

PROTECTING VULNERABLE AND AT-RISK ADOLESCENTS KL KRASH PAD (CHOW KIT FOUNDATION)



The KL Krash Pad is a teen and youth centre located in the capital city's Chow Kit area to meet the needs and rights of vulnerable and at-risk inner-city adolescents and young people. The Centre offers teens and youth with alternatives to risk behavior that may expose them to gangs, violence, crime, substance abuse and the risk of HIV infection.

Activities at the Centre are designed to motivate, interest and inspire vulnerable and at-risk adolescents and young people, and which engage their creative expression, while giving them skills for self-sufficiency. The Centre houses an onsite café, a mini-gym, library, computer lab and various art and music projects, all focused on skills development and possible income generation. As adolescents and young people start to participate in the Centre's activities, the staff determines their literacy level, skills, and interests in order to guide them to appropriate programs.

Some adolescents interested in vocational opportunities are given the option to work at the Centre's café or benefit from a possible internship placement. For those who need basic literacy and numeracy, home school classes are provided. For school drop-outs, the "Back to School" course helps adolescents complete their Form 5 and/or sit for their exams. Whenever possible, adolescents are placed back in mainstream schools.

KL Krash Pad works in collaboration with the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development.

REACHING OUT TO VULNERABLE AND AT-RISK ADOLESCENTS

Around 400 adolescents and young people have registered with the KL Krash Pad since its launch on 15 March 2009, 50 of whom are daily users and visitors to the Centre.

The inner-city adolescents and young people who benefit from the Centre's programs and services are poor, come mainly from fractured families and/or single parent households, and are between the ages of 13 and 21 years old. Those in the adolescent age bracket are regarded as particularly vulnerable since some will begin to explore their boundaries and experiment in risk-taking behavior out of curiosity, peer pressure, boredom and/or a desire to escape their daily reality.

Most of these vulnerable adolescents and youth live in Chow Kit and the surrounding areas of Kampung Baru and Bukit Bintang. The KL Krash Pad reaches out to Malaysian as well as stateless, refugee and undocumented adolescents and young people in the following vulnerable and at-risk groups.

- Adolescents and youth exposed to violence, crime, drug use, sex work and HIV in their communities
- Adolescents and youth living and/or working on the streets
- Adolescents involved in risk behavior such as drug use and unprotected sex with one or multiple partners
- Adolescents coerced or forced into commercial sex as well as victims of trafficking
- Adolescents without formal documentation or birth registration
- Adolescents who are victims of violence, abuse and neglect in their homes and communities

These adolescents and youth are more vulnerable to health risks such as HIV, exposure to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect including trafficking. Many consistently drop out of school and do not complete their education. Almost all experience social exclusion due to poverty and rapid urbanisation.



REALISING EQUITY AND RIGHTS FOR AT-RISK ADOLESCENTS

Equity means that all children have an opportunity to survive, develop and reach their full potential without discrimination, bias or favoritism. This interpretation is consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which guarantees the fundamental rights of every child to health, nutrition, clean water, hygiene, sanitation, education, protection and play regardless of gender, race, nationality, religious beliefs, income, physical attributes, geographical location or HIV status.

In Malaysia, UNICEF is in partnership with the Chow Kit Foundation to realise the rights of vulnerable and at-risk adolescents as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF is also working with the Government, civil society, media and the corporate sector to strengthen the child protection framework for all children in the country, including vulnerable and at-risk adolescents. Projects include:

- Strengthening the child welfare system's ability to prevent, detect and address violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect including for vulnerable and at-risk children and adolescents.
- Reducing the vulnerability of children, adolescents, young people and women to HIV infection by working within the UN system and in partnership with the Government and civil society.
- Advocating for a comprehensive system's approach to child protection services for all children in Malaysia, which includes identifying gaps to ensure that the child is granted equitable and quality support in the event of protection risks.
- Providing legal expertise to the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development for the drafting of the Social Workers Act. This includes the set up of a technical working group and steering committee chaired by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development.
- Developing the 'Standards for Children's Care Centres and Other Residential Institutions for Children' with the Department of Social Welfare and building the capacity of social workers at the operational level.

'UNITED FOR UNICEF' SUPPORT TO KL KRASH PAD

After two years in operation working to improve the quality of life of Kuala Lumpur's inner city vulnerable and at-risk adolescents and young people, the KL Krash Pad aims to move forward with efforts to strengthen protection services for its beneficiaries. Amongst others, the Centre is currently expanding its programs to include peer support counselling, play therapy and safe spaces for sport and play, referral services and the provision of alternative education to build life skills for adolescents.

UNICEF will channel all proceeds raised at the Manchester United Foundation and UNICEF Legends Charity Dinner in Association with Telekom Malaysia Berhad (TM) on 8 April 2011 to the KL Krash Pad's capacity building programs for adolescent and young people. These will include: 1) Income Generation Initiative for Young People; 2) Adolescents as strong Peer Leaders; and 3) Creating a Safe Space through Sports.

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