

## Malaysia

### Update on the context and situation of children

For the third year in a row, political uncertainty and Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) have cast a shadow over Malaysian public life. In November 2022, the country swore in its third prime minister within two years, while COVID-19 continued to play a significant role. Since the January 2020 onset of the pandemic, Malaysia recorded 5 million confirmed cases and 36,700 deaths. In April, Malaysia transitioned into the endemic phase and subsequently removed all travel and trade barriers.

Malaysia's societal reopening has revived the economy. The 2022 projected gross domestic product growth rate is, conservatively, 5.4 per cent.[1] Despite declining unemployment overall (3.6 per cent), recovery has been uneven. Unemployment among youth remains high (12.8 per cent) and lower-income workers face extreme rates of work stoppage (25 per cent).[2] COVID-19's legacy has also included increased poverty, inflation, learning loss and missed healthcare opportunities.

An estimated 9.1 million children under 18 years of age live in Malaysia.[3] As an upper middle-income country, Malaysia attracts documented (around 2 million) and undocumented (between 1.5 and 3 million) migrant workers, especially in the domestic, agriculture and service sectors, comprising approximately 20 per cent of the total workforce.[4] Their children are often undocumented.[5] Without documentation, children have limited to no access to government healthcare or education and face heightened protection risks such as child labour, abuse, trafficking and reduced legal protection.[6]

Basic water, sanitation and hygiene services are widespread[7] in Malaysia, with piped water available to 95 per cent of the population and 99.7 per cent able to access sanitation services. The public health system is strong and maternal and under-5 mortality rates are low (29 deaths per 100,000 live births and 8.6 per 1,000 live births, respectively).[8] Malaysian children enjoy high vaccination coverage – hovering between 94 and 99 per cent since 1994 – despite pandemic challenges.

Primary and secondary education are largely free for citizens and 2020 government education expenditure was 3.9 per cent of gross domestic product.[9] However, schools closed for 61 weeks during the pandemic[10] and, despite government efforts to provide education online, many students fell behind. In addition, nearly 1 in 10 children aged 12 to 15 years do not attend lower secondary school in Sabah [11]. Children with disabilities also face barriers to accessing education. Approximately 69.3 per cent (pre-primary), 59.6 per cent (primary) and 50.1 per cent (lower secondary) non-Malaysian children with disabilities are out of school compared to 16.7 per cent, 6.3 per cent and 9.0 per cent of Malaysian children, respectively.

Malaysia ranks 103 (of 146) on the 2022 Gender Gap Index and ranks just 123 (of 146) in political female empowerment.[12] Women and girls aged 15 and older spend 19.1 per cent of their time on unpaid work, compared to just 6 per cent spent by men.[13] Indeed, a girl born in today's Malaysia will be 63 per cent as productive as she would have been with full access to education, health and employment.[14] Obstacles to gender equality include gender-based violence[15] and stigma towards and possible criminal prosecution of same-sex relationships and gender non-conformity.

Economic and other pressures have increased food production costs and intensified food insecurity in Malaysia. Overall food inflation hit a high of 7.2 per cent in 2022 with substantial consumer price increases for grains, meat and other proteins (7.3, 7.3 and 8.8 per cent, respectively).[16] To ease the impact, especially on the poorest, the government released the largest aid package in Malaysian history.[17]

Even before COVID-19, many Malaysians were unable to afford a nutritionally adequate diet.[18] According to latest NHMS data, 29.8 per cent of children aged 5 to 17 years were overweight (15 per cent) and obese (14.8 per cent), while 21.8 per cent under age 5 years were stunted.[19] Children in households with food insecurity are more likely to be malnourished[20] and the incidence of anaemia in Malaysia is growing; one quarter of children aged 6 to 59 months are currently affected.[21]

In 2022, Malaysia ranked 130 (of 180) on the Environmental Performance Index and a dismal 174 for ecosystem services. In December 2021, extreme rainfall and unusual weather patterns, coupled with an altered physical environment unable to absorb much of the precipitation, caused Malaysia's worst flash flooding in 50 years with 1.46 billion USD in damages, the displacement of more than 120,000 people, including children, and the death of 54.[22]

The new UNICEF Malaysia Country Programme 2022-2025 focusing on child wellbeing, equity, inclusion and ending violence against children began in July 2022. UNICEF anticipates a successful partnership with the new government to further child-friendly policies and programmes.

