of 1,114 youth lives in 1997. Youth deaths among 15 to 24 year olds made up 37.4 per cent of the total number of reported deaths resulting from motor vehicle traffic accidents. The 15 to 40 year age group accounted for 61.1 per cent of all road accident deaths in that year.

The major cause of death by uncertified causes among male youth aged 15 to 19 years and 20 to 24 years was accidents, followed by fever, cancer, heart attack, and fits and convulsions (see Table 3-3). Among females aged 15 to 19 years and 20 to 24 years, fever took the highest number of lives, followed by accidents, cancer, fits and convulsions, and heart attack.

**Table 3-3: Deaths by uncertified causes by sex and by age group in 1997**

|                      | <i>Male</i>        |                    | <i>Female</i>      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|                      | <i>15-19 years</i> | <i>20-24 years</i> | <i>15-19 years</i> | <i>20-24 years</i> |
| Accidents            | 256                | 238                | 35                 | 19                 |
| Fever                | 34                 | 44                 | 37                 | 30                 |
| Cancer               | 27                 | 19                 | 15                 | 17                 |
| Heart attack         | 12                 | 15                 | 5                  | 9                  |
| Fits and convulsions | 6                  | 12                 | 11                 | 11                 |

**Source:** DOS 1998c



It is important to note that the primary causes of youth mortality differed significantly from the mortality pattern of the general population. Among the general population, the leading cause of death among both males and females by medically certified and inspected cause was heart disease (8,559 cases), followed by malignant neoplasms (4574 cases), and accidents (4,548 cases) in 1997 (DOS 1998c).

## **2. Reproductive health**

### ***(a) Overview of youth reproductive health related behaviour***

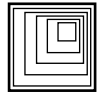
Adolescence is a period in life when significant biological and social changes occur. Youth may encounter difficulties in adjusting to new situations. The majority of the social problems are related to behaviour, life style or sexuality. Promiscuity, teenage pregnancy, running away from home, delinquency and substance abuse are problems that often occur among youth.

It is generally believed that such problems have escalated due to changing familial structures, which result from the migration of young men and women from rural to urban areas. Other contributing factors are believed to be exposure to mass media that comes with the growth of communication technology.

Comprehensive information on reproductive health among youth was provided by the National Study on Reproductive Health of Adolescents conducted by the National Population and Family Development Board in 1994. A total of 2,366 adolescents aged 10 to 19 years from every state and all ethnic groups were surveyed during the two-year study.

The major conclusions of the study are highlighted below:

- Most youth are not provided with information, counselling or support when they experience stress owing to biological changes that affect their behaviour, attitude, personality and lifestyle. Parents are often unprepared or unable to give sufficient advice and reassurance to their children or are reluctant to discuss the issues. Therefore, youth often share experiences of biological changes and sexual relationships among themselves.
- Over two-thirds of youth aged 13 to 19 years have had at least some exposure to materials such as magazines, films and videos containing explicit or implied sexual connotations.
- Dating is an accepted norm among teenagers.



- More urban than rural adolescents approve of cohabiting and of having sexual relationships, especially among older youth and those intending to subsequently marry.
- Several adolescents interviewed knew or had known someone who had either been pregnant or had had an abortion. Many of the adolescents knew clinics that performed abortions as well as of the traditional means used to abort a foetus.
- Approximately 40 per cent of those surveyed had discussed changes in puberty with their mothers and 37 per cent with friends. Female adolescents preferred to speak with their mothers, whereas male adolescents tended to favor their friends in discussing the issue.
- The issue of male-female relationships was discussed by about two-thirds of the adolescents, especially among males. These youth consulted their friends as well as their mothers and teachers on the subject.
- Half of adolescents approved of pre-marital sex, while the other half disapproved. Among the former, 45 per cent thought that sexual intercourse was acceptable once a couple was engaged and 30 per cent felt that it was acceptable once a couple fell in love or had a strong mutual attraction.
- Only 1 per cent of those surveyed admitted to ever having sexual intercourse.
- About 14 per cent of the adolescents interviewed, the majority of them males, said they practiced masturbation. Most boys began masturbation at the age of 15 years, while girls did so at an earlier age.
- Less than half of the adolescents had ever discussed pregnancy; if they did so, it tended to be with friends (34.8 per cent), teachers (28.9 per cent) or mothers (26.2 per cent). Pregnancy was rarely discussed with fathers.
- The majority of those surveyed knew that pregnancy occurs as a result of sexual intercourse, but 31 per cent of them did not know the meaning of sexual intercourse, showing a lack of knowledge about reproductive health issues.
- With regard to contraceptives, adolescents were most familiar with the condom, followed by sterilization, the pill, injection and the intra-uterine device (IUD).
- Almost all the adolescents surveyed, 98 per cent, had heard of AIDS. Some 78 per cent had heard of AIDS through the television and the radio while 11 per cent had heard of it through the newspaper.



- Substance abuse in various forms like smoking, glue-sniffing and ingesting cough medicines were reported by respondents as common.
- Loitering or “lepak” was reported by adolescents to occur when the home environment was dull or unhappy, or if there is parental neglect or bad relations between the parents and the children.

**(b) Contraception**

The contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) in Malaysia among married women aged 15 to 44 years increased significantly from 1970 to 1994 due to the success of family planning campaigns. In the same period, the proportion of those using contraceptives increased from 11.7 per cent to 41.5 per cent for those aged 15 to 24 years; from 19.8 per cent to 53.5 per cent for those aged 25 to 34 years; and from 14.4 per cent to 70 per cent for those aged 35 to 45 years (NPFDB 1996).

Government family planning campaigns have particularly targeted rural areas in the last decade. As a result, the majority of new family planning users, from the period of 1993 to 1997, lived in rural areas. By state, the number of new family planning users was the highest in Sabah and Sarawak with equal proportions in the urban and rural areas of those states for all age groups (see Table 3-4).

**Table 3-4: Number of new family planning users  
by state and by area in 1997**

|                   | <i>Urban</i> | <i>Rural</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Johor             | 2,716        | 3,701        | 6,417        |
| Kedah             | 2,006        | 4,708        | 6,714        |
| Kelantan          | 985          | 2,973        | 3,958        |
| Melaka            | 754          | 1,549        | 2,303        |
| Negeri Sembilan   | 2,527        | 1,818        | 4,345        |
| Pahang            | 1,735        | 3,405        | 5,140        |
| Perak             | 3,946        | 2,969        | 6,915        |
| Perlis            | 433          | 580          | 1,013        |
| Pulau Pinang      | 1,177        | 1,837        | 3,014        |
| Sabah             | 6,125        | 6,171        | 12,296       |
| Sarawak           | 4,285        | 5,367        | 9,652        |
| Selangor          | 3,143        | 3,414        | 6,557        |
| Terengganu        | 785          | 2,970        | 3,755        |
| W.P. Kuala Lumpur | 2,972        | –            | 2,972        |
| W.P. Labuan       | 83           | 155          | 238          |
| Total             | 33,672       | 41,617       | 75,289       |

**Source** DOS 1998a



Among all age groups of new family planning users in 1997, the pill was the most common form of contraceptive, used by 75 per cent (see Table 3-5). Other form of contraceptives included condoms, tubal ligation, IUD, injection and others, in order of decreasing prevalence. Vasectomy was the least preferred option and was only performed in four cases. These figures show that women continue to take the primary responsibility in family planning.

The pill was the most preferred method of family planning in all states. The second most common form of contraceptive was tubal ligation in the four states of Johor, Kedah, Melaka and Perlis. Injection, however, was more prevalent in the three states of Sabah, Sarawak and Terangganu than in other states.

**Table 3-5: Number of new family planning users by area and by method in 1997**

|                 | <i>TOTAL</i> | <i>Pill</i> | <i>IUD</i> | <i>Condom</i> | <i>Injection</i> | <i>Tubal ligation</i> | <i>Vasec-tomy</i> | <i>Other</i> |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------|------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Malaysia        | 75,289       | 56,165      | 2,992      | 7,661         | 2,010            | 4,622                 | 4                 | 1,835        |
| Johor           | 6,417        | 4,922       | 190        | 591           | 32               | 669                   | –                 | 13           |
| Kedah           | 6,714        | 5,504       | 115        | 359           | 135              | 515                   | –                 | 86           |
| Kelantan        | 3,958        | 3,260       | 291        | 247           | 37               | 110                   | –                 | 13           |
| Kuala Lumpur    | 2,972        | 1,768       | 378        | 454           | 86               | 114                   | –                 | 172          |
| Melaka          | 2,303        | 1,526       | 131        | 211           | 1                | 422                   | –                 | 12           |
| Negeri Sembilan | 4,345        | 3,208       | 184        | 535           | 23               | 309                   | –                 | 86           |
| Pahang          | 5,140        | 3,858       | 146        | 769           | 176              | 141                   | –                 | 50           |
| Perak           | 6,915        | 4,247       | 325        | 1,082         | 65               | 825                   | 1                 | 370          |
| Perlis          | 1,013        | 752         | 19         | 66            | 16               | 130                   | –                 | 30           |
| Pulau Pinang    | 3,014        | 2,036       | 193        | 374           | 17               | 210                   | –                 | 184          |
| Sabah           | 12,296       | 9,553       | 326        | 996           | 771              | 239                   | 3                 | 408          |
| Sarawak         | 9,652        | 7,600       | 230        | 757           | 383              | 315                   | –                 | 367          |
| Selangor        | 6,557        | 4,892       | 211        | 756           | 83               | 573                   | –                 | 42           |
| Terangganu      | 3,755        | 2,837       | 240        | 452           | 174              | 50                    | –                 | 2            |
| W.P. Labuan     | 238          | 202         | 13         | 12            | 11               | –                     | –                 | –            |

*Source:* DOS 1998a



No youth-specific data was available for new family planning users by state or by area.

### 3. Sexually transmitted diseases

The Social Statistics Bulletin (1998) of the Department of Statistics reported 3,685 cases of sexually transmitted diseases, excluding HIV/AIDS in 1996 (see Table 3-6). Of the total, gonococcal infection accounted for 48.1 per cent, syphilis made up 42.3 per cent, chancroid accounted for 0.2 per cent and other STDs made up 9.4 per cent. No youth-specific data on STDs were available.

By state, the highest concentrations of reported STDs were in Sarawak, followed by Sabah, Kuala Lumpur, Pulau Pinang and Johor. Unprotected sex between male clients and female commercial sex workers is thought to be the primary cause of STD transmission among migrant workers in large urban areas.

