

MAPPING ALTERNATIVE LEARNING APPROACHES, PROGRAMMES AND STAKEHOLDERS IN MALAYSIA



Foreword

As part of UNICEF's education programme to advocate and support the rights of all children to gain access and complete basic education in Malaysia, this mapping study was commissioned between May and September 2015. Education opportunities for refugee, migrant, undocumented and stateless children in Malaysia are provided by a wide range of individuals, community groups, faith-based organisations, foundations and NGOs, including some government agencies. Although some basic data and information on these Alternative Learning Centres or Community Learning Centres exist; there is no comprehensive data or information on the wide range of such centres in existence all over the country.

Such alternative learning centres have also existed for a long time in Malaysia, going back to the mid-1970s. They are generally more prevalent in the eastern state of Sabah which has the largest migrant and refugee population in the country, but are also spread out in the main cities and towns in Peninsular Malaysia as well.

For the first time, this mapping study has gathered together basic data and information on the range of alternative learning centres in the country. Through background deskstudy, responses to questionnaires, field visits and interviews with key informants and stakeholders, this study provides a good overview of these learning centres – including their structure and management, teacher-pupil ratio, legal status, curriculum and learning methods, among others.

It is UNICEF's hope that this study will be a first step in developing a comprehensive database of information on alternative learning centres in the country, and that it be utilized as evidence for policy advocacy and to guide and inform programme implementation for basic education in the country for those who cannot access public education.

Finally, we would like to thank Ms. Preeti Kannan who was contracted by UNICEF to undertake this mapping study. Preeti holds a Masters Degree in Human Rights from the University of Sydney, Australia and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Mass Communications from the Symbiosis Institute of Communications, India. She has over nine years of experience in the international media. Before moving to Malaysia, she was a humanitarian affairs reporter with The National, a UAE-based newspaper where she wrote widely on refugees in the region, migrant and domestic worker abuse. She began her journalism career in India, writing on a number of human right issues.

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1 Introduction to the study

In Malaysia there are many stakeholders - including Government agencies, United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), corporates, foundations, faith-based agencies, communities and individuals providing alternative learning opportunities for refugee, undocumented and stateless children who do not have access to formal government schools. To date there has been no comprehensive mapping of all these alternative learning centres (ALCs) or community learning centres (CLCs) in order to better understand the context in which basic education is provided to these children – including the management, financing, roles and responsibilities. It is also unclear to what extent these stakeholders are able to provide quality education; how conducive is the learning environment; what curriculum is being used; how are teachers trained; how are the learning centers financed; accreditation and certification; student enrolment, etc.

Hence, a mapping of approaches, programmes and stakeholders was felt necessary and a good starting point to understand better the provision of alternative education for children not accessing public education.

The mapping is also aimed at helping UNICEF and stakeholders identify how best to support these initiatives and to bridge the current gaps in policies, participation and service delivery. Furthermore, the mapping also seeks to compile available data and information on the ALCs/CLCs which can be used as evidence for policy advocacy and support relevant interventions by Government and partners. For UNICEF in particular, this mapping is an important source of evidence in its effort to influence Government and the Ministry of Education (MoE) in particular to develop an “Alternative Education Policy” for Malaysia and identify areas and actions of strategic importance where UNICEF can contribute and support government and non-governmental agencies in order to remove barriers to the fulfilment of rights to education for all children.

The mapping was designed to focus on the Alternative Learning Centres (ALCs) for out-of-school children: namely refugees from Myanmar and other countries in Peninsular Malaysia, children of Filipino refugees and undocumented migrants in Sabah, children of Indonesian migrants and undocumented workers in palm oil plantations across Sabah and the children of sea gypsies or the Bajau Laut. ALCs, alternative learning methods and approaches in the state of Sarawak have not been included in this mapping.

1.1 Terms of Reference (TOR)

The objectives of the study as laid out in the TOR were:

1. To review existing policies and guidelines vis-à-vis Education for All (EFA), with specific reference to children not accessing the national education system i.e. refugee, asylum-seekers, undocumented, children living in plantations and children

of sea gypsies;

2. To review, edit and revise draft document of Mapping of Alternative Learning Approaches, Programmes and Stakeholders in Malaysia through collection and verification of additional data from UNICEF partners including the MoE, UNHCR, Federal Special Task Force Sabah/Labuan (FSTF S/L) , Humana Child Aid Society Sabah (HCASS), individuals, faith-based organisations, foundations, NGOs and others in Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah;
3. To consult and gather information as necessary from all relevant national and/or subnational government and non-government stakeholders;
4. To conduct an analysis of key barriers and obstacles to delivery of education services for immigrant, refugee, asylum-seekers, undocumented, children living in plantations and others;
5. To examine the strengths (including best practices) and weaknesses of existing approaches, programmes and stakeholders relating to alternative education.

1.2 Methodology

The methodology used was a combination of desk review and field visits to review the implementation and progress of ALCs. This included:

- (i) Document analysis: Reviewed policy documents, research materials, assessments and studies on alternative learning centres in Malaysia.
- (ii) In-depth interviews: Detailed face-to-face interviews were conducted with Government agencies, UNHCR, NGO representatives, managers of ALCs and teachers. Interviews were also done on the telephone and via emails, wherever personal interviews were not possible.
- (iii) Case studies: of children, parents and teachers wherever possible.

A detailed profile of the various ALCs with set parameters has also been compiled based on field visits and, in one case, based on an interview via email. Photographs have also been included wherever possible and were either taken during field visits or furnished by the centres.

1.3 Limitations

There are a multitude of ALCs and stakeholders with a variety of approaches and programmes educating children all over the country. It has not been possible in this study to reach out to all these ALCs/CLCs because of the limited time and resources and especially because of their extensive geographical spread across the country. Sarawak was not covered for the same reasons. The focus therefore was on the main stakeholders and partners who were reaching out to the largest number of undocumented, refugee and stateless children in Peninsular Malaysia and especially in Sabah. These included the UNHCR, the FSTF (S/L) – now part of the National Security Council – the HCASS, the Indonesian Government/Consulate and key faith-based organisations.

In cases where NGOs or government bodies are running more than one ALC, it was possible to visit only one or two centres. The mapping had to be completed within four months from May 11 to September 11, 2015 which meant that all the visits and data collection had to be completed by the first week of August.

Field visits to ALCs for the Bajau Laut children in Tawau, Sabah, did not happen as scheduled as it was only later known that the centres operate only from Wednesday to Sunday.

There were some communication difficulties and a number of interviews were conducted with the help of UNICEF and ALC/ CLC teachers who interpreted the questions from English to Bahasa Melayu and translated the responses back to English.

2 Background and context

In Malaysia, education opportunities for street children, refugees, stateless children, undocumented children, immigrants, stateless and children living in plantations are available in a vastly diverse and sporadic learning centres provided by individuals, community, foundations, NGOs, and faith-based groups.

There are also no exact numbers available on the number of children of refugees, migrants, plantation workers or children of undocumented people in Malaysia or on the number who do not have access to government school facilities.

There has never been a Government policy or guidelines for the provision of education for non-Malaysian citizens. However, the government has welcomed initiatives by the private sector, non-governmental organisations and individuals in providing these children with an education.

The study has identified the different ‘Alternative Learning Centres’ (ALCs) and ‘Community Learning Centres’ (CLCs) when centres identify themselves as such. Although HCASS, which caters to children in palm oil plantations, uses the term “plantation schools”, the mapping will refer to them as ALCs. This is because “schools” are generally the term used to describe formal learning centres licensed and recognised by the Government.

Initiated often by the community and for the community, the ALCs and CLCs broadly use the Malaysian national curriculum to teach three core subjects: Mathematics, Science and English. They also train them in spoken and written Bahasa Melayu (BM) or sometimes the native language of these communities.

2.1 Definition - Alternative Education

“Alternative education” is the over-arching term that refers to education programmes that are not considered formal education.¹ It provides methods of delivery to ‘fill the gap’ of education for children who are not enrolled in the formal national system. Often, they are offered outside the auspices of the formal government education system and includes programmes that are not managed by the government but rather implemented by individuals, agencies and NGOs.

They generally include the use of a formal curriculum and pedagogy, but the teachers are often untrained by the relevant ministry or may not have received formal recognition of their teacher training or the learning programme may not be recognised formally by the relevant government ministry.

1. P. Baxter and L. Bethke, *Alternative Education: Filling the gap in emergency and post conflict situations*, IIEP, Unesco 2009, pp.27

Alternative Education Programmes (AEP) or parallel programmes may look exactly like all other education programmes offered in a particular country but are considered alternative because they take place in a venue other than a formal school or may seek to ensure access for sections of the community who may be marginalised, either geographically or for reasons of gender, religion, ethnicity or culture.² Examples of parallel programmes include community schools where often the only form of support is from the community itself and where the teachers, who may be untrained and unqualified, are paid directly by the community.

The pedagogy is generally traditional and the schools may have a limited range of subjects depending on the skills and knowledge of the available teachers. Community-based schools may be supported wholly by communities. When community schools receive outside support, the teachers may also receive training from the NGOs to use different pedagogical methods that are more learner-centred and participatory and that fulfil some of the elements of a quality education. In most instances, this training is not recognised or accredited by the government ministries.

2.2 International commitments and obligations

In the year 2000, 164 governments including Malaysia agreed on the Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All (EFA): Meeting our Collective Commitments, launching an ambitious agenda to meet six wide-ranging education goals by 2015.³ EFA was first launched in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 to bring the benefits of education to every citizen in every society.⁴

To realise this aim, a coalition of national governments, civil society groups and development agencies such as UNICEF and the World Bank committed to achieving specific education goals. But after little progress was made in the first decade, the international community reaffirmed its commitment in Dakar, Senegal in 2000 to realise the below objectives:

Goal 1

Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Goal 2

Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

2. *ibid*

3. UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015*, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002322/232205e.pdf>, (accessed 14 May 2015).

4. *ibid*.

Goal 3

Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.

Goal 4

Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

Goal 5

Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

Goal 6

Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

However, 15 years after the EFA goals were laid out, a staggering 58 million children were found to be out of school globally in 2012 and it was calculated that one in six children in low and middle income countries – or almost 100 million – will not have completed primary education by the 2015 deadline.⁵ The poor quality of learning at primary level still has millions of children leaving school without basic skills.

In comparison, Malaysia, as an upper middle-income country with progressive education and development policies, can be viewed as having achieved many of the EFA goals. But the reality is that a significant number of children remain out of school.⁶

A report submitted to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2009 said that about 200,000 children of primary-school age were not attending school. The report cited cost of schooling as one of the obstacles for children from low-income families. It also said that education was not sufficient for children with disabilities, children (of Malaysians) without birth certificates are denied the opportunity to attend schools; and asylum seeking children, refugee children, stateless children as well as children of migrant workers are not given free primary education in government-run schools.

These numbers, however, are from six years ago, since then hundreds, if not thousands of refugees and migrants have arrived in Malaysia. In May 2015, the Government along with Indonesia agreed to allow about 7000 'boat people' including women and children from Myanmar and Bangladesh to land on their shores and have offered shelter for a

5. UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015*, pp.16

6. Government of Malaysia, 'Education for All 2015 National Review Report: Malaysia', paper given at the World Education Forum in Incheon, Korea, 19 May 2015 - 22 May 2015, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002297/229719E.pdf>, (accessed 15 June 2015).

year, reversing their previous decision to push them back.⁷ More than 3000 refugees had landed in both countries earlier in the same month.⁸ To date, the Government has no comprehensive policy for alternative education for immigrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, undocumented and stateless children in the country.

But, in its UPR in 2009, Malaysia said:

*In full compliance with its treaty obligation under the CRC (Convention on the Rights of the Child), all children in Malaysia are not denied access to education. The Government also constantly engages with international organisations such as UNICEF and UNHCR, and civil societies, to ensure that children of illegal immigrants attend informal classes to be conducted by NGOs, such as, through community-based schooling.*⁹

Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹⁰ states that ‘everyone has the right to education’. Education is increasingly viewed as the “fourth pillar” or “central pillar” of humanitarian response, alongside the pillars of nourishment, shelter and health services.¹¹ Access to education is a basic human right and is linked to poverty reduction, holding promises of stability, economic growth, and better lives for children, families, and communities.

The provision of educational opportunities is one of the highest priorities of refugee communities.¹² Refugee mothers, fathers, and children the world over emphasise that education is the key to the future that will help bring peace to their countries. Education is not only a right but a passport to human development and contributes to fostering peace, democracy and economic growth as well as improving health and reducing poverty.

National governments are obliged under the CRC to permit the education of child refugees within their borders. In many countries the government is actively engaged in or supportive of refugee education programmes, while, in contrast, some governments place restrictions on the education of child refugees and asylum-seekers.¹³

Malaysia is not a signatory to a number of international treaties including: the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless People, the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of

7. P. Menon, ‘Malaysia, Indonesia to let ‘boat people’ come ashore temporarily’, Reuters, 21 May 2015, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/05/20/uk-asia-migrants-indonesia-idUKKBN00501920150520>, (accessed 15 June 2015).

8. *ibid.*

9. United Nations, *National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15 (A) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1*, Geneva, 2 February 2009 - 13 February 2009, pp.8, http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session4/MY/A_HRC_WG6_4_MYS_1_E.PDF, (accessed 15 June 2015).

10. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted 10 December 1948 UNGA Res 217 A(III)) (UDHR) art 26.

11. J. Crisp (ed.), C. Talbot (ed.), D.B. Cipollone (ed.), *Learning for a future: Refugee education in developing countries*, UNHCR, December 2001, pp.2.

12. S.Dryden-Peterson, *Refugee Education: A Global Review*, UNHCR 2011, <http://www.unhcr.org/4fe317589.pdf>, (accessed 20 May 2015).

13. *Ibid.* pp.16

All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families or the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.¹⁴

The Malaysian government has indicated that the reasons that it is not a party are 'due to the heavy financial burden it will impose upon Malaysia in providing for the refugees' upkeep such as shelter, food, education and healthcare' and 'the view that the huge presence of "refugees" or "asylum-seekers" may be a potential threat to national security'.¹⁵

Despite acceding to the CRC and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), none of the articles potentially relevant to refugees, asylum-seekers, migrant workers or stateless people in these treaties have been the subject of enabling legislation or administrative practice. However, the CRC provides the international framework for the protection of rights of all children and ensuring that their needs are met.

Articles 28 and 29 cover the right to education. Article 28 states:

- (1). *States Parties recognise the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:*
 - a. *make primary education compulsory and available free to all;*
 - b. *encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;*
 - c. *make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;*
 - d. *make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;*
 - e. *take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates....'*

Article 29 states:

- (1) *States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:*
 - a. *the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;*

14. UNHCR, 'For the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report - Universal Periodic Review: Malaysia', <http://www.refworld.org/publisher/UNHCR/COMP/MYS/513d9a0e2,0.html>, 2013, (accessed 15 June 2015).

15. P. Mathew, T. Harley *Refugee Protection and Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia*, A fieldwork report, The Australian National University, March 2014, pp. 12.

- b. the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;*
 - c. the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilisations different from his or her own;*
 - d. the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;*
 - e. the development of respect for the natural environment.*
- (2) *No part of the present article or article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principles set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.'*

It is important to note that Malaysia's ratification of CRC in 1995 contained a number of conditions in the form of 'reservations'. This includes reservations to CRC Articles 28(1)(a) on free and compulsory education at primary level.¹⁶

The Committee on the Rights of the Child in their Concluding Observations in regard to Malaysia's first periodic report among other things recommended:¹⁷

- i. ... that the State party strengthen its mechanisms for data collection by establishing a national central database on children and developing indicators consistent with the Convention in order to ensure that data are collected on all areas covered by the Convention and that they are disaggregated, for example by age (for all persons under 18), sex, urban and rural area ...*
- ii. ... that the State party carefully and regularly evaluate existing disparities in the enjoyment by children of their rights and on the basis of that evaluation undertake the necessary steps to prevent and combat discriminatory disparities against children belonging to vulnerable groups. These include the Orang Asli, indigenous and minority children living in Sabah and Sarawak and particularly in remote areas, asylum-seeking and refugee children (for example, the unregistered children of Filipino refugees holding IMM13 refugee passes), children born out of wedlock and children of migrant workers.*

16. UNICEF Malaysia, 'CRC reservations: A protective environment for children', http://www.unicef.org/malaysia/17982_crc-reservations-malaysia.html, (accessed 15 May 2015).

17. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), *Committee on the Rights of the Child: Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention*, Geneva, 29 May-15 June 2012, http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/co/CRC_C_AUS_CO_4.pdf, (accessed 16 May 2015).

- iii. ... that the State party take urgent measures to ensure that asylum- seeking and refugee children have access to free and formal primary, secondary and other forms of education, and that in particular refugee and asylum-seeking children who are engaged in informal education have access to official examinations.

After an official mission to Malaysia in 2007, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Vernor Muñoz Villalobos, said that many people still do not have access to any type of education, such as refugee children, asylum- seekers, stateless persons, children of migrant workers, undocumented people, street children, and indigenous children who mostly live in remote locations.¹⁸

The Special Rapporteur urged Malaysia to revise its Education Act 1996 so that children who do not have a birth certificate may enroll in educational institutions, thereby guaranteeing the right of education for all children in the territory of Malaysia, as prescribed by international standards on the subject, regardless of whether they are refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless children, children of legal or illegal migrant workers or street children.

He also recommended the Government to put in place statistical policies and programmes providing constant information on the number of children without access to public education, including refugee children, asylum-seekers, stateless children, children of (legal and illegal) migrant workers, street children, throughout the territory of Malaysia, disaggregated by state, ethnic origin, gender, disabilities, rural and urban areas, with a view to establishing a policy and appropriate measures for including such children in the national education system.

In response to a question on education for refugee and undocumented children raised by Senator Noriah Mahat, the Minister of Education, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin in July 2010 stated that the Government will ensure that undocumented children are given education in line with the principles of ensuring education for all children irrespective of religion, race or location.¹⁹ But eight years after the UN Special Rapporteur's visit and five years after the Education Minister's promise to provide education to all children, there has been no policy change.

In order to accelerate access to education for all, the MoE has informally allowed other organisations or government agencies to implement alternative education programmes for children who cannot be reached with conventional measures of schooling. It has welcomed some initiatives by the private sector, NGOs and individuals in providing these children with an education.²⁰

18. UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Vernor Muñoz Villalobos: addendum : mission to Malaysia*, 20 March 2009, A/HRC/11/8/Add.2, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/49f06efd2.html>, pp.2, (accessed 15 June 2015).

19. 'Govt to ensure stateless children get education: DPM', *The Star Online*, 20 July 2010, <http://www.thestar.com.my/story/?file=%2F2010%2F7%2F20%2Fnation%2F20100720134853>, (accessed 15 June 2015).

20. Government of Malaysia, 'Education for All 2015 National Review Report: Malaysia', pp.43

But in many cases, government departments are turning down requests for licensing or verbally permitting them to function only for three days a week and sometimes without uniforms, while some others have been asked to shut down or live in the constant fear of being shut down.

The following sections detail the different categories of refugees, plantation workers, undocumented migrants, a brief history of their lives in Malaysia, the different education providers, student enrolments, the level of teacher training, the level of education students receive at the end of primary schooling and the challenges they face.

3 Alternative education for children of refugees

Even though it is not a party to the 1951 Convention or its 1967 Protocol, Malaysia has a long-standing tradition of humanitarian commitment and has generously provided temporary asylum on humanitarian grounds to several groups of asylum-seekers and refugees.²¹

This has included Filipino refugees from Mindanao arriving during the late 1970s and early 1980s, Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees and asylum-seekers during the 1980s and 1990s, a small number of Bosnian refugees in the early 1990s, and Indonesians from the Province of Aceh in the early 2000s.

Rohingyas arrived first on Malaysian shores in the late 1980s, closely followed by the Chins and other ethnic groups from Myanmar in the 1990s.²² Refugees from Middle Eastern countries like Palestine, Syria, Yemen, Iraq and others from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran also started trickling in the 2000s.

Refugees live within the local community and usually in congested low-cost flats in the city and do odd jobs in restaurants and factories.²³ UNHCR conducts refugee status determination (RSD) and offers a wide range of assistance to allow basic self-reliance of refugees in the absence of any state-provided support.²⁴ But its certificates do not result in a formal, legal status conferred by the Malaysian government and the law doesn't distinguish between refugees and undocumented migrants.

Government authorities do not use the term “refugee”, but “UNHCR cardholders in Malaysia”, which the refugee agency issues after full RSD is completed – a process that can take up to 2 years. The UNHCR documentation gives refugees and asylum-seekers some protection from detention, and from judicial caning which is a sentence that could in theory be ordered against a refugee or asylum-seeker who does not have a lawful migration status in Malaysia. The Government allows UNHCR cardholders freedom of movement in Malaysia, albeit restrictive in nature and cardholders are constantly subjected to spot checks and arbitrary detention for verification purposes.²⁵

As of June 2015, about 152,830 refugees and asylum seekers have been registered with UNHCR Malaysia. Of this, 141,570 - 92.6 per cent - are from Myanmar, comprising some 49,800 Chins, closely followed by 45,170 Rohingyas, 12,340 Myanmar Muslims, 7,320 Rakhines and Arakanese, and other ethnicities from Myanmar.

21. UNHCR, *Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees For the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report - Universal Periodic Review: Malaysia, March 2013*, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/513d9a0e2.html>, pp.2., (accessed 15 July 2015).

22. Interview with UNHCR staff, 30 May 2015.

23. H.Letchamanan, 'Myanmar's Rohingya refugees in Malaysia: Education and the way forward', *Journal of International and Comparative Education*, vol. 2, Issue 2

24. Mathew and Harley, *op.cit.*, pp.13

25. *ibid.*



Source: UNHCR website

There are no refugee camps in Malaysia. Instead, refugees share living spaces, often living in small, cramped flats.

There are also some 11,000 refugees and asylum-seekers from other countries, including some 3,970 Sri Lankans, 1,200 Pakistanis, 1,100 Somalis, 960 Syrians, 850 Iraqis, 550 Iranians, 430 Palestinians, and from other countries. Some 69 per cent of the refugees and asylum-seekers are men, while 31 per cent are women. Another 30,000 refugees, mostly Rohingyas, are waiting to be registered.

The Chin refugees, the largest refugee group in Malaysia, live in devastating poverty in extremely cramped houses in Kuala Lumpur and some others live in makeshift camps outside the city or in the distant Cameron Highlands, where they work for very low wages on farms, with unreliable water supplies and inadequate protective gear.²⁶

Rohingyas, the second largest refugee group in the country and one of the most persecuted minorities in the world, have been seeking refuge in Malaysia since the 1980s.²⁷ In 2006, the Government began issuing IMM13 permits which offered some form of legitimacy and

26. A. Alexander, 'Without refuge: Chin refugees in India and Malaysia,' *Forced Migration Review*, vol.30, April 2008, pp.37.

27. Letchamanan, *op.cit.*, pp.89

protected them from being harassed by the authorities or being arrested. Unfortunately the efforts to legitimise the Rohingya were halted when the government decided to review the overall refugee situation.²⁸

Among those who have sought refuge over the past four decades, Malaysia has ensured protection and assistance to the Filipino refugees from Mindanao, refugees from Cambodia, Vietnam, a small number of Bosnians and Indonesians from the Province of Aceh.

Malaysia continues to ensure some level of protection and assistance to the current refugee population, comprised largely of Myanmar nationals, although not at the levels provided to the groups mentioned above. For example, Malaysia allows refugees to access public health services and provides a 50 per cent discount off the foreigner's rate for medical fees incurred by refugees recognised under UNHCR mandate. It also issues birth certificates to children of refugees who are born in Malaysia.

This is not the case in education. Initially, refugee children were given access to state schools up to secondary five levels and such access was limited from 1995 when the federal government imposed an annual fee i.e. RM120.00 and RM240.00 for primary and secondary students respectively, while local children enjoyed free education.²⁹ The school fees were required to be paid upfront annually at the beginning of the academic year. The imposition of the school fees did not stop refugee children from attending state schools although many refugee families were poor.

Official statistics showed that in 2003, over 51,814 Filipino children were in state schools at the primary and secondary levels.³⁰ This was due to the high value placed by refugees on formal education and their perception of schooling as a means for upward social mobility. However, what led to a decline in the number of refugee children attending state schools in the subsequent years was an official ruling introduced in 2002, which made it compulsory for children to present their birth certificates on enrolment.

Many refugee children do not have birth certificates due to a variety of reasons and this led to them dropping out.³¹ There is no Government policy to prevent refugee children from attending private schools, but the exorbitant costs of private education and the absence of legal residence permit make it difficult for refugees to access them. The only other option is to enroll in the parallel education system provided by informal CLCs established by refugee communities, individuals or NGOs with the support of UNHCR.

28. *ibid.*

29. A. Kassim, 'Filipino Refugees in Sabah: State Responses, Public Stereotypes and the Dilemma Over Their Future', *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 47, No.1, June 2009, http://ci.nii.ac.jp/els/110007476150.pdf?id=ART0009304773&type=pdf&lang=en&host=cinii&order_no=&ppv_type=0&lang_sw=&no=1439662363&cp=, pp.62, (accessed 16 June 2015).

30. *ibid.*

31. *ibid.*

UNHCR has a record of about 5755 pupils in 126 refugee learning centres. These are mainly located in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Perak, Pahang, Terengganu, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Johor, Pulau Pinang, Kedah and Kelantan.

There are other faith based organisations and community centres that run classes sometimes as few as one a week and mostly, only to teach English. Many learning centres are set up and managed by refugees themselves. A number of dedicated Malaysians and expatriates volunteer their time, money and efforts alongside refugee communities to find sponsors, teach, provide educational materials and sometimes even donate personal funds to help children in these informal centres.

Refugee CLCs are located mostly in rented, cramped flats or shop lots frequently located on top floors, accessible only by narrow, steep flights of stairs. More often than not, they do not carry any name boards as they are not recognised or licensed by the Government or the MoE, and hence legally not allowed to operate. Although the existence of these centres is well known and overseen by the UNHCR, they prefer to remain inconspicuous for fear of attracting the authorities' wrath or being shut down.

Most of them charge a modest fees between RM10 to RM150 a month, depending on the facilities they provide like food, boarding or transport. The fee is a way to instill a sense of commitment and responsibility in parents to educate their children rather than help CLCs pay any bills. It is not uncommon for CLCs to waive the fee amount partially or completely when parents are unable to pay or have more than two children studying.

This is because of the importance refugee communities and CLCs place on education and to ensure the children are, to some extent, in a safe environment when parents are away at work. Nevertheless, students and refugee teachers are always at the risk of being detained and arrested despite carrying UNHCR registration cards or CLC issued identification cards.

This is because refugees and asylum seekers are equally subject to the Immigration Act as other undocumented migrants, such that if they unlawfully enter or remain in Malaysia, they are liable to being imprisoned, whipped, detained and removed.³² Malaysian immigration law does not provide special protection or procedures for asylum seekers, refugees or trafficked persons nor does it make special provisions for children or women, including pregnant women. As a result, the status of 'refugee' does not exist in Malaysian law and, at least formally, the fact that a person has the recognition of the UNHCR does not attract any special rights in Malaysian law.

32. International Federation for Human Rights., Suaram, *Undocumented migrants and refugees in Malaysia: Raids, Detention and Discrimination*, 2008, <https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/MalaisieCONJ489eng.pdf>, (accessed 16 June 2015).

An estimated 5,755 out of an estimated 21,555 children - or a mere 26.6 per cent - between the age of 3 and 17 years of age are enrolled in these 126 centres. This means a staggering 15,800 registered refugee children are out of schools. Of the total 21, 555, about 6091 children are in the age group between three and five years, while 9619 children are between the ages of 6 and 13 years old. Another 5845, are aged between 14 to 17 years. There are no estimates for the number of unregistered children who aren't attending any community centre.

Table 3.1 Number of refugee children in Malaysia & student enrolment in CLCs as on June 2015

Age Group	Persons of Concern	Enrolled in learning centres
3-5 years	6091	826
6-13 years	9619	4113
14-17 years	5845	816
Total	21,555	5755

Source: UNHCR

One of the first alternative learning centres in the country was set up by the Dignity for Children Foundation (DCF) in 1999 for the the urban poor and underprivileged families, mainly squatters in the Sentul area, which was infamously dubbed as Kuala Lumpur's red light district because of its notoriety.³³ The centre began with community outreach programmes through the New Covenant Community Church and later shifted its focus on education. In 2004, DCF began accepting refugees.

It is one of the largest CLCs with 950 students, focusing on the urban poor. Other centres - mostly focusing on primary education - followed and were set up by the communities themselves after their numbers began to grow and when they realised they were spending several years, sometimes as many as 10, in Malaysia waiting to be resettled – which meant many children were growing up without the basic literacy skills.

The second centre was established by the Soroptimist International Club in Johor Bahru (SIJB) by Soroptimist International, a global movement of women aimed at improving the lives and status of women and girls through education, empowerment or enabling opportunities. SIJB was started in 2007 after a memorandum of understanding was signed between them and UNHCR for a school, dubbed 'Project ABC'.³⁴

33. Interview with staff from Dignity for Children Foundation, 08 June 2015.

34. Email interview with Soroptimist International, 06 July 2015.

It was initially started to help the children of 46 Rohingya families in Kota Tinggi and later expanded to accept more Rohingya children. More such centres were established, particularly in KL, to educate Rohingya children. Although many of the centres accept Rohingyas, 28 of the 126 centres exclusively educate the Rohingya children.

