A PROMISE TO CHILDREN
UNICEF works for a Malaysia:

where all children have their rights upheld and respected, regardless of race, gender, nationality, religion or material wealth,

where investment in children is a key strategy to achieve national development goals, reflected in decisions in all spheres and at all levels of society, and

that is the very best place for a child to be born, grow and realise his or her full potential.
A PROMISE TO CHILDREN

The prospects of our future depend on the investments in our children.

Just by being born, every child acquires the right to quality education, enough food to eat and clean water to drink, access to good healthcare, and a safe environment free from violence and exploitation.

Malaysia is acting on this promise. The country’s investments in reproductive health services and the provision of quality water, sanitation and nutrition to mothers and children have significantly reduced child and maternal mortality rates.

Malaysia is close to providing universal primary education, which not only provides children with a good start in life by equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to break out of poverty, but also provides them with a safe and supervised environment. Malaysia is also investing in protection services for children and in combating HIV.

Still, as Malaysia moves towards its 2020 vision of an inclusive, high income country, all children must be touched by its progress, benefit from its investments and have their birth rights fully realised.

There is still a lot to be done. Malaysia’s 2010 Millennium Development Goals report highlights that despite the country’s remarkable achievements in reducing overall poverty from 19.9% to 4% in less than 20 years, some 660,000 children under 15 years are still vulnerable to the multiple deprivations of child poverty. Poor children are less likely to have access to health care and to be in good health. They trail in emotional and intellectual development, and
are more likely to drop out of school early.

Our more than 50 years of experience in this country tells us that these are issues that can be overcome. Malaysia’s outstanding progress over recent years in economic and social development tells us this is possible. And success for children is an indispensable ingredient in the equation of success for the country to achieve its goal.

UNICEF’s new Country Programme (2011-2015) is designed to be an important factor in this equation. It is focused on bringing about lasting change through the support of policy reform and national capacity development in the interest of every child. It is also aiming at forging partnerships and raising resources and engagement for children. Their future can only be secured if society as a whole agrees that children are the first priority and if everyone, from decision-makers to ordinary citizens, act accordingly.

That’s why we need your involvement. Take a stand with us for the children in Malaysia!

Hans Olsen
UNICEF Representative, Malaysia
The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) works in more than 150 countries and territories and is the world’s leading organisation for children. Started as an emergency organisation for children in the wake of World War II, UNICEF has grown to promote and protect the rights of all children, everywhere.

Our strength lies in our unique ability to influence and support decision-makers through evidence-based advocacy to effect positive, lasting change for children. We have the global as well as local outreach necessary to create powerful synergistic partnerships to realise the most innovative ideas in children’s best interests. We continuously consolidate our experiences to overcome the challenges faced by children and those who care for them. Every day, all over the world, we work with families, communities and governments to make it possible for every child to grow and realise their full potential.

Over 60 years of experience have given us valuable lessons and exceptional insight into child rights-based development across the globe, and we know that a safe, happy and stimulating childhood is key to a better and more peaceful world.
It is possible to give every child a good start in life. The world can, if it chooses, ensure that every child grows and develops to their full human potential.
The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the world’s most widely accepted UN human rights treaty, establishing the indispensable basic rights of every child. UNICEF’s mandate is based on the CRC and the indivisible, interrelated and equally important articles of this milestone document serve as a guide for our work worldwide. The CRC determines, among other things, that:

- Every child is born with rights.
- Every child has the right to an education, the right to health and proper healthcare, and the right to a name and a nationality.
- Every child has the right to participate in matters that affect them and the right to be treated equally.
- Every child has the right to be protected from harm.
Since 1954, UNICEF has joined forces with the Government and the people of Malaysia to transform the lives of children across the nation.

We are proud and happy to know that we have helped achieve improvements in health, nutrition, water and sanitation, formal and informal education as well as welfare services for children in rural and poor urban areas.