[1] Government of Malaysia (GOM) and IMF project 5.4 per cent; World Bank 6.4 per cent; Asian Development Bank 6.0 per cent.

[2] World Bank, *Macro Poverty Outlook for Malaysia, 2022*.

[3] UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2021*, 2021.

[4] IOM website, accessed 5 January 2023. Numbers are estimates as undocumented people are excluded from national statistics.

[5] World Bank, *ID4D Data Set*, 2018.

[6] UNICEF, *Situation Analysis of Women & Children in Malaysia*, 2020. Relevantly, Malaysia remains on Tier 3 of the Trafficking in Persons Report. US Department of State, *2022 Trafficking in Persons Report*, 2022.

[7] Rates are notably lower in Kelantan, Sabah and Sarawak and rural areas, informal settlements and vulnerable groups.

[8] UNICEF, *Key Demographic Indicators Malaysia*, 2020.

[9] World Bank, *World Development Indicators*, 2020.

[10] UNESCO, *Global Monitoring of School Closures*, accessed 10 December 2022.

[11] UNICEF, *Situation Analysis of Adolescents in Malaysia*, 2020.

[12] WEF, *Global Gender Gap Report 2022*, 2022.

[13] UN Women, *Malaysia Data Hub*, accessed 10 December 2022.

[14] World Bank, *Malaysia Gender Landscape*, 2022.

[15] WAO, *Malaysian Public Attitudes and Perceptions towards Violence Against Women, 2021*.

[16] GOM, *Consumer Price Index Malaysia October 2022*, 2022.

[17] GOM, *Total subsidies in 2022 nearly RM8 bln*, 2022.

[18] UNICEF, *Situation Analysis of Women & Children in Malaysia*, 2020.

[19] GOM, *National Health and Morbidity Survey 2019*, 2020.

[20] UNICEF, *Addressing Malaysia's nutrition crisis post-COVID-19*, 2020.

[21] WHO, *World Health Statistics*, 2019.

## Major contributions and drivers of results

In 2022, UNICEF Malaysia remained focused on reaching the most vulnerable children and their families. Challenges associated with a changing political climate and the shifting nature of COVID-19 have required a renewed focus on strategic partnerships to ensure results for children.

**Building the evidence base on the situation of children in Malaysia:** UNICEF supported evidence generation to promote the rights of children. In partnership with Institute for Democracy and Economic

Affairs, the study *Left Far Behind* was completed, of which findings were discussed by both policy makers and with the refugee community, laying the groundwork for further evidence-based advocacy on education and healthcare for refugees in Malaysia. UNICEF also finalized a comprehensive study on birth registration of children under 5 years of age affected by migration in Peninsular Malaysia, to inform policy dialogue and advocacy.

UNICEF supported a review of the Plan of Action on Child Online Protection 2010-2015 and generated evidence on online child sexual exploitation and abuse as part of an unprecedented research effort in 13 countries. The September 2022 launch of the resulting *Disrupting Harm* report was supported in Malaysia by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD) and Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC). A strong focus on building evidence generation is also on scaling up the evidence-based parenting programming and roll-out of ParentText chatbox jointly with the National Population and Family Development Board, Parenting for Lifelong Health and University of Putra Malaysia (UPM).

UNICEF collaborated on several evidence-gathering efforts regarding health: with the Ministry of Health (MOH), a study on contributing factors to psychological distress and help-seeking behaviours among adolescents living in low-cost flats during COVID-19; and, with the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS), the first National Youth Mental Health Index, to be used by the government to monitor youth mental health and wellbeing domains and inform youth policies and interventions.

UNICEF took the lead among UN agencies to provide technical assistance to the national statistical office (DOSM) to identify gaps and provide recommendations on missing or incomplete Sustainable Development Goal indicators. The completed project has resulted in an increased commitment by DOSM to extend existing survey tools to provide the required data for the missing/incomplete indicators .

**Strengthening Malaysia's policy framework for children and families:** UNICEF engaged robustly on policy development and strengthening in 2022. Major developments include the tabling of the first-ever Roadmap to Strengthen Support to Child Victims and Witnesses in the Criminal Justice System and a draft Private Members Bill to Amend the Evidence of the Child Witnesses Act, to both of which UNICEF provided technical support, and the reform of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants Act.

UNICEF co-led and provided technical inputs during high-level policy dialogues and Transforming Education Summit (TES) national consultations. The thoughts and voices of school-going children collected via U-Report contributed to the global advocacy effort to ensure every child achieves basic reading and maths skills.