Visits to at least eight refugee centres and interviews with several teachers and managers of CLCs revealed that most of them were severely underfunded, heavily reliant on UNHCR's assistance for teacher compensation and training, were overcrowded, lacked proper classrooms, did not have sufficiently trained teachers and students often had little or no exposure to sports or other recreational activities integral for childhood development.

CLCs typically operate between four to six hours a day for five days a week. In many cases, they offer two separate sessions in the mornings and afternoons to accommodate as many students as possible in the little space they have.

Often, teachers are refugees themselves with little teaching experience or knowledge of pedagogy and do not receive sufficient compensation for their services. While many of these CLCs use the Malaysian national syllabus and teach Bahasa as one of their core subjects, there is generally no formal certification of learning and no recognition of studies by any authority.

This directly impacts their attendance especially when they reach upper primary or secondary classes like Grades 6, 7 or Grade 8. It's common for students to be much older than the grades they are meant to be in and once they are over 14 or 15 years of age, both girls and boys tend to drop out. Families view the opportunity costs of education to be quite high and instead of spending money - even if it's as low as RM30 a month - on studying, they would rather have them earn and reduce the financial burden on the primary breadwinners.

Many girls drop out to take care of younger siblings or shoulder the burden of household chores while parents go to work. Several centres also cited a lack of motivation, inability to obtain certification and the difficulties in accessing higher education as some reasons for dropouts. According to UNHCR, there were four main reasons for registered children skipping schools: (i) living in remote areas where access is difficult, (ii) enrolled but do not regularly attend classes, (iii) families cannot afford the fees and (iv) pressure to work and support the family.³⁵

³⁵ Interview with UNHCR staff, 18 May 2015.

3.1 Primary and secondary education

Refugee education in Malaysia is relatively nascent and the first intake of refugees in a parallel education set up can be traced back to 2004. It was only in 2007 that SIJB became the first CLC to primarily educate Rohingya refugees, and that was confined to Johor Baru. Most alternative education centres in Malaysia focus their efforts on primary six education or Grades 1 to 6.

Only a handful provide secondary classes for children from Grades 6 or 7 to 12. Surprisingly, this is blamed on the lack of students because, as explained above, many are under pressure to work, get married or simply, lack the motivation to study further. For instance, the Zomi Education Centre (ZEC), which runs 10 centres, said it had tried to hold secondary classes in the past but had little success with enrolment. It needed at least ten students to run classes and was willing to hire qualified teachers but the response had been disappointing. Instead, the centre now refers interested candidates, in the rare cases they want to study further, to either DCF or Ruth Education Centre in Cheras.



Source: UNHCR

Children seen eating together at a refugee school.

That's not the case always. The inability to hire qualified teachers is reason enough for most CLCs to shy away from secondary education. Unlike primary centres where instructors often have little experience or the necessary credentials, secondary education needs qualified instructors. And with CLCs perennially short of funds, hiring new teachers isn't always possible. Space constraints is another obstacle many centres try to counter by running separate sessions in the mornings and the afternoons so more students can study.

Lastly, the demographics of the refugee population in Malaysia currently is such that the number of children who need primary education is usually much higher than those who need secondary education. For primary level education, the number of children between the ages 6 and 13 who were registered with UNHCR as of June 2015 was nearly 15,000, although only about one third or 5,000 were in CLCs.

For secondary education, only 816 refugee children aged between 14 to 17 years old are registered with the CLCs, which is just 14 per cent of the 5,845 refugee children in this age bracket. However, not all of 816 refugee children are enrolled in secondary level, as a sizeable number of these children are still in the primary level, in grades not appropriate for their ages, due to the gaps in their schooling years.”

The handful of CLCs that offer secondary programmes include DCF, Ideas Academy, Sahabat Support Centre, Alliance of Chin Refugees and Ruth Education Centre. Ideas Academy is a joint venture between IDEAS (Institute for Democratic and Economic Affairs), Malaysia's first cross-partisan think-tank dedicated to promoting market based solutions to public policy challenges and Stitching Youth Refugee Cause in the Netherlands. It was set up in September 2014 for students after Grade 6 to address the absence of opportunities for the underprivileged youth, in particular stateless and undocumented children in Pudu, KL. It opened its doors with 24 students, mostly from Myanmar, Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Somalia.³⁶

Although IDEAS accepts refugees from Grade 7, students' academic abilities were found to be varied and some of their levels were as low as of that of a Grade 3 pupil.³⁷ Educators said primary CLCs presently weren't preparing them enough for secondary education. The quality of teaching is low because many aren't qualified to teach. The centres also had few resources and little understanding of the curriculum.

Educators, nevertheless, believe the demand for secondary CLCs is increasing with many students valuing education and eager to leave their jobs to study and importantly, see the willingness among parents to let them quit their jobs.³⁸ This could see more opportunities

36. Interview with former operations manager at Ideas Academy, 05 June 2015.

37. *ibid.*

38. *ibid.*

for secondary education opening up but, training teachers in primary CLCs to deliver quality education, investing more in teaching aids and better equipping students for higher studies has to be done simultaneously.

3.2 Curriculum and certification

UNHCR encourages CLCs to follow the Malaysian curriculum to make the case stronger for the Government to unconditionally open the doors of public schools to refugee children. The second reason behind this is to make it easier for children to integrate, if and when the Government changes its policies. Hence, many CLCs religiously follow the national curriculum and maintain the academic year followed by public schools from January to November, timing their holidays with the national calendar.

They rely on public school textbooks printed in English before 2012, when the Government decided to change the medium of instruction from English to Bahasa Melayu in national schools. They use photocopied versions of the old syllabus or handouts given to them by the UNHCR pre-2012. BM is taught to help assimilation of the community with the local population.

However, not all CLCs have opted to teach the Malaysian curriculum. Some like the Sahabat Support Centre (SSC) use the North American curriculum as most of its students resettle in these countries. SSC said its long term goal was to prepare children for the future and there was no point of following the national curriculum when Malaysia wasn't their final destination or teaching them BM when students weren't interested in learning the local language. The Fugee School, on the other hand, uses books from Singapore and UK while the IDEAS Academy follows the Canadian Ontario curriculum and instead of books, uses online resources.

DCF prepares its students between the ages of 14 to 16 years for the Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) examination. As an international qualification, it is recognised by leading universities and employers worldwide.

But it is an expensive option since each paper can cost between RM400 and RM1600, depending on where the registration is done, and requires an international school to register the students. The exams are quite rigorous and intensive preparation is required. Nevertheless, the costs and level of difficulty are offset by the fact that the IGCSE allows UNHCR registered refugee students to take these exams and offers them an international certification.

There are calls for refugee CLCs to explore the US-based General Education Development (GED) Testing Service, which is the equivalent of an American or Canadian high school diploma.³⁹ It tests students in five subjects: Social Studies, Science, Reading, Mathematics, and Writing. Students need a fairly high level of English and will be required to do a lot of self study.

The online tests are open to everyone and do not require students to have a passport or a UNHCR card, making it accessible to refugee students.⁴⁰ Each paper costs US\$50 (approx RM200) and students can take the test at an official testing centre in KL. It is the equivalent of passing high school and qualifies the candidate to apply for an undergraduate programme. It is recognised by universities worldwide. About 18 million adults have sat for these tests since they were formed in 1942 and is available in English, Spanish and French.

3.3 Tertiary education

After almost 18 months of negotiating access for refugee students into colleges and universities in Malaysia, UNHCR made significant breakthrough when it signed its first Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in September 2014 with the International University of Malaya-Wales (IUMW), a private university that was set up in KL as a partnership between the University of Malaya and the University of Wales, UK.

The MOU marks a milestone for the refugee agency as it was a result of meetings over a year with the university's management, stressing the need for tertiary education for refugees in Malaysia.⁴¹ The university agreed to open up its foundation - a pre university course for a year before a degree to refugees and offered letters of acceptance to four students - two boys and two girls - from Sri Lanka.

However, they later realised that as per the MoE's Education Malaysia Global Services (EMGS) regulations, non-Malaysian students were considered international students, who needed a valid visa to study in the country. To obtain a valid visa, they had to make the application from their home country, which is not possible for asylum seekers.

An understanding between EMGS and IUMW meant that the students could enroll if they had a valid passport and paid a fine to EMGS for not having a visa as required by Malaysian law.⁴² As non-Malaysians, the international fee structure, which ranges between RM 15,000 and RM40,000, applies to them but the university offered a 30 per cent discount and another RM1,000 off other expenses since they cannot apply for visas.

39. GED Testing Service, <http://www.gedtestingservice.com/educators/current-testing-program>, (accessed 20 June 2015).

40. Interview with former operations manager at Ideas Academy. 05 June 2015.

41. Interview with UNHCR staff, 3 June 2015.

42. UNHCR informed it had a verbal understanding with MoE.

Individual donors offered to pay the fees and the university opened its scholarships for foundation programmes to refugees. The four students were able to study with IUMW's students in existing programmes and are expected to complete their foundation course in September 2015.

The second university that opened its doors to refugees was the Lim Kok Wing University, a private school based in Cyberjaya that was established in 1991. UNHCR signed a MOU with them in December 2014 to accept 100 students, with the first batch restricted to 30 students as a pilot project, for short vocational courses or professional diploma programmes ranging from six months to three years.

The courses would be fully funded by the university and the focus would be on hair dressing, web and interactive design and event production. Students would only have to pay for living expenses, which however can cost up to RM1,000 a month as the campus is located in Cyberjaya, an expensive location to live in.

The students were recruited after UNHCR sent information notices to CLCs and community leaders about the university's decision to accept students. The UN agency screened the students and forwarded their applications to Lim Kok Wing for interviews. The university is under no obligation to report the students to immigration officials, unlike IUMW, as they are short courses that do not need their clearances.

The courses started on 29 June 2015, with classes including English proficiency, communication skills, creative thinking, fundamentals of design and computer skills. They are currently all in one class but will later be assimilated into their respective courses of choice, together with the other local or international students. The students are 70 per cent boys and include Burmese minorities like the Chins and Rohingyas as well as Sri Lankans and Pakistanis.

The intake by the two universities is having a ripple effect on other educational institutions and more are keen to accept refugees. The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus signed a MoU with UNHCR on 1 July 2015 and has agreed to offer 'taster course' for refugees in foundation and undergraduate studies. Currently four students have already been enrolled in the foundation studies July intake. They are now in the midst of recruiting five refugee students for September intake undergraduate studies and the university has promised a full tuition waiver.

Students will have to bear living expenses, which is expected to be reasonable since the campus is located in Semenyih, 30km from Kuala Lumpur. The university will issue a transcript of marks and a separate certification, stating that they have completed the same modules, in the absence of a MoE certification since many do not hold passports. Other colleges like Monash University and Brickfields Asia College are also considering intakes.

The ability and the option to pursue higher education has clear benefits for the refugee community. Students in CLCs will be better motivated when they see there is a future for them after secondary education.⁴³ They realise there is a benefit in going to these informal or parallel learning centres.

UNHCR hopes this would reflect on enrolments in the primary and secondary centres and reduce the number of out-of-school children. Access to tertiary education could also have a positive impact on teachers, many of whom feel demotivated or upset over sacrificing better paid jobs to teach refugees when children have no options to study further.

Many obstacles, however, remain particularly in dealing with the Government agencies. Although a number of universities would like to register refugees for their programmes, they often shy away because of the visa requirements and legal procedures involved. Universities do not want to risk their reputation and host “illegal” people.⁴⁴

The high tuition fee makes it difficult to find funding and scholarships are limited. Refugees themselves pose several challenges. The awareness on the need for education continues to be low among many, especially the Rohingyas unlike asylum seekers from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan or Somalia, who view education as a key for upward social mobility. Many are relatively new to Malaysia and have been in schools before they fled and hence, have academic certificates.

Table 3.2 Level of education for young refugees between 18-30 years as of July 2015

Young refugees bet 18- 30 years	Young refugees with pre- school, primary &/or secondary school or other qualification	Young refugees completed or on-going university or post university education	Young refugees with Technical Degree Certificates	Young refugees completed secondary education
59,978	57,037	1,238	198	1,505

Source: UNHCR

43. Interview with UNHCR staff, 3 June 2015.

44. *ibid.*

But since many of the Chin and Rohingya children grew up in Malaysia and have been exposed to structured education institutions, they are slowly understanding the importance of furthering their studies. With the current batch of students in the few secondary refugee centers in Malaysia, UNHCR expects about 100 of them to graduate each year from secondary education and apply for tertiary education. About 630 refugee youths have also graduated from Project Self-HELP since its implementation in 2011. Project Self-HELP is a skills training programme by HELP College of Arts and Technology.

The opening of universities and colleges marks a watershed moment for refugees in Malaysia and there are further attempts to address their needs beyond tertiary education. UNHCR is working towards linking them up with industrial partners after they graduate. There are plans to have the agency's Refugee Education Working Group that consists of NGOs and volunteers to approach corporations to provide internship opportunities. The agency's Livelihood Unit has already started talking to private companies to explore long term opportunities.

3.4 Teachers

Teachers are often from refugee communities and it is not uncommon for them to have never worked with children prior to their arrival in Malaysia. Many become educators for several reasons: financial considerations, their academic backgrounds, even if not in teaching, is beneficial to the underfunded and short staffed CLCs, their desire to be close to their own children who study at these centres and to help other kids from their own communities.⁴⁵

For many, teaching is a better option than working in restaurants or in construction even though some take up part time jobs after school hours or during holidays. Dedicated and highly committed, they work long hours often for very little pay, taking classes alongside local and expatriate volunteers, guiding children through their formative years. Often they explore unconventional methods of instruction, singing, dancing and playing games in classrooms to motivate children and uplift the kids' and their own spirits.⁴⁶

Despite serious financial and emotional challenges and living in uncertainty for years in a country which only serves as a transit point, many of these teachers work hard to: educate hundreds of children, identify depression or other issues in students, engage in fostering friendship among pupils from different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds, handhold students who are unable to cope academically and impress upon them and their families the benefits of education.

45. Interview with Iranian teacher from Sahabat Support Centre, 6 July, 2015

46. *ibid.*



Source: Preeti Kannan

A teacher seen taking classes at the Kachin Community Learning Centre in Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur. Many are refugees themselves waiting to be resettled.

Many teachers, in spite of holding UNHCR cards, live in the fear of being detained or arrested and recount stories of them or their loved ones being picked up and harassed by police officials, who may demand anywhere between RM50 to RM300 to let them off.⁴⁷ They lead inconspicuous lives, living and working in the shadows. Sometimes their spouses are forced to hide in toilets at their work places when immigration authorities come calling.⁴⁸

UNHCR figures reveal that about 520 refugee teachers and 300 volunteers are in the 126 CLCs. About 200 of these teachers are paid remuneration between RM200 to RM600 a month by UNHCR, while the centres pay salaries, or what many term as “compensation” or “pocket money”, for the others from their minimal tuition fees or/ and from individual and corporate donors.

Many fend for their families for as little as RM130 a month and hence are forced to take on jobs as waiters, working four or five hour shift jobs late into the night.⁴⁹ Many CLCs were informed by the UNHCR in June 2015 that the agency will gradually stop paying teachers’ compensation because it faces budget cuts. This will only make it more difficult for these teachers to make ends meet, compelling them to look for other jobs. To avoid this, CLC managers will find alternative funding or face the prospect of running classes with even fewer tutors.⁵⁰

47. Interview with teacher from Sahabat Support Centre, 6 July 2015.

48. *ibid.*

49. Interview with teacher from Kachin Community Learning Centre, 24 June 2015.

50. Interview with Chin Student Organisation staff, 15 May 2015.

3.5 Training

Most refugee teachers have undergone some form of training, notably the DCF teacher training, which consists of two modules held twice a year. First conducted in 2007, DCF was invited by the UNHCR to conduct these trainings to assess the teaching standards in CLCs and improve them further. The first module, at the beginning of the year, centers on the January to June curriculum and gives them a grounding into how to teach, manage a class and handle students. The final module, held in the second part of the year, discusses topics in the curriculum from July to October and tutors them on how to approach the content and assesses their abilities.

Training for each module is generally done during school holidays for about five to six days, lasting for about ten hours each day. The costs are borne by UNHCR, which pays for the teachers' food and transportation. Coaching is done for teachers handling early childhood, lower primary and upper primary classes. DCF, which has about 2000 teachers, said there is a need for constant training as many instructors leave due to resettlement. Even after the programme, it is difficult to monitor how they are managing as the content keeps changing. The last DCF coaching was done in 2014 due to UNHCR's budget cuts and CLCs do not have the money to pay for it. DCF hopes this can be resumed as these sessions help develop their own staff's skills.

Another training that is gaining traction is the "Energise and Be Energised" programme run by Alexius Collette, a volunteer coach and consultant, who works with teachers as well as children. The objective of his workshops, which range from three to eight days, is to raise motivation, improve behaviour, instill the value of working as a team, enhance creativity and boost communication skills.⁵¹ As of June 2015, 12 teachers and 20 students from Sahabat Support Centre and 20 students and 20 teachers from the Fugee School had attended his workshops.

The hands-on workshops help tackle challenging behaviour among upper grade students like being disrespectful, fighting, making a mess, ethnic differences and improves parental engagement. Mr Collette said he found several gaps in the way teachers were dealing with students. According to him, they lacked the ability to translate values into behaviour or creativity, were disconnected from the needs of students, lacked lesson plans, were not putting down discipline as a team like uniformly requiring students to be on time or classes to be clean.

The workshops helped teachers better manage these shortcomings and also dealt with low motivation caused by emotional problems or in the absence of financial incentives. He noticed a significant change in student and teacher attitudes and they were very keen to learn and bring about change.

51. Interview with Alexius Collette, 10 June 2015.

3.6 UNHCR

The origins of refugee education can be traced back to the post Second World War. But until the 1980s, few resources were allocated to education within UNHCR and the agency typically relied on refugees to create their own primary school opportunities globally.⁵² Since 2010, education has taken on new prominence within the agency and has acquired a new institutional place as part of the agency's core mandate to protect and is now one of the Global Strategic Priorities.⁵³

In a refugee situation previously, the thrust was always on the immediate and emergency needs like shelter, access to clean water, sanitation, food, health.⁵⁴ In countries like Somalia there had been no post conflict solutions and in some cases entire generations had lost out on education. Schools were always run by NGOs and there was no focus on teacher training or out-of-school children globally but of late, education is being considered as a protection tool and refugees themselves have started asking for education.⁵⁵

The international community has come to realise that the provision of education is crucial as it provides knowledge and skills development that strengthens the capacity of refugees to be agents of social transformation. It is also vital to understanding and promoting gender equality and sustainable peaceful coexistence, and enable refugees to contribute towards post-conflict nation-building in the cases of voluntary repatriation or on the other hand, ensure better integration into society in resettlement countries.⁵⁶

Despite this global consensus, educational capacity within UNHCR is shockingly limited both in terms of human and financial resources.⁵⁷ As late as 2011, globally there were only two education officer positions and education received only four per cent of UNHCR's total comprehensive budget in 2010,⁵⁸ down from eight per cent in 2008.

The lack of consistent donor funding to maintain even the low-cost models of refugee education supported by UNHCR is an ongoing hazard for refugee school programmes worldwide, due to unified multi-sectoral budgets at global and country levels. That means a refugee education project's budget can be cut whenever there is a funding crisis anywhere in the world.⁵⁹ The shortfall in funding experienced by UNHCR in recent years has prevented the introduction of consistent programming standards contrary to what was recommended in the internal evaluation of its education sector in 1997.

52. S. Dryden-Peterson, *op.cit.*, pp.13

53. *ibid.* pp. 9

54. Interview with UNHCR staff, 3 June 2015.

55. *ibid.*

56. Email interview with UNHCR staff, 29 July 2015.

57. S. Dryden-Peterson, *op.cit.*, pp.9

58. *ibid.* pp 7

59. J. Crisp (ed.), C. Talbot (ed.), D.B. Cipollone (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp.8

In Malaysia, UNHCR began operations in 1975 when Vietnamese refugees began to arrive by boat. From 1975 until 1996, the agency assisted the Government in providing protection and assistance for the Vietnamese boat people.⁶⁰ Over those two decades as part of an international burden sharing effort UNHCR resettled more than 240,000 Vietnamese to countries including the United States, Canada, Australia, France, New Zealand, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Norway. During that same period more than 9,000 persons returned home to Vietnam with the support of UNHCR.

In the 1970s and 1980s, UNHCR assisted the Government in receiving and locally settling over 50,000 Filipino Muslims from Mindanao who had fled to Sabah. UNHCR also supported the Government in locally settling several thousand Muslim Chams from Cambodia in the 1980s and several hundred Bosnian refugees in the 1990s. As there are currently no legislative or administrative provisions in place for dealing with asylum-seekers or refugees in the country, UNHCR conducts all activities related to the reception, registration, documentation and status determination of asylum-seekers and refugees.

With education becoming a core component of UNHCR's international protection and durable solutions mandate, refugee education in Malaysia is no different. Its work centers on advocacy, coordination, support provision, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. But due to the gap in access to public schools, UNHCR has had little choice but to set up a parallel education system and the Education Unit was established in 2012 with this increased focus.⁶¹

The agency believes that access to quality education in Malaysia will help refugees live healthy, productive lives and build skills of self-reliance while they are in Malaysia. It will also ensure they become skilled workers, contributing robustly to the local economy.

Learning centres were managed by refugees themselves with little assistance until the UNHCR started getting actively involved. The Education Unit enabled comprehensive support that helped refugee children gain greater access and better quality of education. Previously, sufficient attention was not given to quality of teachers, reference books, teaching materials or in ensuring schools were safe learning environments. The education team subsequently reviewed these issues and has been working on ironing them out.

For example, one of the first lessons it learned was the importance of data and its impact on all other areas of its work. Insufficient data, ad-hoc sharing of data from refugee learning centres and the issue of data-verification were addressed in the last quarter of 2012. It implemented the UNESCO's (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) Open Education Management Information System (OpenEMIS) which helped streamline data collection and enabled UNHCR to prioritise its efforts and funding.

60. Email interview with UNHCR staff, 29 July 2015.

61. Ibid.

However, the agency continues to grapple with several challenges. Since Malaysia remains a non-signatory country to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, refugees are considered illegal migrants and have no access to legal employment and social services. Refugee children also do not have access to the public school system. Additionally, the urban refugee situation in Malaysia with its diverse ethnic groups and widespread geographical distribution present a further obstacle for delivering education to the refugees.

For instance, when initially engaging with the Rohingyas, the agency found the community to be divided with many self-appointed community leaders. Albeit from the same ethnic group, getting them to work together to set up and run the CLCs was not easy. The community required a lot of hand holding and was fully dependent on the UNHCR. Education was not high on the community's agenda despite their children being initially allowed to attend government schools. However, that slowly changed with support from the agency.

To make refugee learning centres independent, the agency encourages CLCs to follow a community school model where different parties such as the parents and the community play an equal role in sustaining the school. UNHCR also pushes them to engage with locals and volunteers to build their own funding networks and tap into various resources to improve the learning experiences of children. And when community funding and school fee collection are insufficient - which is often the case - UNHCR supplements with grants so education is not disrupted.

Over the years, service standards at most community learning centres have improved. But ultimately, their ability to be independent and sustainable depends on the refugee communities. The level of cohesiveness, unity, network with local organisations, be it private support groups or faith-based organisations, as well as time spent in Malaysia - all have an impact on whether the learning centre will be able to stand on its own.

Centres have closed in the past for various reasons like resettlement of the teachers or merging of centres located within the vicinity. Children are then absorbed by centres located nearby or in some cases, a new centre is opened by a new management and teachers.

In the hope of shoring assistance for these centres from the Government, the agency has facilitated visits by the MoE to several CLCs in 2011 when the ministry was conducting a study on alternative learning. It also included an MoE staff in its delegation to a conference in Senegal in 2012, where issues of textbooks to refugee schools and opportunities for trainings were discussed. UNHCR also organised a regional education strategy workshop in 2013, for which MoE had sent a representative.

Hence in the absence of critical support, UNHCR tends to act like an unofficial government agency on education, shouldering significant onus of assisting this vulnerable section to realise their academic goals. It provides a wide range of support: from helping set up CLCs, to providing monthly and annual financial assistance by way of teachers' compensation, buying or procuring old school books, providing school bags, uniforms, education tablets, teaching materials, paying rentals and utilities.

Although the agency did not disclose its financial plans for the ongoing year, its top three expenses have been teachers' compensation, transportation and community school grants. UNHCR also helps them connect with potential donors, provides certification, facilitates and pays for teacher training programmes, lobbies universities to accept refugee children. Along with the livelihoods department, the agency scouts for placements for graduating refugee children.

However like its global counterparts, the agency has not been insulated from shrinking budgets caused by the rapidly rising refugee population. In June 2015, the UNHCR's Global Trends Report: World at War, said the number of people forcibly displaced at the end of 2014 as a result of war, conflict and persecution had risen to a staggering 59.5 million compared to 51.2 million a year earlier and 37.5 million a decade ago.⁶²

The UN High Commissioner Antonio Guterres warned that "dramatic problems in multiple regions are in contrast to decreasing support; in 2010, there were 11,000 newly displaced per day; in 2011, 14,000; in 2012, 23,000; in 2013, 32,000; in 2014, 42,500 per day."⁶³ Given these burgeoning numbers, it is no surprise when immediate needs of asylum seekers are prioritised over education. UNHCR Malaysia has also been forced to make some tough decisions like reviewing its teacher compensation programme, which was initiated in 2011. Subject to budget availability, 200 teachers were given RM200 to RM600 a month. Although meant for a fixed number of teachers, many CLCs were further dividing this sum among themselves. As of August 2015, the programme was still ongoing, but should plans of the programme being phased out gradually be implemented, children would be the ones losing out.

To sustain the compensation, UNHCR is trying to find alternative funding through private donations, NGOs and the refugee community themselves. It has suspended its DCF teacher training programme as of 2014 and has stopped providing ad-hoc material support like textbooks due to the high costs of printing.

62. 'Worldwide displacement hits all-time high as war and persecution increase', *UNHCR*, 18 June 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/558193896.html>, (accessed 19 July 2015).

63. 'UNHCR head tells humanitarian NGOs "moment of truth" has arrived', *UNHCR*, 1 July 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/559404216.html>, (accessed on 19 July 2015).

Despite these setbacks, UNHCR said it would continue to provide support and work with various partners including government agencies, NGOs and volunteers as part of its programme of humanitarian support for refugees even as more learning centres are expected to open in the future in areas outside the central region of KL and Selangor.

3.7 Case Studies

(i) Students

"I came to Malaysia in 2008 from Somalia and have been studying at the Fugee school for eight years. We have been waiting to be resettled in the US. I am the only one who can speak English in my family. I learnt the language very quickly so I could help my family cope in Malaysia. We face a lot of difficulties here. My mother has diabetes and I have to take her to the hospital regularly. In June 2015, UNHCR stopped giving us compensation and that has made our situation worse. It is difficult to buy medicines for her. Most of my family isn't educated and that is why I want to study. I study non stop and am pursuing HR, management and marketing classes at a community college three times a week. But, it is very hard to concentrate because of all the problems my family has. I feel very upset when my friends get resettled and anxiously wait for our turn to come."

Mariam Abdullahi Shukuur, 15, Somali student and part time teacher at Fugee School, KL

"I did home schooling for a year and finished my O levels with a school here. After that the UN sent mails that refugees can join IUMW. Our community group, Tamils in Malaysia, informed us and they are sponsoring me. I really like my course and it's really good. It's giving me a lot of exposure. It is the first time that the university is accepting refugees. I hope I can be resettled in the US and do my degree after this."

Kirushanth Ramesh, 19, Sri Lankan refugee studying foundation course in arts at IUMW University. He is among the first batch of refugees to be accepted by the university.

"I was born here in Malaysia. My parents came as children from Rangoon. We are Rohingyas. My parents aren't working because their health isn't good. My brother works in Malacca as a contractor and my sister runs a warung (roadside shop). We are dependent on them but the money is not enough. My younger sister and I are studying right now. She is in kindergarten in a private Islamic school. I used to study in a government school. When I was in Form 1 in the government school in Ampang, I was told I was a refugee and needed a passport to go to school. I was asked not to come to school. I didn't go to school for two years. It was terrible for me. I had to stay at home and help my mother. I used to cry a lot. I thought this was my home but I was told this isn't my country. That's when my mother explained to me what a 'refugee' meant. I was shocked at that time. Now I am studying again in a CLC and am very happy that I have a future again. After I finish studying, I want to build a firm that has a gym, a swimming pool, dance studio, boutique, grocery and a cafe. We have been waiting for resettlement for years. We have been told we will go to Australia or America. My ambition will come true only if I have a citizenship."

Nur Jamila, 18, Rohingya refugee studying Grade 11 IGCSE (O levels) at a CLC in KL

"We have been in Malaysia for three years but I didn't go to school for the first two years. I like studying here and the teachers too but I miss our house and my uncles in Syria. I hope we can go to Canada or Australia. I want to become a football player when I grow up."

Mohammed Hussein, Syrian refugee and Grade 5 student at SSC, KL

"I am really happy to be able to study. This is the first time we have the chance and it is a big help. I really like my course and want to do my degree when I finish in two years. More universities should accept refugees."

Joseph Phun UK Thang, 17, Chin refugee from Myanmar doing a diploma course in Web Design at Lim Kok Wing University.



Source: Preeti Kannan

Lu Mai Tashi speaking about her life in Malaysia and the problems she faces raising her two grandchildren without any help.

