

Malaysia

Country programme document 2011-2015

The draft country programme document for Malaysia (E/ICEF/2010/P/L.10) was presented to the Executive Board for discussion and comments at its 2010 annual session (1-4 June 2010).

The document was subsequently revised, and this final version was approved at the 2010 second regular session of the Executive Board on 9 September 2010.

Basic data[†]
(2008 unless otherwise stated)

Child population (millions, under 18 years)	9.7
U5MR (per 1,000 live births)	6
Underweight (% of under-fives, moderate and severe)	8
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	30 ^a
Primary school enrolment (% net, male/female)	99/99
Survival rate to last primary grade (%)	99
Use of improved drinking water sources (% , 2006)	99
Use of improved sanitation facilities (% , 2006)	94
Adult HIV prevalence rate (% , 2007)	0.5
Child labour (% , children 5-14 years old)	—
GNI per capita (US\$)	6 970
One-year-olds immunized with DPT3 (%)	90
One-year-olds immunized against measles (%)	95

[†] More comprehensive country data on children and women can be found at www.childinfo.org.

^a WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA and the World Bank developed MMR 2005 estimate is 62 per 100,000 live births, which are adjusted for under-reporting and misclassification of maternal deaths. http://www.childinfo.org/maternal_mortality.html.

Summary of the situation of children and women

1. Malaysia is one of Asia's most culturally diverse nations, with its multilingual population including Malays, Chinese, Indians and more than 200 indigenous ethnic groups. In 2008, the population was estimated at 27.7 million, including 3 million indigenous people and 2 million non-Malaysian citizens. Children comprised about 10.5 million, with 3.2 million under the age of five.¹

2. In line with its overarching vision to become a fully developed country by 2020, Malaysia has made great strides in eradicating poverty and boasts a solid legal, policy and institutional framework for developing and implementing social policies for children. Overall poverty was reduced from levels of around 50 per cent in 1970 to 3.6 per cent in 2007, and income inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, improved from 0.46 to 0.44 between 2004 and 2007. Main remaining income disparities are observed along rural/urban, ethnic and geographic lines.

3. Given the larger average household size of poor families, child poverty was estimated at 12.6 per cent in 2004, in contrast to 5.7 per cent of overall poverty at the household level in the same year.² States with the highest incidence of child poverty were Sabah, Terengganu and Kelantan. In terms of absolute numbers, more than half a million children were classified as poor in Sabah, followed by well over

¹ Government of Malaysia, Department of Statistics. Data reported in the text are official figures of the Government of Malaysia and may differ from the basic data table.

² In 2004, poor households averaged 6.6 members, compared with 4.4 members for non-poor households. Malaysia, Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department and UNDP, *Malaysia: Measuring and Monitoring Poverty and Inequality*, 2007.

100,000 in Sarawak and Kelantan. Child poverty is of particular concern, as its manifestations tend to have permanent effects on children by limiting their mental, physical and emotional development and depriving them of the opportunity to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

4. Aggregate social indicators are approaching levels similar to those of fully developed countries; Malaysia is well on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals except for Goal 6 (combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases) where the country faces a low-intensity HIV/AIDS epidemic. In 2008, net primary school enrolment reached 94 per cent, with complete gender parity; under-five mortality edged up slightly, to 8.1 per 1000 live births, primarily driven by a higher neonatal mortality rate for male babies; more than 90 per cent of the population had access to safe drinking water; and the number of reported new HIV infections — including mother-to-child transmission — dropped to 3,700 in 2008, from 4,500 in 2007, while the share of women within the HIV-infected population continued to increase to 19 per cent. However, in line with remaining economic disparities, social indicators for marginalized groups and regions continue to lag national rates of progress.

5. Reported child abuse cases have continued to trend upwards, from 1,800 in 2005 to 2,800 in 2008, disproportionately affecting girls and relating mainly to neglect or physical and sexual abuse. Despite a commendable commitment to further strengthen child protection — reflected in the development of the National Plan of Action for Children and the Child Protection Policy — the under-resourced child and family welfare system still lacks a clear continuum of prevention, early intervention and holistic response services. Lack of documentation and statelessness are a challenge particularly in East Malaysia, with its large migrant population, but also affects indigenous groups and other marginalized populations throughout the country. Although no incidence of child labour has been officially confirmed, it continues to be of concern on remote plantations, which do not offer children access to education.

6. The recent global financial crisis affected Malaysia mainly due to its heavy reliance on exports. It is estimated that the economy contracted by 1.7 per cent in 2009. While downturns in trade and in private investment have been the main transmission channels, financial market turbulence was also reflected in reversals in capital flows, equity price volatility and higher sovereign bond spreads. Manufacturing employment dropped, with foreign workers taking the brunt of the adjustment. However, growth is projected to bounce back in 2010, in line with the expected recovery in global demand.