For Malaysia's National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, UNICEF supported the integration of children's rights in the National Baseline Assessment by engaging child rights stakeholders in civil society to participate in consultations, and facilitated a consultation with young people to support their articulation of a child rights perspective and propose action on child rights and business. UNICEF also advocated for the rights of children on plantations in Malaysia in the review of the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil Principles and Criteria.

Various engagements were held with government and civil society to share findings and recommendations from UNICEF's Impact of Climate Change on Children: A Malaysian Perspective and discuss how to address identified risks. UNICEF collaborated with MWFCD and National University of Malaysia (UKM) to highlight findings and recommendations on the impact of climate change on children to the National Social Council. UNICEF Malaysia also contributed to a report on Legal Empowerment to Advance Climate and Environmental Justice for Children in East Asia and the Pacific.

UNICEF was also a leading voice in ensuring child rights were considered in discussions in the draft Control of Tobacco Products and Smoking bill. UNICEF has also provided support to MOH in evaluating the impact of sugar-sweetened beverage taxes in Malaysia, to inform decision-making. UNICEF participation in a Technical Working Group chaired by the Minister of Health contributed to the development of strategic plans for Reduction in Sugar Consumption among the Population of Malaysia (2022-2025) and to Combat the Burden of Malnutrition among Children in Malaysia (2022-2030). UNICEF and Food Fortification Initiative, in an engagement session with MOH, provided technical support on the implementation of mandatory flour fortification.

UNICEF has given technical support and facilitated engagement with children, especially from marginalized communities, to provide their views on the development of a new National Child Policy (NCP) and associated Action Plan, a priority of MWFC. In Sarawak, UNICEF participated in the development of the State Nutrition Workplan and began discussions about introducing Cash-plus programming in the state. The state government indicated their interest in UNICEF technical assistance to add child participation into the development of a city masterplan.

**Addressing child protection risks through social service workforce (SSW) strengthening:** The capacity of the SSW is a key bottleneck for systemic change of the Malaysian child protection system. In 2022, UNICEF Malaysia supported the government to establish an evidence base for its comprehensive reform and is assisting with the pending Social Work Bill.

The Country Office supported MWFC and the Department of Social Welfare (JKM) in the review of social work education and curricula, finalized in March, and worked with MWFC and JKJ to map the SSW in relation to its child protection role. Both the mapping and review inform UNICEF technical assistance to Malaysia's upcoming NCP, and the development of an SSW-strengthening roadmap over the course of 2023.

UNICEF also supported government efforts to make the SSW more inclusive of children affected by migration. A comprehensive training of trainers, with 20 key pre- and in-service training providers, included all Malaysian universities and colleges offering social work degrees, the government, UNHCR and civil society organisations (CSOs). Work is ongoing to institutionalise capacity building and develop more systemic links between government social service workers and civil society providers.

**Preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse of children:** UNICEF Malaysia has continued its advocacy and support for the government in implementing the National Strategic Plan in Handling the Causes of Child Marriage. For MWFC, UNICEF moderated a public advocacy forum on child marriage. On Human Rights Day, UNICEF launched the Malay version of the Child Marriage Advocacy Brief jointly with the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM), UNCT, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Legal Affairs Division and Department of the Prime Minister. Jointly with UNFPA, UNICEF is finalizing a study on teenage pregnancy, a driving factor for child marriage.

In partnership with Project Liber8, UNICEF increased refugee and migrant children's knowledge and awareness on safe migration and human trafficking. Since 2021, Advoc8 reached a total of 3,054 students across 60 schools nationwide. The workshop module is being replicated in additional schools and community learning centres, in partnership with the private sector.

UNICEF continued its evidence generation and strategic advocacy to support the government in establishing alternatives to immigration detention. This included a mapping of children in immigration detention centres and trafficking shelters together with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), a high-level consultation with key stakeholders, and a bilateral meeting between Thai and Malaysian government counterparts to facilitate sharing, learning and identification of areas for future

collaboration on children affected by migration. Additionally, UNICEF partnered with HOST International to strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms in Rohingya and Myanmar Muslim communities.

The *Disrupting Harm* report confirmed UNICEF's position as a thought leader in preventing child abuse and exploitation; a related social media campaign generated 23 million impressions and more than 760,000 views in less than three months. In conjunction with the report's release, UNICEF Malaysia launched the #SayaSayangSaya social media campaign for young people on self-love, healthy relationships and online sexual exploitation and abuse.