**Table 3-6: Number of sexually transmitted disease cases treated and classified by type and by area in 1996**

| <i>State</i>    | <i>Syphilis<br/>(all types)</i> | <i>Gonococcal<br/>infection</i> | <i>Chancroid</i> | <i>Other STDs</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Johor           | 134                             | 28                              | –                | –                 | 162          |
| Kedah           | 61                              | 1                               | –                | 48                | 110          |
| Kelantan        | 47                              | 8                               | –                | –                 | 55           |
| Melaka          | 25                              | 13                              | –                | –                 | 38           |
| Negeri Sembilan | 34                              | –                               | –                | 4                 | 38           |
| Pahang          | 80                              | 5                               | –                | 3                 | 88           |
| Perak           | 42                              | 3                               | –                | 4                 | 49           |
| Perlis          | 3                               | 2                               | –                | –                 | 5            |
| Pulau Pinang    | 138                             | 41                              | –                | 10                | 189          |
| Sabah           | 191                             | 389                             | –                | 49                | 629          |
| Sarawak         | 523                             | 1,085                           | 3                | 214               | 1,825        |
| Selangor        | 81                              | 36                              | 3                | 13                | 133          |
| Tereangganu     | 35                              | 3                               | –                | –                 | 38           |
| Kuala Lumpur    | 168                             | 158                             | –                | –                 | 326          |
| Total           | 1,562                           | 1,772                           | 6                | 345               | 3,685        |

**Source:** DOS 1998a





**(a) HIV/AIDS**

**(i) Incidence**

The Department of Medicine, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur in 1998 reported that the Ministry of Health first recognized HIV/AIDS as a problem for Malaysia in 1988. Between 1988 and 1992, the spread of HIV among intravenous drug users was rampant. After 1992, HIV began to spread to the heterosexual population through unprotected sexual intercourse.

The Ministry of Health reported 33,233 cases of HIV and 3,554 cases of AIDS in Malaysia from 1986 to 1999. A total of 2,685 people died of AIDS-related diseases during that period. The number of HIV and AIDS cases, as well as AIDS-related deaths, has increased each year. The annual rate of increase, however, has dropped considerably to 1.5 per cent in the period 1998 to 1999 (MAC 1999).

The majority of the HIV and AIDS cases occurred among males at 95.4 per cent and 93.6 per cent respectively (see Table 3-7). Youth have been most affected by the epidemic. Those aged 20 to 29 years and aged 30 to 39 years accounted for 39.3 per cent and 43.1 per cent of all HIV cases and 21.9 per cent and 43.9 per cent of all AIDS cases, respectively.

Ethnically, a higher proportion of Malay Bumiputra had contracted HIV and AIDS (72.8 per cent for the former and 57.2 for the latter). Chinese and Indians accounted for 15 per cent and 8.8 per cent of HIV cases and 30.2 per cent and 8.2 per cent of AIDS cases, respectively.

**Table 3-7: Percentage of reported HIV and AIDS cases by sex, by age and by ethnicity from 1986 to 1999**

|      | <i>Sex</i>  |               | <i>Age group</i>   |                    |                    | <i>Ethnicity</i> |                |               |              |
|------|-------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|
|      | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> | <i>13-19 years</i> | <i>20-29 years</i> | <i>30-39 years</i> | <i>Malay</i>     | <i>Chinese</i> | <i>Indian</i> | <i>Other</i> |
| HIV  | 95.4        | 4.6           | 1.9                | 39.3               | 43.1               | 72.8             | 15.0           | 8.8           | 3.5          |
| AIDS | 93.6        | 6.4           | 4.4                | 21.9               | 43.9               | 57.2             | 30.2           | 8.2           | 3.3          |

**Source:** MAC 1999



The majority of HIV and AIDS cases have occurred among intravenous drug users. Heterosexual intercourse also accounted for a significant proportion of HIV/AIDS transmission, whereas unknown causes made up a considerable share of the remaining 12.4 per cent and 16.1 per cent respectively (see Table 3-8).

**Table 3-8: Major transmission routes of HIV infection  
(in per cent) from 1986 to 1999**

|      | <i>Intravenous<br/>drug users</i> | <i>Hetero-<br/>sexual<br/>intercourse</i> | <i>Homo-<br/>sexual/<br/>bisexual<br/>intercourse</i> | <i>Mother to<br/>child</i> | <i>Blood<br/>donor</i> | <i>Unknown</i> |
|------|-----------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| HIV  | 76.4                              | 9.7                                       | 0.9   | 0.4                        | 0.1                    | 12.4           |
| AIDS | 58.2                              | 21.6                                      | 1.7   | 1.2                        | 0.9                    | 16.1           |

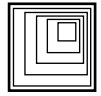
**Source:** MAC 1999

Factory workers, fishermen and long-distance truck drivers accounted for 5.3 per cent, 4.1 per cent, and 1.5 per cent of HIV carriers and 4.7 per cent, 3.9 per cent and 1.8 per cent of people living with AIDS, respectively. The aforementioned occupations often require men to be away from their wives and a higher proportion of these men are thought to frequent commercial sex workers than men in other professions. Commercial sex workers accounted for 0.6 per cent and 0.4 per cent of people living with HIV and AIDS respectively (MAC 1999).

There was little information about the occupations of people living with HIV and AIDS. However, a considerable portion of people living with HIV and AIDS were unemployed at 11.8 per cent and 16.6 per cent, respectively.

A recent study by the University Hospital in Kuala Lumpur showed that an increasing number of women have been infected through unprotected sexual intercourse with their husbands. Since heterosexual couples often do not perceive themselves as at high risk of contracting HIV, the rate of infection still grows in Malaysia.

The Ministry of Health set up the National AIDS Task Force in 1985, with participation from various sectors of the medical profession, including medical, health and laboratory services. The task of this committee was to study the HIV situation and outline possible measures to prevent the spread of infection.



Education programmes were initiated among health care workers and were subsequently offered to the general public. The AIDS Unit of the Ministry of Health was set up to coordinate these educational activities, but its mandate also included surveillance, data collection and analysis.

By an Act of Parliament of 1988, HIV/AIDS has been included in the list of notifiable diseases under the Infectious Diseases Act. The notifiable sexually transmitted diseases already listed under the Act included gonorrhoea, syphilis, nonspecific urethritis and chancroid. Under-reporting and delays in reporting have been major barriers to accurate data collection.

The AIDS Task Force was reorganized in 1992 with the establishment of the National Technical Committee on AIDS and the National Coordinating Committee. These two committees are responsible for overseeing patient care, monitoring quality control of HIV testing methods, prevention and control, and social and economic implications of HIV/AIDS.

The Government gave its highest level of commitment to the issue of HIV/AIDS in 1992 with the inception of the Cabinet Committee on AIDS. Acting on the advice of the two earlier committees, the Cabinet Committee makes decisions on national funding for AIDS.

The National AIDS budget allocation for 1992 to 1995 was RM 218 million. Since then, an annual budget of RM 42 million has been allocated for AIDS-related programmes, including health and medical services. The annual AIDS budget is about 2.3 per cent of the national health care budget.

Several NGOs have been active in HIV/AIDS prevention and care for people living with HIV/AIDS. The work of NGOs in this area began in early 1987 with the inception of the Pink Triangle, which initially worked with the gay community in providing AIDS education and counselling. This group subsequently expanded its services to include the heterosexual population and intravenous drug users.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been encouraged to secure their own funding for programmes. The government also provides annual funding for the Malaysian AIDS Council, an umbrella organization for AIDS-related NGOs.

In 1992, an umbrella organization called the Malaysian Council of NGO for AIDS was formed, spearheaded by the National AIDS Task Force with the aim to provide outreach work to those at high risk. A year later, this council reorganized itself and became the Malaysian AIDS Council comprising 22 AIDS-related NGOs.



#### 4. Substance abuse

##### (a) Drug abuse

In 1999, the National Drug Information System (NADI) reported 35,359 drug users in the country (see Table 3-9). Of this total, the 16 to 24 year age group made up 28.4 per cent while the 13 to 24 year age group made up 28.8 per cent. There were also four reported cases of addicts less than 13 years of age.

By state, the urbanized states of Pulau Pinang, Kuala Lumpur, and Selangor had the highest number of drug users aged 20 to 24 years; Kelantan and Selangor had the greatest number of drug users aged 18 to 19 years; and Sabah and Pahang had highest number of young drug users aged 13 to 17 years of age. These differences by age-group and by state point to the need for age-specific and state-specific prevention campaigns.

**Table 3-9: Number of drug use cases by age at the time of detection, January – December 1999**

| <i>State</i>    | <i>&lt; 13<br/>years</i> | <i>13-15<br/>years</i> | <i>16-17<br/>years</i> | <i>18-19<br/>years</i> | <i>20-24<br/>years</i> | <i>All<br/>ages</i> |
|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Perak           |                          | 10                     | 48                     | 128                    | 585                    | 3,626               |
| Selangor        |                          | 17                     | 85                     | 211                    | 872                    | 3,819               |
| Pahang          |                          | 37                     | 100                    | 174                    | 751                    | 2,709               |
| Kelantan        |                          | 6                      | 80                     | 217                    | 1,074                  | 3,226               |
| Sabah           | 3                        | 38                     | 92                     | 128                    | 413                    | 1,779               |
| Johor           |                          | 8                      | 56                     | 135                    | 654                    | 3,588               |
| Kedah           |                          | 16                     | 70                     | 167                    | 666                    | 2,276               |
| Melaka          |                          | 5                      | 15                     | 42                     | 215                    | 1,218               |
| Negeri Sembilan |                          | 2                      | 37                     | 96                     | 390                    | 1,584               |
| Pulau Pinang    |                          | 10                     | 57                     | 152                    | 597                    | 4,943               |
| Sarawak         |                          |                        | 3                      | 3                      | 14                     | 57                  |
| Perlis          |                          |                        | 10                     | 11                     | 71                     | 204                 |
| Terengganu      | 1                        | 9                      | 46                     | 119                    | 577                    | 1,921               |
| Kuala Lumpur    |                          | 7                      | 46                     | 124                    | 701                    | 4,349               |
| Labuan          |                          | 2                      | 1                      | 2                      | 12                     | 60                  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>    | <b>4</b>                 | <b>167</b>             | <b>746</b>             | <b>1,709</b>           | <b>7,592</b>           | <b>35,359</b>       |

*Source:* NDA 1999



Among all age groups, 50.7 per cent were new drug users while 49.3 per cent were repeated drug users. The 1999 figure showed a 5.9 per cent decrease in total number of drug users compared with the previous year.