However, we are acutely aware that while these advances are significant, there’s still a long way to go. Lasting improvements in the social, legal and protective environment provisions for children happen only with irrevocable change in policy based on the best interests of the child.

In our 2008 to 2010 Country Programme, we set about improving the availability of knowledge and data on issues affecting Malaysia’s children to build a firm base for policies that could address remaining social gaps. A number of issues were successfully addressed to this end, specifically in the areas of health, education and protection.

For instance, crucial information about children and AIDS was recorded during a study on children affected by AIDS in Selangor. UNICEF’s Supplementary Reading Programme for children living in the remote areas of East Malaysia proved to be such a success that the Ministry of Education is now expanding the programme to include Orang Asli schools in the Peninsula. We have also completed critical initiatives related to child protection, such as the Chow Kit study on the most vulnerable children in urban areas and the Get on Board Campaign to Stop Child Abuse in Malaysia.

UNICEF is always working in collaboration with Malaysian partners in government, corporations or civil society organisations and we are honoured to be part of Malaysia’s journey to improve the lives of its children while developing the nation.
CHALLENGING FACTS

It is estimated that 125,000 Malaysian children are still out-of-school and do not have access to primary education. This figure does not include refugees, stateless and undocumented children.

Only 66% of marginalised children between 7 – 19 years old in remote areas of Sabah and Sarawak attended school according to 2007 statistics. Just 1% of them could be found in higher education.
HELPING OUR CHILDREN SUCCEED

Every child deserves the opportunity to grow – both physically and intellectually – regardless of gender, ethnicity, economic background, disability, geographical location, citizenship or HIV status.

We can only begin to move towards reducing poverty and guaranteeing authentic human progress when every child can read and write.

UNICEF works with the Government of Malaysia and communities to allow every child fair and equal access to quality education. We provide technical assistance and capacity development and we also research, design and test programmes that have been replicated nationwide.

Our vision is that, by 2015, every child in Malaysia will be in a position to receive and complete their primary school education.

ACHIEVEMENTS

• Scaling up teaching and learning methodologies for Orang Asli children is a programme that seeks to attract and empower them to continue attending school while also promoting their cultural knowledge.

• With UNICEF support, a database that links to the Education Management Information System (EMIS) has been developed to identify and track out-of-school children.

• Our School Emergency Preparedness and Response Programme was applied by schools in Malaysia during the early 2011 floods that affected several northern and eastern regions of Peninsular Malaysia. It was also selected by UNICEF as one of the most notable innovations for children worldwide.
NEVER TOO LATE

With some help, rural schools are slowly winning the war on illiteracy.

Meriam Anyie was born deep in the rainforests of Borneo. She belongs to the Penan ethnic group, the nomadic indigenous people of Sarawak. Although almost all 10,000 Penans in Sarawak have abandoned their ancestral nomadic ways to live in towns and villages, things were very different when Meriam was a child. She never lived in a permanent home, much less learnt to read and write.

Today, Meriam, who is in her 30’s, is going to school for the first time in her life. She is just one of many who have enrolled in an adult literacy programme called KEDAP, the Ministry of Education’s pilot project designed to reach the remote Orang Asli and Penan communities of the country. By providing a basic education for parents, KEDAP aims to help them understand the value of schooling for their children.

Rural folk face many challenges when it comes to getting an education; some students have to walk for hours to attend school.

Despite these obstacles, KEDAP is a success that comes on the heels of a long-running effort to boost enrolment rates and educational achievement in rural areas. In line with this goal, UNICEF funded a Supplementary Reading Programme in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. Both these initiatives are in keeping with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As more parents like Meriam learn the importance of education, more children will be able to study and increase their potential.

“Now I know the alphabet and I can read, write and count to 20. Now I can help my children a little bit with their school work,” said Meriam.
“My hope is for my children to have ambition in their hearts. I want them to be successful. Maybe my daughter can be a nurse ... my son Andi can be a teacher ... I will be very happy.”