**Promoting child health and wellbeing:** The UNICEF supported and country-led evaluation of Malaysia's first diversion pilot was completed in December 2022; it also provides recommendations for next steps. An assessment of JKM institutions for children in conflict with the law, with the aim of improving JKM services to children in these institutions, was agreed upon with government counterparts and will begin in early 2023.

UNICEF is supporting the Malaysian government to strengthen the current growth monitoring and promotion programme for children under five years of age with anthropometry equipment for 114 community health clinics in 6 districts, to be followed by implementation research. Additionally, UNICEF Malaysia, with the government's Malaysia Global Innovation Centre, awarded co-funding grants to each of three social enterprises, largely focused on air quality, that completed the 2021 MyUNICEF Impact Challenge.

Recognising the importance of local government in the implementation and development of national and sub-national policies and initiatives, UNICEF made substantial effort to enlist local councils into the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI). As a result, 4 states and 24 local councils announced their interest in implementing the CFCI.

**Promoting adolescent and youth participation and empowerment:** The Youth Environment Living Lab (YELL), a joint initiative with UNDP, strengthens youth-led climate and environmental action rooted in local narratives, based on an experiential approach. YELL, with MOYS, provided seed funding to 10 teams of rural youth to implement environmental entrepreneurship projects in their communities. YELL was one of three winners of the global UNICEF-UNDP Green Shark competition, with USD 250,000 awarded for further scale-up. Beyond YELL, UNICEF and partners held more than ten events to engage over 1,000 youth in climate action.

UNICEF's Young Leaders Programme recruited 45 young people (including 42% per cent girls, 18 per cent with disabilities, 8 per cent refugees and 4 per cent indigenous), in partnership with Childline Foundation, to strengthen their capacity for participation in child rights programming. In Pahang, capacity-building sessions focusing on education and innovation in disaster risk reduction and climate change and two school preparedness programmes were carried out, involving almost 500 youths and 40 teachers.

Skills-building workshops for marginalised groups on mental health, entrepreneurship and learning were conducted in partnership with the Malaysian Youth Council, GoodKids Academy and LeapEd Services via @KitaConnect, online engagement programme that aims to build the skills of young people in Malaysia. A total of 783 young people, including 60% per cent girls and 10 per cent with disabilities, participated in @KitaConnect's digital engagement programme and supplementary peer-to-peer sessions; 24 youth champions were upskilled to lead and co-facilitate these engagements. Introduction of TikTok content co-created with children for future skills development has garnered over 14,000 followers and a total of more than 3 million views, leading to the translation and expansion of content to the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia.

**Promoting the inclusion of marginalised children and reimagining education:** UNICEF, Ministry of Education (MOE) and technology partners Google, Microsoft and Apple relaunched the Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia (DELIMa) 2.0 platform incorporating face-to-face and online learning. As of August, 99 per cent of teachers and 85 per cent of students have used DELIMa. The multidisciplinary global citizenship education project-based lessons aimed at strengthening 21st century skills and a growth mindset have been accessed over 19,000 times with 5,600 unique users. UNICEF is also working with the government to expand the platform to children in institutions under the Malaysian Prison Department. UNICEF's work via DELIMa has been recognised as a Sustainable Development Goal 4 global best or innovative practice.

Future Skills for All (FS4A), in partnership with Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation, UNICEF and DiGi Telecommunications and aimed at strengthening equitable provision of digital and skills development, ensured continuity of learning during COVID-19 with 36,751 unique users, over 1 million page-views and 41.3 per cent completion rate. Fifty per cent of participating teachers are now serving children in rural communities. Learning materials include sign language interpretation, in partnership with Malaysia Federation of the Deaf. Co-creation workshops for offline learning kits were carried out with children with disabilities and indigenous and undocumented children to ensure that materials are accessible and inclusive.

The first Inclusive Playground in Malaysia was launched in March 2022 in partnership with Sime Darby Property. Designed for children with different capabilities, the launch of the playground gained 789,406 Instagram impressions and coverage by over 10 media outlets. Based on the construction of the Inclusive Playground, a Best Business Practice Circular and Guidance Toolkit on designing, building and managing inclusive parks and play spaces has been developed to advocate with public and private stakeholders for the refurbishment of existing and construction of new, inclusive play spaces for children in Malaysia.