In 1999, the highest concentration of drug users were found in Pulau Pinang followed by Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Perak, Johor, and Kelantan (see Table 3-10). Sarawak had the lowest number of drug users. From 1998 to 1999, only four areas registered an increase in the number of drug users: Sabah, Kuala Lumpur, Negeri Sembilan, and Terengganu.

**Table 3-10: Number of drug users traced by areas in 1998 and 1999**

|                 | <i>1998</i> | <i>1999</i> |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Johor           | 3,616       | 3,588       |
| Kedah           | 3,127       | 2,276       |
| Kelantan        | 3,912       | 3,226       |
| Melaka          | 1,694       | 1,218       |
| Negeri Sembilan | 1,460       | 1,584       |
| Pahang          | 3,333       | 2,709       |
| Perak           | 3,890       | 3,626       |
| Perlis          | 285         | 204         |
| Pulau Pinang    | 4,821       | 4,943       |
| Sabah           | 1,225       | 1,779       |
| Sarawak         | 172         | 57          |
| Selangor        | 4,458       | 3,812       |
| Terengganu      | 1,896       | 1,921       |
| Kuala Lumpur    | 3,626       | 4,349       |
| Labuan          | 73          | 60          |
| TOTAL           | 37,588      | 35,352      |

**Source:** NDA 1999a

Of the new drug users traced in 1999, 97.6 per cent were male, 70.6 per cent were Malay, and 93.7 per cent were people aged below 40 years. Some 77 per cent of the total number of drug users had completed at least lower secondary school and 83 per cent were employed.

The majority of the new drug users at 67.3 per cent were using opiate drugs such as heroin, morphine and opium. Another 26.2 per cent used cannabis. Some 94.8 per cent of them stated that they had started using drugs as the



result of peer pressure, curiosity and naivete (NDA 1999a). The reasons for initial experimentation with drugs were peer pressure, curiosity, depression and for entertainment (NDA 1999).

From January to December 1999, the number of arrests of drug offenders under the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952 and Dangerous Drugs Act (Special Preventive Measures) 1985 reached 15,853, a decline by 5.1 per cent compared to the arrests for the same period in 1998. The average monthly number of persons convicted under Section 39A of the Dangerous Drugs Act was 235 and under the Dangerous Drugs Act (Special Preventive Measures) 1985 was 115.

In December 1999, 8,107 drug users were seeking treatment and rehabilitation at 27 drop-in centres throughout the country. Only 2 per cent of those who sought assistance were female. Of the total, 58.5 per cent were classified as serious addicts and 39.2 per cent were considered light addicts.

Although the majority of drug users are youth, they constitute only 1.5 per cent of those under treatment. Moreover, many of the addicts had not voluntarily sought treatment.

Of the drug users seeking treatment, 10.2 per cent were living with HIV/AIDS and 0.7 per cent suffered from chronic diseases such as mental illness, hepatitis, haemorrhage, high blood pressure or diabetes.

In 1999, the National Drugs Agency implemented various drug prevention programmes and activities throughout the country. The programmes included 690 talks and briefings, most of which were targeted at youth and students, and 315 anti-drugs mobile exhibitions. Surprise urine test programmes were also administered 938 times in high-risk schools involving 43,157 students.

A total of 54 anti-drug programmes were broadcast on the radio in 1999. They included talks, fora, interviews and counselling. Thirty-three anti-drug programmes were also carried out at workplaces. Other awareness-raising activities were also held for annual events such as National Anti-Drugs Week in February and International Anti-Drugs Day in June of that year.



## D. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

### 1. Health personnel

The number of doctors and nurses in Malaysia nearly doubled from 1993 to 1998 as the government had prioritized training in order to overcome shortage of personnel in the health sector. Between 1995 and 1998, a total of 537 post graduate scholarships in the field of medicine, surgery, orthopedics and gynecology were awarded. The doctor to population ratio in 1997 was 1 to 1,521.

Health care professionals were concentrated in urbanized states, in government and private medical centres. The highest number of doctors, dentists and nurses were found in Kuala Lumpur, while the lowest concentration was found in Perlis (see Table 3-11).

**Table 3-11: Number of doctors, dentists and nurses registered in the medical profession by state in 1997**

|                 | <i>Doctor</i>     |                | <i>Dentist</i>    |                | <i>Nurse</i>      |
|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|
|                 | <i>Government</i> | <i>Private</i> | <i>Government</i> | <i>Private</i> | <i>Government</i> |
| Johor           | 647               | 671            | 85                | 116            | 1,757             |
| Kedah           | 393               | 331            | 52                | 42             | 1,205             |
| Kelantan        | 604               | 151            | 61                | 30             | 990               |
| Kuala Lumpur    | 2,675             | 1,130          | 141               | 251            | 2,063             |
| Melaka          | 260               | 225            | 24                | 30             | 527               |
| Negeri Sembilan | 307               | 203            | 38                | 43             | 770               |
| Pahang          | 348               | 186            | 51                | 31             | 1,000             |
| Perak           | 732               | 614            | 67                | 81             | 1,879             |
| Perlis          | 70                | 31             | 11                | 4              | 229               |
| Pulau Pinang    | 481               | 612            | 47                | 98             | 1,087             |
| Sabah           | 405               | 230            | 34                | 40             | 1,497             |
| Sarawak         | 465               | 253            | 36                | 45             | 1,268             |
| Selangor        | 561               | 1,273          | 67                | 277            | 1,009             |
| Terengganu      | 287               | 103            | 41                | 22             | 787               |
| Total           | 8,235             | 6,013          | 755               | 1,110          | 16,068            |

**Source:** DOS 1998b

There is a need to increase incentives for health professionals to work in rural areas and in less developed states in order to promote equity in health care services in the country.



## **E. CHALLENGES FOR YOUTH HEALTH POLICY**

Malaysia has made significant achievements in the provision of basic health care to its population, including expanding services to rural areas. Although medical care has become increasingly advanced in the urban areas, more effort is required to provide high quality health care throughout the country. The private sector should be encouraged to expand services to poorer areas.

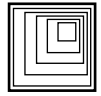
Youth have benefited from Malaysia's overall advancement in the health sector, yet their specific health needs have not been adequately addressed in the national health policy. Age disaggregated data in the area of health is still unavailable, but the existing data demonstrate a clear need for a national youth-specific health policy in Malaysia. Youth have health needs that are different from the general population due to various physical and behavioural changes that occur during adolescence. The leading causes of death among youth, for example, were accidents and violence, while those of the general population were heart disease and malignant neoplasms. Thus, health policy and programmes need to be age-specific in order to be more effective.

Sexual and reproductive health care is a central health issue among youth. There is a need for sex education and counselling in schools, as there is evidence that many of the youth in Malaysia are sexually active and lack accurate information to protect themselves. This seems to be particularly true among young males. Although not the major cause of the spread of HIV/AIDS in Malaysia, unprotected sex has become an increasing concern as a large number of heterosexuals continue to mistakenly believe that they are at little risk of contracting the virus.

There is also a need to strengthen the family institution in order to foster an environment that is supportive to youth. This entails encouraging improved family relations, open communication, and increased interaction and time spent between parents and children.

Substance abuse is a pressing concern among youth in Malaysia, as 93.7 per cent of substance abusers are below the age of 40 years. The majority of substance abusers use opiate drugs, often intravenously. The use of contaminated needles has been the primary cause for the spread of HIV/AIDS among the youth population. 82.4 per cent of all people living with HIV and 75.8 per cent of those living with AIDS are aged 20 to 39 years. In addition, youth are unlikely to seek help voluntarily. This situation points





to the need for increased efforts on the part of the Government of Malaysia to introduce effective measures to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS among young injecting drug users.

Interventions in the area of HIV/AIDS prevention and substance abuse should be targeted on specific states as well as age groups as the data show higher concentrations of victims among the younger youth population in some states and older youth populations in others. Without age disaggregated data, the problems in some states would be shrouded. Drug prevention strategies should focus on primary prevention, public education, community support and prevention of drug use in the workplace.

Providing adequate skills-training to drug users in treatment centres and rehabilitation programmes, in co-operation with the community and potential employers, may help counter negative peer pressure and fight depression among drug users.

The contraceptive prevalence rate has increased steadily over the past few decades, but the rate is still relatively low. Condoms account for only 10 per cent of contraceptives, and are not used effectively in halting the spread of HIV/AIDS. Also, men should be encouraged to take greater responsibility in the area of family planning as their participation in this area is currently negligible. Youth-specific data on contraceptive prevalence rate as well as on STDs should also be collected in order to plan and implement effective programming.

Given the pressing youth-specific health concerns in Malaysia, the Government, along with the private sector which is already active in the education sector, should target youth in formulating an effective health policy. Programmes for youth relating to all aspects of health education and information should also be strengthened.

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# Youth Employment IV

## **A. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT POLICY**

### **1. Background**

Since the early 1990s, Malaysia has prepared itself to face the global economic challenges brought on by knowledge-based or K-economy industries, in which the use of information technology to obtain information and communicate in international business and commerce has become widespread.

If Malaysia is to be successful in this global context, and if its youth are to find a place within the K-economy, the country requires a set of effective human resource policies that will prepare youth with appropriate training and skills enhancement and ensure effective utilization and continuous development of human resources. Efficient adjustments in the labour market and greater investments in human capital are underway to enhance the productivity and quality of the workforce.

The strategic thrusts for human resource development to support the aforementioned objective have included the following:

- To increase the supply of skilled human resources to support the needs of knowledge-based and capital-intensive industries;
- To improve accessibility to education and training in order to enhance income and quality of life among Malaysians;
- To reduce dependence on foreign workers as industries shift towards greater automation and labour-saving technologies in production processes;



- To encourage self-employment through the provision of training in entrepreneurship, management and finance;
- To strengthen the labour market mechanisms to facilitate labour mobility; and
- To promote the implementation of wage schemes linked to productivity and work performance.

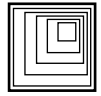
This human resources policy resulted in a significant change in the employment structure of Malaysia. In 1990, 26 per cent of the labour force was engaged in the agriculture and forestry sectors, and only 19.9 per cent in the manufacturing sector. The situation reversed by 1998, with the agriculture and forestry sectors employing 16.8 per cent of workers and the manufacturing sector employing 27 per cent.