- Meriam Anyie, Penan mother
CHILDREN

CHALLENGING FACTS

Reported child abuse cases have increased from 1,800 per year in 2005 to 2,789 in 2009.

Child abuse affects more girls than boys. Data of reported child abuse cases from 2006 to 2009 indicate that for every abused boy, there are two abused girls.
KEEPING OUR CHILDREN SAFE

Children should be able to live and grow in an environment that shields them from violence, abuse and exploitation of any kind. Building a secure environment begins at home, with the child’s parents or caregivers, and extends to schools and the wider community.

To prevent or respond effectively to child abuse, violence and exploitation, a well-resourced and effective national child protection system, protective social practices and children’s own empowerment are needed.

In Malaysia, UNICEF is creating a safer and better environment for children by working with the Government, children’s NGOs such as Childline Malaysia, Chow Kit Foundation and the Malaysian Child Resource Institute as well as the corporate sector, teachers, social workers, parents and the media, among others.

Our vision is for every child to live a life free from violence and fear. Only then can children develop to their full potential and contribute their unique capabilities and talents to build a better and brighter life for themselves, their families, their communities and country.

ACHIEVEMENTS

• UNICEF has been working with the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development to develop the Social Work Competency Standards which will equip and professionalise the human resource capacity of the Government to deliver quality primary, secondary and tertiary interventions in child protection.

• The UNICEF Safe School Programme with the Ministry of Education and HELP University aims to educate teachers, school administrators, parents, and students on social skills and problem-solving strategies that contribute to safe school environments, free from bullying.

• UNICEF’s Get on Board digital campaign against child abuse in 2010 empowered the public to take action at the individual and community levels to protect children from abuse. It was carried out with a broad coalition of partners in government, the corporate sector, civil society organisations and individuals.
SAFE FROM HARM

As Head Prefect, teenager Dashenee Huthamaputhiran is a friendly face around her secondary school.

If she spots students teasing, harassing or bullying each other, she steps in to help resolve the situation or brings the problem to the attention of her teachers.

These are among the skills that Dashenee learned through the Safe Schools Programme, an initiative by UNICEF in partnership with the Ministry of Education and HELP University. The programme is designed to help prevent the occurrence of violence in the learning place, especially bullying among students.

The Safe Schools initiative also includes a teacher’s manual and training activities to equip teachers with intervention skills so that they are able to manage bullying among students.

Bullying, which includes psychological abuse like teasing, intimidation and exclusion, is both a symptom and a cause of a socially unsupportive environment and it violates a child’s right to be protected from all forms of physical and mental harm.

Guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF works with its partners in Malaysia and around the world in a variety of ways to ensure that every child can live free of fear and violence. UNICEF’s engagement ranges from legislative change and social support systems to this kind of grassroots intervention directly with children.

With more knowledge about bullying, Dashenee has been able to help a 14-year-old girl at school who was a victim of cyber-bullying through a popular social networking site. Using her peer-to-peer coaching skills, Dashenee intervened and encouraged the girl to seek help from the school counselor.

“I treat every student in this school as my sister, and I try to help them in any way I can,” said Dashenee.
“The most important thing that I learned from the bullying programme is the different ways some students bully other students. I never knew that calling people names is a form of bullying.”

- Dashenee Huthamaputhiran, student
CHALLENGINGFACTS

Children with HIV are facing stigma and discrimination, leading to ostracisation, exploitation, homelessness and loss of education.

New HIV cases among women and girls have increased from 4% in 1995 to 12% in 2005 and 18% in 2010. New HIV infections through heterosexual transmission have dramatically jumped from 27% of cases in 2009 to 43% in 2010.
ENSURING AN AIDS-FREE GENERATION

The best defence against HIV and AIDS is knowledge. Adolescents must be given youth-friendly information, skills and services to facilitate the prevention, treatment and care for HIV and AIDS. Mothers-to-be with HIV must also receive appropriate treatment and information so that their babies can be born healthy.