(ii) Parents

"I came to Malaysia in 2011 with my two grandchildren. We travelled by boat, car and on foot to reach this country. Their parents have been resettled in the US and are trying to get us to join them. They send some money for the monthly expenses but it is not enough. I wash dishes in restaurants but they are not calling me as much as am getting old. We share a room with nine people but we do not have enough for food or living expenses. Sometimes I end up cooking for everyone and cleaning the entire house. The children are getting older and they do not like being here with so many people. They get depressed when they see their parents via the Internet. When the police come, we are very scared. I am very tired and frustrated. We have had the first interview with the US immigration and are waiting for medical checkup. I hope we can join them soon as it is getting tough for me to manage them alone in my old age."

Lu Mai Tashi, 61, a Chin refugee whose grandchildren, 11 and 9 years old are studying at the Kachin Refugee Learning Centre, KL

"I came to Malaysia in January 2014 alone with my three children as my husband is unable to leave Somalia. Although we have been here for so long, we have an appointment with UNCHR for RSD only in 2016. I try my best to stay away from the police. I am very scared of them. I depend on my uncle in Canada for my monthly expenses."

Mariam Abdi Rahim, 30, Somalian refugee with three children in Fugee School, KL

"I fled my home two years ago because my life was under threat from the Taliban. The government said they couldn't protect me. I have five children and hope we can resettle in the UK or elsewhere. I want my children to become doctors. I'm a herbalist and work with an NGO in Kuala Lumpur to help Pakistanis. I am really worried how to make ends meet. I want my children to have a proper education. The Malaysian government should reconsider its policies to educate children. My children ask why do we have so few books, why is our situation difficult and I have no answers."

Mohammed Yousaf, 37, Pakistani refugee with three children at SSC, KL

(iii) Teachers

"I decided to work in a school because I wanted to help my husband financially. I also have a certificate in philosophy from the Damascus University and wanted to put it to use and was keen to be close to my own children, who study here. We go beyond teaching to help the children and their families. Sometimes parents are going through divorce or the mother is a widow and they go through a lot of issues. It's important to reach out to the parents before we take on the children. Any trouble with the family is reflected in the child's behaviour. We are waiting for UNHCR to resettle us and hope we can leave soon. We are tired of being refugees. My husband has to hide in the toilet when immigration officials come."

Hanan Kbiaa, 31, Syrian refugee teaching math, science and social studies at SSC, KL

"I came to Malaysia in 2012 with my husband and two children, 8 and 11 years. I started teaching here in 2014 because both I wanted to be close to my younger son, who has epilepsy. I used to work elsewhere but one day he had an epilepsy attack and he was home alone. We want to resettle soon because my son needs better medical attention. I like teaching here and helping the children. A lot of them become depressed and aggressive because of their situation. We try to encourage them to come to school and talk to them about the importance of an education. Many of them come from different cultures and there is an Arab group, a Pakistani group and an Iranian group. They fight about religion. We have banned discussing religion in school. Many teachers and parents live in fear of the police. They stop us and take us to the police station and we have to pay between RM50 to RM300 to be released."

Foroogh Naghashzadeh, 37, Iranian refugee and Math teacher at SSC, KL

"I came to Malaysia in 2012 by bus, boat and by walking in the nights through Thailand. I make only about RM650 a month. So, I try to work at nights as a waiter in a Japanese restaurant from 6pm to 11pm to earn extra money. This means I cannot prepare properly for lessons for the next day. I am very keen to teach these children but face many challenges like we do not have enough books to teach the older children. We do not have enough teaching aids like maps. Many of the children sleep late and are very tired in the morning sessions."

Jaw Tu Hkawng, 22, Chin refugee who teaches social studies at Kachin Learning Centre, KL

4 Alternative education programmes in Sabah

Unlike Peninsular Malaysia which houses refugees, largely, from Myanmar and other countries, the state of Sabah hosts a complex mix of: Filipino refugees, Indonesian plantation workers, undocumented migrants, sea gypsies and many more, who live and work alongside Malaysians, vying for respect, recognition and attempting to access basic needs. A significant proportion of the population of Sabah are non-Malaysians or foreigners.⁶⁴ This demographics has created tensions with the local population.

This section will provide an overview of their origins and their lives in Malaysia, briefly touching upon the current political, social or economic debates surrounding their status since the focus of the mapping is largely on their children and the stakeholders providing primary six (Grade 1 to 6) education. It will also delve into the different Government and non-governmental education providers.

The first part will focus on the Filipino refugees and the 12 alternative learning centres in Sabah that are primarily managed by the Federal Sabah Task Force – Sabah/Labuan (FSTF-S/L), which will here on be referred to as the NSC,⁶⁵ along with other government and NGO stakeholders. The second part will examine the roles of the HCASS, NGOs and the Indonesian government in educating children in plantations.

The third section will highlight the efforts of faith-based agencies and other NGOs teaching Filipino refugees and other undocumented children. The final section will look at the work of the Persatuan Kebajikan Pendidikan Kanak-Kanak Miskin (PKPKM) – Society for Education of underprivileged Children in Sabah in reaching out to the Bajau Laut or the sea gypsies.

4.1 Filipino refugees and undocumented migrants

The influx of Filipino refugees, who were Muslims, to Sabah between 1972 and 1984 was a result of the civil war in the Mindanao region in the southern part of Philippines since the late sixties.⁶⁶ The Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) on Immigrants in Sabah concluded that the armed conflict and economic factors - promise of better jobs and improved quality of life - were the main reasons for immigration to the state.

According to the RCI, refugees were initially managed by the Sabah government through the Chief Minister's Department and the UNHCR but, in 1989, these duties were taken over by the NSC (which was at that time the FSTF), under the Home Affairs Ministry. Special treatment was given to the Filipino Muslim refugees like enabling them to work and live in

64. Interview with (Dr Vincent Pang) Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), 17 June 2015.

65. In an email communication dated 13 August 2015, officials from NSC said: "FTSF is now a part of/ under Sabah Office of National Security Council. This merger was implemented on June 2014. FTSF [has been] actually under the National Security Council since it [was] established, and the recent merger is between FTSF and Sabah Office of National Security Council."

66. 'War in southern Philippines reason refugees fled to Sabah', *New Strait Times Online*, 4 December 2014, <http://dev.nst.com.my/node/59119?d=1>, (accessed 20 June 2015).

Sabah and the Federal Territory of Labuan, ensuring they could not be deported without consent, unless they were involved in crimes. Another push factor for the migration is believed to be related to the territorial claim to Sabah by the Philippine government and many Filipinos who *“still perceive Sabah as part and parcel of the Philippines.”*⁶⁷

Tun Mustapha, who was Sabah’s Chief Minister in the first half of the seventies, granted them permission to stay on humanitarian grounds but there are reasons to believe his decision were based on economic, political and personal factors like the need for labour in Sabah’s plantations, his religious beliefs and ancestry.⁶⁸

Initially 100,000 refugees were accommodated in the 1970s in coastal areas especially in 34 resettlement villages - only five of which have been gazetted - in Tawau, Kota Kinabalu and Sandakan with the help of the Sabah State Government. They were given permission to stay and work and granted a special pass - the HF7, which was later changed to the IMM13 - and that was extended to their offspring as well.⁶⁹

The NSC or former FSTF (S/L), took over the administration of the settlements in 1989 because a lot of “irregular” economic migrants from Indonesia and Philippines had arrived in Sabah illegally and some of the Filipino migrants were finding their way into the refugee settlements, worrying Malaysian authorities, who perceived this as a security threat.

Refugees and their offspring are required to renew their IMM13 passes annually but many are unable to do so because of large families and the costs involved - RM90 per year per person - in maintaining their status as legal migrants.⁷⁰ Researchers found that in Telipok and Kinarut settlements, the average size of the respondents’ household was 6.5 persons, which is higher than the national average of 4.8 in 2004.

A family of six - with four children above twelve years old - who are unemployed, will have difficulty in paying RM540.00 (RM90×6) a year to renew their IMM13 passes as for some, this amount is equivalent to a month’s income. The research found it was therefore, not uncommon for some refugee families not to renew their passes although they are fully aware of the consequences of not doing so. This makes them “irregular migrants” leaving them vulnerable to arrest and deportation.

Many refugee children are undocumented and considered “illegal migrants” as their births have not been registered by the state’s National Registration Department (NRD) because the parents haven’t been able to produce the necessary documentation like the baby’s

67. *ibid.*

68. A. Kassim, *op.cit.*, pp.58.

69. *ibid.*, pp.68

70. *ibid.*

clinic card; the mother's maternity card, the parent's marriage certificate and identification cards; and a letter of labour summary from a hospital.⁷¹

In many cases, parents do not hold marriage certificates because they haven't registered their marriages due to lack of awareness of procedures or because of marrying migrants, who entered the country illegally. Parents sometimes do not possess birth certificates for their children either because they gave birth at home or weren't aware of the procedures to register them.

Researchers have also documented stories of IMM13 card holders lacking nationality because of their unwillingness to become Filipino citizens even when given a choice by the Philippines government to process their papers.⁷² The Philippines government regularly conducts missions in Sabah and has issued 30,000 passports to undocumented migrants in the past five years.⁷³

The Philippines Vice Consul said:

"We have made the birth registration process in Sabah simpler to allow as many eligible individuals to be recognised as Filipino citizens. We require them to undergo an interview and present affidavits of two disinterested persons and the village chief as proof of their ancestry and personal circumstances. If they do not have existing records with our census authority, their birth will be recorded and a passport will be issued to them within two to three months."

The embassy has limitations in processing applications because of insufficient personnel and machines. But these are not the only reasons. One major issue is the language barrier. The undocumented migrants speak only Bahasa, Bajau or Suluk while the embassy officials communicate in Tagalog. The other main barrier is the reluctance on the part of the migrants to accept the generosity of the Philippines government. But officials said, *"They [the undocumented migrants] would normally prefer to become Malaysians but they do not have a choice."*⁷⁴

This reflects the complexity and the paradox of the statelessness debate in Sabah where *"the impulse to escape statelessness is by no means as strong as the impulse to 'hold out' for a particular, preferred nationality that might be gained in the future."*⁷⁵

71. H. Daud, The Role of Enforcement Agencies: National Registration Department. In Tenaganita, *Acting Today for Tomorrow's Generation*. Proceedings of Regional Conference on Stateless/Undocumented Children in Sabah, 16 - 18 November, cited in A.Kassim, pp.69.

72. C Allerton, 'Statelessness and the lives of the children of migrants in Sabah, East Malaysia', *Tilburg Law Review: Journal of International and European Law*, vol.19, http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/55806/1/Allerton_Statelessness-and-the_lives-of-the-children-of-migrants-in-Sabah_2014.pdf, pp.6 (accessed 18 May 2015).

73. Interview with Philippines Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, 21 July 2015.

74. *ibid.*

75. C.Allerton, *op.cit.*, pp.6

There are no exact figures but only estimates on the number of Filipino adult and child refugees or IMM13 card holders in Sabah or the number of undocumented adults and children in Sabah. In July 2008, the then Minister of Home Affairs, Hamid Albar said in Parliament that 57,194 IMM13 cards were issued in 2007 but this does not necessarily indicate the number of refugees per se as each pass may contain more than one name i.e. a parent and his/her children below the age of 12.⁷⁶

NRD statistics in 2010 showed that there were 700,000 immigrants in the state, of which 250,000 were illegals.⁷⁷ The MoE conducted a study in 2009 and found 43,973 undocumented children in Malaysia between the ages of 7 to 17 years old not in schools.⁷⁸ The findings led to the MoE working in partnership with UNICEF and NSC towards providing access to basic education for refugee and undocumented children in Kampung Numbak in Kota Kinabalu.

The main objective of the AEP in Kg. Numbak was to provide alternative education pathways for the children who lacked the proper documentation to gain access to mainstream education in Malaysian government schools. The Kampung Numbak EduCare Centre was completed in 2010 and was officially opened on 26 March, 2011 by the Ministry of Education, FSTF S/L, UNICEF and the Malaysia Teachers' Union.

The school caters to the Filipino refugees and undocumented migrants, many of whose ancestry could be traced back to the Philippines. The Bajau community forms the largest group of students (55.2 per cent), followed by Suluk (24.0 per cent), and Kagayaan (18.4 per cent). A further 2.4 per cent are made up of students from other ethnic groups.⁷⁹

4.2 The National Security Council

The FSTF (S/L) was created under the NSC, the Prime Minister's Department in 1989, to manage issues and concerns relating to refugee and foreign migrants in the state. While its core responsibilities included monitoring the newly established settlements of the Filipino refugees and keeping a close watch on their activities,⁸⁰ it has assisted in the provision of basic primary education for Filipino refugee children and undocumented children as most do not possess the necessary documents to enter national schools.

76. A Kassim, *op.cit.*, pp.71.

77. R.Goh, 'Constant work on Sabah illegals', *The New Strait Times Online*, 17 December 2014, <http://dev.nst.com.my/node/63353?d=1>, accessed 20 May 2015.

78. UNICEF-UMS, *Reaching the Unreached: An Assessment of the Alternative Education Programme for Refugee, Undocumented and Stateless Children in Kampung Numbak, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah*

79. *Ibid.*

80. A. Kassim, *op.cit.*, pp.60.



Source: Preeti Kannan

Students leaving after classes at the Telipok Learning Centre run by the NSC in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

On the one hand the NSC is an authoritarian law enforcement agency tasked with maintaining security, running detention centres and cracking down on activities that can endanger the state or its citizens, while on the other, it is playing the role of a caring, humanitarian organisation providing basic primary education in 12 ALCs for undocumented and Filipino refugee children. However, some believe the NSC's role in education has little to do with the Government or the system but is a result of good task force directors.⁸¹

Nevertheless, the NSC's role is commendable because it is one of those rare state actors in Malaysia shouldering the onus of an education provider for a group that is looked upon with suspicion, prejudice and resentment by the hostile local community, in this case the Sabahans.⁸²

Some see them as illegal immigrants who pose a threat to security and with their high growth rate many Sabahans fear they may soon out-number the local population. Yet others see them as taking away jobs from the locals and polluters of the environment. The refugees are perceived as "naturally inclined" to do polluting activities like using dynamite to catch fish.

Although an assessment of the Kg Numbak centre in 2014 made several recommendations including the need to continue improving the quality of education and teaching,⁸³ the NSC-run centres serve as a benchmark for alternative education provided by a government body for non-Malaysians. In the strictest sense of the term, the NSC's mandate does not extend to education, but it sees its role in this area as part of a wider security mandate. The CLCs were opened as a practical approach to address potential security threats.

81. Interview with UMS, 17 June 2015.

82. A. Kassim, *op.cit.*, pp.67.

83. UNICEF-UMS study: *Reaching the Unreached: An Assessment of the Alternative Education Programme for Refugee, Undocumented and Stateless Children in Kampung Numbak, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, 2013.* pp.91



Children seen playing football on a weekday morning at the Kg. Numbak refugee settlement. Not all children are studying because of several reasons including space constraints.

*"The role of NSC is primarily related to security. We see this problem of not getting education among undocumented children as related to security problems. If these children are allowed to loiter anywhere or do anything, they will lead to serious security issues. To prevent that, we try to provide basic education... We want to stop them [from] getting involved in crime and other unhealthy activities."*⁸⁴

NSC opened the first alternative learning centre in Telipok in 2004 for the refugees and undocumented children. As of June 2015, NSC was operating 12 primary learning centres - 11 in Sabah and one in Labuan - with a total of 3,427 students schooled by 42 teachers.⁸⁵ Two of these centres, the Kg Numbak Learning Centre in Kota Kinabalu and the Kg. Bahagiya Learning Centre in Sandakan are run in collaboration with UNICEF. UNICEF has provided RM422,715.16 to fund the programme in Kg Numbak and will pay for teachers salaries until the end of 2015.

The centres are run with assistance from the MoE, NGOS, the Malaysia Teacher Foundation, the Kg. Numbak EduCare Centre and the Sime Darby Foundation, which has helped contribute tables and chairs. For the past six years, the MoE's support has been mostly in the form of teacher training and textbooks. All of them run classes from Grades 1 to 6.

The centres charge a nominal fee of RM2 to RM3 a month. Some collect the money upfront at the beginning of the year. Most parents are fishermen or are involved in construction and there are many instances when the parents cannot afford to pay anything. The centres have anywhere between two and nine classrooms and most run classes for five to six hours a day, while some operate two separate sessions to accommodate more children. An equal number of boys and girls study in them.

84. Interview with NSC, 15 June 2015.

85. The NSC facilitated visits to their learning centres in Kg. Numbak and the other in Tepilok, on 15 June 2015 for the mapping.

Table 4.1 Number of children and teachers in the alternative learning centres in refugee settlements of June 2015

No	School Name	No of Students	No of Teachers
1	Kg. Telipok KK	248	4
2	Kg. Lok Urai KK	240	3
3	Kg. Pulau Pondo KK	75	2
4	Kg. Kinarut, Papar	335	3
5	Kg. Pantai Bahagia Kudat	133	2
6	Kg. Pulau Jampiras Sandakan	159	2
7	Kg. Hidayat Tawau	366	4
8	Kg. Selamat, Semporna	512	5
9	Kg. Pangkalan Junak	142	2
10	SPRM Kiansam WP Labuan	234	4
11	Kg. Bahagiya Sandakan	678	5
12	Educate Centre Kg. Numbak KK	305	6
	TOTAL	3427	42

Source: NSC-Sabah

Teachers are Malaysians as well as from refugee communities with IMM13 permits and have the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) or the Malaysian Certificate of Education certificate, a national examination taken by all fifth-year secondary school students in Malaysia. Additionally, they attend MoE's five day training course tailored specifically for teachers in these alternative learning schools. It has been organised since 2012. The training is run by a local college, which focuses on pedagogy, classroom maintenance and school administration. Some of those interviewed had varied professional backgrounds before becoming teachers.



Source: Preeti Kannan

A child walking through discarded water bottles, footwear and other trash at the Kg Numbak refugee settlement. Garbage can be seen everywhere despite efforts by authorities to keep it litter-free.

One of the English teachers at the Kg. Numbak centre had previously worked as a cleaner in a police station. Although his grasp of English was limited, the head teacher of the centre was thrilled the children were able to say simple phrases like “*Good Morning*” and “*Thank you*”, which to them was significant progress.

The centres are impacting the communities in the settlements positively in many ways. For instance, at the Kg. Numbak centre, the head teacher said there had been considerable improvement in literacy. “*Earlier 90 per cent children weren’t able to read or write. Now at least 80 per cent can read Bahasa and some English.*”⁸⁶

The community had seen an increase in children attending the Friday prayers in the community mosque. The children had also become proficient in reciting the Quran because of the Islamic classes held at the centres. Considerable improvement in cleanliness, manners and in areas of hygiene in the settlements were also highlighted.

However during a visit to Kg. Numbak where the houses are built on stilts, plenty of garbage could be seen floating in the water near the entrance to the settlement despite a massive clean up drive only a few days back. While some of it had been brought by the tides, people were also responsible for littering. The community has been given big drums to dispose the garbage but people were using them to store water instead and continued to throw trash in to the water.

86. Interview with head teacher at Kg. Numbak Centre, 15 June 2015.

Students were assigned duties to ensure the cleanliness of centre.⁸⁷ Messages of personal hygiene were being instilled through rhymes. Similarly, through outdoor activities such as physical education, students learned the importance of exercise for personal health.

The Kg Numbak centre provided opportunities to inculcate teamwork and cooperation through outdoor events such as sports and communal work. It also encouraged the development of a sense of citizenship in the students.⁸⁸ In the daily assembly, the national anthem, *Negaraku*, and the state anthem, *Sabah Tanah Airku*, were sung to instil a sense of allegiance to Malaysia.

The NSC was also facilitating teaching of handicrafts and bracelets to the women and children, helping them earn money from sale of their products. One of the teachers who has skills in construction is planning to introduce these skills to the children. Students are also taught to mend fishing nets. There is an overall growing awareness in the settlements on the benefits of education. For example, fewer children were believed to be wandering on the streets. *“We cannot eradicate the problem [of crime] but we can see some improvements. Between 2000 and 2005, we could see many kids loitering in the markets of Kota Kinabalu but now the number of children has been reduced.”*⁸⁹

Despite the obvious benefits of schooling, several challenges remain including financial constraints that make it difficult to hire more teachers or provide better teaching aids and resources to the students. One of the teachers at the Telipok learning centre said many educators lacked the knowledge and the experience to teach and needed training in English.⁹⁰

He said the RM3 fee collected every month went towards making copies of exam papers and lamented the limited number of blackboards in the classes. The UNICEF-funded Kg. Numbak and Kg. Bahagiya have some computers and small libraries. There is also some minimal sports equipment like footballs.

The 12 centres reach out only to 10 per cent of the refugees and undocumented children. Though there are regular enquiries from parents who want to enrol children, the centres are unable to take them in. The task force said it had no plans to open new primary centres. The centres also experience dropouts and the NSC recorded nearly 180 dropouts in June 2015 across all the CLCs for reasons such as parents relocating to another part of Malaysia or not being able to keep sending them to school, preferring them to work. Girls drop out because they are required to help with family chores.

87. UNICEF-UMS, *op.cit.*, pp 43.

88. *ibid.*

89. Interview with NSC, 15 June 2015.

90. Interview with English and Islamic values teacher at Telipok Learning Centre, 15 June 2015



Children loitering about at the Kg Telipok refugee settlement.

Limited number of teachers due to lack of sufficient funding is another challenge. In the Kg. Bahagiya CLC, the parents were willing to raise money to help hire more teachers. There are also land issues because the settlements aren't all gazetted by the Government and are considered illegally occupied by squatters. Public sentiment is also not always in favour of such learning centres. *"The local communities think refugees are the main source of problem for security and hygiene issues..."*⁹¹

Academicians noted that even some senior government officers shared the public's negative perceptions. They believe refugees are a nuisance and people who help them aren't considered patriotic.⁹² There is also a difference in perception towards the communities in different settlements largely because of how the refugees and the undocumented themselves interact with the local population.

91. Interview with NSC, 15 June 2015.

92. Interview with UMS, 15 June 2015.

People in the Telipok settlement, which was opened in 1980, are seen to be better assimilated with the local community because they carry out house repairs and other odd jobs, which makes the local community realise they are no different to them.⁹³ They also have their own cars and are better off than the refugees and undocumented migrants in the Numbak settlement, who are largely fishermen.

The Numbak settlers are generally a closed community and the nature of their profession means that their engagement with the outside world is limited to selling their catch. They are also much poorer than the Telipok settlers and rely on public transport to take them around.

The other issue is that on the one hand, the Government allows the education of refugee and undocumented children in alternative learning centres by NGOS and other entities, on the other hand, the same undocumented children and their parents are subject to crackdowns by some government departments like immigration because they do not possess valid papers for their stay in Malaysia. Measures like these reflect the complicated and contradictory policies that exist for refugees, undocumented people and other non-Malaysians, especially in Sabah.

The direct impact of such clampdown is low attendance and in many cases “*students do not attend classes for days or months due to document issues.*”⁹⁴ While the centres are filling a major gap in primary education, there are scarce options for the children to study after Grade 6, with little chance of employment other than menial work.

Some get simple administrative jobs since they can read and write. In rare cases when children get ID cards, they go on to study in government schools. Some of the teachers interviewed also underlined the need for high schools as students were talented and eager to learn. The Task Force said it had no plans to open secondary schools but noted that it was open to collaborations with NGOs and other organisations to help the children study further.

4.3 CLCs supported by the Philippine embassy

Over the past three years, the Philippine embassy in KL has been involved with NGOs and individuals running CLCs for the undocumented children because the embassy felt the need to create opportunities for them. It was only in 2014 the relationship was formalised through a MoU between them and six CLCs run in Sabah, namely Kenigau, Sandakan and Lahad Datu.⁹⁵ Four are run by individual Filipino migrants, two CLCs including the

93. *ibid.*

94. Interview with NSC, 15 June 2015.

95. Interview with Philippine Embassy in KL, 21 July 2015.

PKPKM, which teaches undocumented children apart from the Filipino refugees and the Bajau Laut; and Stairway to Hope.

The support for the centres is in the form of teacher training provided by the Philippines Education Ministry, helping with teaching resources and facilitating fund raising activities. In 2014, the Ministry conducted a 12-day long training where teachers from the Philippines came to Sabah to train the CLC volunteers and teachers, many of whom have not even finished college. Recently, it helped organise a fund raiser which brought in RM94,500 for the CLCs.

Stairway to Hope in the Inanam district was established by the Filipino community and with support from the embassy to provide the children of Filipino refugees and undocumented children with basic reading, writing, arithmetic and other life skills. The founder Mrs Marilou Chin a Malaysian from Philippines, noticed a few years back that by 6 pm, Kota Kinabalu city changed and girls between 14 and 16 years of age could be seen prostituting themselves.

The founder said she noticed the blank look on the faces of the children playing in the area. Hence, with leaders of Filipino community and help from the Philippines embassy, she started the Stairway to Hope at the house of a benefactor with RM6,000. With the help of the Philippine embassy which gave RM10,000 and some personal money, she bought some tables and chairs to use in the yard where the students were given classes. From 40 children, they had 70 in six months.



Source: Preeti Kannan

A class underway at the Stairway to Hope.

The CLC provides education to about 270 children from Grade I to Form 1 (the equivalent of Grade 7). It is situated 10 kilometres from the city at Kg. Kalansana Inanam and children walk to school or take the public transport. The students are divided into six groups and classes are conducted in three two- hour sessions every Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. Since the Government does not want to legally recognise these centres, they have been informally allowed to operate on the condition that they will function only three times a week and without uniforms. However, the centre has stitched its own uniforms in different colours.

4.4 Case studies

(i) Students

"I have been studying at the centre since 2011. I was at a Korean school nearby before that. I have 10 siblings. My father is a fisherman and my mother is a housewife. My favourite subjects are Melayu and English. I like to draw cartoons and people's faces. I hope to become an astronaut some day."

Nazrulla bin Hasan, 13, Grade 6 student at Kg. Numbak

"I have been studying in the centre for the past four years. My father is a carpenter. He wants me to study so I can read and write."

Norika Binti Raup, 12, Grade 4, Kg. Telipok

"I like my school. I have been studying here since I was nine years old. My favourite game is basketball and my favourite subject is Bahasa. My father is a carpenter. I want to become a businessman someday and help my family."

Roholmen, 13, student at Kg. Numbak

(ii) Parents

"I came to Malaysia in 1984. I have no documents for me or my family. I am very happy that my children can go to school here and are learning to read and write. But, I worry what happens after that. I wish someone would set up a high school here as we really want our children to be educated."

Charmalyn Kadir, 40, factory worker and mother of four children at Kg. Telipok centre.

"We are thankful the school is there for the children. Many refugees do not have documents because of circumstances but that shouldn't prevent children from getting an education. My children are lucky to go to a government school because I am married to a Malaysian and my children are Malaysians."

Adela Abdullah, mother of four children and resident of Kg Telipok

(iii) Teachers

"I am very happy to have this job. I love teaching. I used to work in the police station but this gives me a lot of satisfaction. I want to help children from my community."

Jool Bin Ogg Ong, 27, English teacher at Kg. Numbak

"I was a temporary teacher for the centre before the task force appointed me as staff this year. I have seen children with no knowledge who are now able to read and write. Now, from writing sentences they are able to write essays. Teaching the children requires a lot of patience and coercing as education isn't ingrained in them. I buy my own resources to teach them. It takes much longer for them to appreciate the value of education. But, over time they love coming to school. I have a lot of expectations from them and hope they can do better in life than their parents."

Nor Shila, 24, Bahasa Melayu Teacher, Kg. Numbak

5 Alternative education for children in palm oil plantations

Malaysia along with Indonesia produces 85 per cent of the world's palm oil.⁹⁶ It provides direct employment to 600,000 people and accounted for RM53 billion of Malaysia's Gross National Income (GNI) in 2011 and this was further expected to increase by another RM30 billion.⁹⁷ The industry and its employment practices have long been under international scrutiny and has attracted criticism for alleged exploitative labour practices. Plantation children in the state of Sabah are mainly from Indonesia and are in the country legally or illegally.⁹⁸

Thousands more came from Indonesia in waves since the 1970s to fulfil a demand for cheap labour in the palm oil industry. They are not allowed to bring children or start a family - workers are granted family visa only if they earn RM2,500 a month - but they do.⁹⁹ Without papers to prove their nationality, these children have limited access to healthcare and are denied education. The Indonesian government estimates about "30,000 to 53,000 children" work as palm kernel pickers or help parents to support their family, instead of attending school.¹⁰⁰

Humana Child Aid Society (HCASS), a Sabah-based NGO that runs learning centres for children in plantations, said that most of its students were born in Malaysia. It estimated that there were about 40 children per 1000 hectares of plantation and this did not include children of workers from the Philippines.¹⁰¹

The NGO also put the number of children of migrant labourers and IMM13 card holders to be 10,000 children or higher, living in towns of Sabah.

These children are without access to basic education due to their legal status, poverty and distance from schools. Many of them who are undocumented are prohibited from attending mainstream Malaysian schools. HCASS and the Indonesian government together reach out to 24,000 children.

5.1 Humana Child Aid Society Sabah (HCASS)

HCASS took the initiative to provide basic education for children who live in plantations and other remote areas often far from schools. HCASS began operating on the cocoa plantations back in 1991 with just 70 children and three centres.