**Strengthening institutional capacity in social and behaviour change (SBC):** UNICEF nutrition and SBC units are working with MOH and MOE to develop an evidence-based SBC communication strategy to promote healthy eating habits among children, including a digital communication and engagement campaign expected to launch in 2023. UNICEF has supported the capacity-building of 32 nutritionists from five states in utilizing SBC approaches to address micronutrient deficiencies in women, to be extended to other states in 2023. In addition, UNICEF supported three Communication for Development (C4D) centres, trained more than 250 people, consulted with four government projects and completed three research papers in 2022. An additional six C4D papers are under way.

**Programme development and private sector engagement:** In conjunction with World Children's Day (WCD), Johor Darul Takzim Football Club (JDT) participated in a themed match with WCD elements. This partnership has raised awareness and positively impacted discussions between UNICEF Malaysia and the Johor state government on CFCI.

UNICEF, with the Malaysian Research Accelerator for Technology and Innovation, collaborated on the Social Impact Challenge Accelerator initiative, whereby matching grants were provided to finalists, GoodKids Academy and LeapEd Services to scale up mental health and psychosocial support modules to adolescents from low-income households and novice teachers nationwide.

**Developing and leveraging resources and partnerships for children:** Multi-year partnerships are key to ensuring UNICEF is able to continue its work on behalf of children, especially the most vulnerable, and their families. In 2022, UNICEF increased the number of active pledge donors by 4 per cent, to 169,000. Face-to-face fundraising, severely curtailed by COVID-19, saw particularly significant growth (24 per cent).

The 2022 UNICEF Malaysia country programme was fully funded from non-earmarked donations

raised from individuals and corporations. UNICEF is supporting private sector stakeholders in key economic sectors to amplify and replicate positive business actions, and to jointly design shared value partnership activities to remedy and mitigate risks to children's rights.

## UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

In 2022, UNICEF Malaysia collaborated with government counterparts to promote evidence generation and strategic policy development. UNICEF leveraged long-term relationships with the Malaysian Association of Social Workers and JKM to support comprehensive SSW reform. UNICEF co-chairs the Advisory Group on Social Service Workforce Strengthening alongside MWFC and, with MOH, co-chaired the National Technical Advisory Group for the adolescent mental health and psychosocial support report. UNICEF works closely with the Parliamentary Special Select Committee on Women and Children, SUHAKAM and Office of the Children's Commissioner to enable strategic inputs into policy development.

Partners on environmental and climate issues included the National Disaster Management Agency; Environment Protection Department Sabah; MOYS; MOE; and Ministries of Environment and Water, and Science, Technology and Innovation. Government partners in child protection include MOHA, Council for Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants, MCMC, National Registration Department and Attorney General's Chambers.

The Disrupting Harm research was jointly implemented by ECPAT International, INTERPOL and UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti and supported by the Fund to End Violence Against Children, MWFC, MCMC and End Child Sexual Exploitation Network Malaysia. In education, UNICEF joined with indigenous CSOs to realign global citizenship education in the pre-primary indigenous curriculum. UNICEF partnered with Digi on expansion of FS4A and joint advocacy on child rights and business for regional and country audiences. Youth and youth organisations, such as U-Inspire, Malaysia Youth Delegation and youth champions, remain integral partners.

UNICEF maintains close relationships with sister agencies and chairs the interagency Operations Management Team, co-chairs the technical working group on sexual and reproductive health education with UNFPA, is UNCT focal point for TES and engaged proactively as a member of the recently formed UN Migration Working Group (comprising IOM, ILO, UNHCR and other UNCT members). With UNDP, UNICEF implemented the YELL programme. UNICEF also supported the National Baseline Assessment of the National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights (which UNDP is leading on behalf of the government) by engaging children, young people and civil society stakeholders to provide the child rights perspective on business activities.

For evidence generation and advocacy, close collaboration with academia and think tanks has been essential. In 2022, these included the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs, UPM, UKM, University of Malaysia Sabah, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and Universiti of Malaya. Work included a focus on capacity building regarding evaluation and SBC, nationwide child-centred disaster risk management strategy and recommendations on child-friendly policies and governance. With the National STEM Centre and Institute of Teacher Education, UNICEF established teacher and youth training programmes.