7. While the lack of data precludes an in-depth analysis of the impact of recent crises on women and children, adverse effects were likely buffered by the Government's generous provision of universal benefits to its citizens, most notably free education and health care services and subsidies on key food items. However, concerns remain with regard to the comprehensiveness of the social safety net and coverage rates of programmes specifically targeted at poor families and children, with many young and marginalized children out of reach of school-based social interventions such as feeding programmes. Given the need to reduce the fiscal deficit to ensure fiscal sustainability, the 2010 budget envisages significant cuts in

federal government spending, including a reduction in current spending on education and training of almost 1 per cent of the gross domestic product.³

8. Going forward, the highest development priorities remain greater equity in social outcomes, specifically the need to improve the situation of poor, indigenous, migrant and other marginalized children, and to strengthen the protective environment for all children in Malaysia. In light of budgetary constraints, it will also be essential to improve the effectiveness and targeting of social expenditures and programmes — ensuring optimal resource utilization — and to closely monitor social indicators, especially at the disaggregated level.

9. Malaysia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995, expressing reservations to 12 articles. Subsequently, it withdrew its reservation to six articles, but maintains the other six reservations, including on the principle of non-discrimination and on the prohibition of corporal punishment, torture and cruel and degrading treatment. It also noted that the provisions are applicable only if they are in line with the country's constitution, national laws and policies.

10. The concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Malaysia's 2007 report welcomed the Government's efforts in safeguarding children's rights. The Committee's main recommendations included the withdrawal of all remaining reservations; ratification of the optional protocols; review of Malaysia's dual legal system and domestic laws; and the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools. It also recommended ensuring equal access to education at all levels for all children, improving the birth registration system and performing a systematic assessment of budgetary allocations for children.

Key results and lessons learned from previous cooperation, 2008-2010

Key results achieved

11. The current country programme's strategic approach has focused on evidence-based advocacy to influence policy change and enhance the social, legal and protective provisions for children in Malaysia. It includes two interrelated components:

(a) **Partners in development.** This programme component aims to strengthen monitoring, analysis and research frameworks to further build the knowledge base on children. It is also redefining the mode of engagement for UNICEF in Malaysia, putting in place a sustainable funding mechanism to ensure its long-term viability.

(b) **Quality social policies and services.** This programme component supports the Government in its efforts to enhance policy and service provisions for children so that underserved groups of children benefit from better access to quality health care, education and protection services.

12. UNICEF Malaysia successfully adopted a new tripartite funding model, paving the way for an effective and sustainable new mode of engagement. The Government demonstrated its support for a continued UNICEF presence by pledging an annual

³ Ibid.

contribution of \$500,000 to the programme. At the same time, long-standing obstacles to private-sector fundraising were removed; UNICEF fundraising efforts have been showing encouraging results. In addition, a comprehensive strategy on corporate engagement beyond fundraising was successfully initiated in 2009, culminating in a new formal partnership with the corporate regulator, the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM), and the launch of a first best business practice circular on the establishment of child care centres at private workplaces.

13. To enhance knowledge and data on children, a number of research projects were carried out, providing a clearer understanding of the current situation of children and effective policies for addressing remaining social policy gaps. These include the Malaysia Child Index; the launch of the Child-Injury Database; the 2009 Situation Analysis; a comprehensive assessment of the child and family welfare system; an assessment of the juvenile justice system; a study on children affected by AIDS in Selangor; a report on education in detention; a child trafficking assessment; and a publication on combating child abuse in Malaysia. A joint project with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on poverty reduction strategies for the Orang Asli community and a United Nations country team (UNCT) project on measuring progress with the Millennium Development Goals on a disaggregated level are also expected to enhance the availability of socio-economic data on children and assist the Government in developing more targeted interventions.

14. A number of policy provisions for marginalized children were strengthened as a result of evidence-based advocacy efforts. For example, after the successful pilot and evaluation of the Supplementary Reading Programme for children in remote areas in East Malaysia, the programme is in the process of being scaled up. A collection of Orang Asli folklore and ghost stories was finalized, to serve as a model and advocacy tool to develop a targeted teaching approach for Orang Asli children. The national Early Learning Development Standards were revised and will be piloted in 2010 for incorporation into the new curriculum. The Government has also made strides in halting the spread of HIV and AIDS, and the United Nations Theme Group (UNTG) on HIV and AIDS chaired by UNICEF supports the national AIDS programming response with the financial resources made available by UNAIDS. In 2010, the development of the National AIDS Strategy 2011-2015 is expected to focus on the urgent interventions and response to the shift in heterosexual transmissions.