96. Sime Darby, 'Palm oil facts and figures', http://www.simedarby.com/upload/Palm_Oil_Facts_and_Figures.pdf, April 2014, (accessed 20 July 2015).

97. The Oil Palm, 'Economic contribution', <http://theoilpalm.org/economic-contribution/>, (accessed 20 July 2015).

98. L.Schlein, 'Plantation schools offer hope for Malaysia's stateless children', *Voice of America*, <http://www.voanews.com/content/stateless-children-go-to-plantation-schools-in-malaysia-134035038/148340.html>, (accessed 10 July 2015).

99. Roundtable on sustainable palm oil, *Impact report 2014*, pp.33.

100. P. Suwandi, *Sustainable education for all in rural areas through Community Learning Centres*, unpublished report by Indonesian CLC coordinator, 2014, pp. 2.

101. Roundtable on sustainable palm oil, *op.cit.*, pp.33.



Source: Preeti Kannan

Tiny tots watching rhymes on a small television set used as a teaching aid at the HCASS learning centre in Sungai Balung Estate, Tawau. The little ones stay safe in the centres as their parents toil at the plantations.

The first centre was built 35 kilometres outside Lahad Datu with the help of funding from NGOs and benefactors from Holland and rest of Europe.¹⁰² The teachers were recruited from among Indonesian and Filipino migrants who were previously working in the cocoa farms and oil palm plantations but were well educated and had college degrees.

There are now 138 HCASS learning centres, licensed by the MoE, throughout Sabah, educating about 13,101 children and there are plans afoot to open new ALCs. Humana said that it could set up new ALCs upon the requests of plantations owners and subject to approval by the MoE. The new centers are expected to open in 2016. The former project director for HCASS found that by providing education for the children, it was a way to keep them off the streets or from becoming child labourers in the plantations.¹⁰³

102. UNICEF-Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, *Education for children in plantations in Sabah : An Assessment of HCAS Education Programme in Sabah 2012*, pp.46

103. M.MAriff, 'Providing education for underprivileged children in Sabah', *Bernama*, 9 December (no year mentioned), http://education.bernama.com/index.php?sid=news_content&id=461030, (accessed 10 July, 2015).

Many of the Indonesian and Filipino children are born in the country or came into the country with their parents to work in the palm oil plantations. Children in the plantations are often left on their own when both parents are out working in the fields. Without education, they are likely to end up as child labourers at an early age, following their parents to work in the field and picking loose palm oil fruits.¹⁰⁴ Quite often, young girls end up as child-brides and may have children of their own when they are as young as 15 or younger. Some of these underprivileged children end up living on the streets and sometimes turn to glue-sniffing.¹⁰⁵

Initially, the centres were started on the request of the parents but the centres are now being set up with the help of plantation owners as part of their corporate social responsibility, and as members of the Roundtable Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) which was formed in 2004, are obliged to provide education to the kids.¹⁰⁶

The objective of the RSPO is to promote growth and use of sustainable palm oil products through credible global standards and engagement of stakeholders. It also recognises the need to give responsible consideration for employees, individuals and communities affected by growers and mills. The education projects are carried out with assistance from plantation companies like Sime Darby, IOI, PPB, Oil Palms, Genting Plantations, JC Chang and Hap Seng.¹⁰⁷

However, many small and medium sized plantation owners are yet to provide education for children in their plantations. Plantations were first urged to contribute to run the centres in 1999, when European countries stopped sending aid because of the overall rate of Malaysia's development.¹⁰⁸ At the start, Humana says it found plenty of resistance as plantation owners did not think the welfare of the children of their employees were their responsibility but this slowly changed and owners started contributing when they realised that workers would be more loyal and were likely to work longer years in the plantations if their children were given education.

The Sawit Kinabalu Group, a Sabah state owned palm oil firm, said it has been running 25 learning centres in 30 of its estates for the past eight years. The company said it got involved in education *"to make sure the children of our workers have some education, can read and calculate. When they become adults, we can employ them and their reading and calculation skills will help. They can become supervisors and hence be in better positions than their parents."*¹⁰⁹

104. Ibid.

105. L.Schlein, op. cit.

106. Interview with member of the Executive Board of HCASS in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, 16 June 2015.

107. UNICEF-Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, op.cit., pp.2 & 3.

108. Ibid, op.cit., pp.46.

109. Interview with Sawit Kinabalu in Pegagau estate, 27 July 2015.

The firm noticed its Indonesian and Filipino workers were staying longer, sometimes even for 15 years, when it started providing education. *“Plantation companies providing education is one of the good ideas. We should not discriminate between Malaysians or Indonesians when it comes to education. We shouldn’t have double standards. All plantations should help children. It’s good business sense so workers stay longer with us.”*¹¹⁰

Based on calculations, many plantations have agreed to pay RM2,000 a month for 50 children, which means RM40 per child, which is very minimal and modest compared to what the Government spends on local children.¹¹¹ HCASS says this amount had been revised in 2013 from RM30 to RM50 but not all plantations were paying the new amount and even the revised RM50 was insufficient as costs of running the centres had gone up significantly.

For instance, although Sawit pays for an assistant teacher and provides accommodation for all teachers, it pays only RM1,000 a month for the upkeep of the centres in Sungai Balung and Pegagau estates. This covers only one- fourth of the approximate RM4,000 a month it takes Humana to run an ALC.¹¹²

The ALCs accept children from the age of five years, who are enrolled in the kindergarten and progress up to primary six. Some children are as old as 18. Of the 13,101 children, there are 6 595 males and 6506 females. Among the total student population, nearly 84.6 per cent are Indonesians, 12.7 per cent from the Philippines and about 1.7 per cent are classified as stateless but they are mostly registered in town schools located in Lahad Datu district, Semporna district and Bum Bum Island in Semporna.

Malaysian children comprise a small proportion, one per cent, of the student population and are mostly in kindergartens. About 437 children completed their primary six in 2014 and went on to study further at the Indonesian CLCs or returned to their home countries.

The centres operate from 7.30am to 11.30am and some operate in the afternoon from 12.00pm and end at 4.00pm. The children follow the Malaysian curriculum and are taught BM, English, Science, Mathematics, Islamic Studies, Physical Education and visual arts. They pay anywhere between RM2 to RM50 a month, depending on the centre. They usually buy their own textbooks.

110. *ibid.*

111. UNICEF-Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, *op.cit.*, pp.47

112. Interview with acting Executive Director of HCASS in Tawau, Sabah, 27 July, 2015.

Table 5.1 Number of students at HCASS learning centres as of July 2015

No of Students	
Indonesian	11,084
Filipino	1663
Undocumented	223
Malaysian	131
Total	13101

Source: HCASS

Table 5.2 Number of teachers at HCASS learning centres as of July 2015

No of Students	
Indonesian	11,084
Filipino	1663
Undocumented	223
Malaysian	131
Total	13101

Source: HCASS

There are about 393 teachers in the 138 centres, of which 97 teachers have been provided by the Indonesian Government and another six provided by the plantations. Until a few years ago the centres had a number of Filipino migrant teachers but the Malaysian Government had decided not to renew their work visa, insisting that local teachers be hired to replace them.¹¹³ But HCASS said very few Malaysian teachers were interested in being employed in plantations because of their distance from cities.

The teachers earn between RM800 and RM1,500 but HCASS said this wasn't sufficient and they were trying to convince plantation owners to pay more.¹¹⁴ The HCASS teachers have undergone the government's training course. Four trainings for two cohorts was conducted and the last was done in 2014. The next training is due in December 2015.

An UNICEF-Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris assessment carried out in six learning centres between September 2011 and February 2012 found various challenges namely: lack of initiatives to train teachers, paucity of teaching resources, absence of a clear salary structure or rewards for the teachers, no clear legislations governing the existence of these centres, inadequate monitoring of teaching and learning, shortage of facilities in the

113. Interview with Treasurer of HCASS in Tawau, Sabah, July 27 2015.

114. Interview with member of the Executive Board of HCASS in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, 16 June 2015.

centres, lack of space and found that parents were unable to assist the children in their studies at home.¹¹⁵

The report made a number of recommendations to the various stakeholders including Humana, plantation owners, government agencies like the MoE to improve the quality of education. Suggestions were also made to prioritise training, standardise pay scales, improve facilities, increase intakes so more students can benefit from education and work together to reduce dropouts, which HCASS said was negligible. Humana said that most of the Humana centres are located far away from towns and this makes close supervision of the activities difficult.

5.2 Indonesian government-run CLCs

A number of Indonesian migrants - legal and illegal - live and work in the palm oil plantations and many have had children here and in some cases, the children have migrated with the parents from Indonesia. While HCASS estimates about 50,000 children to be living in these estates, the Indonesian consulate in Kota Kinabalu said this number could be as high as 60,000 in Sabah and this does not include the number of Indonesians working illegally in Malaysia.¹¹⁶ About 469,000 Indonesians are registered with the consulate but officials believe at least a million Indonesians could be living in Sabah alone.

Given the large population of Indonesian migrants on the plantations and their children, prompted Indonesia to sign an agreement with Malaysia in 2006 to ensure its children were getting quality primary education.¹¹⁷ The Government-to-Government (G2G) agreement paved the way for qualified Indonesian teachers to work in the plantation learning centres run by CLCs or HCASS and to help realise the Indonesian government's objectives namely:

- (i) Provide free access to quality primary education to Indonesian children whose parents are migrant workers
- (ii) Equip students with vocational life skills, make them fluent in their native language
- (iii) Build a sense of nationalism and familiarise them with the Indonesian culture and heritage
- (iv) Make workers understand the importance of education and ultimately, alter the paradigm of their lives as migrants workers
- (v) Repatriate them to their hometowns to continue their study after secondary education so underage employment and exploitation can be reduced
- (vi) Break the cycle of poverty among Indonesians in Sabah, especially in palm oil plantations¹¹⁸

115. UNICEF-Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, op.cit., pp.81

116. Interview with Minister Counselor of Indonesia consulate in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, 16 June 2015.

117. P. Suwandi, op.cit., pp.1

118. ibid., pp.4.



One of the best run Indonesian CLCs is the Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Tawau.

Indonesia has a vibrant alternative education model in place for dropouts and older children within its borders. It has replicated the same strategy in its CLCs in Malaysia, where Package A is the equivalent of primary grade, Package B is for secondary and package C is for high school students. The first Indonesian CLC following this model was opened in Keningau in 2003 and in 2006, after the G2G deal more such centres were opened.

Under the G2G agreement, the first group of 25 and 26 teachers arrived in August and September 2006 and after an induction course with the ministries of education from Malaysia and Indonesia, they were attached to 51 learning centres in the east coast of Sabah.¹¹⁹

The arrival of the teachers led to 29 centres being opened by plantation companies in 2007 and another 58 teachers were sent from Indonesia. The teachers stay for two years under the G2G agreement and do not have to pay for visas. They roughly earn the equivalent of RM4,200 a month (the salary is paid in Indonesian Rupiah), which is significantly higher than the RM800 to RM1,100 paid to Malaysian and locally hired Indonesian teachers.

In an attempt to bring the locally recruited Indonesian teachers - many of whom aren't graduates - in par with standards of teachers hired from Indonesia and to improve overall quality of teaching, the consulate encourages them to study further. Hence, 54 teachers

119. UNICEF-Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, *op.cit.*, pp.8

from Kota Kinabalu and 23 teachers at the CLCs in Tawau enrolled for the first time at the Open University in Indonesia in May 2015 for a four year degree course.¹²⁰ The course costs are borne by the Indonesian government. Once they graduate, they have the option to go back to Indonesia if they want to teach there.

Table 5.3 Total number of Indonesian CLCs in Malaysia as of July 2015

Number of Indonesian CLCs	
Number of CLCs in plantations including sub CLCs	182
Number of CLCs outside plantations	25
SIKK	1
Total	208

Source: Indonesian consulate in Kota Kinabalu

Table 5.4 Total number of children in Indonesian CLCs as of July 2015

Number of Children	
Number of kindergarten children	300
Number of primary school children	7700
Number of secondary school children	3000
Total	11000

Source: Indonesian consulate in Kota Kinabalu

As of July 2015, there were 11,000 children studying in 208 CLCs including 25 CLCs located outside the palm oil plantations across Sabah and in the Sekolah Indonesia Kota Kinabalu (SIKK). Of these, 70 centres provide primary, 36 centres provide secondary education for nearly 3,000 children from Grades 7 to 9 and 137 are classified as 'sub CLCs'.

The Indonesian Consul General said: "*We call any place where students study as a CLC,*" implying that the centres were set up ad-hoc wherever the student population was sizeable and promoted learning, often without the facilities prescribed under formal education. About 780 children are in SIKK and 300 children are in kindergarten as well.

The primary objective of the CLCs is to reach out to Indonesian children living legally and illegally inside and outside palm oil plantations. Children from the age of 7 to 22 years study from kindergarten to Grade 12 and pay anywhere between RM5 to RM15 per month. They learn religious studies, Bahasa Indonesian, mathematics, science, social science and also go for Physical Education classes. English is taught only from secondary grades.

120. Interview with Indonesian consulate in Tawau, Sabah, 29 July 2015.

The CLCs adopt a multi-grading teaching technique, where classes for three to four grades are conducted inside one room and the class is separated only by a line. Most primary grades have morning sessions except for some in the secondary level. Evening classes are held for some higher secondary grades. They share rooms with HCASS. Students also get an allowance from their government for attending the CLCs. Primary grade children get RM125, while secondary students get RM220 annually. About 4000 have completed their secondary schooling from the CLCs so far. On an average, 300 complete every year.

Teachers are equipped to take different subjects for different grades and interestingly, have been given 42 motorcycles by the Consulate to commute from one centre to another. The teachers have to ride anywhere between three and 80 kilometers a day to teach at different CLCs. The role of the government, especially the Indonesian Education Ministry and the Consulate is to function as a facilitator, initiator, and help in capacity building.¹²¹

The Indonesian government spends about 16 billion Indonesian Rupiahs annually to run the CLCs, pay teachers' salaries, provide books, uniforms, teaching materials and so on. The consulate said its government had a clear strategy for educating its nationals.

"We try to provide primary, secondary and also tertiary education. More and more students are finishing secondary. So we have a programme for the best students and try to provide scholarships and send them back to Indonesia. We also facilitate others who want to continue higher education. Our government is also planning to build new boarding schools in Sebatik island to accommodate all the graduates from CLCs in Sabah."¹²²

There are three boarding schools - one Indonesian government-owned and two funded partly by the government - in Sebatik island, Indonesia, that take in students who want to pursue high school. But there are plans to build more to accommodate the growing number of high school aspirants. Presently, the CLCs are able to accommodate less than 300 students in its higher grades. The government has a verbal understanding with Sabah immigration authorities to grant special passes to children so they can leave Sabah legally to pursue higher education and return legally to visit their parents.

Under this, about 22 children were able to go back last year while another 200 students returned to Indonesia this year to enrol in schools.¹²³ As long as the children are under 18, they can be granted special pass. However, the children will have to go through the Indonesian Consulate and cannot directly approach immigration.

121. P. Suwandi, *op.cit.*, pp.5.

122. Interview with Indonesian consulate in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, 16 June 2015.

123. Interview with Indonesian consulate in Tawau, Sabah, 28 July 2015.

In its efforts to emphasise the importance of having legal documents, the consulate said it was relying on children going back to create awareness on the importance of documents. *“We tell them to keep it very safe and encourage them to tell their neighbours and family about the importance of documents.”*¹²⁴

Despite its vision to educate students, the Consulate faces several issues:

- (i) A number of children, between the ages of 12 and 17 years, are thought to be working on these plantations illegally, barely making about RM18 per day.¹²⁵ These child labourers were working on the estates in the day and attending the classes in the evening. Under-age and illegally employed, they earn almost half the prescribed minimum wage of about RM800. Officials are concerned about the number of children, who were not studying at all and could get involved in other illegal activities.
- (ii) An estimated 40 per cent of the workers in the palm oil plantations are thought to be illegal. They come here without documents and often, go back without documents using illegal and expensive means. And when they get married or have children, their illegal status is passed on to the children. Though the Indonesian Consulate is willing to issue birth certificates or documents to such workers, the Malaysian government refuses to recognise them because of lack of proof of entry into Malaysia.¹²⁶ The other reason for children remaining without documents is that workers can apply for family visas only if they earn RM2,500 per month. Since most workers earn far lesser than that, it leads to children remaining without documents or going back to Indonesia illegally.
- (iii) Temporary cards are given to students signed by the Consulate indicating they are studying. However, these are not legally recognised.
- (iv) While the agreement between the Malaysian Prime Minister Nazib Razak and Indonesian President Joko Widodo didn't specify if the CLCs would be located inside or outside the plantations, the Consulate said the MoE had “narrowed down” the interpretation by confining them to palm oil plantations. But, many Indonesian migrant workers are employed in poultry farms, vegetable farms as well as fertiliser companies.
- (v) Obtaining teacher permits are difficult as there are many requirements.

124. *ibid.*

125. Interview with Indonesian consulate, in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, 16 June 2015.

126. The Indonesian consulate in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, said when illegal Indonesian migrants approached them, it issued documents viz passports to them but since the Malaysian government has no record of their entry, they are at risk of being jailed. The other option is to leave the country illegally after paying nearly RM400 per person to smuggle their way out. Otherwise, they end up being stranded in the plantations for years.

5.3 Case studies

(i) Parents

“My older daughter is studying at the high school in Sebatik island. She stays in the hostel and visits us once a month. She wanted to study further so we put her there. I am happy she is studying.”

Samsiah Binti Lakarim works in a shop as a helper in Sungai Balung. Her older daughter is in Grade 10 and younger daughter is in Grade 4 at the Humana ALC in Sungai Balung.

“I would like to send my children to a Government school but they are not allowed to study there. I feel happy that my children are at least getting an education. My children get ready and go to school on their own because I have to go to work early. I am not at home when they come back either. They will study at the CLC after they finish primary school.”

Agnes Bera is a field labourer at Sawit Kinabalu. Her two children study in Grade 1 and Grade 4 at the Humana ALC in Sungai Balung.

(ii) Teachers

“I am very happy because I can share my knowledge and help the children. Some of the Indonesians do not have any documents. I help them make applications to get documents and passports. We need better support for the centre from the company.”

Lina Hasnawati, 25, Indonesian teacher at CLC in Pegagau. She teaches English and all subjects for Grades 7,8,9.

“I was a housewife before I decided to teach. I have worked at the Sungai Balung centre for 17 years. I tried to look for a job elsewhere but the children kept messaging asking when I was coming back and I just couldn't leave them. I really like teaching. My heart belongs to the children. I feel pity for them and want to do my best. We teach with the facilities we have.”

Aida Binthi Madikala, 45, head teacher at Sungai Balung. She teaches Bahasa, English, Math and Science for Grades 1, 5 and 6. She also teaches kindergarten.

"I wanted to teach because I wanted to help the Indonesian children. The level of understanding among the children are quite low. They don't understand anything about English and I have to teach English in Bahasa Indonesian. I wish we could be paid more since it's very expensive to live here.

Nerisah Ile, 28, Indonesian teacher at the Holy Trinity CLC in Tawau.
She teaches English and Science.

6 ALCs - Faith-based NGOs

A number of faith-based NGOs and individuals have shouldered the onus to educate children, who are not as privileged as their peers to attend schools, despite the right to education enshrined in the UDHR. Moved by the plight of the children in their community or neighbourhood, these individuals have started centres either in rented buildings or have opened their homes, converting rooms into classrooms, to teach children.

Some said they were driven to act after seeing children sniffing glue or by their religious motivation or simply out of their belief that all children deserve an education. Visits to three Sabah centres - Hope Learning Centre and the Bethel Learning Centre in Kota Kinabalu and Grace Alternative Guidance Centre in Tawau - revealed a dedicated team of teachers, managing between 75 to 400 students, who are mostly Filipino refugees - legal and undocumented, Indonesians and some Pakistanis.

Some of them were also children of Malaysian citizens but were undocumented in some cases as parents were from different religious backgrounds and had not registered their marriages, which is necessary for issuing birth certificates to children. The NGOs rely on community churches to raise money and like any other CLC, charge a modest fee. The teachers are Malaysians, Filipino refugees and church volunteers.

The Hope Learning Centre in Penampang was started in 2007 by pastor Michael Liman and his wife, Lolita Rachel Giling. Both are Dusun - also known as Kadazans - the predominant ethnic group in Sabah. They are attached to the Bright Hope Learning centre in KL, which is a registered NGO, and teaches about 400 Filipino refugees and undocumented people. The centre was initially started in a church but then moved to a separate building. They were teaching in Bahasa until 2014 but have now switched to English.

The Bethel Kids in Penampang is a small centre run by pastor Peter Jacob Bidion in his own home, teaching about 75 children from kindergarten to Grade 6. Inspired by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that says every child has a right to education, the pastor, also a trained church counsellor, and his family decided to convert the rooms of their home including their porch into classrooms. The centre was started with two children in 2009 and now welcomes children of Filipino refugees, Indonesian and Pakistani refugees.

Another ALC, the Grace Alternative Guidance Centre was started by the church in its own premise in 2011 but shifted to a separate location in 2014 to accommodate its growing number of children and has two separate batches. It has 300 students from Grades 1 to 6 and many of them are undocumented because of various reasons like births not being registered by parents. The Rotary Club of Tawau has helped the centre buy computers. The centre has applied to the MoE to be licensed and is hoping it will get the recognition it deserves.

7 ALCs - Bajau Laut or the Sea Gypsies

The Bajau Laut are a nomadic community of South-East Asia and have been living in the coastal areas of the East Malaysian state of Sabah for hundreds of years.¹²⁷ Also known as “sea gypsies” or ‘Pala’uh’, they are arguably some of the most marginalised people in Malaysia. Despite records of their presence in the region dating back to centuries, many Bajau Laut have no legal nationality documents bonding them to any State/country, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

As per the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, the term “stateless person” means a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law¹²⁸. The Malaysian Federal Constitution, in fact, provides key protections which provide a basis to prevent and reduce statelessness in Malaysia.¹²⁹ Most importantly, the Federal Constitution provides that a child born in Malaysia “*who is not born as citizen of another country*” and cannot acquire citizenship of another country by registration within one year of birth is a citizen of Malaysia by operation of law.



Source: Preeti Kaman

The PKPKM centre in Semporna, Tawau, has few students as drop outs are alarmingly high.

The Constitution also prevents deprivation of citizenship, if it will result in statelessness and provides for citizenship to be acquired by naturalization, thus underscoring the legal as well as moral imperative for the Sabah government to act on this issue without delay. But, a number of gaps in the nationality law remain.

127. PKPKM Sabah, ‘Bajau Laut’, <http://www.pkpkmsabah.org/bajau-laut/>, (accessed 20 July 2015).

128. *Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*, opened for signature 28 September 1954, (entered into force 6 June 1960), <http://www.unhcr.org/3bbb25729.html>, (accessed 31 July 2015).

129. UNHCR, *Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees For the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*, op.cit., pp.2.

The Bajau Laut are a classic example of a protracted and intergenerational statelessness situation.¹³⁰ Originally from the southern Philippines, these seafaring gypsies migrated to Sabah, making up around 13 percent of the total population of the state.¹³¹ They roam freely throughout the so-called 'Coral Triangle' between Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, living on their boats and the Bajau are believed to be the second-largest ethnic group in Sabah, although their exact numbers are unknown.¹³²

As nomadic people living on the waters of the Coral Triangle, they often remain undocumented without any proof of nationality and without access to school and medical care.¹³³ Children, the majority of whom were born in Sabah, are particularly at risk.

Table 7.1 Number of teachers and children at the PKPKM centres in Sabah as of June 2015.

PKPKM Learning Centres	No of Teachers	No of Students
Semporna Town Centre	5	432
Kg. Pantau-Pantau Centre, Semporna	2	128
Kg. Halo Centre, Semporna	4	418
Labuan Haji Centre, Semporna	2	257
Kg. Hayan Centre	1	72
Singgamata Town Centre, Lahad Datu	3	398
Kunak 1	2	152
Kunak 2	1	80
TOTAL	20	1937

Source: PKPKM

They live in house boats or stilt houses built on top of coral reefs and when they do spend the occasional night on solid ground they often report feeling 'landsick'.¹³⁴ Their livelihood is totally dependent on the resources of the sea so spear-fishing is vitally important to them. Bajau free-divers can dive to depths of over 20 metres and stay there for several minutes on a single breath as they go in search of fish.¹³⁵

130. Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network, *A position paper on: The vulnerability of Bajau Laut (Sama Dilaut) children in Sabah, Malaysia, Thailand*, March 2015, http://www.aprrn.info/1/images/PDF/Bajau_Laut_position_paper_FINAL.pdf, (accessed 25 July 2015).

131. D.Chang, 'Bajau Laut: Gypsies of the sea', *CNN*, 1 July 2011, <http://travel.cnn.com/explorations/life/bajau-laut-gypsies-sea-881930>, (accessed 20 July 2015).

132. B. Tilmantaite, 'In Pictures: Nomads of the sea', *Al Jazeera*, 20 March 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2014/03/pictures-nomads-sea-2014312760932684.html>, (accessed 21 July 2015).

133. PKPKM website, *op.cit.*

134. 'About Oceans', *BBC*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/planetexplorer/environments/oceans>, (accessed 20 July 2015.)

135. *ibid.*

Ongoing conflict and insecurity in Southern Philippines, commercial overfishing and a gradual colonisation of the reefs by seaweed growers from other groups have led the Bajau Laut to leave most of their traditional fishing grounds. Many have settled for a life in stilted villages along the shore of Eastern Borneo and it has meant a departure from life on boats, but still with strong ties to the sea, and with collection and seafood and fishery as the main livelihood. In some cases the Bajau Laut communities have nowhere else to be are forced to live in the street in urban areas.

The Sabah-based NGO PKPKM is providing education to the Bajau Laut, Filipino refugees and other undocumented people around Semporna and Lahad Datu. Rosalyn Venning, the founder of PKPKM, said the community's life style had dramatically changed and many children and their families have been forced to beg because they are so poor. *"They used to supply fish to the markets now they are begging for fish."*¹³⁶

PKPKM began teaching in 2009 with a pilot project and in November 2011, a learning centre was established in Semporna with 250 children, teaching classes three times a week. Now they run six learning centres - housed in rented facilities located on the top floor of a shophouse - and have set up mobile teaching units on islands close to the Bajau Laut communities in Kg Halo, Labuan Haji, and Kg Hayan.

A mobile teaching unit is an open shelter near the village with desks and chairs provided by the parents and a PKPKM teacher. They estimate teaching 1900 children across Sabah, running primary six classes for children between the age of four and 15 years old.

Many of the classes are held from Wednesday to Sunday and take place in the open. Mrs Venning said they set up centres wherever the Bajau Laut children are because the children cannot come to them. Children are taught Science, Math, English, Bahasa, art and history of Malaysia. They also learn dancing and singing. The NGO said it also teaches children how to preserve the coral reefs in the Coral Triangle.

PKPKM doesn't only educate the Bajau Laut, they also reach out to ethnic groups like the Suluks, Visayas, Bajau and undocumented migrants. The children who study at the PKPKM ALCs also comprise Malaysians, who later go on to study in government schools.

136. Interview with PKPKM founder, Kuala Lumpur, 6 June 2015.

8 MoE and ALP programmes

8.1 Sekolah Bimbingan Jalinan Kasih (SBJK)

The Malaysian Ministry of Education has established a learning centre called *Sekolah Bimbingan Jalinan Kasih* in the Chow Kit area in Kuala Lumpur that offers education, shelter and aid to abandoned and neglected street children. The location for this centre is the former Federal Territory Education Department office buildings in Lorong Haji Hussein 2, Off Jalan Raja Muda Abdul Aziz, Kuala Lumpur. Its central location in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, nestled between shops and budget hotels makes it ideal as a learning centre for these children as they live within the vicinity and find themselves in somewhat familiar territory.

The purpose of the school is to ensure that these children still have access to education and to protect them from the risk of exposure to various forms of social ills. The school commenced operations in August 2013 and offers preschool, primary and secondary education based on modules tailored to the students' needs. As of 1 November 2014, the student enrolment at SBJK stood at 120. The criterion for acceptance at this facility are as follows:

- i. Children without documentation whose parents are both Malaysian citizens, or either parent a Malaysian citizen;
- ii. Dropouts from the national school system;
- iii. Orphans who live in orphanages/residential homes registered with the Department of Social Welfare, and
- iv. Children with social problems.

The curriculum used in SBJK is based on the national curriculum with some modifications to cater for the socio-cultural needs, potential and environment of the students. Life-skills and moral values, along with sports and basic vocational education are also taught to these street children. The learning methodology is based on the fun learning concept and is flexible:

- Students are taught using the multigrade model;
- The teaching and learning process uses the SBJK Modules;
- Each class is taught by 2 teachers (team teaching);
- Students with excellent academic potential will be absorbed into the mainstream schools with guidance from a mentor teacher. These students are eligible to sit for the Malaysian public examinations such as UPSR (primary), PT3 (secondary) and SPM (secondary).
- All students take up basic vocational skills lessons (food preparation and sewing).
- Students are not required to wear school uniforms;
- All students are provided with 3 free meals daily (breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea/dinner).