Other key partners include JDT, providing opportunities to broadly disseminate advocacy and communication messages; the European Union (EU) Delegation in Malaysia on the cross-regional Protecting Children affected by Migration Programme; and the EU Human Rights Working Group. In 2022, UNICEF expanded its partnerships to include informal influencers such as retired senior civil servants, professional bodies (Malaysia Institute of Planners) and government-affiliated organisations (Khazanah Research Institute and Penang Institute). UNICEF also strengthened relationships with technological partners Google, Microsoft and Apple.



## Lessons Learned and Innovations

Although the general political uncertainty over the course of 2022 made planning difficult, UNICEF managed to influence discussions on the draft tobacco bill by leveraging long-standing relations with Members of Parliament and the Special Parliamentary Select Committee (PSSC) and producing a thorough analysis of its implications. Similarly, the timing and sequencing of advocacy initiatives, particularly on more sensitive issues, is crucial; UNICEF Malaysia must pro-actively scan the policy horizon to engage early on.

Other key takeaway from 2022 advocacy efforts is that UNICEF Malaysia should engage in more systematised and audience-centred strategic advocacy, including SBC, on ending violence against children, with greater focus on structural bottlenecks. The capacity restraints, lack of professional recognition, under resourcing and supervision system of the SSW remain key obstacles to national service delivery on identification, prevention and response to violence, exploitation and harmful practices. In this regard, UNICEF should increase support for the establishment of a Children's Department under the MWFCDC, engage in public finance for ending violence against children, and maintain a strong focus on SSW strengthening and reforming the Child Act and the Child Victims and Witness Act.

It is important to note that government agencies welcome detailed recommendations on implementation and related case studies - such as small-scale pilot projects - before advocating for scale-up at national or sub-national level. Agencies are more likely to be receptive to advocacy based on locally generated evidence, with clear recommendations on practical solutions to challenging issues.

Long-term relationship-building for technical exchange between countries is a worthwhile investment. For instance, a peer-to-peer exchange to the UK organised by the PSSC had a significant impact on Malaysian stakeholders. A similar approach on child immigration detention is now being explored between Malaysian and Thai counterparts. Creating more platforms for peer sharing of good practices through study trips, staff exchange or staff secondment should be encouraged.

On programme implementation overall, strong partnerships are necessary to achieve results for children, especially the most vulnerable. To maintain relevance in Malaysia, design of programme initiatives needs to be sensitive to the evolving political economy. For example, until the national capacity on evaluation increases, country-led evaluations would require longer timeframes and greater assistance from UNICEF.

When engaging with partners, UNICEF should continue to take into consideration social and cultural norms and ways of working, which are as important as the presentation of factual evidence. Additionally, existing engagement with government counterparts outside of MWFCDC and the justice sector should be increased.

Ensuring representation of experts from diverse technical backgrounds in programme planning and implementation is important to develop robust and comprehensive programmes that meet the needs of wider groups. This became particularly clear during implementation of activities in East Malaysia. Increased subnational programming requires additional emphasis and scope of SBC communication.

It is also important to develop multi-sectoral responses to the challenges facing children. Dedicated and strategic all-of-office efforts can drive more substantial results. This also applies to engagement with government: to ensure that children in Malaysia are adequately protected from climate, environmental, and disaster risks, for example, a cross-ministerial or agency structure is required.



Youth feedback on the digital engagement modalities utilized during the pandemic indicated online fatigue, coupled with increasing offline commitments. UNICEF has since changed approach and is now using integrated offline and online modalities to help sustain inclusivity and accessibility (through online platforms) and strengthened participation (via offline initiatives). Young people in Malaysia are extremely motivated to take action on social and environmental issues but frequently lack the necessary resources. There is value in providing a platform for the resources needed, with a focus on longer-term skill building and transferable skills development.

On the Education front, online learning can exacerbate previously existing learning inequalities if not accessible to all teachers and learners, yet, paradoxically, online teaching and learning platforms that incorporate accessibility features and offline learning materials can be important ways to make education systems more inclusive. Establishing digital learning communities alongside platforms will maximize their successful and sustained use.

Strengthened partnerships have resulted in innovations for learning befitting an upper middle-income country such as Malaysia. This is evident through programming such as FS4A via Google Classroom and TikTok; global citizenship education via Google Earth; and Teacher Digital Learning Community via Google Classroom and Telegram groups. DELIMa prioritises democratisation of learning by giving teachers and learners support and collaboration options; focusing on digital learning (with accessibility features) for children, providing future skills and competencies; and helping teachers develop digital learning communities.