Lessons learned

15. While an upstream approach, with a continued emphasis on medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) focus area 5, was found to be the appropriate strategy in Malaysia, more attention needs to be paid to other priority areas of the MTSP to further assist partners in addressing gaps in service provision for particularly marginalized groups of children through more inclusive policies.

16. In order to remain an effective and relevant development partner in a middle-income country context, UNICEF needs to ensure it has the technical and professional capacity to deliver high-quality research and policy analysis on a consistent basis. This will require a more systematic approach and greater focus on strategic areas where it can make the highest value-added contribution.

17. There is a need to forge stronger and broader partnerships with national civil society organizations (CSOs), the corporate sector, academia and other development

partners to leverage better and more sustainable results for children. Existing partnerships, such as collaboration within the UNCT, should continue to be consolidated to take advantage of synergies.

18. Renewed interest in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its promotion of inclusive policies is reflected in the Government's 'One Malaysia' initiative, which fosters cross-cultural cohesion, as well as the current Ninth Malaysia Plan for 2006-2010 and strategic directions and key result areas of the upcoming 10th Malaysia Plan for 2011-2015. It is therefore an opportune time to firmly anchor the next country programme around the Convention.

The country programme, 2011–2015

Summary budget table

<i>Programme</i>	<i>(In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Regular resources</i>	<i>Other resources*</i>	
Improved data, capacity and resources for children	1 000	4 000	5 000
Reduction in child poverty and quality social services for all	750	3 500	4 250
Cross-sectoral costs	2 000	2 500	4 500
Total	3 750	10 000	13 750

* Indicative estimates only, based on the availability of private-sector, thematic and government funds.

Preparation process

19. The country programme exercise was carried out under the guidance of the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department and is tightly aligned with the preparation of the 10th Malaysia Plan. The proposed country programme is consistent with the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2007, national and international development targets, as well as the 2009 Situation Analysis and other key sector assessments. Insights gained through the Programme Performance Assessment in June 2009 and the Annual Review and Strategic Moment of Reflection in December 2009 were also integral to the development of the draft country programme. The UNICEF Regional Office for East Asia and the Pacific contributed extensively throughout the process.

Programme components results and strategies

20. The overall goal of the country programme is to support the Government in achieving Vision 2020, which articulates its vision of Malaysia becoming a fully developed country with an inclusive and caring society that protects the rights of all children by 2020. Towards this objective, it seeks to create self-sustaining national capacities so that all children in the country will be better able to enjoy their rights for survival, development, protection and participation.

21. As appropriate for a middle-income country, the focus of the programme will be on enhancing data, national capacities and resources for children, as well as

assisting the Government in a selected number of well-defined priority areas where UNICEF can add the highest value. In doing so, it will seek to (a) identify and address remaining data gaps, including key child protection indicators; (b) support national capacities for rigorous monitoring and evaluation of social interventions; (c) ensure optimal resource utilization for children through budget and expenditure policy analysis; and (d) provide high-quality analysis and advocacy for the development of policies to address the most pressing needs of marginalized and vulnerable children in Malaysia.

22. In order to leverage scarce resources, maximize results for children and ensure the sustainability of its interventions, UNICEF will seek to address underlying factors, such as child poverty, tap into international good practices and strengthen strategic partnerships with CSOs, the private sector and non-state providers, academia and other development partners. Targeted capacity-building of CSO partners is envisaged to allow for a smooth transition to full country ownership of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2020. Engaging the corporate sector has already shown great potential for raising resources, ensuring child-friendly business practices and facilitating support for marginalized groups of children. Partnerships with the media and communication efforts, including through donor communications, will play a critical role in supporting programme advocacy objectives and in conveying key messages on the challenges facing children in Malaysia.

23. In line with Vision 2020 and the strategic directions under the 10th Malaysia Plan, the following key results for children are expected to be achieved under the programme for 2011-2015:

- (a) Poverty amongst children has been reduced (in line with 10th Malaysia Plan targets);
- (b) Coverage and comprehensiveness of social safety net programmes have been strengthened, with enhanced targeting of poor children and families;
- (c) The child welfare system's ability to address violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect has been improved and children living with HIV and AIDS are protected and cared for;
- (d) Reform of the juvenile justice system has been completed;
- (e) All children enjoy access to quality education, quality health care and early child development (ECD) interventions;
- (f) All children enjoy the right to birth registration and identity;
- (g) The number of children, women and other most-at-risk populations infected with HIV and AIDS has been reduced.