The subjects offered at SBJK are BM, English, Religious/ civic studies, music, science, mathematics, history, Information Technology, health education and vocational education. A typical day's activities at the SBJK is as follows:

8.00am	Self-grooming/Breakfast
8.30am	School Assembly
9.00am	Academic Sessions
10.30am	Morning break
11.00am	Academic Sessions
1.00pm	Lunch/Prayers
2.30pm	Religious or Civic Studies /Co-curriculum/ Talent Development
4.00pm	Afternoon Tea/Dinner/Prayers
4.30pm	School Dismissal

8.2 Sekolah Dalam Hospital (SDH) – Schools in Hospitals

The Sekolah Dalam Hospital (SDH) programme is a collaboration between the MoE, the Ministry of Health (MoH) and Yayasan Nurul Yaqeen. SDH provides education for students undergoing long-term or repeated treatment at hospitals. The concept is based on best practices from countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. In 2013, 10 SDH have been established throughout the country.

Table 8.1 Year of establishment of Schools in Hospitals in Malaysia

Year	Hospitals
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Lumpur • Hospital Ampang, Selangor • Hospital Serdang; Selangor
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia, Kubang Kerian, Kelantan • Pusat Perubatan Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Cheras, Selangor • Hospital Sultanah Aminah, Johor Baharu, Johor • Hospital Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah, Temerloh, Pahang • Hospital Pakar Sultanah Fatimah, Muar, Johor • Pusat Perubatan Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital Selayang, Selangor

SDH provide formal education and operates for four hours a day after the patient receives medical treatment. SDH utilises the existing curriculum with an edutainment approach in core subjects of Bahasa Malaysia, English, Mathematics, Science, and other subjects based on the need of the students. Islamic education and spiritual-based education is also

included in the teaching and learning process to help students cope with any emotional or psychological issues they face during their treatment.

Selected experienced teachers are required to undergo special training to enhance their competency in multitasking and multi-grade pedagogy skills. The teachers are also trained with clinical skills. In 2013, the number of students who attended SDH totalled 19,240 (including children undergoing repeated treatment). In 2014, three new SDH will open to meet the needs of patients.¹³⁷

8.3 Sekolah Integriti (SI) - Integrity Schools, and Sekolah Henry Gurney (SHG)

The Young Prisoners Programme at Integrity Schools and the Juvenile Education Programme in Sekolah Henry Gurney are established in collaboration with the Prison Department of Government of Malaysia. Integrity Schools are tailored to prisoners under 21 years old, providing school facilities within the prison compound separated from other prisoners. The facilities include classrooms, computer labs, sports facilities, prayer rooms and a staff room. The schools use the national curriculum and classes are divided into 3M (reading, writing, arithmetic), pre-PMR, PMR, pre-SPM, SPM and STPM.

The provision of education to prisoners and students at Integrity Schools allows students to continue their education and sit for national examinations. This will provide them hope and appropriate educational qualifications in preparation for their return to society.

The Henry Gurney Schools are youth rehabilitation institutions which house youth who have been ordered by the Juvenile Court to be detained for rehabilitation. The academic module of Henry Gurney Schools is based on the national curriculum to enable students to sit for public examinations. The schools also use the Prison Department rehabilitation module, which includes character building, academics, spirituality, skills, sports, and recreational activities¹³⁸.

¹³⁷ Ministry of Education Malaysia, Education Performance and Delivery Unit, *Malaysia Education Blueprint: Annual Report 2014*, <http://www.padu.edu.my/files/ar/Chapter%202.pdf>, pp.39, accessed 15 August 2015.

¹³⁸ Ministry of Education Malaysia, op.cit.

8.4 Project Jiwa Murni, Royal Malaysian Army

Projek Jiwa Murni is an education project for underprivileged and stateless children in Pulau Berhala, Sandakan, Sabah which was initiated by the Royal Malaysian Army when it deployed a team to undertake Operation PASIR at Pulau Berhala in 2009. On 9 February 2010, this project was officially named “3M Class” by the Deputy Minister of Defense. It was later upgraded to become “3M School (Read, Write and Count)”.

Based on the Army’s latest census, the island comprises of 2,534 citizens who are made up of 1,536 adults and 978 children. From this number, less than 10 percent or only 170 children and teenagers, are attending school in the city of Sandakan. This basic education program is not under the job scope of the Army, but is a voluntary initiative undertaken by them out of concern for the right to education of underprivileged children on the island.

This programme focuses on the basic 3M education which is in line with Early Childhood Education and Primary School Education. It also teaches basic knowledge such as living skills and constitutionalism to create educated, responsible and skillful human capital.

This programme was well received by the local community and also caught the attention of the MoE and UNICEF to become a model that can be adapted into a pilot project for the basic education of stateless children in other areas.

9 Summary Analysis and Conclusions

This section will have two parts - the first will look at the strengths, weakness, opportunities and constraints (SWOC) facing the different ALCs and CLCs in KL and Sabah based on field visits and interviews. The second part will briefly sum up key insights, findings and conclusions from the mapping.

The following table will give an overview of the various opportunities and challenges faced by refugee centres, ALCs run by the NSC, CLCs supported by the Philippines Embassy, ALCs run by HCASS, Indonesian CLCs, faith-based ALCs and the PKPKM run centres.

9.1 SWOC analysis

REFUGEE CLCs			
Strengths	Weakness	Opportunities	Constraints
They are better structured & supervised since most have been operational for a few years	They lack certification & access to public examinations	More CLCs could explore the IGCSE and GED certifications to overcome the lack of government accreditation	Students, teachers & parents are always afraid of being detained or arrested
They are managed & run often by refugee communities	There is an over reliance on UNHCR for funds, support & guidance	More CLCs could explore curricula & syllabus from countries of origin, besides Malaysian curriculum	There is always a threat of centres being closed down by authorities
Teachers are very dedicated	There aren't enough teachers	They could focus on using books and languages of countries of origin	Pressure on children to quit school & work
Many teachers have undergone a standard teacher training from DCF	Attrition rates of teachers is high because they get minimal compensation	CLCs can explore partnerships with international schools to improve children's exposure & boost motivation	Low motivation among students to study beyond primary
They are mentored & assisted by UNHCR	There is a lack of continuous training of teachers	They could look at part-time work opportunities for pupils so they earn while studying & this could reduce drop-outs	
They are driven by the need to ensure at least basic primary education for the community	There is limited data on out-of-school children	CLCs should look at corporate and individual donors to raise funds	
More universities are starting to accept refugees	Most CLCs struggle to raise funds		

ALCs run by NSC			
Strengths	Weakness	Opportunities	Constraints
They provide primary six (grade 1-6) education to children of Filipino refugees and undocumented migrants	They are unable to accept more students due to lack of space & insufficient teachers	They could consider starting afternoon sessions to take in more children	Detention of adults, children is putting children at risk, violates child rights & sends a mixed message on Government policies. It is also leading to low attendance
They are raising awareness on hygiene & the benefits of education	They cannot allocate more funds to provide better teaching resources or study materials	They could actively look for collaborations to start secondary & high school classes	Refugee & undocumented children have no option to study beyond Grade 6
They offer qualified refugees opportunity to teach		They could look at better training programmes for teachers	Negative public perception towards educating refugees
Maintenance of the centres are taken care by the NSC		UNICEF & other agencies could look at long term funding programmes	
		Possibilities of tie-ups with embassies & other organisations for teacher training programmes	

CLC supported by the Philippines embassy			
Strengths	Weakness	Opportunities	Constraints
Philippines MoE organises teacher training once a year	Sabah Education Dept permits CLCs to operate only three times a week	The state government should consider licensing CLCs so they are recognised & can operate five days a week	One of the CLCs has been asked to informally close by the education department
Embassy helps with fund raising activities	Children are not allowed to wear uniforms	The embassy should proactively engage with the six CLCs to ensure uniform teaching techniques, better supervision & availability of teaching resources	
	There is no regular or consistent funding		

ALCs run by HCASS			
Strengths	Weakness	Opportunities	Constraints
There is structured learning programmes & objectives	Centres are located far from towns, hence supervision of activities are difficult	There are plans to open more learning centres	Not all plantation firms are adhering to the terms as agreed by the RSPO
To some extent, the ALCs have uniform teaching standards	There is a need for more teachers	They should have constant monitoring of the standard of education	Centres are forced to rely on the generosity of plantation managers rather than a uniform company policy for all ALCs in their estates
Plantations are increasingly prioritising children's education	They are unable to take in more students	They need to reach out to more corporate, private sponsors	Since some plantations are reluctant to set up ALCs inside their estates, children are forced to go to other ALCs in other estates, making them overcrowded
They provide children a safe environment while parents at work	The pay scales are low for locally hired teachers	They should look at improving coordination with the Indonesian CLCs	
	There is a heavy dependence on plantations for funding	They could explore options to work with UMS to train teachers	
	There are concerns the English levels among students are falling		

Indonesian CLCs			
Strengths	Weakness	Opportunities	Constraints
They are better administered & have proper curriculum management	There are difficulties in opening CLCs outside plantations	There is a need to enhance cooperation with Malaysia to prevent trafficking, illegal employment of adults and children	There is no recognition of consulate issued passports, birth certificates to workers and children
Since Indonesia has a national ALP policy, the same is implemented in CLCs in Malaysia	It is not easy to obtain teacher permits	There are many children living outside plantations and need education opportunities	There is a risk of arrests of undocumented children going to Indonesia for higher studies
They are well funded as they are financed by the Indonesian government	There are separate pay scales for locally hired teachers	There is a need to create more places for high school students	CLCs located outside plantations face threat of closure
Teachers hired by the Indonesian government earn significantly more	A number of companies not keen to help set up CLCs or sub CLCs in their premise	Locally hired Indonesian teachers are being encouraged to become graduates and the Indonesian government is funding their part-time study	
Some CLCs provide free education	Teachers are a bit exhausted as they have to commute 3-80 kms to reach CLCs	There is a need to improve English learning in primary classes instead of focusing on the subject only in secondary classes	
They are helping reduce child labour & early marriage, especially among girls They are providing passports, birth certificates to adults, children who are in Malaysia illegally They are raising awareness on the need for documents		They need to provide the same certification for undocumented, non-Indonesian children at CLCs. At present, non-Indonesian children can study at the CLCs but do not get certification	

ALCs - Faith-based NGOs			
Strengths	Weakness	Opportunities	Constraints
There is a lot of support from churches in terms of funding, resources and volunteers	There is no structured curriculum followed in some ALCs	They could further tap into church networks, groups to raise funds, hire teachers	They are anxious about being shut down
They have a wider pool of volunteers willing to teach at the ALCs	Classes are conducted in homes or small shop lots, leaving little room for children to play or enjoy sports		
They enjoy the trust & credibility of the community mostly and there is a positive & healthy attitude towards educating non-Malaysians	They have funding challenges		

ALCs - Bajau Laut			
Strengths	Weakness	Opportunities	Constraints
There is support from Philippines embassy in terms of fund raising and training teachers	There is a very high rate of children drop outs	There are new schools in the offing	Children end up sniffing glue. They are sometimes forced into it by adults as it is believed that glue sniffing suppresses hunger
Children are taught how to protect coral reefs	Teachers feel burdened by regular travel between island schools		

9.2 Conclusions

This is the first time a mapping of the different ALCs and CLCs in Malaysia has been done to understand the varied alternative education programmes and the myriad actors providing learning opportunities for refugee, undocumented, migrant and stateless children in Malaysia.

It is an intriguing and complex world of distinctive approaches and unique initiatives taken by a range of stakeholders including governments, faith-based agencies, NGOs and individuals for Malaysia's diverse and multi-ethnic population. The wide spectrum of alternative learning models that exist does present one of the biggest challenges for the country in terms of how to address the needs of education for the large number of refugees, migrants, undocumented and stateless populations that are in the country.

From compiling data on out-of-school non-Malaysian children, putting together a database on the different education providers and to addressing their needs, a lot remains to be done. This is particularly important if Malaysia has to fulfil the obligations as a signatory to the CRC.

The first crucial step is to ensure education for each and every child in Malaysia. In its Concluding Observations, the Committee on the Rights of the Child stated that Malaysia should *“take urgent measures to ensure that asylum-seeking and refugee children have access to free and formal primary, secondary and other forms of education, and that in particular refugee and asylum-seeking children who are engaged in informal education have access to official examinations.”*¹³⁹

The UN refugee agency has also emphasised the need for Malaysia to enact a legal framework for the protection of people of concern, and to put in place an administrative framework to ensure the implementation of refugee law, while also advocating for refugees to have the right to work and access to services.¹⁴⁰ There have been several calls in the past by UNHCR and several organisations urging the Government to accede to the UN Refugee Convention and its Protocols.

Whilst the long term goal of UNHCR and other advocates is to ensure the ratification of the relevant Conventions, lobby for the removal of reservations to the CRC, press for the implementation of nationality laws as underlined in the Federal Constitution and allow access into national schools for non-Malaysians, there are a number of short-term and immediate needs that needs to be addressed by the Government.

To begin with, the Government should give utmost priority and address the issue of recognition of alternative learning centres across the country and legally permit their operation and functioning. Such a step could have a monumental impact on ALCs and CLCs and revolutionise the way they are run. It will improve their funding opportunities as many Malaysian corporations and individual donors will be encouraged to shed their inhibitions about funding the so-called “illegal people” and also help tackle negative perceptions associated with them.

Legalising their operations is bound to have a ripple effect on the quality of overall education services and delivery, enhance the levels of teaching. More funding would mean that learning centres can hire better teachers and improve the kind of resources available in centres. It will also help address the critical problem of certification and help tackle dropouts as many pupils feel disillusioned over their inability to obtain certification in order to pursue higher studies and seek employment.

139. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), op.cit.

140. ‘UNHCR Global Appeal 2013 update: Malaysia’, <http://www.unhcr.org/50a9f82da.pdf>, pp. 222. (accessed 17 August 2015).

There is not just a need for a Government framework or guidelines for alternative learning. The top priority should also be on developing a well-defined and comprehensive policy to deal with the multiple alternative learning centres across the country.

The purpose of the mapping and the profile section, in particular, is to give detailed information on the approaches adopted by the different learning centres and to analyse their strengths and weaknesses. The study, finally, hopes to bring together the Government and all relevant stakeholders to discuss the ways forward and work towards the development of an Alternative Education Policy in Malaysia.

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ANNEXES

Terms of Reference

UNICEF Malaysia is looking for a qualified consultant to review and complete a Mapping of Alternative Learning Approaches, Programmes and Stakeholders in Malaysia. Initial ground work for the Mapping has started, but more data and information is needed to complete this study.

Background

“Alternative education” is the over-arching term that refers to education programmes that are not considered formal education¹. Alternative learning provides methods of delivery to ‘fill the gap’ of education provision for children who are not enrolled in the formal national system², such as community-based schools. Often, but not exclusively, they are offered outside the auspices of the formal government education system. Alternative education, in its strictest interpretation, includes programmes that are not managed by the government but rather implemented by individuals, agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). It also includes non-formal education programmes where the certification and validation of learning is not automatically assured; ad hoc education or awareness programmes that respond to a specific perceived need, and short-term education programmes that are considered bridging programmes to the formal system.

At the global level, there is no commonly accepted terminology to encompass the various programmes that try to meet the learning needs of children outside of the formal schooling system. To this end, the term “alternative learning” or “flexible learning” strategies is used to cover the various initiatives and the different terminologies they are called including equivalency programmes, certified non-formal education (NFE) programmes, accelerated learning programmes, second chance education, community-based education/ school/ learning, flexible schooling programmes, complementary programmes, alternative learning programmes, etc.

In Malaysia, education opportunities for street children, refugees, stateless children, undocumented children, immigrants and stateless and children living in plantations are available in patches provided by individuals, community, foundations, NGOs, and faith-based groups. There has never been a Government policy or guidelines for the provision of education for non-Malaysian citizens. However, the government has welcomed initiatives by the private sector, non-governmental organisations and individuals in providing these children with an education.

1. P. Baxter and L. Bethke, op.cit., pp.27.

2. ibid

The actual number of children who do not have access to government school facilities is not known. However, based on a study that was conducted by the Ministry of Education (2009) to respond to the needs of Article 28 (1)(a) Convention on the Rights of the Child discovered that there were about 43,973 undocumented children from the age of 7 to 17 years old who are not in school. Out of this figure, 5,271 are Malaysians and 38,702 are non-citizens³.

This figure is likely to be a gross underestimate and is believed to be just the tip of the iceberg. Local sources and estimates provided by UNHCR, the Federal Special Task Force and Humana Child Aid Society, indicate a total of about 100,000 children estimated to be out of school or receiving some form of alternative education in learning centres in various parts of the country.

International Commitments and Obligations

Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁴ states that 'everyone has the right to education'. Education is not only a right but a passport to human development. It opens doors and expands opportunities and freedoms. It contributes to fostering peace, democracy and economic growth as well as improving health and reducing poverty.

Malaysia is a State Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)⁵. The CRC provides the international framework for the protection of rights of all children and ensuring that their needs are met. In Malaysia's report submitted to the Universal Periodic Review in 2009, it was clearly stated that:

In full compliance with its treaty obligation under the CRC, all children in Malaysia are not denied access to education. The Government also constantly engages with various international organisations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and civil societies, to ensure that children of illegal immigrants attend informal classes to be conducted by NGOs, such as, through community-based schooling⁶

3. UNICEF Malaysia, *Education is a human right: UNICEF Education Programs in Malaysia* (2010), http://www.unicef.org/malaysia/Factsheet_-_Education_-_UNICEF_in_Malaysia.pdf, (accessed 15 August 2015).

4. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted 10 December 1948 UNGA Res 217 A(III) (UDHR) art 26., <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>, (accessed 15 August 2015).

5. UNICEF Malaysia, 'CRC in Malaysia', http://www.unicef.org/malaysia/children_crc-in-malaysia.html, (accessed 15 August 2015).

6. Child Rights International Network, 'Malaysia: Children's Rights References in the Universal Periodic Review', <https://www.crin.org/en/library/publications/malaysia-childrens-rights-references-universal-periodic-review>, (accessed 15 August 2015).

However, it was also noted from the periodic review that that an estimated 200,000 children of primary-school age in Malaysia who are not attending school. Cost of schooling is one of the obstacles for children from low-income families. Education is also not sufficient for children with disabilities; children (of Malaysians) without birth certificates are denied the opportunity to attend schools; and asylum seeking children, refugee children, stateless children as well as children of migrant workers are not given free primary education in government-run schools.

Objectives of the Consultancy

UNICEF Malaysia is aware that there are many actors including Government agencies, UNHCR, NGOs, corporates, foundations, faith-based agencies, communities and individuals providing alternative learning opportunities for children who do not have access to formal government schools. However to date there is no comprehensive understanding of all the stakeholders and their roles and responsibilities.

It is also unclear to what extent these stakeholders are able to provide quality education; how conducive is the learning environment; what curriculum is being used; how are teachers trained; how are the learning centers financed; accreditation and certification; student enrolment etc.

A mapping of approaches, programmes and stakeholders is necessary and a good starting point to understand better the provision of alternative education for children who are not accessing the formal government system in the country. The mapping will also help to identify how best UNICEF can work with and support government, NGOs and others - including those working directly with children - to bridge current gaps in policies, participation and service delivery.

The mapping is also important to enable UNICEF to advocate for and influence Government and MOE in particular to develop an “Alternative Education Policy” for Malaysia and identify areas and actions of strategic importance where UNICEF can contribute and support government and non-governmental agencies in order to remove barriers to the fulfilment of rights to education for all children.

The overarching country programme strategy focuses on assisting all vulnerable children, aimed at reducing disparity and promoting equity. In line with this, UNICEF is seeking to engage a Consultant to conduct a mapping study.

Scope of Work

1. Review existing policies and guidelines vis-à-vis Education for All (EFA), with specific reference to children not accessing the national education system i.e. immigrant, refugee, asylum-seekers, undocumented, stateless, indigenous, children living in plantations;
2. Review, edit and revise draft document of Mapping of Alternative Learning Approaches, Programmes and Stakeholders in Malaysia. May require collection and verification of additional data from UNICEF partners including the Ministry of Education, UNHCR, Federal Special Task Force (Sabah/Labuan), Humana Child Aid Society, individuals, faith-based organisations, foundations, NGOs and others in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak;
3. Consult and gather information as necessary from all relevant national and/or subnational government and non-government stakeholders;
4. Conduct an analysis of key barriers and obstacles to delivery of education services for immigrant, refugee, asylum-seekers, undocumented, stateless, indigenous, children living in plantations and others;
5. Examine the strengths (including best practices) and weaknesses of existing approaches, programmes and stakeholders relating to alternative education.
6. On the basis of the analysis undertaken, provide recommendations to UNICEF and the Government of Malaysia on the ways forward to enable ALL children in Malaysia to access education.

Methodology

Data collection methods will include, but not limited to desk review of existing policies and programme documents, secondary analysis of existing data on children in alternative learning centers; interviews/focus group discussions with key stakeholders and informants including the Ministry of Education, National Security Council, FSTF (S/L), UNHCR, NGOs, faith-based organizations, embassies/consulates, foundations, school management, teachers, parents and students/children themselves; site-visits.

Key Deliverables

No.	Item	Weakness	Action	Delivery Date
1	Inception Report	The inception report should consist of the consultant's work plan and methodology	Consultant	15 May 2015
2	Monthly Report	Reports of consultations/meetings with government, NGOs and other stakeholders	Consultant	Monthly
2	First Draft of Consolidated Report	The first draft report should be a complete compiling and analyzing all the gathered information/data and outcomes of consultations/ meetings with partners and key stakeholders	Consultant	10 July 2015
3	Revisions	Based on comments/feedback on first draft report to update and revise, including collecting and analyzing additional data/information as necessary	Consultant	31 July 2015
3	Final Report	Final Report listing all the stakeholders and areas of work, including a SWOT analysis, key findings from the analysis of the quantitative data and qualitative assessment of the gaps in service provision, key obstacles, recommendations and other issues as stated in the Scope of Work	Consultant	31 August 2015

Work Schedule

All work assignments shall start from 1 May 2015 and be concluded on 31 August 2015 (4 months) – with possibility of extension if necessary.

Working Arrangements

- All work will be done at the consultant's own premise, and at the UNICEF Malaysia office - as necessary.

Qualifications and Specialized Knowledge/Experience Required

The consultant should possess/demonstrate the following:

Education

- Advanced degree in Education/Social Sciences or related fields;

Work Experience

- At least 5 years of work experience in development and related fields preferably including work experience with international organisations.
- Research in education/social science or related fields would be an advantage.
- Work experience in human rights, refugees would be an advantage.

Skills and Competences

- Ability to facilitate consultation with a spectrum of stakeholders including government officers, civil society, community members and parents.
- Strong ability to conduct research and data analysis.
- Good analytical, negotiating and communication skills.
- Familiarity with educational, political, social and cultural background of Malaysia.
- High level of technical writing skills. Experience in writing reports would be an advantage.
- Excellent oral and written skills in English.
- General administrative and computer skills.

ALCs and CLCs - Profiles

This section profiles the various models of ALCs and CLCs that exist in KL and Sabah for children of refugees, plantation workers, Filipino refugees, undocumented migrants and sea gypsies. More than 30 parameters were used to compile standard information from founders, managers and teachers, who were interviewed personally. Only in the case of one CLC, which is located in Johor Baru, the questions were sent via email.

The profiles also include observations made wherever possible after field visits. The purpose of this section is to have detailed information on the centres, their history, student numbers, how the CLCs are funded, socio-economic backgrounds of the students and teachers, number of teachers and volunteers, how are they trained, the curriculum used, certification - if any, what do children do after they finish or drop out and so on.

1. REFUGEE CLCs

(i) Chin Student Organisation (CSO) in Jalan Imbi, KL

1. Profile - The students are mostly Chins, an ethnic group from Myanmar persecuted for ethnic and religious reasons. Many Chins have fled to refugee camps in Malaysia, Thailand and India.¹ Chin refugees living in Kuala Lumpur live in crowded apartments with up to 10 people sleeping in one room without beds, and only one bathroom facility for an apartment with 20 occupants.
2. Student enrolment - About 340 students study currently at the centre. The number of pupils studying in these centres annually vary between 300 to 400 students with about fifty leaving to resettle every year.
3. Grades and ages - Children between 4 and 17 years study in preschool to Grade VI and Secondary 2, the equivalent of Grade VIII is offered only in its Cheras branch.
4. Subjects taught - English, Math, Science and Chin language. Students also learn computers, painting and have Bible studies. They are also taught about their Chin heritage and learn through song and dance.
5. Curriculum used - Malaysian.

1. World Relief, 'Cultural profiles - Chin Burmese', <http://worldrelief.org/page.aspx?pid=1730>, accessed 15 August 2015.



Children between 14 - 16 years from Grade 3 with their teacher Silas in the Cheras school.

6. Textbooks: Children use the Longman books provided by UNHCR eight years ago. They are the same books used in the Malaysian public schools. The Cheras centre is now testing the books affiliated to the English as a Second Language (ESL) programmes. Volunteers also bring their own resources.
8. Term dates: January to December
9. Timings - 10am to 3pm
10. Typical day
 - 10am - 12noon: Morning classes (KG children leave at noon)*
 - 12pm - 1pm: Lunch*
 - 1pm - 3pm: Afternoon session*
 - i. *Gender ratio - 60 per cent are boys, while 40 per cent are girls*
 - ii. *Number of classrooms - 4 to 7 in each centre.*
 - iii. *Social and economic background of the students - Many of the Chin refugees eke out a living by working in the construction industry. Several parents are also working in farms in Cameron Highlands.*
 - iv. *Fees charged - RM30 per month*
 - v. *Meals provided if any - They provide lunch in three centres everyday and twice a week in other centres. They also try to give milk and fruit once a week.*
 - vi. *Number of teachers - 24 Chin teachers and 16 volunteers.*

- vii. *Salaries for teachers - RM130 - RM500. 12 teachers get RM300 from UNHCR.*
- viii. *Education level of the teachers - Mostly bachelors degree in math, science and theology from Myanmar, while two teachers have their Masters from India.*
- ix. *Teacher training - Teachers are trained by UNHCR partners, DCF*
- x. *Socio-economic background of the teachers - Most teachers are Chin refugees, waiting to be resettled and depend on the CSO and UNHCR's compensation to make ends meet.*
- xi. *Certification/ accreditation - Students sit for exams twice a year, in June and November to determine their abilities. The CLC gives recommendation letters to help students pursue their higher studies in Malaysia or in the resettled country. Outstanding children get certificates of achievement.*
- xii. *Centre facilities and infrastructure - Classes are usually held in rented flats or shop houses, where rooms are temporarily converted into classrooms and are usually overcrowded and lack basic teaching facilities.*
- xiii. *Funding - CSO is currently funded 55 per cent from donations, 25 per cent from school fees, and 20 per cent from sales of the local Chin community newspaper. Donations are given by individuals, local and international organisations. Berjaya Times Square has been paying the rent for the five centres for the past one year. The CLC also came up with an innovative idea to collect and publish a Chin recipe book in 2014. It was a collection of recipes contributed by the parents and the community.*
- xiv. *Dropouts if any - One or two a year when parents move to another place in Malaysia. Retaining senior aged students is difficult as they are under pressure to work.*
- xv. *How many have passed out so far - An estimated 2000 students.*
- xvi. *What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - Many go on to study at DCF or seek UNHCR's help in finding places in other centres. Some end up working.*
- xvii. *Parent participation: CSO doesn't have a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) but trains some of the students' mothers in sewing and making handicrafts to help them earn money when they get resettled.*
- xviii. *Strengths: (i) The CSO is a registered NGO with the Government and Care Malaysia. (ii) Cheras branch students have been part of an Immersion Programme with the Australian International School Malaysia (ASIM) for the past six years. The programme runs on alternate weeks where 40 students do science and geographic studies with ASIM pupils. This opportunity gives the*

students a chance to experience a real school environment and helps them practice their English, which will benefit when they are resettled. The AISM students, in turn, learn more about the Chin people and their culture. At present AISM also offers activities two afternoons a week in which students from CSO and AISM focus on literacy and sport. (iii) A notable achievement of the CSO is that some of its former students are studying in prestigious colleges in the US and elsewhere, pursuing higher education because of the foundation laid by the CLC.

- xix. Weaknesses: (i) Students are often tired and distracted during school hours as a result of their congested home life where 20 people can share a single apartment without beds and with just one washroom. (ii) The centres lack sufficient text books and computers. The textbooks they currently use are very old and tattered as they are over eight years old. (iii) Due to poor salaries, Chin teachers are always under constant pressure to leave and find paid work.*
- xx. Opportunities: An NGO has agreed to send volunteers to help the centre's students improve their English and Science. Soon the volunteers will hold two hours of classes each Saturday to help the students from the Jalan Imbi centre. There are many gifted students and these extra classes will help them.*
- xxi. Constraints: A 15 year old male student was arrested and detained for three months in 2013. The centre managed to track him down but it took a long time to release him. As a result, the student was left traumatised. Students are given CSO ID cards with their age, name, the centre they are studying in and contact of the centre.*
- xxii. Observations: The CSO centres are fairly well organised and offer better facilities than the average CLC to their students because they are able to organise fund raising dinners and charity bazaars that also draw attention to the plight of the Chins in Malaysia. CSO enjoys a good network of expatriate volunteers, who have helped set up the immersion programme with the prestigious AISM. Immersion programmes like these are integral to ensure children get a wider exposure and provide a platform to interact with children from other backgrounds, while also giving AISM students the opportunity to understand the challenges refugee children face. More schools should take such initiatives and open their doors to refugee children. Innovative ideas like the Chin recipe book can be replicated by other CLCs and can have a positive impact on the community. Such out-of-the-box fund raising initiatives are a great way forward because they showcase different aspects of the community and also helps the local population combat stereotypes, if any, about refugees.*
- xxiii. Contact – Rhonda Kortum, Volunteer Administrator*

(ii) Zomi Education Centres in Jalan Talalla and Maharajalela in KL

1. Brief background - Run by the Zomi Association of Malaysia (ZAM), the first Zomi Education Centre (ZEC) was set up in 2007 by ZAM with 45 students to provide basic education to the Zomi children. The centres are located in KL in Cheras, Kota Damansara, Klang, Maharajalela, Sungai Long, Talalla, Sunway, Dengkil, Kepong and Rawang and are estimated to reach out to 60 per cent of Zomi children. However, this means over 40 per cent of school going age are not in school.
2. Profile - Zomi refugees are from Myanmar's Chin State, who have fled because of fear of persecution.
3. Student enrolment - Approximately 450 students study in the ten centres.
4. Grades, ages - Students are between 5 and 16 years of age and study from Kindergarten to Grade 5.
5. Subjects taught - English, math, science and Zomi language. Burmese language is also taught to the kindergarten and elementary students. Zomi refugees are largely Christians and have Bible readings and religious teachings.