Malaysia's rapid GDP growth rate averaging 8.4 per cent from 1991 to 1997 created a high demand for labour. In 1997-1998, however, the country suffered from the Asian financial crisis that led to an economic recession. The vulnerability of youth in the employment sector was particularly evident during this economic downturn when the GDP recorded a negative 7.5 per cent growth in 1998.

As a result of the Crisis, many companies were forced to cut costs and lay off their employees; some became bankrupt and closed down altogether. Although no youth-specific data exist with regard to retrenchment, the majority of the retrenched employees were likely to have been youth as employees with the least seniority tend to be dismissed first. Moreover, retrenchment compensation was likely to be less for the younger and less-senior employees than for the older ones.

With the economy on the verge of recovery, there is a need for a youth-specific employment policy that addresses the concerns of young workers. Policies to safeguard the employment rights of young workers should be mainstreamed into the National Youth Development Policy alongside its objective of preparing youth with up-to-date technological, technical and vocational skills, as well as through entrepreneurial activities.

Programmes involving skills-training, business opportunities and entrepreneurship are needed to guard against future adverse effects of economic downturns on youth as well as to create a generation of youth who are independent and capable of developing successful careers.



## **2. Legislation relevant to youth employment**

The Government of Malaysia has issued several laws to ensure that workers enjoy a decent standard of living, good working conditions, and secure employment and livelihoods. Youth workers are protected by the same laws as all other workers; additionally, they are guarded by the Children and Young Persons Act.

### **(a) *Children and Young Persons (Employment) Act (1966)***

The Children and Young Persons (Employment) Act of 1966 stipulates that children and young persons may only be employed in light work and work that is non-hazardous to their health. The law restricts the number of working hours for children and young persons to a maximum of six hours per day and six days per week. They are also entitled to rest periods during the workday.

### **(b) *Other relevant legislation***

The Employment Act of 1955 sets forth the minimum standard of terms and conditions of employment for employees in the private sector. It protects employees in matters such as wages, hours of work, sick leave, annual leave and maternity benefits.

The Trade Union Act of 1959 oversees trade unions, trade union members and the Registrar of Trade Unions. It serves as a framework to regulate the activities of unions and matters relating to union disputes; the usage and provision of funds; the formation of unions; and the formation of federation of trade unions.

The Industrial Relations Act of 1967 governs the relationship between the employer or groups of employers and employees or trade unions. It provides regulations to be adopted by employers and employees in addressing issues such as the recognition of trade unions, collective bargaining, conciliation, trade disputes and strikes.

The Factories and Machinery Act of 1967 provides for the protection of workers from the hazards of industrial work, including occupational diseases, and sets the minimum standards for healthy and safe work environments.

The Workmen's Compensation Act of 1952 provides for workers' compensation in the case of work-related injury or injury at the workplace.



The Employees Social Security Act of 1969 is an accident compensation law that provides for disability benefits and pension payments to industrial workers injured while at work.

The Employees Provident Fund Ordinance of 1951 provides for compulsory savings for employees, to help them or their dependants financially upon their retirement, death or disability. Both the employer and the employee contribute to the fund.

The Employment (Termination and Lay-off Benefits) Regulation Act of 1980 specifies the amount of compensation to which an employee is entitled when his or her service is terminated or he or she is laid off from work. The regulation also specifies the conditions and the channels for disbursement of such compensation.

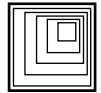
The Workers (Minimum Standard of Housing) Act of 1966 sets the minimum standards for housing provided by employers that are situated outside the limits of a municipality, town council or local authority. It applies particularly to workers' housing on plantations.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1994 provides the legislative framework to promote, stimulate and encourage high standards of safety and health in the workplace.

### **3. Government expenditure**

The Government's commitment to human resources development was evident during the revision of the Seventh Malaysia Plan. Education was allocated 18.7 per cent of the total public development budget following the review (see Chapter 2), and training received 2.8 per cent of the budget. The proportion allocated to training had increased from RM 1.5 billion in the original plan to RM 2.5 billion after the revision (EPU 1999b).

Within the training budget, the majority of funds was allocated to industrial training. This share increased from 77.1 per cent to 88.9 per cent of the training budget following the mid-term review (see Table 4-1). Management training received 27 per cent of the budget following the review and commercial training was allocated 2.7 per cent.



**Table 4-1: Budget allocation in the Seventh Malaysian Plan for training in both the original and the revised plans, 1996-2000 (in per cent)**

|                     | <i>Original</i> | <i>Revised</i> |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Industrial training | 77.1            | 88.9           |
| Management training | 18.6            | 27.0           |
| Commercial training | 4.3             | 2.7            |
| Total               | 100.0           | 118.6          |

**Source:** EPU 1999b

The public expenditure on industrial training reflects the shifting of the economy towards capital-intensive and higher value-added activities which require an increasing supply of knowledge and skilled human resources in industry. Efforts have been ongoing to improve the quality of the workforce through re-training and skill-upgrading.

#### **4. Government initiatives on youth employment promotion**

The Ministry of Human Resources and the Ministry of Education are the key government agencies concerned with employment in Malaysia. Youth as part of the labour force are included under the target group for employment initiatives, although no youth-specific employment programmes yet exist.

##### **(a) Training programmes**

With the Government's increased focus on capital-intensive industry, the training programmes that have been promoted include programmable logic control, computer-aided design (CAD), computer-aided manufacturing (CAM) and computer-aided engineering (CAE).

High priority continues to be placed on increasing access to education and training to enhance income generation capabilities, as well as improve the quality of life of Malaysians. Apart from expanding education and training facilities, financial assistance is also provided to enable the low-income group to have greater access to education and training.

The education and training system continues to be restructured, especially with greater private sector involvement, to meet the changing needs of local industries and increasing demand in specific skills.



The Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) was established in 1993 by the Ministry of Human Resources to increase private sector participation in training programmes; however, not all companies and industries participate in the fund. Therefore, further incentives should be offered to companies to provide training and courses for their workers, especially in preparing employees for the K-economy.

Efforts are also undertaken to encourage self-employment, particularly among the unemployed and the new job seekers, including recent graduates. A Graduate Entrepreneur Training Scheme was set up in 1998 to provide training in basic entrepreneurial skills, communications skills and personal development. Loans ranging from RM 20,000 to RM 100,000 will be provided to those graduates interested in settling up their own businesses.

For public sector employees, a training programme in entrepreneurship will be provided to enable them to establish and manage their own businesses. These schemes are aimed at increasing employment opportunities as well as the number of Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera entrepreneurs in the country.

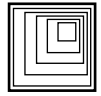
***(b) Employment offices***

Labour market information and mechanisms will help to facilitate greater labour mobility between contracting and expanding sectors as well as across various occupations and skills. Such measures will also help in matching demand with supply and in promoting networks between employers and job seekers. Employment offices throughout the country will be strengthened with the setting up of an electronic labour exchange for the registration, monitoring and placement of workers.

The mass media and employment offices will assist in the dissemination of labour market information on job vacancies, thus matching skills with requirements of industries.

Promoting systematic placement and re-hiring of workers, and career networking among new labour market entrants and potential employers, would help reduce unemployment. The completion and publication of the Malaysian Standard Classification of Occupations (MASCO) should improve the dissemination of labour market information on new job opportunities, thereby improving occupational mobility.





The Government is taking concrete steps to upgrade the overall labour market information system, in order to more effectively meet the growing needs for such information. Improvements are also undertaken with respect to institutional coordination, streamlining of data production, and continuous inventory of user needs.

## **B. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS**

### **1. Labour force**

#### ***(a) Definitions***

The Department of Statistics defines employment, unemployment and under-employment as follows:

#### ***(i) Employed person***

An employed person is defined as someone who works for hourly pay, profit, or family gain, as an employer, an employee, a self-employed person, or an unpaid family worker.

People who do not work because of illness, injury, disability, bad weather, vacation, labour dispute and social or religious reasons, but have a job, farm, enterprise or other family enterprise to return to, are also considered to be employed.

#### ***(ii) Underemployed person***

Employed persons who work less than 30 hours per week, or less than the normal duration, due to the nature of their work or due to insufficient work, and who are able and willing to accept additional hours of work during the week in which the labour force survey is conducted, are considered underemployed.

#### ***(iii) Unemployed person***

There are two categories of unemployed persons: active and inactive. An active unemployed person is someone who does not work, but is available and actively looking for work.



An inactive unemployed person is defined as one of the following:

- A person who does not look for work because he or she believes that no work is available or that he or she is not qualified;
- A person who has been disrupted from looking for work due to temporary illness or bad weather; and
- A person who is waiting for answers to job applications.

All persons not classified as employed or unemployed are classified as outside the labour force. They include housewives, students, including those who are continuing their studies, retired or disabled persons, and those not interested, for various reasons, in obtaining a job.

**(b) Labour force participation rate**

The labour force in 1998 consisted of 8.9 million people, an increase of 0.6 million people from 1995. The overall labour force participation rate in 1998 was 64.3 per cent. The labour force participation rate was 83.4 per cent for males and 44.2 per cent for females.

The total number of youth employed in 1995 was 1.86 million accounting for 23.5 per cent of the total number of employed persons. The youth were mainly employed in the manufacturing sector, which has the largest share of employed youth at approximately 37.9 per cent in that year.

The percentage of youth who found employment in the urban areas increased substantially, from 33.6 per cent in 1990 to 56.5 per cent in 1995. The proportion of youth employed in professional and technical occupations increased from 4.8 per cent in 1990 to 6.7 per cent in 1995.

Disaggregated data on labour force participation by age, sex, ethnicity and marital status are provided in the 1980 and the 1991 Population Census. The data provide an insight into the economically active population.

The labour force participation rate for young males has always been much higher than those of young females. The discrepancy is perhaps attributable to perceived traditional gender roles wherein men worked outside the house while women largely took responsibility for childcare and household work. Increasingly, however, women have joined the labour force, particularly young women.



The labour force participation rate of young men decreased slightly for all age groups from 1980 to 1991 (see Table 4-2). The rates for young women increased in all age groups, except the 15 to 19 years and 35 to 39 years age brackets, which both decreased marginally.