24. The programme is expected to be funded largely by private fundraising receipts, as well as regular resources from the global budget of UNICEF and supporting funds from the Government.⁴ As private fundraising has shown exceptional promise during the current programme, it is expected that proceeds will

⁴ The contribution of the Government of Malaysia is subject to Cabinet approval, which is pending.

make it possible, as a reflection of Malaysia's upper-middle-income status, to support UNICEF global activities through the submission of regular resources.

Relationship to national priorities and the UNDAF

25. The programme was developed within the context of the Government's national priorities, as laid out in the guidelines on the 10th Malaysia Plan and Vision 2020. It recognizes the critical importance of national ownership and provides continuity in UNICEF support to the Government in its pursuit of its policy and implementation framework, the National Mission, 2006-2020, notably thrust 3 (address persistent socio-economic inequalities), thrust 4 (improve the standard and sustainability of quality of life) and thrust 5 (strengthen the institutional and implementation capacity).

26. The country programme will be fully synchronized with the 10th Malaysia Plan, which is especially significant as the next five years are critical in Malaysia's pursuit of Vision 2020. In the aftermath of the global financial crisis, Malaysia will need to return to a trajectory of high growth as well as accelerate progress towards embracing a new economic and social model, necessary for its transformation into a developed and inclusive society that ensures a sustainable and high quality of life for its entire population.

27. In this endeavour, the country programme supports the national key result areas introduced by the Prime Minister in 2009 (widening access to quality education and raising the income of low-income households) as well as the strategic directions 3, 4, 5 and 6 in the National Mission: providing creative, innovative and skilled human capital; applying an inclusive approach to address the development gap; improving the quality of life on par with developed countries; and enhancing the role of the Government as an effective facilitator with integrity. Specifically, it addresses a significant number of key result areas that will form part of the 10th Malaysia Plan: improvement in the quality of students; increase in efficiency of the labour market; eradication of poverty and increase in the income of households in the bottom 30 per cent income bracket; increase in access to quality and affordable basic physical and social infrastructure; just and equitable distribution of income; quality health care and active lifestyle; development of a progressive society; innovative service delivery; enhancement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of programmes and projects; and enhancement of the capability and competency of the public service.

28. Since the country programme of cooperation with Malaysia is not based on a Common Country Assessment or a United Nations Development Assistance Framework, UNICEF uses the UNCT as the main mechanism for working closely with other United Nations agencies towards achieving the goals of the United Nations system in Malaysia. Cooperation initiatives under the UNTGs on HIV and AIDS, gender and human rights have been essential tools for pursuing joint programme objectives to date. The new country programme will ensure greater coordination within the UNCT in Malaysia to make use of synergies and eliminate duplication.

Relationship to international priorities

29. Malaysia is well on its way to achieve all Millennium Development Goals except for Goal 6 related to halting and reversing the spread of HIV and AIDS. The

new country programme will support Malaysia in fully meeting these goals and continuing to move towards achieving its vision of becoming a fully developed country. In doing so, the programme will be guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in response to Malaysia's 2007 report; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and the principles and goals of *A World Fit for Children*. The new programme will contribute to selected aspects of all of the UNICEF MTSP focus areas, including young child survival and development; basic education and gender equality, and HIV/AIDS and children; child protection from violence, exploitation and abuse; and policy advocacy and partnerships for children's rights.

Programme components

30. **Improved data, capacity and resources for children.** The programme will support the strategic directions of the 10th Malaysia Plan, including applying an inclusive approach to development and enhancing the role of the Government as an effective facilitator in five key areas: (a) quality data on children; (b) monitoring and evaluation, impact assessments and budgets for children; (c) private-sector fundraising and engagement for children; and (d) CSO partnerships and capacity-building.

31. The development and successful implementation of effective policies to address social priorities requires the consistent generation and analysis of high-quality disaggregated data. Therefore, strengthening the Government's central social data collection and management processes, as well as its monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment capacities, to ensure excellence in service delivery, will be a key intervention. Close monitoring of child-related budgets and expenditures will seek to ensure adequate and cost-effective financing of key supportive systems for children, such as the child protection system and social safety net. Finally, in recognition of all stakeholders' universal responsibility to ensure the well-being of children, partnerships with the private sector and national CSOs will be reinforced to raise resources, build the capacities of national CSOs and influence corporate-sector policies to ensure child-friendly business practices and facilitate support for marginalized children.