Source: ZEC

Zomi children seen at a graduation ceremony.

7. Textbooks - Longman books provided by UNHCR and are the same used in the Malaysian public schools. Some churches also provide them with books.
8. Term dates - January to November
9. Timings - 9am to 3pm.
10. Typical day -
 - 9am - 9.45am: Bible and teachings from Christianity
 - 10am - 12noon: Morning classes
 - 12pm - 1pm: Lunch
 - 1pm - 3pm: Afternoon session
11. Gender ratio - 60 per cent are boys, 40 per cent are girls.
12. Number of classrooms - There are about three to seven class rooms in each centre, some of which are located inside church premises. Four of these centres also provide boarding to the students and the boys and girls sleep in separate but overcrowded rooms above the centre. Some of the teachers also live with them.
13. Social and economic backgrounds of the students - The parents are mostly employed in restaurants. Often, many cannot afford to pay school fees, in which case the centre lets them study for free.
14. Fees charged - RM40 per month for day schooling while the centre charges between RM85 and RM150 per month, depending on the centre, for students who stay in its hostels.
15. Meals provided if any - Lunch is provided in some of the centres, while two centres receive food from generous churches near the centre. Cooking is also done in these hostels by teachers and the older students help them.
16. Number of teachers - 35 Zomi teachers and 40 local volunteers.
17. Salaries for teachers - 20 teachers paid by UNHCR between RM500 and RM600, while the remaining get some pocket money from the school.
18. Education level of the teachers - Most have Bachelors degree in theology from Myanmar.
19. Teacher training - Teachers have received training from UNHCR partner, the Dignity for Children Foundation.

20. Socio-economic background of the teachers - Most teachers are also Zomi refugees, waiting to be resettled. Some of their children study in the centre.
21. Certification/ accreditation - None
22. Centre facilities and infrastructure - None
23. Funding - Money raised from the church, individual donors and centre fees is used to pay electricity bills, teachers' pocket money and other operational costs. Local volunteers who devote their time to teach also donate materials and sometimes money.
24. Dropouts if any - No fixed numbers but one or two a year when parents move to another place in Malaysia.
25. What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - Some of them study at the Ruth Education Centre in Cheras, which offers secondary education. However, many 16 and 17 year olds are also forced to work to help their families.
26. How many have passed out so far - Around 600
27. Parent participation - Each centre has a PTA, which discusses school fee and discipline issues. They help manage the centre's operations, talk to parents if their children drop out or if the students are facing any issues.
28. Strengths: (i) For the past two years, 20 the students, aged between 10-16 years, from the Talalla centre have been invited by the Garden International School to use their Sports and the Science lab for two hours, once a month. The school provides transportation. (ii) The centre offers shelter to some of the children and free food despite the serious crunch in resources. Education is also provided for free to some of the children or their siblings if the family cannot afford to pay. (iii) Their driving force is the desire to see their community children get a basic education. This has also seen more Zomi refugee parents keen to enrol their children.
29. Weaknesses: Teachers are poorly paid and classrooms are very small and dingy. There is no space or provision for outdoor play and funds are always short. There's little space for anything and often classrooms are used to sleep in the nights for those who stay in the school premises. The teachers and their families also share accommodation with the students.
30. Opportunities: The children took part in a drama competition organised by UNHCR

last year and hope it will be organised again this year. Students also take part in the annual Faisal Cup, a football tournament for boys and a netball contest for girls, organised by the Dignity for Children Foundation. “When our children go to these events, we see they are able to communicate well in English and confidently with children from other schools. This is a major success for us,” said Jacob Thang, head teacher, adding, “If we didn’t run this centre, many would grow up without learning to read or write.”

31. Constraints: Students and teachers live in constant fear of being arrested by authorities. The centre said police caught one of its students last year and she was kept in custody for five days.
32. Observations: The organisation is reliant on its modest fees and benefactors. On visiting the Talalla and the Maharajalela centres, it was noted that there was little space to do anything as classrooms are tiny and overcrowded. While students from the Talalla centre have the opportunity to visit GIS once a month, majority of the students lack the exposure to sports and other extracurricular activities, which will impact the holistic development. The teachers live with their children, who also study in the centre, in the small space above the classrooms. Teachers, while dedicated and committed, are weighed down by their own anxieties of low pay, managing their families, educating their children and the time they would spend in Malaysia while waiting to resettle.
33. Contact – **Hau Suan Khai**, Coordinator

(iii) **Soroptimist International Club of Johor Bahru (SIJB), Johor Baru**

1. Brief background - SIJB runs three centres in Johor Bahru. It began working with Rohingya refugees in 2007 when floods in the area brought their plight to the fore. Under its first initiative titled Projects ABC to educate Rohingya children, the organisation set up the Kota Tinggi Rohingya’s Learning Centre. Classes were initially held on a concrete floor in a single room but with support from private donors and other sponsors, they rented a shop lot to teach basic reading, writing skills and simple arithmetic. To reach out to more children, the Kulai Rohingya Learning Centre was opened in 2010 as Project ABC II. In 2012, UNHCR appointed SIJB as an implementing partner and in 2014, it opened the third centre, the Rohingya Community school in Tampoi.
2. Profile - SIJB helps educate Rohingyas and Sri Lankan refugees. The Rohingya Muslims are a minority community from Myanmar and are considered one of the most excluded, persecuted and vulnerable communities in the world by the UN.² The

2. S. Herman, ‘Study: Rohingya Among World’s Most Persecuted’, Voice of America, 17 October 2014, <http://www.voanews.com/content/stateless-rohingya-deemed-among-worlds-most-persecuted/2486813.html>, (accessed 15 August 2015).

ethnic conflict between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils has resulted in a large number of Sri Lankans, mostly Tamils fleeing the island country because of fear of persecution.

3. Student enrolment - Kota Tinggi – 140 children
Kulai – 85 children
Tampoi – 35 children
4. Grades, ages - Children from 5 years old to 16 years old study in Pre school to Form 2 (Grade 8)
Kota Tinggi – Pre School to Form 2
Kulai – Pre School to P 4
Tampoi – Pre School to Form 1
5. Subjects taught - English, Bahasa Melayu, mathematics, science, moral studies, arts and crafts and a sports activity once a week
6. Curriculum used - Malaysian curriculum
7. Textbooks - Longman textbooks provided by UNHCR are given to the students.
8. Term dates - January to November
9. Timings - 8am to 12pm
10. Typical day - Each class is about 1.5 hours long. For example, class starts at 0830 am with a morning break from 10am to 10.30am.
11. Gender ratio - There are an equal number of boys and girls
12. Number of classrooms - Each centre has five class rooms.
13. Social and economic background of the students - Most parents are engaged in manual work, taking on jobs as grass cutters. Some also wash cars or work in restaurants for a living.
14. Fees charged - RM20 per month
15. Meals provided if any - None
16. Number of teachers - 11 regular teachers and 2 to 3 volunteers come every six weeks from AIESEC, an international youth organisation.

17. Salaries for teachers - RM600 to RM1200 per month
18. Education level of the teachers - Most of the teachers do not hold degrees. However, the head teachers are qualified with teaching degrees. And the rest have experience working in kindergarten schools. The teachers are mostly volunteers and are paid a small stipend. The unpaid volunteers are graduates from AIESEC doing their internships overseas.
19. Teacher training - All SIJB teachers have attended the Dignity for Children Foundation's training.
20. Socio-economic background of the teachers - Most teachers are Malaysians while two teachers are refugees.
21. Certification/ accreditation - UNHCR gives certificates to students upon completion.
22. Centre facilities and infrastructure - Yes, they do get computer lessons but at the moment it has been stopped as SIJB needs manpower and funding. Library books have been given by UNHCR and donors.
23. Funding - About 70 per cent of funding comes from UNHCR while SIBJ raises the rest through charity events. SIJB pays the rent for both schools.
24. Dropouts if any - About 30 per cent drop out every year either because they get married or are compelled to work. Some also leave because they do not feel motivated to study further.
25. What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - Some continue higher studies and pursue diploma courses at the Help University in KL. Some go on to work in restaurants or get married.
26. How many passed out so far - Ten students
27. Parent participation - There are PTA meetings held three times a year to discuss student progress and raise issues.
28. Strengths: (i) SIJB goes beyond education to look after the medical needs of students and adults through checks and free medications, (ii) It provides free classes and seminars to Rohingya adults in literacy, computing, sewing and culinary classes and talks to them about family planning, (iii) It also conducts free medical camps for adults.

29. Weaknesses/ challenges: (i) The centres are struggling to cope with the increasing number of Rohingya children, (ii) Due to lack of funds, they are unable to maintain existing centres or establish new ones. They are also unable to afford to relocate to larger premises, recruit more teaching staff, and transport children to and from the schools. (iii) Although 30 per cent of the parents are very keen their children have an education, at least 50 per cent do not value education and insist the children work. Another 20 per cent of the children come from broken homes, making it hard for them to focus on classes. (iv) Children also drop out as they grow older.
30. Opportunities: The centre is planning to start a Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) programme for single mothers, adults and children to equip them with skills. They plan to start classes after Ramadan in July 2015. In Kota Tinggi, SIBJ is encouraging women who know baking to set up their own businesses.
31. Constraints: A small percentage of students are involved in glue sniffing.
32. Observations: The centre goes beyond education to address the medical and vocational needs of the community. Its adult classes for single mothers and adults will help them become independent financially. To continue its work, it will have to aggressively look for funding beyond the conventional and regular donors.
33. Contact – **Soraya Alkaff- Gilmour, Project Coordinator**

(iv) Sahabat Support Centre (SSC) in Ampang Point, KL

1. Brief background - The Sahabat Support Centre (SSC) was established by the Malaysian Social Research Institute (MSRI) in January 2011 to provide a range of support services to urban refugees from minority refugee communities in Malaysia. It started with five children, mostly Arabs and hence, initially focused only on Arabic classes. The exams were conducted at an Arabic school. When the number of children increased to 20, they started teaching in English. The number of children and teenagers needing education rose when the number of families registering with SSC increased. Hence in August 2013, MSRI opened the SSC2 School and rented out a building with three floors for more than 100 children. SSC offers family healthcare programmes that include medical check-ups, counselling to children and parents facing any trauma, offers medical tests for women, emergency support like counselling and basic household items for families who have newly arrived in Malaysia. SSC1 provides pre kindergarten, kindergarten and day care and also offers vocational training for parents and teaches them to make handicrafts. SSC2, on the other hand, runs a school from Grade 1 to 12.

2. Profile: SSC provides support to refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Sudan, Pakistan, Lebanon, Liberia, Somalia and other communities that have fled wars and conflicts and are awaiting resettlement in Malaysia. Children from 11 countries are enrolled at SSC.
3. Student enrolment - About 150 students study currently at the centre.
4. Grades, ages: The students are from 4 years to 19 years old and are in Grades 1 to 12. Often two grades are combined because of lack of funding and space. It also runs a day care, pre- KG and KG classes.
5. Subjects taught - English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Art, Arabic and Persian on Fridays as an after school activity. Living skills is being incorporated into the curriculum.
6. Curriculum used - North American curriculum that is modified to fit the children's needs and abilities. The centre has weekly meetings with staff to make lesson plans and decide on the curricula for the month.
7. Textbooks - International schools following the North American curricula have donated books.
8. Term dates - August to June
9. Timings - 9.30 - 4pm. The centre is planning to change its timings from 9am to 3pm for its Grades 1 to 9 and have only two hours of school from 3pm to 5pm for Grades 9 to 12. This is to (i) retain its older students who drop out due to the pressure on them to work. This way, they can work in the mornings and study in the afternoons and (ii) to combat the space constraints.
10. Typical day -
 - 9.30 - 10.45 - 1st session
 - 10.45 - 11.00 - Break
 - 11.00 - 12.00 - 2nd session
 - 12.00 - 12.30 - Lunch
 - 12.30 - 1.45 - 3rd session
 - 1.45 - 2.00 - Break
 - 2.00 - 3.15 - Last session
 - 3.15 - 3.45 - Living skills/ homework
 - 3.45 - 4.00 - Clean up

On Fridays, the afternoon sessions are for games, movies and fun.

11. Gender ratio - 60 per cent are boys, while 40 per cent are girls.
12. Number of classrooms - Two for preschool and six for Grades 1 to 12.
13. Social and economic background of the students - The parents have little financial means and mostly range from being low income to facing extreme poverty. Some work odd jobs or temporary jobs in restaurants, schools and do not have a stable or regular income. Many rely on their savings or money sent by families abroad. Teachers are always asked to look out for children sleeping too much in class since it is a sign of families not having food to eat. In this case, the centre provides free food. Many children also suffer from trauma because they have come from war zones, where they have witnessed parents getting killed or almost killed.
14. Fees charged - RM10 per month but for the books. Siblings are charged RM5.
15. Meals provided if any - Meals are given to only those the centre identifies as being in extreme poverty.
16. Number of teachers - 12 teachers + 20 volunteers
17. Salaries for teachers - RM10 per hour, and they can earn up to RM1100 a month.
18. Education level of the teachers - All have bachelor degrees and 60 percent have university degrees. Most also have experience in teaching.
19. Teacher training - The centre partners with international schools to train teachers. They also have volunteer trainers to boost motivation and to teach teachers to handle classrooms. The teachers also go through mental health training at least once a year at the centre. Experts in the field are invited to conduct the training.
20. Socio-economic background of the teachers - They are refugee teachers from Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, Iran and other countries, waiting to be resettled and depend on the centre for their livelihoods.
21. Certification/ accreditation - The centre gives report cards four times a year. and the final report has a stamp from UNHCR.
22. Centre facilities and infrastructure - It has a library. Teachers use laptops and projectors. They have a computer lab with 20 computers. Children are taken to the Tasik Ampang park to play.

23. Funding - It has two major sponsors that include Credit Suisse Bank and MSRI. Individual donors chip in for teacher's salaries and sometimes for student fees. UNHCR pays the rent for the school, uniforms, bags and teachers salaries.
24. Dropouts if any - 20 to 30 per cent. Yes, students leave to work in restaurants. Students also stop coming once they reach Grade 10 or higher because of lack of motivation. They realise they are getting an education but not a certificate and the inability to access universities also leads to low morale. It gets difficult to motivate them but the centre tries to counsel children and the parents.
25. What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - The first batch is yet to complete.
26. How many completed so far- None
27. Parent participation - The centre tries to get parents involved by making it mandatory for them to collect report cards twice a year and discuss students' progress. They have periodical interviews to discuss any issues they have or student dropouts.
28. Strengths: (i) The centre provides holistic services to meet the needs of refugee children and families. For instance, when students get sick they are sent to SSC's doctors for free checkups. SSC also runs vaccination programmes. Yolanda Lopez, programme officer, said: "We just do not do education. We do everything be it healthcare, vocational training, education, classes for adults, emergency support like if a father has a heart problem, we try to provide food, medicines. We provide counselling to mothers and kids if the father is in detention. If a parent is facing psychological problem, the counsellor talks to them. We try to put the family in a level so they can tackle everything." (ii) SSC has collaborations with international schools. For instance, ten students from the Mt Kiara International School come to SSC and teach the kids once every alternate week. They also help students in any subject the student is weak in. They sometimes play games and eat together. Students from the upper grades visit the International School of Kuala Lumpur to play and learn once a fortnight (iii) Since last year SSC has been conducting sports days and cultural days for students to showcase their talent, (iv) It provides vocational training like computers and English classes for adults. Women learn to make crafts, which are sold in local bazaars.
29. Weaknesses: (i) The centre said it dealt with children from 11 different countries and at times, they come with the notion of conflict or are influenced by discussions at home and this tends to reflect on their relationship with children from different backgrounds in school. For example, political discussions among parents about Iran's role in Syria can tend to impact the rapport between Iranian and Syrian students in the centre (ii) SSC faces space constraints (iii) Motivating parents to send children to school

is difficult and this impacts attendance (iv) At present, it doesn't have a vocational training programme for the older children.

30. Opportunities: (i) SSC is training its children to sit for the Cambridge IGCSE exams and is conducting mock exams. They are trying to reach schools who can register their children and the first batch of four students from Grade 10 to 12 will sit for the exam at the end of 2015 (ii) The centre has a small cafeteria. It ran a competition for refugees, who wrote proposals and prepared dishes. The refugee who prepared the best food and offered the best price range was chosen to run the canteen.
31. Constraints: Dropouts are one of its major concerns as it has lost a number of students because of the influence of drugs or due to pressure from parents to work.
32. Observations: (i) SSC has one of the best and impressive models for a CLC because of the range of services it provides for children and families from education, medical support, food, counselling, etc. It goes beyond education to reach out to refugee communities. The checks and balances it has in place are also commendable. For instance, educating teachers to spot children who are sleeping excessively in class and relating it to financial problems is excellent as families might be too proud or ashamed to seek help. (ii) Preparing students to appear for the IGCSE exams will help it tackle certification issues and motivate students to study harder. (iii) The centre's long term and practical vision is reflected in its adoption of the North American curriculum. (iv) Unlike other CLCs that teach BM, Sahabat is focussing on teaching Arabic and Persian languages that will enable children to maintain their cultural identity and roots rather than trying to force them to learn BM, a language they may never use in the future. (v) The centre is also opening business opportunities for families by enabling them to run canteens.
33. Contact - **Yolanda Lopez**, Programme Officer

(v) Ruth Education Centre in Cheras, KL

1. Brief background - Ruth Education Centre (REC) in Cheras was started in 2011 after Burmese community leaders approached the Kuala Lumpur International Friends Fellowship church to start an upper secondary education centre. After a proposal for the centre was approved by the Coalition of Burmese Ethnic Minorities (COBEM), which oversees ethnic groups from Myanmar, the CLC began with 16 students. The centre now has four premises - all in Cheras - and one of it provides boarding for the students where classrooms turn into bedrooms in the night. REC focuses on: (a) Christian spiritual formation where the emphasis is on singing, worshipping and praying, (b) academic formation and (c) vocational empowerment for senior and intermediate levels. In this, students are sent for certified courses elsewhere in multi

media, web design and gaming. Students are also trained in teaching so they can teach primary CLCs in KL and give back to the community. The centre prepares them for diploma and certificate courses.

2. Profile - The centre accepts all refugees but most of them studying presently are Burmese pupils from the Chin, Kachins, Shans, and Karen community.
3. Student enrolment - 46 students in 4 premises.
4. Grades, ages - Students study from Grades 9 to 12 or the equivalent of O and A levels.
5. Subjects taught - Malay, English, Biology, Accounts, Chemistry, Math and sometimes Chinese. One off workshops are also held in Spanish. REC also has English literature and drama classes. It conducts rigorous English classes in four levels - remedial, junior, intermediate and senior English classes. It focuses on literature, drama and recitation. There are also junior, intermediate and senior levels for accounts, biology, chemistry, math. REC also has music classes and dance lessons.
6. Curriculum used - REC said it designed its own curriculum after examining other colleges in Malaysia, Singapore, UK and America.
7. Textbooks - REC provides books and instructors also donate
8. Term dates - January to December
9. Timings - 7.30am - 6pm from Monday to Saturday.
10. Typical day - 7.30am - 8.30am - Spiritual class
10am - 12pm - Morning session
2pm - 6pm - Afternoon session
11. Gender ratio - 60 per cent are girls while 40 per cent are males.
12. Number of classrooms - Four in each centre.
13. Social and economic background of the students - Parents are poor refugees mostly working in restaurants and coffee shops.
14. Fees charged - RM50 per month. Those who cannot afford are urged to pay a small token amount so they feel a sense of responsibility in attending classes.

15. Meals provided if any - Yes, three meals. REC has a student committee to organise cooking, raise issues of students and discipline issues.
16. Number of teachers - 20 instructors including five student volunteers from UCSI University and Methodist College. Two volunteer teachers from Australia train the volunteers twice a year in pedagogy, teaching philosophy and planning the curriculum.
17. Salaries for teachers - Teachers aren't paid. It's all voluntary.
18. Education level of the teachers - Most have degree from Malaysia, two have masters.
19. Teacher training - None
20. Socio-economic background of the teachers - All the teachers are Malaysians.
21. Certification/ accreditation - Only internal assessments and students are given certificates and testimonies when they leave.
22. Centre facilities and infrastructure - The centre has 20 Computers, a music recording studio, 18 laptops for multimedia students and a library of 5000 books. Students learn to compose music, record and sell albums to friends of REC.
23. Funding - UNHCR provides some limited grants but they also depend on the generosity of churches and individual donors from Malaysia.
24. Dropouts if any - About 5 per cent a year. The main reason is to support their family. Some also leave because they are not interested or not able to cope.
25. What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - Most have been resettled in the US and are doing well. They also end up working in the fashion industry or in restaurants.
26. How many students have passed out so far - About 30.
27. Parent participation - None
28. Strengths: (i) Students are trained to teach in the community schools and REC pays them RM300 to RM400 a month, (ii) Students learn to organise charity carnivals for Burmese refugees and also manage events in community schools, giving them leadership and organising skills, (iii) The centre has counsellors to help students, (iv) A student committee has been established to raise issues students face.

29. Weaknesses/ challenges: (i) The centre has to deal with disciplinary issues. For instance, students do not do their homework or show the level of commitment expected, (ii) Many of them who join them after studying in CLCs speak only Burmese languages and English levels are low, (iii) Difficulties in finding centres that offer full or at least 75 per cent scholarships for vocational courses conducted by external centres.
30. Opportunities: It's hoping to explore a partnerships with business and marketing schools like the multimedia partnership it has with an external centre for one-year courses.
31. Constraints: One or two students regularly chew tobacco. They were given three warnings before being asked to leave.
32. Observations: (i) REC is one of the few centres with higher secondary classes and is well known among the primary CLCs, especially the Burmese centres, to take in students interested and capable of pursuing higher education, (ii) It's strengths lie in its abilities to forge partnerships with the multimedia centre to give their students exposure to vocation training,³ (iii) Since it takes care of all the needs of students like food, boarding and education, it makes a concentrated effort to avoid students from dropping out, (iv) By teaching students to compose music and selling their music albums, REC is giving them a skill and helping them earn some money at the same time, which is vital for the students since the pressure to earn money is one of the primary reasons for student to drop out, (v) Ruth impresses on students the need to give back to the community. It does this by encouraging them to teach at the primary CLCs and incentivises students for it. This strategy has a number of benefits. It helps the students earn some money and ensures they do not drop out. At the same time, it's a boon for the primary CLCs, most of whom struggle to hire or pay teachers.
33. Contact - **Pastor Michael Moey**, founder and director

(vi) Kachin Refugee Learning Centre in Bukit Bintang, KL

1. Brief background - The CLC has centres in Bukit Bintang and Setapak. The Bukit Bintang centre was started in 2007 and was only for the Kachin community with 15 students but slowly started accepting other Burmese like Chin, Karen and Rohingyas.
2. Profile: Kachins are an ethnic group who live in Myanmar's Kachin state. More than half of them are Christians, while some are Buddhists and also belong to other denominations.

3. REC managers were not keen to disclose the name of the multimedia centre as the Government does not license centres that teach refugee students.

3. Student enrolment - 228 students
4. Grades, ages - Children are between 3 and 18 years and study in nursery to Grade 7 or Form 1. Only one centre offers until Form 1, while the other is until Grade 6.
5. Subjects taught - English, Bible studies, math, science, social studies, art and craft.
6. Curriculum used - Malaysian
7. Textbooks: Children use copies of Longman books provided by UNHCR from a few years ago and some books from Singapore.
8. Term dates: January to November.
9. Timings - Pre school is from 9am to 3.30 pm. The CLC in Bukit Bintang uses two sessions for different grades. Morning session is from 9am to 12.30pm for Grade 4 to Form 1 and the afternoon session runs from 1pm to 4pm for Grades 1 to 3. But the Sepatak centre has only one session for all students. On Wednesdays, the last two sessions are used for religious studies for Grades 4 to Form 1.

Grades 4 to Form 1

9.00 to 9.55 - 1st session
 9.55 to 10.50 - 2nd session
 11.00 to 11.45 - 3rd session
 11.45 to 12.30 - Final session

Grades 1 to 3

1.00 - 1.45 - First session
 1.45 - 2.30 - Second session
 2.30 - 3.15 - Third session
 3.15 - 4.00 - Final session

10. Typical day - About 55 minutes for morning sessions while each class is 45 minutes for the afternoon sessions.
 - (i) *Gender ratio - 55 per cent boys, 45 per cent girls*
 - (ii) *Number of classrooms - The Bukit Bintang centre doesn't have classrooms but instead uses a large and a small room provided by the Kuala Lumpur Baptist Church for a monthly rental. Classes are conducted in the different corners of the room. The CLC in Setapak is a two storey building with eight classrooms and another two classes in a nearby building.*
 - (iii) *Social and economic background of the students - Parents work in restaurants or as sales people.*
 - (iv) *Fees charged - RM40 to RM100 per month*
 - (v) *Meals provided if any - Three times only for pre school kids.*
 - (vi) *Number of teachers - 19 teachers and five volunteers, who are mix of expatriates and Malaysians.*

- (vii) *Salaries for teachers - RM700 to RM900. UNHCR has been paying RM500 for 10 teachers but they aren't sure how long this will continue.*
- (viii) *Education level of the teachers - They have Bachelor degrees from Myanmar and some have worked as teachers previously.*
- (ix) *Teacher training - Teachers attended training in 2014 with UNHCR partner, Dignity Foundation.*
- (x) *Socio-economic background of the teachers - Teachers are also refugees and have children studying in the centre. Sometimes they work part time jobs during school holidays.*
- (xi) *Certification/ accreditation - The CLC gives certificates when the students resettle to say what grades they attended and the subjects they studied.*
- (xii) *Centre facilities and infrastructure - They have a small library and a computer room.*
- (xiii) *Funding - The centre depends on school fees and churches to pay the rent. Some churches buy some dry groceries like noodles.*
- (xiv) *Dropouts if any - Most student do not finish Form 1.*
- (xv) *What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - They work in restaurants, salons and as sales girls. Few have also returned to teach.*
- (xvi) *How many have passed out so far - Not sure*

27. Parent participation - None

28. Strengths: (i) Once a week the CLC organises an activity dubbed six corners for learning, thinking, creative, reading, listening and conversation. During this time, students are given problems or puzzles to solve. They also play games or have conversations about different topics, (ii) They organise outings like sports day and carnivals once a year, (iii) Students are encouraged to speak up and correct teachers if they are wrong, in an attempt to instil leadership skills, (iv) Youth classes are conducted for people between 19 to 60 years of age for three hours a day, where they learn English, Math and Science, (v) It is the only CLC to have received tablets from UNHCR so students can use them to learn (vi) Teachers keep in touch with resettled students, going as far as helping them with their studies.

29. Weaknesses: (i) The centres have severe funding shortages and are heavily dependent on the modest fees paid by students and on the generosity of churches as well as UNHCR for teachers' salaries, (ii) Not all volunteers are as committed and leave before the year ends, (iii) The centres are always short of resources, (iv) Students of 2-3 different grades share one room.

30. Opportunities: The CLC is looking for collaborations with secondary schools so students can study further.
31. Constraints: (i) Students and teachers are always scared of being arrested even if they have UNHCR cards. (ii) The number of students have dropped from 250 last year because many were resettled.
32. Observations: The centre has very committed teachers who work hard to help students get a basic education. But, the centres struggle to raise funds and find it difficult to make ends meet. They try to compensate for their lack of academic resources with creative, hands-on activities like their six corners. The CLC should look at forging partnerships with international schools so children can get a chance to experience a real school environment. They also should look at alternative sources to fund their operations and pay teachers' salaries instead of relying on the UN refugee agency's assistance.
33. Contact - **Teacher Sam**, Coordinator

(vii) Dignity for Children Foundation (DCF) in Sentul, KL

1. Brief background - Dignity For Children (DCF) started its work in 1999 through the New Covenant Community Church to look after underprivileged families in the Sentul area. The church began to reach out to the community through basic home improvement services, grocery distribution, free medical check-ups, job placements and counselling. But to have a long lasting impact, they started giving tuition classes and soon had 50 students. The focus was initially on toddlers and preschool children. The work officially came under the name of Harvest Centre in 2003 and the first Montessori Preschool for the underprivileged opened its doors to 30 students in January, 2004. Secondary education programmes were added in 2008.
2. Profile - DCF helps educate children from marginalised and underprivileged communities, which includes urban poor, migrant and refugee children from Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Somalia and Iran.
3. Student enrolment - 950
4. Grades, ages - 2 years old to 19 years old. 2 to 4 years are in the toddler stimulation programme, while four and six years grouped together to do pre school. 7 to 9 years are in lower primary, 10 to 13 years are in upper primary, 13 to 16 years are in lower secondary while 15 to 18 years old are in upper secondary.

