

Forging media partnership for children's rights

At UNICEF Media Workshop 'All Rights for All Children'

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WELCOME ADDRESS BY

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Good morning, Selamat Pagi and a warm welcome to all. I wish to thank all of you for dedicating your time to attend this workshop.

We are here over these three days to talk about children – not just about their future, but about their present existence and childhood.

Childhood – that time between birth and adulthood – is often forgotten in our obsession to prepare children for the future and mould them into responsible citizens with good careers.

But childhood is what children experience *now*, as they are growing up. During these years, they need special care and protection, and they should be respected and encouraged to participate in decisions that affect them – because it is their right to enjoy their childhood today.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) created this vision of childhood 20 years ago. With the CRC, we now understand that effective protection of childhood must be based on fundamental, universal and inalienable rights – rather than particular needs that may differ from place to place or time to time.

In line with this vision, great achievements have been made for children in Malaysia, following strong commitment by the Government. Malaysia signed and ratified the CRC in 1995, further strengthening the country's commitment to children.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Yet there are children hidden in the shadows of disparities, stigma and discrimination, where their daily challenges go unnoticed. Without a protective environment, their rights will continue to be neglected and they will never experience the vision of childhood set forth in the CRC.

While the Government, UNICEF and its partners in civil society remain deeply committed to eradicating economic and social inequalities that endanger the rights of all children in Malaysia, every person in the country can contribute towards better childhoods by simply changing attitudes and behaviours that undermine the rights of a child.

Friends from the media,

All of you, including those from traditional and new media, have an important role to play in protecting the rights of every child in Malaysia, because you have the distinctive ability to influence opinions and provoke action.

By applying a child-focused lens on events and issues in Malaysia, you can identify the rights and wrongs of society's behaviour, and by doing so, greatly enhance the work of the Government, UNICEF and civil society in advocating for children's rights in Malaysia.

Being in Sabah and Sarawak gives you an added advantage. You are on the ground to observe unique issues that affect children here, and you can help to carry their voices to the attention of those who should be protecting them. Together, we can give these children better childhoods, as it is their right.

I wish you a productive and inspiring workshop, and I hope we will be able to build a partnership together, to celebrate 20 years of the CRC and work towards achieving all rights for all children.

Thank you.