**Table 4-2: Labour force participation rates by age group and by sex in 1980 and 1991 (in per cent)<sup>(a)</sup>**

| <i>Age group</i> | <i>1980</i>       |             |               | <i>1991</i>       |             |               |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|
|                  | <i>Both sexes</i> | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> | <i>Both sexes</i> | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> |
| 15-19 years      | 41.7              | 48.9        | 34.6          | 38.0              | 43.1        | 32.9          |
| 20-24 years      | 71.7              | 91.5        | 53.5          | 73.8              | 88.1        | 59.6          |
| 25-29 years      | 70.5              | 97.3        | 44.7          | 73.2              | 96.6        | 50.1          |
| 30-34 years      | 69.9              | 97.9        | 41.5          | 71.3              | 97.4        | 45.1          |
| 35-39 years      | 71.4              | 98.0        | 43.7          | 70.2              | 97.7        | 42.2          |
| 15-65 years      | 63.3              | 84.8        | 42.2          | 62.9              | 83.8        | 41.9          |

**Source:** DOS 1995a

(a) Persons with unknown labour force status have been excluded in the calculation of these rates.

The drop in the proportion of youth aged 15 to 19 years participating in the labour market can be attributed to longer years of schooling before entry into the labour force, due to the increase in educational and training opportunities. In 1980, 42 per cent of youth aged 15 to 19 years were in school compared to 54 per cent in 1991.

The rise in female labour force participation for the 20 to 34 year age group was caused by an increase in demand for young female workers in that period, especially in the manufacturing and the electronics sectors. Furthermore, young women have increasingly delayed marriage to enter the workforce. The never-married female labour force participation rate rose from 51.2 per cent in 1980 to 58.2 per cent in 1991.

The high demand for women workers has often resulted from discriminatory practices in which women are paid less than men for work of equal value, thus reducing the production costs. There is an urgent need to institute a minimum wage standard in Malaysia and to enforce equal pay for work of equal value between men and women.



The overall labour force participation rates for rural areas and urban areas were almost equal at 63 per cent and 62.8 per cent respectively (see Table 4-3). However, males living in rural areas had a higher participation rate than did their urban counterparts, at 85.3 per cent and 82.4 per cent respectively. In contrast, the urban female participation rate was higher than that of rural females. The higher female labour force participation rate in the urban areas can be attributed to the growth of industry in urban centres and the corresponding demand for female workers. Furthermore, in rural areas, many women may choose not to enter the labour force due to traditional perceptions about gender roles.

**Table 4-3: Labour force participation rates by sex and by area in 1991 (in per cent)<sup>(a)</sup>**

| <i>Sex</i> | <i>National</i> | <i>Urban</i> | <i>Rural</i> |
|------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Male       | 83.8            | 82.4         | 85.3         |
| Female     | 41.9            | 43.4         | 40.1         |
| Both sexes | 62.9            | 62.8         | 63.0         |

**Source:** DOS 1995a

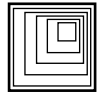
(a) Persons with unknown labour force status have been excluded in the calculation of these rates.

## **2. Employed youth labour force**

### **(a) Distribution by sector**

The majority of young male workers aged 15 to 44 years were engaged in production and related work, or in agriculture (see Table 4-4). Young women aged 15 to 24 years predominated in production and related work, followed by clerical and related work. Among women aged 25 to 44 years, production and related work employed the largest percentage, followed by agriculture, animal husbandry and forestry, fishing and hunting and clerical and related work.

The labour force participation rate of young females was also much higher than that of young males in professional and technical fields.



**Table 4-4: Distribution of employed persons by occupational group, by sex and by age group in 1991 (in per cent)**

| <i>Occupational group</i>   | <i>Male</i>  |              |              | <i>Female</i> |              |              |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
|   | <i>15-24</i> | <i>25-44</i> | <i>45-64</i> | <i>15-24</i>  | <i>25-44</i> | <i>45-64</i> |
| Professional, technical and related workers                                 | 4.9          | 9.6          | 6.6          | 8.5           | 16.7         | 8.2          |
| Administrative and managerial workers                                       | 0.6          | 3.6          | 3.0          | 0.6           | 2.0          | 0.6          |
| Clerical and related workers  | 6.8          | 8.0          | 4.3          | 17.6          | 18.9         | 3.4          |
| Sales workers   | 8.8          | 10.4         | 12.1         | 9.0           | 8.1          | 11.1         |
| Service workers   | 9.0          | 10.8         | 8.6          | 12.1          | 11.6         | 13.0         |
| Agricultural, animal husbandry and forestry, fishing and hunting            | 23.0         | 23.0         | 40.8         | 9.9           | 19.9         | 53.1         |
| Production and related workers, transport equipment operators and labourers | 45.6         | 33.8         | 23.7         | 40.9          | 21.7         | 9.6          |
| Occupation not adequately described / not stated                            | 1.3          | 0.9          | 0.9          | 1.3           | 1.1          | 1.1          |
| TOTAL   | 100.0        | 100.0        | 100.0        | 100.0         | 100.0        | 100.0        |
| Total Number (thousands)  | 891.1        | 2,349.0      | 833.3        | 595.4         | 1,048.8      | 280.0        |

**Source:** DOS 1995a

Age-specific data are unavailable by ethnicity. For all age groups, the proportion of Bumiputera in professional, clerical services, and production-related occupations was proportionate to the ethnic composition of the population. In the agricultural sector, however, Bumiputera made up 74 per cent of all workers, which is higher than their proportion of the general population (see Table 4-5). In administrative, managerial and sales occupations, the Bumiputera constitute 57.7 per cent, which was lower than their proportion of the general population.

The Chinese predominated sales and administrative or managerial work, making up 58.3 per cent and 56.9 per cent of the labour force, respectively, in those occupations. Indians were largely concentrated in production-related work, comprising 11.9 per cent of the labour force, and 8.6 per cent in services (see Table 4-5).



**Table 4-5: Distribution of employed Malaysian citizens by ethnic group within each occupational group in 1991 (in per cent)**

|   | <i>Bumiputera</i> | <i>Chinese</i> | <i>Indian</i> | <i>Others</i> | <i>TOTAL</i> |
|---|-------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| Professional and technical workers                                      | 62.6              | 27.1           | 8.3           | 2.0           | 100.0        |
| Administrative and managerial workers                                   | 35.8              | 56.9           | 5.9           | 1.3           | 100.0        |
| Clerical workers  | 57.7              | 32.6           | 7.9           | 1.8           | 100.0        |
| Sales workers   | 33.5              | 58.3           | 6.1           | 2.1           | 100.0        |
| Service workers   | 66.4              | 22.4           | 8.6           | 2.6           | 100.0        |
| Agricultural, animal husbandry, forestry workers, fishermen, hunters    | 73.5              | 14.2           | 7.2           | 5.0           | 100.0        |
| Production-related workers, transport equipment operators and labourers | 49.8              | 35.1           | 11.9          | 3.3           | 100.0        |
| Occupation not adequately described / not stated                        | 49.5              | 38.7           | 9.7           | 2.1           | 100.0        |

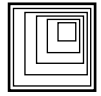
**Source:** DOS 1995a

The 1991 Census registered a sharp decline in the agricultural sector's share of employment. Only 24 per cent of the workforce was engaged in agriculture in 1991, compared to 39 per cent in 1980. This decline occurred against the backdrop of increased industrialization and declining importance of agriculture in the Malaysian economy. Correspondingly, workers in the manufacturing sector increased from 13 per cent in 1980 to 19 per cent in 1991.

**(b) Wages and earnings**

The tight labour market since 1995 has exerted pressure on wages, causing wage increases to exceed productivity growth. This situation may erode competitiveness in the long run. Nominal wage rates grew by 5.7 per cent in 1996 and 6.1 per cent in 1997, but increased at a slower rate of 4 per cent in 1998.

Similarly, labour productivity, as measured by Gross Domestic Product per worker in constant 1978 prices, continued to grow between 1996 and 1998, albeit at a slower rate. Labour productivity grew by 3.5 per cent in 1996



and by 3 per cent in 1997. As a result of the economic downturn in 1998, however, productivity growth registered a negative 3.8 per cent growth due to the under utilization of capacity.

In the manufacturing sector, data from the Monthly Surveys of Manufacturing Industries showed that average nominal wages increased by 10 per cent per annum between 1996 and 1998. Productivity, however, grew at a slower rate of 1 per cent per annum. With productivity growth lagging behind wage growth in the sector, unit labour costs increased, especially in 1996 (4.8 per cent) and 1997 (4.5 per cent). As the labour market adjusted to the economic slowdown in 1998, however, unit labour costs declined by 4.5 per cent.

Overall, wage rates in the other sectors of the economy also registered a decline in growth during the review period. Exceptions were the electricity, gas and water as well as the finance, insurance, real estate and business services sub-sectors of the services sector. Nevertheless, growth in wages continued to outstrip growth in productivity. Labour productivity in the agriculture sector declined from 3.5 per cent in 1996 to 0.1 per cent in 1998, while all the services sub-sectors recorded positive growth. On average, almost all the sectors recorded a positive productivity growth, except the construction sector, which recorded a negative growth of 2.6 per cent.

In line with efforts to ensure that wage increases reflect productivity gains, and with a view to enhancing competitiveness and promoting employment stability, the government adopted the Guidelines for a Productivity-Linked Wage Reform System in August 1996. Implementation of the guidelines has so far been limited by firms adopting a wait-and-see attitude as well as due to a lack of practical models for firms to follow.

In recent years, The Malaysian Trade Union Congress has been demanding that the government establish a minimum wage standard for workers in Malaysia in order to help to eradicate poverty. The Government and employers have been reluctant to grant this minimum wage, however, citing the need to remain competitive in the world market.

### ***(c) Occupational safety***

The Occupational Safety and Health Act (1994) provided the legislative framework to promote, stimulate and encourage high standards of safety and health at the workplace. The Act covers about seven million people at work,



in all economic sectors except the Armed Forces and the Navy. The primary aim of the Act is to promote safety and health awareness throughout the Malaysian workforce.

The Act provides guidelines on the general duties of employers and self-employed persons to formulate safety and health policies. It also provides for penalties for offences related to occupational safety and health.

**(d) Unionization**

In 1999, there were a total of 538 unions in the private, public and local authority sectors registered with the Department of Trade Union Affairs in the Ministry of Human Resources. Their total membership was 733,197. No youth specific data on unionization are available.