5. Subjects taught - Pre school: Literacy, numeracy, sensory, activities of everyday living, music, movement and creativity. Primary: English, Mathematics, Science and Bahasa. Lower Secondary: Also teach, Geography and History. Upper secondary: (i) Pure Sciences - English, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry or Physics (ii) Business stream - Accounts, Business Study, Mathematics and English.
6. Curriculum: Malaysian books. DCF adopted the Montessori system of teaching from 2004, where the focus is on child-centred learning.
7. Textbooks: UNHCR has reprinted the national curriculum books in English for DCF. There are no textbooks used for children up to lower primary, as part of the Montessori philosophy. For the others, the centre loans the books to the students.
8. Term dates: January to October
9. Timings:
 - 8am to 12pm - Toddler to upper primary (Morning session)
 - 12.30pm to 4.30pm - Afternoon session for a separate batch of toddlers
 - 8am to 2.30pm - Lower secondary
 - 8am to 4.30pm - Upper secondary
10. Typical day: 45 minutes of each session
11. Gender ratio - Equal number of boys and girls.
12. Number of classrooms - 25 classrooms
13. Social and economic background of the students - DCF said Malaysian parents of its students were on a welfare system as they were poor. While many other parents were working in restaurants.
14. Fees charged - RM10 RM to RM580 a month. RM10 is for the extremely poor while RM580 are for children who are in the centre for the entire day.
15. Meals provided if any - Three meals.
16. Number of teachers - 44 teachers.
17. Salaries for teachers - Teachers earn between RM900 and RM3500, depending on the experience and qualifications of teachers.
18. Education level of the teachers - Many have bachelor degrees and some hold masters degrees.

19. Teacher training - Most are trained via in-house teachers' training. Some have an International Diploma in Montessori Pedagogy while some are in the midst of pursuing teaching qualifications.
20. Socio-economic background of the teachers - DCF has both Malaysian teachers as well as refugee teachers. About three of its teachers are older students who have returned after doing their IGCSE. They teach because they think it's important to do their bit for the community.
21. Certification/ accreditation - Students take the IGCSE exams. Last year the first batch of 23 students appeared for them. Since many of DCF students are Malaysians, they used to previously appear for the much more affordable SPM but the Bahasa level was increased recently. This meant that many students were failing the BM paper and weren't able to get a certification, which is required to pursue tertiary education.
22. Centre facilities and infrastructure - There is a computer and a small library in each classroom. The centre invests a lot of money in books. DCF said the *"one thing that marks a Dignity students is their ability to communicate"*⁴ *Students are taken to the nearest field to play.*
23. Funding - A majority of the funding comes from individual donors, corporates, UNHCR and international NGOs.
24. Dropouts if any - About 10 leave every because their families resettle. Some older children leave because they need to work or lack motivation.
25. What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - A lot choose to come back and work as teachers or pursue higher education.
26. How many passed out so far - Approximately 40 students.
27. Parent participation: DCF has parent workshops. In 2015, it had three workshops, where time was spent to discuss different issues with the parents and measures to prevent dropouts.
28. Strengths: (i) DCF uses the Montessori system of education, which is rare for an alternative learning centre. (ii) The centre has set up a Skills Training and Education Programme (STEP) to address youth drop outs. They choose students between 15 to 18 years old and help them learn skills from different industries - food and beverages, sewing, hair styling, gardening and woodwork. The STEP programme offers different training programmes every six months. DCF recently launched the Project B cafe in

4. Interview with staff from Dignity for Children Foundation, 08 June 2015.

Sentul in collaboration with Berjaya Care Foundation and B.I.G Group of Companies. Students are being trained to cook, serve customers, handle the cash counter and essentially manage and operate the cafe. Students work for three to four days in the cafe earning money and study in DCF for the rest of the week. A recently launched hair academy is also teaching them hair styling and cutting. (iv) The CLC organises a three-day Peace Camp every year to bring together refugee children, aged between 14 and 15 years, from different communities and CLCs to encourage them to overlook their differences. They use lessons and activities to teach that they are all the same, everyone wants to be loved, accepted and respected. They are taught to discover their strengths and weakness and talk about peace with themselves. They also take part in the Faisal Cup, a football and netball tournament, which helps to bring them closer. (v) DCF runs several training programmes for teachers from other CLCs across Malaysia.

29. Weaknesses/ challenges: (i) DCF said working with the community to have a long term impact was difficult as a lot of them were in Malaysia temporarily, (ii) Students have different levels of understanding (iii) Families keep changing their telephone numbers and it gets difficult to track the children if they do not come to school.
30. Opportunities: It is looking to start new STEP programmes for its students.
31. Constraints: (i) The Malaysian government's decision to change education policies especially its shift to Bahasa has made it difficult for children to pass the national exams. (ii) Lack of opportunities for tertiary education.
32. Observations: (i) DCF is one of the few CLCs using the Montessori style of education to teach children. (ii) Its decision to prepare students for the IGCSE exams and enabling certification circumvents the challenges presented by a curriculum taught only in Bahasa and the omnipresent issue of non Malaysian children's inability to obtain certificates. (iii) Its STEP programmes, where children can earn money while studying is one of the best solutions adopted by a CLC to address dropouts and equip children with vocational skills. A visit to its Plan B cafe, located very close to the centre, revealed a professionally run restaurant manned completely by trained students, who take turns to cook and manage the cash counters. The chic cafe is a hands-on opportunity for pupils to translate the theoretic learnings and a welcome break from the confines of a classroom. The Plan B cafe and some of its other business ventures are model start ups for CLCs to self sustain themselves as well as teach a skill and provide employment to its older students.
33. Contact - **Christina Chung**, Education Programme Coordinator

(viii) Fugee School in Medan Idaman Centre, KL

1. Brief background - The school was started in 2009 after Deborah Henry, the founder, hosted a documentary on refugees for UNHCR in 2008 and when she met a Somali family with four children between 10 and 14 years old who couldn't speak, read or write. Back then, the Somali community in Malaysia was very small. She and a friend started giving the family tuition for six months and more families started approaching them for classes. So they started the Fugee School with about 60 students in an apartment unit in Jalan Jernai, the heart of the Somali community. In January 2015, they moved into a bigger facility in the same area. The centre also teaches English to adults, mostly mothers.
2. Profile - The students are mostly Somalis, but there are also Syrians, Yemenis and stateless Malaysians studying. The centre's doors are open to anyone who cannot access regular schools.
3. Student enrolment - 87 students.
4. Grades - The centre offers Preschool, Grades 1, 2, and 4 up to Grade 9. It started pre school in 2014 and has plans to take in children for Grade 10 in 2016.
5. Subjects taught - English, math, science, Somali language and art.
6. Curriculum used - A mix of Singaporean and British curricula
7. Textbooks - Fugee buys them for the students
8. Term dates - January to November
9. Timings - 8am -12pm for pre school to grade 4.
2pm - 6pm for Grades 5 to 9.
10. Typical day - One hour of each class
11. Gender ratio - Equal number of boys and girls
12. Number of classrooms - Five
13. Social and economic background of the students - The centre described the families as "not being hugely impoverished"⁵. *"The Somali conflict is so protracted, they generally have uncles or aunts in the West, who support them. They are close knit.*

5. Interview with founder of Fugee School, 2 June 2015.

No one is earning here and their families send money from overseas. They have their basic needs taken care of.”

14. Fees charged - RM30 to RM70 per month. RM70 is charged if students use the centre's bus services. The fee was hiked from RM10 to RM30 after the centre moved to its new facility in January 2015. Parents were reluctant to pay even RM10 until last year but after the facilities were upgraded, they realised their children were getting good quality education and the centre was trying hard to provide top notch facilities.
15. Meals provided - None
16. Number of teachers - Nine teachers including two refugee teachers and four student buddies, who are essentially older students teaching pre school classes in their part time.
17. Salaries for teachers - RM300 to RM800 a month.
18. Education level of the teachers - They hold Masters degrees or PhDs.
19. Teacher training - Fugee sends its student buddies once a year to the training by UNHCR partner, Dignity Foundation for Children. It has also completed a workshop, 'energise and be energised training' with volunteer teacher trainer, Alexius Collette.
20. Socio-economic background of the teachers - Most teachers at the Fugee School are students pursuing their higher degrees and hence, enjoy funding from their governments for their monthly expenses. Fugee pays them pocket money for the 15 hours a week they teach. Some teachers also receive UNHCR compensation and the school tops it up.
21. Certification/ accreditation - The CLC conducts its own internal exams in June and November and hands out student reports.
22. Centre facilities and infrastructure - The CLC has computers and they are trying to set up a computer lab. The students are also taken to a field nearby for outdoor sports. They also have corporates sponsoring field trips and recently visited the Lim Kok Wing University.
23. Funding - The centre regularly organises fund raisers and gets a supporting hand from corporates. Its modest fee also helps in a small way.
24. Dropouts if any - The older students - both boys and girls - drop out either due to lack of interest or the girls leave to work at home.

25. What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - Lot of the older kids have been resettled. One of the pupils, who is a student buddy, is hoping to study law.
26. How many have passed out so far - None
27. Parent participation - No
28. Strengths: (i) The students visit the International School of Kuala Lumpur (ISKL) once a month to interact with ISKL students and see a different educational setting. (ii) The school has an ambitious plan to enrol some of its older grade students at The Roboticist, a robotics class held at Jaya One, from next semester. The classes would be held twice a month for 2.5 hours each. (iii) Incitement, a motivation company, spoke to 14 and 15 year olds about public speaking to build their confidence and self worth. (iv) The centre enjoys some strong partnerships. For instance, students from the Canadian pre university come two days a week to teach. (V) Unlike other centres, Fugee relies on the Singaporean curriculum and has a good network of sponsors and well wishers, which means that they can procure good text books for its students.
29. Weaknesses/ challenges: (i) The CLC faces challenges in fund raising. (ii) Fugee said it was unable to have more structured and creative classes and lacked opportunities for hands on learning. (iii) Certification continues to be an issue. (iv) The centre struggles to keep its older kids in school and feels parents do not show commitment in sending the children to school. Many of the parents do not have an education and hence do not appreciate the value of studying. They remain in limbo for six to seven years waiting to be resettled and motivation drops among the kids.
30. Opportunities: The centre is trying to get students to take up the International English Language Testing (IELTS) and ESL exams so they can get certification, which is usually denied to them as refugees in Malaysia. It's also teaching students carpentry. The centre also partners with companies like Taylor's Business Schools to participate in projects like shoe painting and later get the students to market it to get hands on experience.
31. Constraints: Authorities tried to detain women and children at the last big crackdown on illegal immigrants a few years ago and did try to enter the centre.
32. Observations: The Fugee School is run by well-networked Malaysians and the founder Deborah Henry, a former beauty pageant, has been able to translate her professional success into humanitarian work by raising the profile of the centre. Although the fee structure is similar to what other centres charge, the CLC has spacious classrooms and is providing novel educational opportunities. Their ambitious vision and long

term goals are evident with the managers pushing for a robotics programme, a rare endeavour and genuine attempt to provide different opportunities to refugee students. Their student buddy programme provides an incentive for older, high potential students to give back to the community and earn some pocket money, which is vital for refugee students, who are always under pressure to join the work force. The centre's decision to teach English to adults is a way of engaging with the wider Somali refugee community and getting them to see the benefits of an education.

33. Contacts - **Deborah Henry**, Founder

2. NSC-run CLCs

Kg. Numbak Learning Centre, Kota Kinabalu

1. Brief background - The Kg. Numbak Learning Centre was set up to provide alternative education pathways for children who lacked the proper documentation to gain access to mainstream education in Malaysian government schools. The centre was officially opened on March 26, 2011.
2. Profile - It caters to Filipino refugees
3. Student enrolment - 305
4. Grades/ ages - Children between 7 and 14 years study from Grades 1 to 6.
5. Subjects taught - BM, mathematics, civics, Islamic Knowledge, physical education and health education. They also learn to make handicrafts as part of their skills-based training.
6. Curriculum used - A special AEP curriculum based on the national curriculum was designed by the MoE with emphasis on the 3Rs - Reading, Writing and Arithmetic skills, Malaysia Studies (civics and citizenship studies, including values and identity development) and Fardu Ain (Islamic religious knowledge and practices).
7. Term dates - January to November
8. Timings - 7.30am– 11.30am
9. Typical day - Half hour of each class
10. Gender ratio - 60 per cent are boys



Source: Preeti Kannan

Children at the Kg Numbak Alternative Learning Centre in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

11. Number of classrooms - Six classrooms
12. Social and economic background of the students - Parents are mostly fishermen, carpenters and construction workers and mothers are home makers. Many of these adults came to Sabah as young children or were born here after their parents fled the violence in Mindanao.
13. Fees charged - RM25 per year where RM10 is the fee and RM15 is charged for books or materials. Often, parents cannot afford this and the school tries to request them to pay at least RM10
14. Meals provided if any - None, though there have been requests.
15. Number of teachers - Six
16. Textbooks - Old and used textbooks are provided by the MoE and the Sabah Education Department.
17. Salaries for teachers - RM800
18. Education level of the teachers - Teachers have appeared for the SPM

19. Teacher training - Once a year, teachers are sent to a five-day training course at the MoE, where they learn how to teach, manage students, get psychological training and are trained on the different methods of teaching.
20. Socio-economic background of the teachers - The teachers are themselves from the Bajau community.
21. Certification/ accreditation - A leaving certificate is issued by the school and bears the stamps of UNICEF, NSC and the most coveted MoE seal on it.
22. Centre facilities and infrastructure - A small library stocked by UNICEF and two computers in the staff room.
23. Funding - UNICEF gave RM422,715.16 to fund the programme from 2011-2013. It will pay for teachers salaries until the end of 2015.
24. Dropouts if any - There are dropouts when parents move away
25. What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - Most end up working in restaurants and cafes
26. How many passed out so far - On an average about 40-50 students finish from the Grade 6 every year.
27. Parent participation - A PTA meets regularly. It encourages parents to send students to school and raises contribution from them, when necessary. It plans student activities and community events. Any thing the school requires from the community is channelled through the PTA.
28. Strengths: (i) The presence of a learning centre has ensured students know to read and write in Bahasa. They are also learning to say simple phrases in English. (ii) Increased attendance in children attending the Friday prayers in the community mosque. The children are also proficient in reciting the Quran because of the Islamic classes. (iii) Importantly, they have a place to go rather than loiter on the streets.
29. Weaknesses/ challenges: (i) There is a waiting list of 50-60 students but the centre is unable to accommodate them. (ii) Shortage of funding to hire teachers or provide sufficient resources to teach students. (iii) Children only get the primary six education and have few opportunities to study further.
30. Opportunities: Students and adults are taught vocation skills like handicrafts and learn to mend fishing nets.

31. Constraints: Low attendance because of regular immigration crackdowns.
32. Observations: The project is commendable because of the NSC's mission to provide primary education to an otherwise neglected and segregated section of the society. Parents in the community admitted that children were better off being in schools rather than being on the streets. However, because of the centre's inability to accept more students, many children were still aimlessly wandering around the settlement. Afternoon sessions to accommodate more children - which was one of the recommendations made by the UNICEF-UMS study in 2014 - will reduce this problem. While the enthusiasm and interest of the teachers was evident, it is important they have a better knowledge of the subjects they teach for instance, raising the language levels of the English teacher. While NSC has made provisions for primary education, it is important the children have the opportunity to study further. Currently, they end up working in cafes and restaurants after their primary six. NSC and UNICEF should work together for long term goals so children are not left with only a basic education. The centre also needs regular assessment on the quality of education provided and look at ways to implement all the recommendations made by the UNICEF-UMS study in 2014. The NSC should work with federal and state departments to regularise undocumented migrants in the settlement and prevent adults and children from being detained or arrested. Such conflicting policies adopted by different government departments are unjust, violate the rights of children to education and unbecoming of a country aiming to attain EFA and become a developed nation.
33. **Contact - Manager, NSC Sabah**

3. CLCs supported by the Philippines embassy

(i) Stairway to Hope in Inanam district, Kota Kinabalu

1. Brief background - The CLC was started in 2012 by the Filipino community and with support from the Philippines embassy in Kota Kinabalu to provide the children of Filipino refugees with basic reading, writing, arithmetic and life skills. It was started with 40 children in the house of a benefactor with RM6000 seed money.
2. Profile - Children of Filipino refugees or undocumented migrants born in Malaysia. Most have no documents. Some of the students' fathers are from the Philippines and mothers are Malaysian but since their marriages have not been registered, the children have no birth certificates.
3. Student enrolment - 273



Children seen studying at the Stairway to Hope CLC in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

4. Grades, ages - Students between the ages 7 to 18 years study in Grades 1 to 6 and in Form 1 (Grade 7).
5. Subjects taught - Science, Maths, English, Bahasa, Physics for older classes. They also learn arts, singing, dancing and have computer classes.
6. Curriculum used - Malaysian curriculum.
7. Term dates - January to November. They are allowed to operate only three times a week and not allowed to wear uniform. The CLC has stitched its own uniform in different colours.
8. Timings - They run two separate sessions to accommodate more students.
Morning session - 7am to 11.30am
Afternoon session - 1.30pm to 5pm
9. Typical day - Each session is 45 mins long.
10. Gender ratio - 60 per cent are girls
11. Number of classrooms - Five classrooms.
12. Social and economic background of the students - Parents sell fish or work in construction. Some have their own businesses.

13. Fees charged - RM20 to RM40 a month
14. Meals provided if any - No
15. Number of teachers - Nine teachers.
16. Textbooks - The CLC provides textbooks.
17. Salaries for teachers - An allowance between RM300 to RM500.
18. Education level of the teachers - Some are high school graduates.
19. Teacher training - The teachers have undergone training with the Philippines Department of Education. The department's staff come to Malaysia once a year to do capacity building, teach them how to teach, how to handle the children and help with lesson planning.
20. Socio-economic background of the teachers - The teachers are volunteers who are mostly housewives and Filipino migrants whose husbands are working in Malaysia legally.
21. Certification/ accreditation - The CLC issues certificates.
22. Centre facilities and infrastructure - It has a mini library, canteen a computer room and canteen manned by teachers. The computers were donated by UNHCR.
23. Funding - They run fund raising events like bazaar, hold dance and dinner programmes. Church members have paid rental for six months. They depend on the fees collected from students.
24. Dropouts if any - Some leave if they move elsewhere.
25. What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - None yet
26. How many passed out so far - None yet.
27. Parent participation - They have a PTA which meets every three months.
28. Strengths: (i) Children are no longer loitering on the streets. (ii) They are learning to speak English. (iii) More parents are aware of the benefits of education.

29. Weaknesses/ challenges: (i) Since the Sabah Education Department is not keen to recognise them, they are informally allowed to operate three times a week and without uniforms. (ii) They lack consistent funding. (iii) Children are forced to work in cafes or elsewhere to support parents. (iv) Transportation is a problem and many students want to come from far and study.
30. Opportunities: The CLC has an agreement with the Philippines Department of Education and this can enable students to go back and study in the Philippines.
31. Constraints: Children and parents live in the fear of getting arrested.
32. Observations: The CLC, like many others, has committed staff and volunteers who want to help the children. Agreements with the Philippines government to train teachers and enable students to study further is commendable and should be explored in the best possible ways.
33. Contact - **Marilou Salgatar Chin**, Chairperson

4. Plantation Schools

(i) HCASS centre in Sawit Kinabalu's Sungai Balung Estate, Tawau

1. Brief background - The centre in Sungai Balung estate was set up in 2003 to educate the children of workers in the estates. It however accepts children outside plantations as well. Eight years back Sawit Kinabalu started paying for the centre.
2. Profile - The centre teaches Indonesian children and some undocumented migrants
3. Student enrolment - 326 children
4. Grades, ages - Children between the ages of 5 and 16 years study from Kindergarten to Grade 6. The centre started enrolling children in Kindergarten for the first time in 2015.
5. Subjects taught - English, math, Bahasa, science and arts. They introduced a subject called Aflatoun last year, where children learn about savings and finances.
6. Curriculum used - Malaysian
7. Textbooks - Parents pay for the books.



Source: Preeti Kannan

Children seen studying at the Stairway to Hope CLC in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

8. Term dates - January to November
9. Timings - They have two sessions - one in the morning for Kindergarten to Grade 2 and the second is held in the afternoon from Grades 3 to 6.
Morning session: 7am to 11am
Afternoon session: 1pm to 4.30pm
10. Typical day - The classes generally go one for an hour and half hour is also devoted for music or art.
11. Gender ratio - 60 per cent are boys while 40 per cent are girls.
12. Number of classrooms - Three
13. Socio and economic background of the students - Most parents are employed in the plantations. However, there are some who are engaged in selling biscuits or working in vegetable farms outside the plantations.
14. Fees charged - RM10 per month
15. Meals, provided, if any - None

16. Number of teachers - A total of seven teachers work at the centre. Of this, two are employed by Humana and the remaining four are Indonesian teachers, who have been recruited and brought by the Indonesian government under the G2G agreement between the two countries. One assistant teacher has been provided by the plantation company as well.
17. Salaries of teachers - RM800 to RM1100 for locally hired Indonesians and Malaysians.
18. Education level of teachers - Some have only completed their Form 5 while some have finished college.
19. Teacher training - The teachers have undergone training with the Institut Pendidikan Guru (IPG), Tawau campus. They started this programme in 2012 with cooperation between Bahagian Perancangan and Penyelidikan Dasar Pendidikan Malaysia, Putrajaya and Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia. Its compulsory for all Humana teachers, and is done twice a year during school holidays in June and December.
20. Socio-economic background of the teachers - Teachers are Malaysians and Indonesians and come from low income backgrounds.
21. Certification/ accreditation - The students sit for an exam administered by Humana, who gives them certificates.
22. Centre facilities - The centre has a small library and a television, which is used to play nursery rhymes. Every Friday, the centre organises sports like football and volleyball.
23. Funding - The plantation company Sawit Kinabalu pays RM1000 a month. HCASS relies on fees paid by parents and also uses any surplus money from other plantations.
24. Dropouts, if any - Negligible. Some leave when they go back to Indonesia or if parents need them to stop studying and earn for the family. The children are forced to work in the construction industry or wash cars for a living.
25. What do the students do once they complete at the centre - Some students go on to continue their studies in the Indonesian CLCs, while some go out and work. Previously, girls used to get married. But the teachers started advising girls that they have a right to decline marriage proposals and encouraged them to study further instead of succumbing to parental pressures. This has had a positive impact and many, especially girls are continuing their studies.
26. How many have passed out so far - 200

27. Parent participation - The centre has a PTA that meets twice a year. However, the parents do not speak out much or raise issues despite teachers encouraging them to.
28. Strengths - (i) The centre has a dedicated team of teachers. (ii) Students are being dissuaded from stopping education at primary six. (iii) Initiating social change by encouraging girls to study instead of getting married early and educating the wider community on the benefits of education.
29. Weaknesses/ challenges - (i) HCASS teachers said the children's English levels had fallen and blamed the Indonesian teachers for not training the children in the subject enough. (ii) Inability to hire more teachers. (iii) Teachers recruited locally get paid much lesser than their Indonesian counterparts. (iv) Teachers have to pay for the electricity in their quarters.
30. Opportunities - (i) Currently children from other plantations in the vicinity attend the centre because many companies are not open to learning centres being set up in their premises. If companies facilitated their establishment, it would ease the burden on the Sungai Balung centre. (ii) Sawit Kinabalu and HCASS should work together to further improve funding and teaching aids for enhanced learning experience. (ii) Get parents more involved in education by HCASS and the company organising community activities.
31. Constraints - Wide gap in salaries between teachers recruited by the Indonesian government and those recruited locally is leading to discontentment and could increase attrition rates, making it difficult in the future to hire local teachers.
32. Observations - Sungai Balung is one of the largest learning centres because of the number of children it reaches out to. It has a team of local and Indonesian staff, who are going further than conventional education to raise awareness on social issues like early marriage. By stressing the need for education among girls, they are sparking a change in the community. During a visit to the centre, the children from the kindergarten classes were seen watching nursery rhymes in English on television and singing along fluently. Since the centre has only three classrooms to accommodate the 326 children, a number of grades have to share one classroom and this could impact children's abilities to concentrate. The teachers, particularly the head teacher Ms Aida Binthi Madikal, who has worked with the centre since its inception, was very passionate about educating the plantation children and said her team worked hard against many odds. The centre was almost on the verge of closing down nine years ago when the company refused to pay for its upkeep. The parents then stepped in and offered to pay RM10 to keep the school open. This reflects the emphasis parents place on schooling for their children. Although the company has helped set up the centre in its estate, hired an assistant teacher and is providing accommodation for

all the tutors, it should significantly increase its monthly contribution from the present RM1000 a month, pay for utilities in teachers' quarters and provide any assistance wherever necessary. From interviews with teachers, it was gathered that the support the centre received from the company depended on the generosity of the plantation manager rather than any company policy.

33. Contact - **Jan Mohd Khan**, Executive Director

(ii) HCASS centre in Sawit Kinabalu's Pegagau Estate, Tawau

1. Brief background - The centre began in 2001 after parents invited HCASS to start in the estate. The parents wanted the children to go to school when they were at work.
2. Profile - Children are Indonesians, undocumented and Malaysians.
3. Student enrolment - About 126 children study here
4. Grades, ages - Children study from kindergarten to Grade 6.
5. Subjects taught - English, Math, Bahasa Malaysia, Science, Arts, Aflatoun and Moral Studies.



Source: Preeti Kaman

Children at the Pegagau Estate put up a small musical performance in English.

6. Curriculum used - Malaysian
7. Textbooks - Children buy textbooks
8. Term dates - January to November
9. Timings - 7am to 11am (kindergarten)
12.30 to 4.30pm (Grade 1 to 6)
10. Typical day - Each class is for an hour
11. Gender ratio - 60 per cent are boys while the remaining are girls.
12. Number of classrooms - Three classrooms.
13. Social and economic background of the students - Parents work in the plantations
14. Fees charged - Children are charged RM24 a year, which is collected upfront.
15. Meals provided if any - None
16. Number of teachers - 2 Humana teachers +1 assistant teacher provided by the company.
17. Salaries for teachers - RM800 to RM1100 for locally hired Indonesians and Malaysians.
18. Education level of the teachers - Some have only completed their Form 5 while some have finished college
19. Teacher training - The teachers have undergone training with IPG, Tawau campus.
20. Socio-economic background of the teachers - Teachers are Malaysians and Indonesians who have been recruited locally. They come from low income backgrounds.
21. Certification/ accreditation - None
22. Centre facilities and infrastructure - The centre has one computer.
23. Funding - Sawit Kinabalu pays RM1000 a month.
24. Dropouts if any - Only one.

25. What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - They join the Indonesian CLCs or go on to work.
26. How many passed out so far - About 100
27. Parent participation - The centre has a PTA that meets twice a year. They discuss about graduation ceremonies and any teaching issues.
28. Strengths: (i) Children can count and read unlike before when illiteracy levels were high. (ii) The children are in a safe environment when parents are away at work.
29. Weaknesses/ challenges: (i) The centre needs more teachers, (ii) Existing teachers need better training to teach subjects like English.
30. Opportunities: (i) Improve funding of centres. (ii) Get parents more involved in education by organising community activities.
31. Constraints: Wide gap in salaries between teachers recruited by the Indonesian government and those recruited locally is leading to discontentment and could increase attrition rates, making it difficult to hire local teachers.
32. Contact - **Jan Mohd Khan**, Executive Director

5. CLCs run by the Indonesian consulate

(i) CLC at Sungai Balung Estate, Tawau

1. Brief background: The CLC was started in September 2012 by the Indonesian consulate after it saw a need for higher education for children finishing primary six at the HCASS learning centre. The CLC shares classrooms with HCASS.
2. Profile: The CLCs reach out to Indonesian children living legally and illegally inside and outside palm oil plantations. They also accept undocumented migrants informally.
3. Student enrolment - 45 students
4. Grades, ages - The children are in Grades 7, 8 and 9 but are grouped in one class.
5. Subjects taught - Religious studies, Bahasa Indonesian, mathematics, science, social science, physical education and English.



Source: Preeti Kannan

Indonesian girls in Grades 7 to 9 giggling as a class is underway at the Sungai Balung CLC. They are grouped together and share the space with the children from the HCASS learning centre.

6. Curriculum used - Indonesian national curriculum.
7. Term dates - July to June
8. Timings - 1pm to 4pm from Monday to Friday
8am to 4pm on Saturday
9. Typical day - Each class is about 1.5 hours long on weekdays. On Saturdays, the children learn cooking, sewing and have guitar lessons. The teachers rely on their skills to teach children non-academic subjects.
10. Gender ratio - 80 per cent are females.
11. Number of classrooms - One classroom inside the HCASS premise is used by the CLC students.
12. Social and economic background of the students - Parents are employed in as labourers or fruit pickers in plantations.
13. Fees charged - Free
14. Meals provided if any - None
15. Number of teachers - One male Indonesian teacher under the G2G agreement.