UNICEF’s Unite for Children, Unite Against AIDS campaign advocates for children infected and affected by AIDS to create change so that the shadow cast by HIV on children can be limited and eventually eliminated. Partnerships, advocacy, research and capacity building on a national level are all paths to this end.

We are continuously working with the Government, NGOs, the private sector, celebrities and the media to counter and eventually end this epidemic. Concrete commitments and actions today will ensure an AIDS-free generation tomorrow.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- The role of UNICEF as a convener and a key player in the issues of women, children and young people affected by AIDS has led to consultative roundtable discussions and collaboration among the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, and stakeholders in civil society.

- In 2008, UNICEF launched a joint report with the Ministry of Health entitled “Women and Girls Confronting HIV and AIDS”, which highlighted the feminisation of the HIV epidemic in Malaysia.

- UNICEF, together with Salt Media Consultancy, organised a media partnership with the editors and writers of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka to strengthen awareness and media reporting on HIV and AIDS to reduce AIDS-related stigma against affected children and families.
PLACES OF LOVE

In a sea of discrimination, there are havens of hope.

“I am an orphan.”

Twelve-year-old Tze May* utters these words without emotion. Both her parents were HIV-positive and her mother died when she was seven. Her father died the following year and she has been staying at Rumah WAKE ever since.

Fifteen-year old Anwar* lives at Rumah Solehah. He was the home’s first HIV-positive child when he arrived with his mother at the age of five. Abandoned by her husband when she found out she was HIV-positive – even though he was the one who had infected her – Anwar’s mother stayed at the home until she died.

Both Rumah Solehah and Rumah WAKE are just two of a small number of orphanages in Malaysia which care for children living with HIV or AIDS.

Homes like Rumah Solehah and Rumah WAKE play a critical role in protecting children like Anwar and Tze May in an environment stained by stigma. Besides providing a safe home for the children, caretakers also strive to give them a sense of family and responsibility.

Institutionalised care however should always only be considered as a very last resort as children thrive best in a family setting. Where institutional care is offered, programmes must be developed to integrate children back into their communities at the earliest opportunity.

In 2010, Rumah Solehah and Rumah WAKE received financial support from UNICEF for their untiring efforts in supporting children living with HIV and AIDS. The funds were disbursed through the Malaysian AIDS Council.

*Names have been changed to protect the identities of the children.
“For children, the stigma of HIV and AIDS strikes hard on their self-esteem and psychological well-being. Put simply, stigma kills their spirit.”

- Hans Olsen,
UNICEF Representative to Malaysia
CHALLENGING FACTS

More than half a million children in Sabah and well over 100,000 in Sarawak and Kelantan were classified as poor.

Three quarters of children of upper secondary school age who are not in school come from households in the bottom 40% of the income distribution.
MAKING IT REAL

Lasting, positive changes for children and women, based on the rights established in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the principles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women can only become a reality with new and revised national policies affecting children. The first step to influence policy change is to gather and consolidate data on children to have as good an understanding as possible of the challenges facing them.

This is why systematic and institutional driven data collection on children’s development, protection, survival and participation, as laid out in the CRC, is a vital part of our social policy work with government. There is a need to begin shifting mindsets and question social norms through presenting alternative ways of providing protection, development and survival to achieve optimal child well-being.

There is a need to analyse poverty beyond income and also take into consideration the dimensions of health, education and welfare and how they impact children living in poverty.

UNICEF seeks to influence policy reform through strategic partnerships with the Government, alliances with the private sector, and by providing technical know-how and international best practice in support of the priorities for children and women identified in the Tenth Malaysia Plan.

Engaging children and adolescents in UNICEF-supported programmes through partnerships with government and civil society also helps to shed light on the truth about the lives of children, especially marginalised children. Children’s own participation can help transform perceptions, individual action, community engagement and political commitment in support of a future where all children in Malaysia can grow and develop to their full potential.

ACHIEVEMENTS

• A formal partnership with the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM) which led to the launch of the first Best Business Practice Circular and toolkit on child care centres at private workplaces.