A code of conduct for industrial harmony was signed between representatives of employers and employees in 1975. The aim of the code was to lay down principles and guidelines to employers and workers on the practice of industrial relations for achieving greater industrial harmony.

Both employers and trade unions have agreed to refrain from taking unilateral action with regard to any industrial dispute; to resolve all differences, grievances and disputes strictly in accordance with the grievance procedures of collective agreements, or, where there are no agreements, by negotiation, conciliation and arbitration; and to ensure that at all times all matters in dispute are dealt with by the proper machinery established for that purpose.

Companies and trade unions are guided by this code in all matters pertaining to employees and grievances in the workplace.

**3. Unemployed youth**

Youth aged 15 to 24 years formed the highest proportion of the unemployed between 1995 and 1998 for both sexes. In 1998, they formed 64.6 per cent of the unemployed (see Table 4-6).

The high proportion of youth among the unemployed is due to the relatively high retrenchment rate of young workers due to their lack of seniority as well as the generally lower retrenchment compensation they receive.





**Table 4-6: Distribution of unemployed persons by age group and by sex from 1995 to 1998 (in per cent)**

| <i>Age group</i> | <i>Unemployed persons</i> |             |             |             |
|------------------|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                  | <i>1995</i>               | <i>1996</i> | <i>1997</i> | <i>1998</i> |
| Both sexes       |                           |             |             |             |
| 15-24            | 72.4                      | 67.8        | 71.7        | 64.6        |
| 25-54            | 25.0                      | 28.8        | 25.6        | 33.3        |
| 55-64            | 2.6                       | 3.3         | 2.7         | 2.1         |
| 15-64            | 100.0                     | 100.0       | 100.0       | 100.0       |
| Male             |                           |             |             |             |
| 5-24             | 70.3                      | 64.1        | 68.6        | 60.4        |
| 25-54            | 26.0                      | 31.4        | 27.8        | 36.6        |
| 55-64            | 3.7                       | 4.5         | 3.5         | 3.0         |
| 15-64            | 100.0                     | 100.0       | 100.0       | 100.0       |
| Female           |                           |             |             |             |
| 15-24            | 75.3                      | 74.6        | 76.4        | 72.4        |
| 25-54            | 23.6                      | 24.3        | 22.2        | 27.1        |
| 55-64            | 1.2                       | 1.2         | 1.4         | 0.5         |
| 15-64            | 100.0                     | 100.0       | 100.0       | 100.0       |

**Source:** DOS 1999a

In order to address unemployment in Malaysia, the Government has reversed its policy on the employment of foreign workers, once pursued due to a shortage of labour in the country. The Employment Act of 1955 was amended to include the introduction of flexible working hours and the formalization of part-time work, in an effort to increase the utilisation of local labour. These actions are expected to encourage more women, as well as people living in rural areas, to join the labour market, thus reducing the dependence on foreign workers.

### **C. CHALLENGES FOR EMPLOYMENT POLICY**

Given the desire of the country to become a developed nation by 2020, the difficult task of increasing the supply of highly skilled and trained human resources remains to meet the changing demands of the economy through continuous investments in human resource development.



An efficient labour market mechanism has to be introduced to ensure that the demand and the supply of human resources are matched, thus assisting in the country's development process. A large number of knowledge-based workers will be required to help the Government meet its objective of gradually moving towards a knowledge-based economy.

Emphasis will have to be given to three strategies in order to achieve this objective: intensification of existing knowledge content, especially training and courses, in every sector; provision of new knowledge-enhancing activities, such as scholarships and sabbatical leave; and achieving breakthroughs in research and development (R&D), especially in information technology (IT), and high-tech and bio-technology.

The training and acquisition of skills among workers should be introduced as a life-long process in order to provide the opportunity for more people, including youth, to participate in skills training to meet the demand for skilled human resources.

Training courses and other employment programmes should be developed that specifically target youth as they constitute the majority of the unemployed, yet no youth specific employment programmes exist in Malaysia. Young women should be particularly targeted, especially those living in rural areas, as they form the highest proportion of the unemployed.

The need to impose a statutory minimum wage may become inevitable as Malaysia is moving quickly towards its goal of becoming a fully developed nation. This minimum wage, once developed, should be strictly enforced, particularly among youth and woman workers, the two groups that have often been subject to wage discrimination.

A minimum wage standard could help eradicate poverty as well as encourage Malaysians to assume jobs in low-wage sectors where foreign workers have been largely concentrated.

While efforts are underway to impose the minimum wage legislation, the existing wage schemes or salary scales for employees in certain sectors, such as for teachers, are inadequate and therefore must also be upgraded. Education and training have become increasingly vital in a country in pursuit of a high quality of life, and further investment in teachers, who are crucial agents in effecting this transition, is required.

# Youth Participation

# V

## **A. OVERVIEW**

Youth in Malaysia have had a tradition of active participation in all aspects of public life, including politics. Following the students' involvement in socialist movements and in public demonstrations during the late 1960s and the mid 1970s, youth participation was curtailed with the introduction of the Universities and University Colleges Act of 1971, which remains in effect today. The Act banned students from holding political office in organizations outside the university such as trade unions and political parties.

In 1975, the Act was amended to further limit student involvement in politics. They were prohibited from becoming members of, or expressing any form of support for, political parties or trade unions. Section 15 of the Act prohibits a student or a student organization, body or group from associating with outside organizations, except as provided under the Constitution or approved by the Vice-Chancellor of the respective university. The Section also prohibits fundraising by a student or a student organization. It defines criminal liability of office-bearers of a student organization and rules on suspension and expulsion of students charged with criminal offences.

Section 16 empowers university Vice-Chancellors to suspend or dissolve any student organization that conducts itself in a manner which a Vice-Chancellor considers detrimental or prejudicial to the interests or well-being of the respective university.



The curtailment of youth activities as a result of this act has significant implications for the development of youth capacity in labour, educational, social and political participation.

## **B. YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS**

### **1. Malaysian Youth Council**

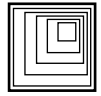
The majority of the youth organizations in Malaysia fall under the umbrella of the Malaysian Youth Council (MYC), which is a non-profit voluntary organization. As discussed in Chapter 1, the MYC comprises of 35 national and state youth-affiliated organizations, including student organizations, socio-economic organizations, religious organizations, uniformed organizations and state youth councils.

### **2. Student organizations**

Following the introduction of restrictions on student association, there are both formal and informal groups of student bodies in institutions of higher learning. There are two types of formal organizations, one at the campus level and the other at the national level. At the campus level, there are two sub-levels: students unions, to which all students can gain membership; and academic-oriented organizations at the faculty, department and college levels. There are also special interest groups, such as sports or recreational organizations.

At the national level, there are two registered organizations: the National Union of Malaysian Muslim Students, which holds motivational and tutoring classes for students; and the Peninsular Malaysia Malay Students Federation, which assists Malay students in pursuing academic excellence. Members of the National Union of Malaysian Muslim Students are individual members of Muslim student associations in campuses and in various states of Malaysia, as the Universities and University Colleges Act denies the campus Muslim students' associations affiliation with the National Union of Malaysian Muslim Students. Similarly, members of the Peninsular Malaysia Malay Students Federation are students who speak, not on behalf of their respective universities, but on behalf of individual students.

At the informal level, there is the Barisan Bersatu Pelajar Malaysia, which is a national network of student unions and a network of campus Muslim students associations.



### **3. Non-student youth organizations**

While student political activism has been curtailed, non-student youth still play an active role in politics and are free to join the various political parties. Almost all political parties in the country have youth wings, which are seen as the birthplace of future political leaders.

In some of the major political parties, especially those that constitute the government, the youth wings have developed into pressure groups. Their opinion and stance on political, economic and social issues are made known and their suggestions are often incorporated in the process of decision-making or drafting legislation.

### **4. Mainstreaming youth participation in civil society**

Strengthening youth participation in Malaysia requires that youth play an active role in civil society. Groups such as the Malaysian Youth Council (MYC) have called for the formation of a civil society network in order to improve governance and to enhance youth participation within it. To date, efforts in this direction have been successful to the extent that seven NGOs have confirmed their participation in the network. They include the MYC, which will serve as the secretariat, the Malaysian Trade Unions Congress (MTUC), the Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services (CUEPACS), the Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (FOMCA), the National Council of Women's Organizations (NCWO), the National Writers Federation (Gapena) and Usiamas, a body of senior citizens.

The following are examples in which strengthened youth representation in civil society could benefit Malaysia:

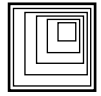
- Views and opinions as well as problems and grievances could be conveyed through official and appropriate channels;
- Youth could be trained by civil society organizations in leadership skills;
- The practice of democracy would be enriched in line with the objective of Vision 2020 to develop a mature democratic society;
- The National Youth Development Policy and other government policies, such as the National Policy on Women and the Policy on Elder Citizens, would be realized;



- The generation gap between adults and youth and the gap between the state and the people would be bridged;
- Patriotism, particularly among youth, would be enhanced; and
- A channel for dissemination and reception of accurate information and feedback would be provided.

Youth representation in a strengthened civil society could be created in many settings, some of which include the following:

- The Parliament could incept more Select Committees that include youth representation, as there are no senators from among youth as there are from other members of the civil society;
- Every ministry could establish relevant “consultative councils” with youth representation;
- Youth currently represented in civil society organizations could also be part of official delegations to relevant international gatherings, conferences and missions;
- Youth representatives in civil society organizations could be appointed as directors or advisers to state agencies at the federal, state, regional and district levels;
- State governments could establish more appropriate consultative councils and youth representatives in civil society organizations could be appointed to them;
- Every state government could appoint at least one local youth representative, and representatives from the other civil society groups, to local authority councils;
- Youth Consultative Councils and other consultative councils related to civil society could be established at district and village levels;
- In the business sector, young workers should not be prohibited from initiating or joining trade unions, and should be allowed to establish in-house associations to represent their rights;
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with focus on youth could have youth-appointed representatives as members of the board of directors or leaders at all levels, or, if appropriate, create relevant special youth committees;



- At institutions of higher learning, official and consultative councils could be established between the board of governors and students/lecturers/administrators where representatives from the latter group are elected democratically to influence academic and non-academic life of their constituency; and
- In secondary schools, the board of prefects and library prefects could be elected in a more democratic manner through an election mechanism involving teachers and students.