32. Key expected programme component results include the following: (a) high-quality disaggregated data on children, including key child protection indicators, are being generated and disseminated in a timely fashion; (b) key government agencies that develop and implement policies for children undertake regular and rigorous monitoring and evaluation and impact assessments, to ensure excellence in program delivery and design; (c) key government agencies and programmes offering services for children are provided with adequate financial resources and employ them in a targeted and cost-effective manner; (d) the private sector supports child well-being through financial contributions as well as corporate social responsibility policies that put children first in the workplace, the marketplace and the community; (e) national CSOs have the capacity to advocate for enhanced policies for children and to effectively address gaps in service provision for marginalized children.

33. The programme will further consolidate the established partnership with the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department, the Attorney General's Chambers, the Department of Statistics and key line ministries that collect data on

and develop policies for children, such as the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. It will also broaden newer partnerships with central government entities, such as the Ministry of Finance and the Implementation Coordination Unit, subnational governments in priority regions, the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM), CSOs, and the private sector. Joint UNCT efforts to strengthen DevInfo and the availability of disaggregated socio-economic data will continue.

34. Reduction of child poverty and quality social services for all. The programme aims to address the central issues of child poverty and protection as well as other targeted priorities in four key areas: (a) reduction of child poverty and strengthening of the social safety net; (b) protective environment for all children; (c) quality education, health and ECD services for all; and (d) HIV prevention amongst most-at-risk populations.

35. Assisting the Government in reducing child poverty and strengthening the coverage and comprehensiveness of social safety net programmes specifically targeting poor children and families will be a key priority under the programme. Another key priority will be the development of a strong and well-resourced child protection system that provides a clear continuum of prevention, early intervention and response services. It will specifically support reform of the juvenile justice system and efforts to facilitate universal birth registration. The vulnerability of children to statelessness will be addressed through the facilitation of multilateral regional cooperation, involving legislators, national CSOs, and the United Nations agencies.

36. Other important needs the programme seeks to address include (a) access to quality education, quality health care and ECD interventions for marginalized groups, including indigenous, migrant and refugee children as well as children with special needs; and (b) effective HIV prevention through a number of strategies: fostering a better understanding of the local epidemic and its drivers, linking services of current national programmes with the most vulnerable populations and working to mobilize the community to play a role in halting the drivers of the epidemic.

37. Key expected programme component results include the following: (a) child poverty has been reduced and the coverage and targeting of social safety net programmes for poor children and families has been enhanced; (b) the child welfare system's ability to prevent, detect and address violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect has been strengthened and children living with HIV and AIDS are protected and cared for; (d) reform of the juvenile justice system has been completed; (e) all children enjoy their right to quality education and health care and have access to ECD interventions; (f) all children enjoy their right to birth registration and identity; and (g) the number of children and adolescents, women, and other most-at-risk populations infected with HIV and AIDS has been reduced.

38. Main implementing partners will continue to be the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department, the Attorney General's Chambers, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, including the Children's Division of the Department of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Home Affairs. Partnerships with subnational governments in key states, such as Sabah and Sarawak, and with agencies that play a central role in poverty-eradication efforts, such as the Implementation

Coordination Unit, the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, will be strengthened; cooperation with UNDP will be deepened.

39. **Cross-sectoral costs** will cover the salaries and expenses of programme and support staff, technical assistance covering more than one programme, as well as office maintenance.

Major partnerships

40. In its support of Vision 2020 and the 10th Malaysia Plan, the country programme primarily seeks to consolidate its partnership with the Government of Malaysia, most notably the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department, and with subnational governments in priority regions. Other key partners will be national CSOs, including Mercy Malaysia, Malaysian Child Resource Institute, PS The Children, Child Helpline, Voices of Children, Nur Salam, Children's Chow Kit Center, WINGS Melaka, Malaysian Care and Borneo Child Aid Society; the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM); the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM); the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil; and academic institutions such as HELP University College and University Science Malaysia. Collaboration through the UNCT will be enhanced. The programme will also further strengthen partnerships with the private sector, including individuals and the corporate sector. The media will play an ever-critical role in supporting advocacy efforts and raising public awareness.

Monitoring, evaluation and programme management

41. The Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department will be the main coordinating body for programme implementation and monitoring. A five-year country programme action plan and annual work plans will be developed; these may be revised as a consequence of annual reviews, evaluations and changes in priority needs or the funding situation. The third annual review, scheduled for late 2013, will serve as a midterm review and will also feed into the preparation of the next programme cycle.

42. An integrated monitoring and evaluation plan will guide the results-based management of the programme and coordinate major research, surveys and evaluations in a comprehensive way. The summary results matrix highlights expected key results as well as key progress indicators that will be used for monitoring the progress of the programme. Key staff capacity in the areas of child protection, monitoring and evaluation, and social policy analysis will be reinforced.