• Research projects which contribute to positive policy changes for children include the Malaysian Child Index, the Child-Injury Database and the 2009 Malaysia Situation Analysis.

• Successful communication of the CRC and its contents have helped facilitate youth participation programmes and raised awareness on child rights for the media and the general public.
VOICES OF TRUTH

Empowering children to understand the world and speak their minds.

Teenager Qusyairi Zazili is a budding environmentalist who took part in the first OneMinuteJr video workshop hosted by UNICEF and the Ministry of Education in conjunction with the International Children’s Day of Broadcasting.

“All the air pollution, all the open burning, the global warming, it bothers me. I am trying to do my part to save my world for my future generation,” said Qusyairi, who produced a one-minute video entitled “Gas”.

With the historic city of Malacca as an inspirational backdrop, Qusyairi joined 19 teenagers from all corners of the country to learn about using digital media to convey his story.

Workshop participants included children from the Orang Asli community, other ethnic minorities and children living with disabilities – as well as those living with HIV or AIDS. During the five-day workshop, children equipped themselves with basic filmmaking skills and a newfound sense of confidence to tackle life’s challenges.

Digital storytelling captures children’s imagination by engaging young people in a language that their generation is familiar with. It creates an important opportunity to convey their thoughts and to exercise their right to participation and self-expression.

The teens had no filmmaking experience prior to the Malacca workshop, but their sense of wonder was clear as they glimpsed the unending possibilities before them.
“After the filming, I believe I have achieved something and feel more positive about myself.”

- Sonia Meyah Ak Selan (16), Sarawak workshop participant
In times of war or natural disaster, innocent children are the most defenceless of all victims. They are often separated from their parents and caretakers during emergencies, which puts their lives in greater danger and dims their chances of survival.

UNICEF responds to an emergency in 24 hours or less. From 2008 through 2010, UNICEF Malaysia launched nationwide emergency appeals to support children caught up in emergencies in four countries, raising more than RM 2.66 million to assist the children affected by:

**2008**
**Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar**
When Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar, UNICEF Malaysia stepped up to contribute RM 695,637 raised through the generosity of the Malaysian public. Among others, funds were used to set up 112 child-friendly spaces providing psycho-social activities for 19,000 children to help them regain a sense of normalcy following the cyclone.

**2009**
**Conflict in Gaza**
This was the largest Israeli military operation in Gaza since 1967. By the time unilateral ceasefires were declared, the Gaza War had killed over 1,400 people – including at least 350 children – and injured thousands more. UNICEF Malaysia raised RM 65,000 to assist children caught up in the crisis.

**2010**
**Earthquake in Haiti**
The dramatic destruction caused by the earthquake in Haiti caused unbelievable stress for over three million people living in the country. UNICEF Malaysia, through the generosity of the public, raised over RM 1.3 million to ensure steady progress towards recovery.

**2011**
**Floods in Pakistan**
Media Prima Berhad and New Straits Times Press (NSTP) raised RM 600,000 as part of its Pakistan Disaster Relief Fund in support of UNICEF’s flood relief efforts in Pakistan.
We believe that making this world a safe and happy place for every child is absolutely possible, but we know we can’t do it alone.

UNICEF works with thousands of others to help improve young lives everywhere and we value every single partnership. As the world changes and new challenges arise, we are grateful for every extended helping hand.

**Governments** are our main partners. We work with everyone from Heads of State and ministers to mayors and community councils.

**Non-Government Organisations**, ranging from international, youth, women, child-rights and religious groups, as well as community and family collectives, are vital partners in our work.

**Businesses and Corporates** help support UNICEF programmes and emergency relief efforts. They also use their influence to change attitudes and policies in the workplace, marketplace and community to help advance issues vital to children.

**Adolescents and Young People** are deeply involved in what UNICEF does. When they have a voice in public debate, we all benefit.