### **C. VOICE OF YOUTH**

From 21 to 28 November 1999, a series of seven focus group discussions was held, involving 60 Malaysian youth. These discussions were facilitated by youth from the Malaysian Youth Council and student interns from Queen's University, Canada in order to identify areas of concern to youth as well as their ideas on strategies to address those concerns. Follow-up interviews were also conducted with rural youth and junior professionals.

The discussions involved small groups of youth and were held in local places frequented by youth. In such settings, the young people felt comfortable and therefore, were open and eager to share their opinions. The 60 participants ranged in age from 14 to 28 years and were of a gender, geographic and ethnic mix. While the views of those 60 Malaysian youth do not necessarily represent the general opinion of youth throughout Malaysia, they do, however, provide valuable insight on issues of concern to youth, including education, health, employment and participation in civil society. The focus group discussions also reinforced the positive role that youth can play in understanding and identifying some of the crucial issues which underpin the formulation and implementation of a national youth policy.

The results of the focus group discussions in the areas of youth, education, health, employment and participation are outlined below.

#### **1. Youth**

The respondents described youth as energetic and full of creativity. At the same time, they thought youth were confused, rebellious, and somewhat *na ve*. Although most of the respondents used positive terms and concepts for self-representation, there was still a great deal of uncertainty in what it means to be a young person.



## **2. Education**

Among the student participants in the focus groups, most enjoyed school and believed that education is a necessary step to achieve their goals. Education was also the one area in which youth felt that the government had policies or initiatives which directly impacted them. Some youth, though unaware of the National Youth Development Policy, were mindful of the various education policies.

The respondents' suggestions for improving the education system included provision of more scholarships and cultivation of an academic environment that promotes freedom of speech. A desire to have more channels for the development of youth in the performing arts and music beyond the primary school level was also noted.

The issue of quotas was raised several times in relation to both education and employment. The inequities created by the quota system were discussed by Indian, Chinese and Malay respondents. The respondents felt that quotas are barriers to promoting positive relations among the various ethnic groups. They suggested that the quota system has led to increased ethnic tension, although fostering a stronger work ethic among the groups that have been disadvantaged by the quota policy.

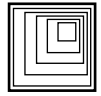
The respondents felt that the educational curricula are relevant to the employment sector, although they also expressed the opinion that schools in Malaysia generally do not encourage students to think. Rather, students are simply taught to answer questions. Accordingly, there is a need to foster a sense of a dialogue which promotes creativity and allows for a vision of youth as innovators of new ideas.

The major barriers against universal access to education include lack of funds and lack of qualification for relevant examinations due to poor grades.

## **3. Employment**

The respondents were generally optimistic about obtaining employment upon completing their studies. Programmes offered by the Ministry of Labour were noted as a good alternative for those who have difficulties finding employment.





Youth's major concern regarding employment was that they may be unable to obtain desirable jobs due to lack of experience. Thus, a desire for increased programmes in education and career counselling in secondary schools was also identified.

The respondents did not feel that the Government adequately targets youth in their employment initiatives. They would welcome strengthened programmes and mechanisms to provide career opportunities for youth.

#### **4. Health**

The key health issues for youth in Malaysia identified by the respondents were HIV/AIDS and substance abuse.

While knowledge on HIV/AIDS transmission was high, tolerance and compassion for people living with HIV/AIDS was considerably low. Youth were generally uncomfortable with the idea of sex education, and a need for increased information about treatments and the encouragement of confidential and supportive services with regard to both HIV/AIDS and substance abuse were identified.

#### **5. Participation**

The respondents generally felt that the government takes an interest in youth and their concerns. Nonetheless, the respondents lacked knowledge about government programmes targeted specifically at youth, with the exception of Rakun Muda. This lack of knowledge could be a reflection of a need to increase dissemination about youth development initiatives among youth.

The youth participants showed a strong interest in politics and a desire to participate in voting. They also, however, identified barriers to their participation, such as ineffective bureaucracy and the fact that they are rarely taken seriously by older people. In general, they believe that they can make valuable contributions to society and have many innovative ideas, but they need to be empowered as active agents for change by having their contributions sought out.



## **D. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

### **1. Voting**

The Election Act of 1958 states that Malaysian citizens aged above 21 years who are residents in a constituency during the voter registration process are eligible to register to vote. People who are not eligible for voters registration include those who are deemed psychologically unfit, those serving prison sentences, and those who have been convicted and sentenced to death or imprisonment for terms exceeding 12 months. Only those who have registered as voters are eligible to vote in an election.

No age disaggregated data are available on voter turn-out. However, the number of potential youth voters during the next general election in 2004 is expected to increase significantly, as the majority of approximately one million youth would then meet the age requirement.

### **2 Political representation**

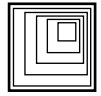
No age restriction exists for persons who want to hold political office. Information was not available on the proportion of youth representatives in the House of Representatives of Parliament or in the state legislative assemblies.

## **E. THE MEDIA**

### **1. Youth-specific media**

Youth participation in the media is encouraged through two main channels: Youth Quake and Speak Up. Youth Quake is a section of the New Straits Times newspaper that caters to youth. All articles are written by youth on subjects that are relevant to young people. Speak Up is a television programme run by youth that is broadcast weekly in English and in Mandarin on TV3, a private television channel. The programme is run by youth and it encourages young people to voice their views and opinions on a variety of topics.

Television coverage has improved throughout the country. A total of 13 locations with poor reception have received new transmitters, especially in Sabah and Sarawak. These efforts have further increased television and radio



coverage, which is now available to more than 90 per cent of the population. Wider coverage of broadcasting services has been achieved through continuous upgrading of broadcasting technology, including the use of modern digital equipment and broadcasting systems. The availability of Malaysia East Asia Satellite (MEASAT) facilities also provides access to information with wider choices of programmes through direct user services by the All-Asian Satellite Television and Radio Operator (ASTRO).

The Internet has also become a main source of information and exchange for youth within Malaysia as well as internationally. Cyber cafes, well equipped with personal computers, have sprung up in most urban areas, especially in the Klang Valley and close to colleges. They provide a cheap means of surfing the Net for students and others, for many of whom owning a personal computer is still beyond their means.

State-of-the-art telecommunications and information technology facilities in Malaysia have provided easy access to the Internet. The country's telecommunications system received a boost in 1996 with the launching and operation of the country's own satellites, MEASAT 1 and 2. The satellites provide a high capacity, broadband, digital infrastructure to support mass information technology and multimedia operations.

The number of direct exchange lines reached 4.5 million in 1998, resulting in an improvement in the national penetration rate from 16.6 telephones per 100 persons in 1995 to 22.5 telephones per 100 persons in 1998. The rural penetration grew from 5.5 telephones per 100 persons in 1995 to 10.7 telephones per 100 persons in 1998 with the installation of 296,000 new direct exchange lines.

Although access to the Internet is still limited to people living in urban areas, the growth in the number of telephone lines in the rural areas is an enabling factor for future access.

## **F. CHALLENGES FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION**

Youth participation in Malaysian civil society, although active, is still limited. Efforts to promote youth representation in governmental bodies and NGOs are underway through the efforts of groups such as the Malaysian Youth Council, trade unions, civil service unions, women's groups and professional bodies.



YOUTH IN MALAYSIA: A REVIEW OF THE YOUTH SITUATION  
AND NATIONAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

The integration of youth participation at all levels of civil society organizations would strengthen youth leadership skills and experience. Furthermore, civil society organizations stand to benefit from the ideas, creativity and initiatives of young people, especially in areas of major concern to youth.

As students are an important component of youth, legislation that currently restricts student activity in politics, should be repealed. Freedom of speech and freedom of association for all youth should be guaranteed in order to strengthen youth capacity and, in turn, national capacity in all fields.

# Future Directions for Youth Development VI

## A. CONCLUSION

The enactment of the National Youth Development Policy in 1987 and the inclusion of a youth chapter in the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2001) have been significant achievements in the area of youth development in Malaysia. Youth and youth organizations were involved in and consulted throughout the policy development processes, lending strength and relevance to the final outcome. Further detailed action plans, with set timeframes and monitoring indicators, are needed for effective implementation of the policies. This study forms part of the research that will be used in the development of those plans, in the areas of youth education, youth health, youth employment and youth participation.

Educational reform was introduced in Malaysia by the Education Act of 1996 and the Private Institutions of Higher Learning Act of 1996. In an effort to attain developed nation status by the year 2020, the Malaysian government has reoriented the education system in the direction of science and technology. Information technology has been introduced in schools and technical training has been encouraged over professional training. The largest proportion of the education budget is allocated to tertiary education and the private sector has also been encouraged to lend its support in this area.



Although education data in Malaysia are not readily accessible, available figures show that almost all children enrol in primary school and that most of them complete six years of schooling. At the secondary level, the rate is much lower, at 64 per cent. There are no data to indicate how many complete secondary education, nor the characteristics of those who complete, according to sex, region and ethnicity.

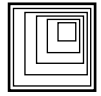
Given the disparities in equity and access to a variety of other resources in Malaysia, by sex, region and ethnicity, however, similar differences likely exist in the education sector. Despite the positive advances being made in the education sector in Malaysia, therefore, efforts should be made to ensure that investment in high technology education benefits the whole educational system, and not only a privileged few.

A youth health policy is urgently needed in Malaysia. The drastic reduction in the number of birth-related deaths and the expansion of medical services to all areas of the country, attests to a high standard of health care in Malaysia. Although health care is accessible in all states, the quality of care is still far from equitable. High quality care is still concentrated in the capital, Kuala Lumpur and the industrialized states of Johor, Selangor and Pulau Pinang.

Although most health data are not age-disaggregated in the country, the available information suggests that health concerns of youth are significantly different from those of adults or children. For example, the leading causes of mortality among youth are accidents and violence, which suggests a need for a preventative approach much different from that needed to treat heart disease and malignant neoplasms, the primary cause of mortality among adults.

A national youth health policy should prioritize the prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS among the young population, as youth currently form the overwhelming number of victims in Malaysia. Substance abuse, particularly injected drug use, is a critical area of concern among the youth population and should be addressed in an open manner, both in order to curb HIV/AIDS transmission and to offset the deleterious effects of drug use.

Sexual and reproductive health care issues should be introduced into school curricula as well as in health programmes, targeting out-of-school youth. Studies show that youth are increasingly sexually active, and yet, many



continue to engage in unsafe sex. The risky behavioural patterns of youth must be addressed through an increase in information, efforts to alter attitudes, and access to youth-friendly health services.

In the area of employment, youth were severely affected by the Asian economic crisis, especially in the manufacturing sector where they are predominantly employed. As the country recovers, government efforts to train youth in science and technology need to be increased to meet market demand, and should be expanded to include training programmes for unemployed youth, especially young women. A statutory minimum wage should be instituted in Malaysia to safeguard the rights of workers, particularly young ones. Youth, especially young women, continue to receive low wages due to the absence of this basic labour standard.

Although Malaysian youth have participated actively in the design and implementation of youth policies and programmes, university students have been excluded from this process. Universities and the University Colleges Act of 1975 ban students from participating in politics as well as any organizations outside the university. Until this act is repealed, the country will not derive the full benefits or potential of its youth population.

## **B. POLICY GUIDELINES: A SUMMARY**

With the forthcoming new national youth policy, the government has been taking measures to ensure its effective implementation, as well as the participation of young people in the policy process.

A national youth policy is a mandating document for the development of specific programmes and plans for meeting the needs and aspirations of youth. It is a statement of society's commitment to youth. As such, the entire policy process must reflect the needs of young people. The only way to ensure this goal is to involve youth at every stage of the process of youth policy formulation and action plan implementation.

Policy-making is not a one-time exercise; it is necessary for an ongoing policy process to be put in place and goals and objectives set. The process begins with a review of existing policies, programmes and projects that directly or indirectly affect the lives of youth. This analysis should take into consideration the many government agencies dealing with youth to determine if duplication or redundancy exists. A detailed action plan for the implementation of the objectives of the youth policy should follow.



The policy process consists of several other elements, such as problem and resource identification, resource mobilization and programme/project coordination. Problem identification, which includes needs identification, helps ensure that the action plan has realistic goals and objectives. Correct knowledge of the situation is crucial for determining and ranking the concerns that must be addressed.

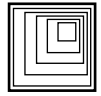
Developing realistic action plans means taking into account the availability and limitations of resources. Financial resources are crucial, but other resources, such as administrative capability, motivational commitment of various actors, and capacity for the management of social, cultural, political and environmental factors must also be built into the plans. When the plans are realistic, the progress of their implementation can be properly monitored.

One of the crucial elements for the formulation and implementation of youth policy and action plans is coordination. An effective policy and its efficient implementation call for coordination within the various levels of a single ministry, and between ministries, departments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. This liaison is best accomplished through an effective national coordinating mechanism.

Once the youth policy has been formulated, and accompanying action plans and coordinating mechanisms set, the focus must be on implementation. Appropriate, relevant, and targeted programmes and projects are the key to successful realization of the policy's goals and objectives. Major bottlenecks in implementation often arise from inadequate cooperation between line ministries and their departments on the one hand, and the key resource ministries, such as planning and finance, on the other. It is thus crucial that the agency in overall charge of youth affairs be given the authority to oversee the implementation of youth activities, in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to ensure effective programmes and projects.

Full implementation of an action plan, derived from the goals and objectives delineated in the youth policy will depend critically on building adequate human resource capability for efficient management at every level. Full understanding of the intended objectives and impact of the youth policy, by those implementing the programmes, is also a major prerequisite. To enhance the success of the action plan, it is important that participatory





training programmes be developed for and with those implementing the programmes. Another important element of success is the flexibility of plans, programmes and personnel to meet the challenges presented by rapidly changing contexts. Monitoring of the implementation of youth programmes, both government and non-governmental, is thus required on a continual basis. Sufficient resources must be set aside for the monitoring and evaluation processes.

The Malaysian Youth Council can perform these many functions only if it has the adequate resources, both financial and human. Effective coordination among the many actors involved in youth policy formulation and programme/project implementation, through regular monitoring of activities, will require sufficient devolution of authority to the Malaysian Youth Council. In turn, the Council must use such resources prudently through a systematic analysis of the current situation and changing needs. It must provide a realistic assessment of existing, available and potential resources and generate new viable options, so as to remove bottlenecks and accelerate implementation. It must be able to help agencies harmonize diverse activities by pointing to the overlaps, duplications and redundancies in the programmes.

A crucial task for the Malaysian Youth Council will be to ensure that agencies and ministries do not treat youth-specific programmes as just an 'add on' to their other priority programmes. To ensure such mainstreaming of youth-specific programmes, the Council should make inputs into the formulation and implementation of policies and plans of various departments and agencies for such related areas as gender equality, poverty alleviation, or securing the rights of young people in need of special protection. In this way, competition for resources can be turned into cooperation, so that the quality of outcomes is enhanced for all concerned.

As the coordinating mechanism, the Malaysian Youth Council will be called upon to ensure that an appropriate balance between central coordination, local priority-setting and decentralized implementation is maintained. The Council has several other functions, such as advocacy, ensuring coverage, managing decentralization, identifying lead agencies, resource mobilization and enhancing legitimacy and support for plans and programmes. These are discussed in detail in the original policy guidelines (Lele, Wright and Kobayashi, forthcoming).



The recommendations about the policy process, discussed above, constitute some general but central considerations for successful implementation. Specific recommendations arising from those principles are outlined below.

## **C. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. National Youth Policy**

#### **(a) Recommendation**

The implementation of the National Youth Development Policy of 1997 should be accelerated.

#### *Justification*

The formulation of the National Youth Development Policy was a highly participatory process involving youth and youth organizations from throughout the country. The Action Plan currently contained within the Policy sets the general direction for future action. In order to effectively implement the policy, programmes must be developed and a timeframe must be set toward achieving the policy's stated goals.

#### *Implementation*

The National Youth Consultative Committee should convene a consultation with its constituent members to develop a detailed implementation plan of the Policy including monitoring indicators. Each member of the Committee should be charged with specific tasks within a specific timeframe and a monitoring system should be established.

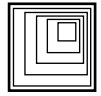
### **2. Education**

#### **(a) Recommendation**

High quality secondary school education should be made accessible to all youth in Malaysia.

#### *Justification*

Secondary education in Malaysia is free but not compulsory. Although net primary school enrolment rates have reached 99 per cent, net secondary school enrolment rates were 64.0 per cent in 1997.



The Malaysian government and the private sector have invested heavily in raising the standard of education in some schools, introducing intermediate technology into the classroom. The facilities and teaching staff among schools located in the urban, industrialized states have benefited more from such reforms than the schools located in rural and remoter states.

#### *Implementation*

The Ministry of Education should standardize their educational resources throughout the country, so that youth living in rural or remote states can compete with their urban counterparts for employment opportunities.

#### **(b) Recommendation**

Educational data in Malaysia should be made readily accessible to the general public and it should be disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity and region.

#### *Justification*

Data on education including secondary cohort survival rates, drop-out rates, net enrolment rates and completion rates are currently inaccessible in Malaysia. To plan effectively, this information is required in a disaggregated form, by sex, age, ethnicity and region.

The lack of information in the area of education makes analysis extremely difficult. Not only does this lack impede planning, but it has specific negative consequences for poor or disadvantaged groups, and those in less developed regions, whose needs risk being masked in the overall statistics.

#### *Implementation*

The Ministry of Education should make data on education public information.

### **3. Health**

#### **(a) Recommendation**

A youth health policy should be developed in Malaysia, which takes into consideration the health needs of both male and female youth.



### *Justification*

Age-disaggregated data in the area of health are scarce in Malaysia. Existing data show that youth have concerns which are specific to their age category. For example, the leading causes of death among youth are accidents and violence. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of people living with HIV/AIDS, as well as those who abuse substances, are youth.

In order to address the specific health needs of youth, more age-specific data need to be gathered, and programmes targeted at improving the health of youth need to be created. Data should be sex disaggregated, as male and female youth experience different health concerns.

### *Implementation*

The Ministry of Health together with the Ministry of Youth and Sports should initiate a process to develop a national youth health policy, involving youth organizations as well as NGOs and health sector personnel involved in work related to youth health.

### **(b) Recommendation**

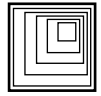
Comprehensive reproductive health education should be introduced in all schools and major out-of-school programmes for youth. Youth-friendly health services should be made accessible to all young people.

### *Justification*

Youth's major source of information regarding sexual and reproductive health care issues is other youth, whose knowledge is often not accurate. In school, sex education has not been incorporated into the curriculum. Also young people seldom seek advice from health personnel due to cultural norms that inhibit youth from openly speaking about sex.

### *Implementation*

The Ministry of Education should introduce sex education into its formal and non-formal education programmes. The Ministry of Health, the private sector and NGOs should work together to promote youth-friendly, confidential and financially accessible health services for youth, throughout the country. This may require the re-training of medical staff in the area of youth relations.



## **4 Employment**

### **(a) Recommendation**

Labour standards such as minimum wage should be introduced in Malaysia to protect youth workers from exploitation.

#### *Justification*

No minimum wage law currently exists in Malaysia. Young workers are often underpaid, particularly young women, who lack bargaining power, as well as legal protection.

#### *Implementation*

The Ministry of Human Resources should enact a minimum wage law as soon as possible.

### **(b) Recommendation**

Training programmes in line with market demand for skills should be targeted at unemployed youth.

#### *Justification*

The majority of the unemployed in Malaysia are youth. Those who have lost their jobs in failing sectors may need re-training in order to secure gainful employment in the future. These youth are not currently specifically targeted by government or private sector training programmes.

#### *Implementation*

The Ministry of Human Resources and the private sector should develop a training or re-training programme to assist unemployed, out-of-school youth to develop market-relevant skills.

## **5 Participation**

### **(a) Recommendation**

As students are an important component of youth, the Universities and University Colleges Act should be revoked.



*Justification*

Youth participation has been encouraged in many sectors in Malaysia with the exception of university students. The Universities and University Colleges Amendment Act bans student involvement in politics as well as any organization outside the campus. This law deprives students of their democratic rights to participate.

*Implementation*

The government should renew the Act with a view to abolishing the provisions which unduly curtail young activities

**(b) Recommendation**

Youth participation in governmental bodies and NGOs should be ensured.

*Justification*

Youth participation in Malaysian civil society, although active, is still limited. The integration of youth participation at all levels of civil society organizations would strengthen youth leadership skills and experience. Furthermore, civil society organizations stand to benefit from the ideas, creativity and initiatives of young people, especially in areas of major concern to youth.

*Recommendation*

The efforts to promote youth representation in governmental bodies and NGOs, which are currently underway through several efforts, need to be further supported to ensure active youth participation.

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