**Media and Celebrities** work with us to make change happen now and to plan for the future.

**Donors** support our people and our programmes. UNICEF receives no funding from the UN budget and relies entirely on voluntary contributions. While we get the majority of our funds from governments, we also depend heavily on funds provided by the private sector and individual donors.

We believe in the power of helping people to help themselves. A major part of UNICEF’s aim is to pass on our global expertise in order to find local solutions.
“Every child regardless of race is a national asset and a future leader.”

- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak,
Prime Minister of Malaysia
From the beginning, UNICEF has worked hard in Malaysia to create an environment where every child freely enjoys the rights to survival, development, protection and participation. This has been the overall goal of UNICEF’s previous Country Programmes.

UNICEF’s programme strategy for 2011-2015 maintains this central theme with a special focus on promoting development with equity to reduce disparities in society.

It builds on the progress of the 2008-2010 Country Programme in assisting the poor, indigenous, migrant and other marginalised, vulnerable and at-risk children in the country.

UNICEF’s priorities for 2011-2015 are directly in line with strategic directions of the Tenth Malaysia Plan (10 MP), which is the key development strategy and planning instrument of the Government of Malaysia. The programme also directly supports Vision 2020, the culmination of a 30-year national development process to make Malaysia a fully developed country by the year 2020.

With these strategic directions firmly in place, we support the realisation of a bright, secure future for all children in Malaysia.

Targets include:

• Reducing poverty amongst children in line with the 10MP target
• Enhancing social safety net programmes, especially for poor children and their families
• Improving child welfare and equipping the system to address violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect of children, including those living with HIV or AIDS
• Reforming the juvenile justice system
• Enhancing access to identity, quality education and healthcare, as well as early child development interventions
• Ensuring that HIV and AIDS affect fewer children, women and other most-at-risk-populations, especially adolescents and young people
The fulfillment of children’s rights depends not only on a society in which everybody understands and respects the rights of children, but one that acts to realise them.
LEGISLATIVE REFORM AND SOCIAL BUDGETING

Introducing and adapting legislation, mechanisms and institutions for their implementation is one of the most essential steps to realising children’s rights. Adequate legislative framework, consistent implementation, accountability and lack of impunity are essential elements of a protective environment. From a child rights perspective, social budgeting should focus on building institutions for child-friendly policies, as reflected in public sector budgets.

CHILD-FRIENDLY BUSINESS PRACTICES

Companies can make an important contribution towards the realisation of children’s rights by the way they do business and use their influence to change attitudes, policies and institutions. The Children’s Rights and Business Principles by UNICEF, the UN Global Compact and Save the Children can guide companies on the full range of actions they may take in the workplace, the marketplace and the community to safeguard children’s rights.

CHILDREN AS ACTIVE CITIZENS

Children need information and knowledge to be equipped to protect themselves. Children also need safe channels for participation and self-expression. The media can help by soliciting the views of children and addressing topics from their point of view, supporting children’s ability to be active participants in society. The media can also protect children by avoiding stereotyping of children and sensationalised stories.

HEALTHY ATTITUDES, TRADITIONS AND PRACTICES

In societies where all forms of violence against children are taboo, and where the rights of children are broadly respected by custom and tradition, children are more likely to be protected from harm. Community and religious leaders have a tremendous contribution to make to protect children by speaking out against attitudes or traditions that facilitate abuse – for example sex with minors, severe corporal punishment, harmful traditional practices, or differences in the perceived status and value between boys and girls.
JOIN US

Become a UNICEF partner today and you’ll be part of a team that works to provide children in Malaysia and around the world with the best possible start in life. Help children realise their full potential and the world will be a better place for all of us.

Let’s stand united for children, and fulfill our promise of a better future to them.
“Real peace is not found in a piece of diplomatic paper. It is found in the secure and healthy lives of girls and boys. If we improve their lives today, we help them inherit a better tomorrow.”

- Anthony Lake,
  Executive Director,
  United Nations Children’s Fund
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