16. Textbooks - Indonesian government provides textbooks
17. Salaries for teachers - Under the G2G agreement, the teacher earns the equivalent of RM4200 a month.
18. Education level of the teachers - The teacher is a graduate from Indonesia.
19. Teacher training - Teachers go through training once a year and the programmes are conducted in Sabah by the Indonesian MoE.
20. Socio-economic background of the teachers - Like other CLC teachers, the male teacher is from Indonesia and holds a teaching permit.
21. Certification/ accreditation - The same certificates issued in Indonesian public schools are given at the CLCs. However, no certification is issued to undocumented children or children who aren't Indonesian nationals.
22. Centre facilities and infrastructure - The CLC has a computer and a LCD projector.
23. Funding - The CLC is fully funded by the Indonesian government, which spends 16billion Rupiah annually in operating CLCs across Malaysia.
24. Dropouts if any - Last year four boys dropped out because they had to work in the fields. The CLC said it requests them to come at any time for at least for 15-20 hours a month. The CLC tries to provide flexible timings so the children can come to school.
25. What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - Of 11, 8 students - all girls - have gone to Sebatik island in Indonesia to study. Children also go back to plantations to work and support their families.
26. How many passed out so far - The first batch of 11 students finished last year.
27. Parent participation: The CLC has a Parent Teachers Association that helps raise awareness among other workers on the importance of education.
28. Strengths: (i) Girls are opting to study further, (ii) Children finishing primary education can read and write and count well. Their achievement is comparable with those who study at schools in Indonesia, (iii) Tackling issue of child labour as more parents starting to send children to school instead of working, (iv) Teachers are trying to convince parents to stop early marriage of girls, (v) Children are in a safer environment and parents feel more comfortable when they are in school. This benefits plantation workers in the long term as their employees' productivity improves when children are getting an education, (vi) Better awareness of health and hygiene in the community,

(vii) Education has multiple effects as it is the first step to make them legal. The consulate gives them birth certificates and passports, which ultimately helps them get a visa and work legally in Malaysia. (viii) The CLCs also run vocational skills that teach children cookery, painting, knitting and sewing. The Indonesian government also provides funds to buy equipment for those taking up these courses. (ix) The CLCs are trying to make parents understand the importance of education to break the cycle of poverty.

29. Weaknesses/ challenges: (i) The CLC lacks enough teachers. (ii) Children between 12 and 17 years work illegally in farms and there isn't much information on them, (iii) Parents push children into working.
30. Opportunities: (i) Encourage more students to pursue higher education in Indonesia.
31. Constraints: Children and families without visas are under threat of being detained and this could lead to low attendance.
32. Observations: The Indonesian CLCs are a model for alternative education that can be adopted throughout Malaysia. The government's aggressive pursuit of education for its nationals is commendable and reflected in the community's, be it teachers or Indonesian government officials, priority over education.
33. Contact - **Galih Satria**, Teacher

(ii) CLC at Pegagau Estate, Tawau

1. Brief background - The CLC was established in July 2013 to provide higher education.
2. Profile - All are Indonesian children
3. Student enrolment - 50 students
4. Grades, ages - Grades 7 to 9
5. Subjects taught - Religious studies, Bahasa Indonesian, mathematics, science, social science, Physical Education and English.
6. Curriculum used - Indonesian national curriculum
7. Textbooks - Indonesian government provides the books
8. Term dates - July to June

9. Timings - 2pm-5.30pm
10. Typical day - 1.5 hours of each class
11. Gender ratio - Equal number of girls and boys
12. Number of classrooms - Three classes
13. Social and economic background of the students - Parents work in plantations
14. Fees charged - Free education
15. Meals provided if any - No
16. Number of teachers - Four teachers
17. Salaries for teachers - Equivalent of RM4200 per month
18. Education level of the teachers - Teachers are graduates from Indonesia.
19. Teacher training - Teachers go through training once a year and the programmes are conducted in Sabah by the Indonesian MoE.
20. Socio-economic background of the teachers - Teachers are from low income backgrounds from Indonesia.
21. Certification/ accreditation - The same certificates issued in Indonesian public schools are given at the CLCs.
22. Centre facilities and infrastructure - There is a small library in one of the teacher's homes.
23. Funding - All costs are borne by the Indonesian government
24. Dropouts if any - Yes, some drop out because they get married or move to another plantation.
25. What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - They continue their studies in the home town and teachers help students get scholarships.
26. How many passed out so far - None yet.

27. Parent participation - There is a PTA that encourages parents to send children to the centres.
28. Strengths: (i) Children are motivated and more confident. (ii) The CLC conducts classes three times a week for undocumented children between 12 and 13 years of age and teach them Bahasa and math. (iii) The CLC has life skills training like stitching bags and so on.
29. Weaknesses/ challenges: (i) Parents prefer to send children to work instead of studying. (ii) The CLC needs more teachers as some teachers teach at different centres and it gets very tiring for them to commute long distances using motorcycles provided by the consulate.
30. Opportunities: CLCs should consider enrolling children who are not Indonesians like undocumented or Filipino migrants and provide them with certificates when they complete.
31. Contact - **Galih Satria**, Teacher

(iii) Holy Trinity Catholic Church CLC, Tawau

1. Brief background - Holy Trinity Catholic Church CLC was started in July 2011 in collaboration with the Indonesian consulate and is one of the few CLCs located outside palm oil plantations. It was initiated by the Good Shepherd Sisters church because so many children in the town areas were not able to access education, unlike the plantation schools. Initially the CLC was only teaching the children reading, writing and arithmetic. But when headmaster Francis Kamuntah, a Malaysian retired government official from the wildlife department, took charge, he changed the system of education and insisted the children should study further and take exams.
2. Profile - The CLC accepts only children of legal Indonesian migrant workers
3. Student enrolment - 204 pupils
4. Grades, ages - Children from 6 to 14 years old study from Grade 1 to 6. Initially some were as old as 18 in Grade 6 but that no longer happens with the level of education improving. The CLC plans to start Grades 7 to 9.
5. Subjects taught - The nine subjects taught include Bahasa Indonesia, math, geography, social science, civics, religious studies, art, physical education and English. The Malaysian government gave permission to set up the CLC on the condition that one Malaysian subject be included. Hence Bahasa Malay and civics are taught. The CLC has both Islamic and Christian religious studies.

6. Curriculum used - Indonesian national curriculum
7. Textbooks - Provided by the Indonesian government
8. Term dates - July to June
9. Timings - 7.30am to 12.45pm. Except on Fridays, they operate only till 11.30 pm so students can attend Friday prayers.
10. Typical day - 45 minutes of each class.
11. Gender ratio - Equal number of girls and boys.
12. Number of classrooms - The CLC has seven classrooms with and one staff room.
13. Social and economic background of the students - Parents are poor and work in plantations, car workshops and vegetable farms to make ends meet.
14. Fees charged - RM30 per month but sometimes they do not charge anything, depending on the parents' affordability.
15. Meals provided if any - None.
16. Number of teachers - Nine teachers. Of this, eight are locally recruited Indonesian teachers while one Indonesian teacher is employed under the G2G agreement. The Indonesian consulate plans to send two more teachers from Indonesia for elementary and high school classes.
17. Salaries for teachers - RM500 per month
18. Education level of the teachers - Teachers have been educated in Indonesia or Malaysia. Some were born here and have finished secondary school. They are encouraged to enrol in distant learning courses in Indonesia to become graduates and are provided scholarships to study further.
19. Teacher training - Twice a year trainers from Indonesia come down and train them. The seminars are facilitated by Indonesian education ministry.
20. Socio-economic background of the teachers - Teachers are all Indonesians and from low income families.
21. Certification/ accreditation - The same certificates issued in Indonesian public schools are given to students.

22. Centre facilities and infrastructure - The CLC has sports facilities like a badminton court, computers and projectors. A new canteen is being constructed.
23. Funding - The church pays for all utilities like water and maintenance. The Indonesian consulate pays for teachers' salaries. A yearly fund is also given by the consulate for operations. RM1100 is given monthly by another church for the CLC.
24. Dropouts if any - Yes, only when parents move elsewhere.
25. What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - Half of the students have gone back to Indonesia to study further.
26. How many passed out so far - 99 have passed. In 2014, 101 students appeared for the Indonesian primary six exams and only two failed.
27. Parent participation - None yet but parents are called to inform progress of the children.
28. Strengths: (i) Parents are more aware of education, (ii) The CLC offers religious teachings for Christians and Muslims, (iii) It's spacious, offers better sport opportunities, (iv) More classrooms unlike other CLCs (v) Focus on hygiene and discipline among students.
29. Weaknesses/ challenges: (i) The CLC is not given the highest priority by the Indonesian consulate and salaries are delayed sometimes by as long as six months. The CLC needs at least RM8000 per month from the consulate to run the centre and pay salaries, (ii) It doesn't accept children of illegal Indonesian workers or undocumented children, many of whom are living in the town areas and do not have access to schools.
30. Opportunities: (i) There are plans to open secondary classes in 2015 and have already registered 28 students, (ii) The CLC helps facilitate registration of documents like birth certificates
31. Constraints: Despite the G2G agreement between the prime ministers of Malaysia and Indonesia, local authorities like the Sabah Education Department have said they need license to operate.
32. Observations: The generosity of the church and the commitment of individuals like the headmaster are ensuring that the CLC is well run and managed. Unlike most CLCs inside plantations that have large class sizes as well as jostle for space and time with the Humana centres, the Holy Trinity Church is spacious, has more classrooms and

hence provides a more conducive learning environment. There is a genuine effort by the managers to prioritise children's education and developmental needs. With plans to introduce secondary classes, the CLC will provide better learning opportunities. However, the CLC's success hinges on the dedication and vision of one man. If more like-minded people were part of the programme along with better support from the Indonesian consulate, it would ensure better success in the long term.

33. Contact - **Francis Kamuntah**, Founder

6. ALCs - Faith-based NGOs

(i) Hope Learning Centre in Penampang, Kota Kinabalu

1. Brief background - The learning Centre was started in 2007 by pastor Michael Liman and his wife, Lolita Rachel Giling. Both are from the Dusun community in Sabah. The ALC works in collaboration with the Bright Hope Learning centre in Kuala Lumpur, which is a registered NGO. Classes were run in a church initially. It was then moved out to a bigger premises nearby and is located in two buildings. The classes were taught in Bahasa until 2014, when the ALC decided to switch to English.



Children of Filipino refugees and undocumented children sitting on the floor and studying at the Hope Learning Centre in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

Source: Preeti Kannan

2. Profile - The centre's students are mostly Filipino refugees or IMM13 card holders and undocumented children. It also accepts children of legal or illegal Indonesian migrant workers. Another category includes children of mixed marriages, where one parent is Malaysian. But since their marriage wasn't legally recognised, they have been unable to register their child's birth.
3. Student enrolment - 385-430 students, of which 385 come regularly.
4. Grades, ages - 5 years to 18 year-old students study in kindergarten to Grade 6. They are grouped based on their abilities rather than by their ages.
5. Subjects taught - BM, science, math, English and art
6. Curriculum used - They have their own teaching plan. They use textbooks provided by a Singaporean NGO and books published in Malaysia.
7. Term dates - January to November
8. Timings - Two separate sessions are held for different sets of students.
Morning session - 7.45am to 11am
Afternoon session - 11.45am - 3pm.
9. Typical day - 45 minutes of each class
10. Gender ratio - Equal number of boys and girls
11. Number of classrooms - The ALC has six classrooms, where two grades sit in one class. Three each in the two buildings.
12. Social and economic background of the students - Parents are relatively poor and work in coffee shops or as labourers.
13. Fees charged - RM40 per month
14. Meals provided if any - None
15. Number of teachers - 10 teachers
16. Textbooks - Students buy books themselves.
17. Salaries for teachers - RM400 to RM750

18. Education level of the teachers -Some have worked previously as nurses before becoming teachers. They are graduates, former students from the ALC and some have completed their SPM.
19. Teacher training - A Singapore-based organisation conducts training once or twice a year to improve their teaching skills, helps them make lesson plans and manage students. The free training takes place over three days.
20. Socio-economic background of the teachers - The teachers include seven locals and three former students. Most of them are there for the passion. They supplement their income by selling food.
21. Certification/ accreditation - The centre gives a certificate when they leave the school. For kindergarten children, they even have a graduation ceremony.
22. Centre facilities and infrastructure - When there are sponsors, they organise sports days and free medical checkups.
23. Funding - They rely on money raised through fees and from donors.
24. Dropouts if any - Some stop attending when they go back to their country to renew their parents' working pass.
25. What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - Some go on to work. The older students work in coffee shops on weekends and some return to their country.
26. How many passed out so far - About 70 have finished so far
27. Parent participation - Parents come to the centre only on special events.
28. Strengths: (i) There has been a change in the students and the community's attitude towards education (ii) Experts are invited to talk about child sexual abuse.
29. Weaknesses/ challenges: (i) The ALC is not recognised (ii) Classrooms are congested and gets very warm (iii) The number of students in a class is quite high and eight students have to use one table. (iv) The lack of space means two grades have to be accommodated in one classroom. (v) Teachers struggle to make ends meet.
30. Opportunities: The ALC has plans to start vocational training and teach life skills.

31. Constraints: Students get picked up by police and immigration authorities for not holding valid permits.
32. Observations: The ALC was among the better run and relatively better funded faith-based ALCs visited in Kota Kinabalu. Its large enrolment reflected the trust parents placed in the centre and the vital role it played in the community in providing education and reaching out to children all of all faiths. All the children had uniforms. But as many as 75 children share a class which will make concentration difficult for students and teachers and impact their learning. Students also have to sit on the floor for long hours and endure the heat.
33. Contact - **Michael Liman**, Founder

(ii) The Bethel Kids in Penampang, Kota Kinabalu

1. Brief background - The centre was started in 2009 by Peter Jacob Bidion, a pastor and trained church counsellor because of his love for education. It is located in the pastor's home and was started with two children.
2. Profile - It caters to both Filipino and undocumented refugees, mainly the Sulk and Bajau, Indonesians and Pakistani refugees.
3. Student enrolment - About 75 students. This has fallen from about 106 last year because many have been resettled.
4. Grades, ages - Pre KG, KG, Grades 1 to 6. The grades 2 and 3 are combined into one class, while Grades 4, 5 and 6 are taught together.
5. Subjects taught - English, mathematics, BM
6. Curriculum used - Malaysian curriculum
7. Term dates - January to November
8. Timings - 8.30am to 12 noon
9. Typical day - One day is dedicated for a subject. For instance, English is taught on Mondays and BM on Tuesdays. They have short half hour breaks.
10. Gender ratio - Equal number of boys and girls
11. Number of classrooms - Five rooms in the house have been converted into classrooms.



Source: Preeti Kannan

A typical day at The Bethel Kids in Kota Kinabalu, where children of refugees and undocumented migrants are getting an education at the house of a generous pastor, who runs the centre.

12. Social and economic background of the students - Parents work in vegetable farms or are employed in the construction industry. Some Pakistani refugees are also traders.
13. Fees charged - RM50 per month but some cannot afford to pay.
14. Meals provided if any - Used to provide food three times a week but it is now given only once due to shortage of funds. Meals are cooked in the house.
15. Number of teachers - Five teachers
16. Textbooks - The centre buys the books and those who can afford, pay for it.
17. Salaries for teachers - RM350 to RM500
18. Education level of the teachers - Teachers are graduates. They have completed their SPM.
19. Teacher training - The ALC has developed its own in-house training and guide for teachers focusing on character building. Teachers are given pointers on how to tackle problems, discipline children, how to work together since they are from different backgrounds. The training is imparted once every two months or according to needs.

20. Socio-economic background of the teachers - Teachers are Malaysians.
21. Certification/ accreditation - The ALC conducts exams every semester and gives its own certificates.
22. Centre facilities and infrastructure - It has a small library.
23. Funding - Raise money through donations.
24. Dropouts if any - Some leave because they fall sick due to lack of food.
25. What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - They go back to Indonesia or Philippines to continue higher education.
26. How many passed out so far - More than 35.
27. Parent participation - During presentation of school report, the ALC calls the parents and speaks to them. Parents also help the pastor's family in the house.
28. Strengths: There is a perceived change in attitude towards education and the ALC is helping build the students character.
29. Weaknesses/ challenges: The centre is unable to accommodate more students. It has more than 70 children on the waiting list.
30. Opportunities: The centre plans to start Form 1 in 2016.
31. Constraints: Children drop out because the families are unable to afford the basic needs like food.
32. Observations: Motivated by his passion for education, the pastor and his family have unconditionally opened their home to the children. While it is a rare and noble deed, the children need sports and other recreational activities so they can have a well-rounded development. Children would benefit greatly from a bigger premise which gives the semblance of a school environment, even if it is only an informal learning centre. The ALC should include more subjects like science and social studies so children are exposed to subjects other than languages. It should review its method of teaching one subject a day as it is not conducive for development and learning when there is a lapse of three days or a week between a subject.
33. Contact - **Peter Jacob Bidion**, Founder

(iii) Grace Alternative Guidance Centre, Tawau

1. Brief background - The Grace Church ministry located in Tawau started teaching children from 2011 in its own premise because of its interest in educating them. The learning centre was moved to a separate place in 2014 since a bigger place was needed to teach them.
2. Profile - The centre accepts undocumented children and others who cannot access regular schools. Some children have birth certificates but their nationality cannot be determined. Some of the parents are Malaysian citizens but haven't registered their children's birth either because they were born at home or the parents haven't registered their marriages.
3. Student enrolment - 300 children
4. Grades, ages - Children from 5 to 14 years study from Grades 1 to 6.
5. Subjects taught - English, math, BM, science and Chinese
6. Curriculum used - Malaysian curriculum
7. Textbooks - If the children can afford books, the centre ask them to buy. Otherwise, they look for sponsors or seek help from the church.
8. Term dates - January to November
9. Timings - Two separate batches of classes are held to accommodate more students.
Morning session: 7.30am - 12 noon
Afternoon session: 12.30pm -5pm
10. Typical day - 45 minutes to 1 hour of class.
11. Gender ratio - Equal number of girls and boys
12. Number of classrooms - Five classrooms
13. Social and economic background of the students - Parents work in the construction industry mostly.
14. Fees charged - RM30 per month. But half of the parents cannot pay so the church helps.

15. Meals provided if any - None
16. Number of teachers - Nine teachers. Some of them work full time and some part time.
17. Salaries for teachers - The centre did not wish to disclose.
18. Education level of the teachers - Most are high school graduates and have appeared for SPM.
19. Teacher training - No specialised training but they learn on the job.
20. Socio-economic background of the teachers - Teachers are all Malaysians. Some of them are church volunteers, who help in teaching. Most of them have never worked as teachers.
21. Certification/ accreditation - The centre has applied to be registered and the MoE has accepted its application. This is, however, only the first step in a long list of procedures before it is recognised.
22. Centre facilities and infrastructure - The centre has some computers
23. Funding - The centre is run with the help of church funds and individual donors. The Rotary club of Tawau has helped to buy computers.
24. Dropouts if any - Yes when parents move to another place
25. What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - The first batch is yet to pass.
26. How many passed out so far - The centre has started primary six for the first time in 2015.
27. Parent participation - Not known
28. Strengths: The centre said parents were keen to ensure their children received an education and this was reflected on its increasing numbers.
29. Weaknesses/ challenges: (i) They do not have space for all the students. (ii) Despite the increasing awareness in education, parents pressure the children to stop going to school and work (iii) The centre needs more teachers because regulation doesn't permit large class sizes.

30. Opportunities: (i) Possible licensing by the MoE. (ii) Its network of church members, volunteers and local organisations can help raise the profile of the work it does.
31. Threats: Children quitting because of pressure to work.
32. Observations: The centre's support from the church and local organisations like the Rotary Club, which many centres lack, is helping the ALC sustain itself and earn the trust of parents who send their children to the centre. If recognised by the MoE, it would be the first of its kind certification by the government in licensing alternative learning centres and could encourage many more such centres to follow suit.
33. Contact - **Chok Fuilin**, Founder

7. PKPKM Learning Centres

(i) ALC for the children of undocumented and Bajau Laut in Semporna, Tawau

1. Brief background - The learning centre in Semporna was set up in 2012 to reach out to the underprivileged in Sabah, who were unable to access any schools.
2. Profile - The centre accepts children of different ethnic groups like the Suluks, Bajau and the Bajau Laut.
3. Student enrolment - 303
4. Grades, ages - Children between the ages of 4 and 15 years study from kindergarten to Grade 6.
5. Subjects taught - BM, English, maths, social science, moral studies and arts
6. Curriculum used - Malaysian curriculum
7. Textbooks - The NGO provides text books
8. Term dates - January to November
9. Timings - Morning session: 7am to 11am for kindergarten.
Afternoon session: 12noon-4pm from Grades 1 to 6
10. Typical day - Each class is two hours long

11. Gender ratio - 70 per cent are girls
12. Number of classrooms - Two classrooms
13. Social and economic background of the students - Parents are from low income and work as fishermen and labourers.
14. Fees charged - RM20 per month
15. Meals provided if any - None
16. Number of teachers - Three
17. Salaries for teachers - RM800
18. Education level of the teachers - Teachers have done their SPM.
19. Teacher training - Sabah Education Board conducts training once a year on teaching techniques, how to teach English and gives tips on making lesson plans.
20. Socio-economic background of the teachers - Teachers are all Malaysians. They travel between centres and teach in the morning on one island and another in the afternoon.
21. Certification/ accreditation - None
22. Centre facilities and infrastructure - There is a computer in the centre
23. Funding - The centre depends on companies and individual donors.
24. Dropouts if any - Yes some leave due to financial conditions. For some families, even paying the RM20 fee a month is difficult and they leave.
25. What do the students end up doing once they complete at the centre - Some of them go to the Philippines to study further as they have family there. Some join the work force.
26. How many passed out so far - Not sure.
27. Parent participation - The PTA meets once every three to four months and discusses the school and children's progress.

28. Strengths: Teachers felt the children's education levels have improved.
29. Weaknesses/ challenges: The centre has dropouts but due to economic conditions, teachers said it was hard to stop them from leaving. At the beginning of the academic year many students join but the numbers drastically fall as the year progresses.
30. Opportunities: (i) PKPKM plans to open two more schools. (ii) They are also looking for sponsors to fund higher education. Children, especially the Bajau Laut, are taught how to protect the coral reefs by environmental agency, WWF. There have been reports of sea gypsies using destructive practices like dynamites to fish, which destroys the marina eco system, (iv) The Philippines embassy supports the work of the PKPKM and facilitates fund raising events.
31. Threats: Children dropping out to work.
32. Observations: The centre in Tawau looked spacious and bright. In one of the classrooms, an older primary section, there were five children sitting unsupervised and copying notes from a blackboard. For almost an hour, the students were on their own. There were barely 20 children in the entire centre although teachers said 80 remained from the 303 who had enrolled. An interview with the teachers revealed the need for structured learning programmes and objectives. The ALC needs to consider steps to ensure children were not quitting mid way and possibly meet with parents regularly to help resolve this issue.
33. Contact - **Rosalyn Venning**, Founder

Acronyms

AEP	Alternative Education Programmes
AISM	Australian International School Malaysia
ALCs	Alternative Learning Centres
BM	Bahasa Melayu
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CLCs	Community Learning Centres
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Chin Student Organisation
DCF	Dignity for Children Foundation
EFA	Education for All
EMGS	Education Malaysia Global Services
ESL	English as a Second Language
FSTF S/L	Federal State Task Force (Sabah/ Labuan)
G2G	Government-to-Government
GED	General Education Development
GNI	Gross National Income
HCASS	Humana Child Aid Society Sabah
IDEAS	Institute for Democratic and Economic Affairs
IELTS	International English Language Testing
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
IPG	Institut Pendidikan Guru
ISKL	International School of Kuala Lumpur
IUMW	International University of Malaya-Wales
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSRI	Malaysian Social Research Institute
NGOs	Non-government organisations
NSC	National Security Council
NRD	National Registration Department
Open EMIS	Open Education Management Information System
PKPKM	Persatuan Kebajikan Pendidikan Kanak-Kanak Miskin
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RCI	Royal Commission of Inquiry
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
RSPO	Roundtable Sustainable Palm Oil
SBJK	Sekolah Bimbingan Jalinan Kasih
SDH	Sekolah Dalam Hospital
SHG	Sekolah Henry Gurney
SI	Sekolah Integriti
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia
SSC	Sahabat Support Centre
SIJB	Soroptimist International Club in Johor Bahru
SIKK	Sekolah Indonesia Kota Kinabalu
STEP	Skills Training and Education Programme
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
Organisation	
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
ZAM	Zomi Association of Malaysia
ZEC	Zomi Education Centre

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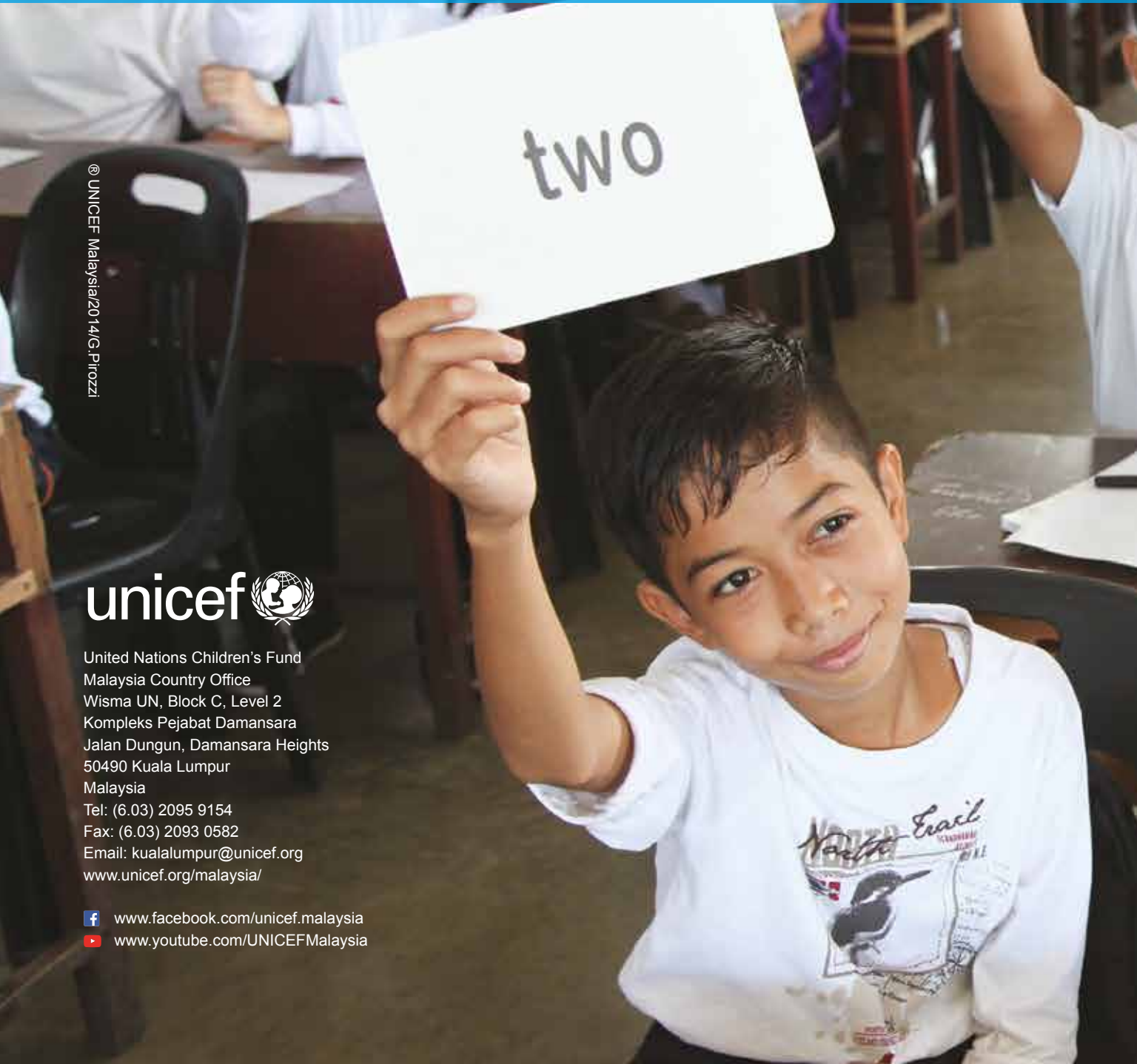
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List of people or organisations interviewed

Name of person	Designation	Organisation	Place of meeting	Date
Hau Suan Khai	Coordinator	Zomi Education Centre	Jalan Talalla Kuala Lumpur	13-05-2015
Jacob Thang	Head teacher	Zomi Education Centre	Jalan Talalla Kuala Lumpur	13-05-2015
Robert Siang Lian Thang	Chairman	Chin Student Organisation	Jalan Imbi, Kuala Lumpur	14-05-2015
Rhonda Kortum	Volunteer Administrator	Chin Student Organisation	(Phone interview)	20-05-2015
Niaz Ahmad	Programme Officer	UNHCR Malaysia	UNHCR Office, Kuala Lumpur	18-05-2015
Mimi Zarina Azmin	Education Associate, Education Unit	UNHCR Malaysia	UNHCR Office, Kuala Lumpur	18-05-2015
Dr Victor P. Karunan	Senior Social Policy Specialist	UNICEF Malaysia	UNICEF, Kuala Lumpur	27-05-2015
Dr Nur Anuar Abdul Muthalib	Former Education Specialist	UNICEF Malaysia	UNICEF, Kuala Lumpur	27-05-2015
Yolanda Lopez	Programme Officer	Sahabat Support Centre (SSC)	Dewan Tasik Ampang, Kuala Lumpur	28-05-2015
Htoisan Nhqum (Teacher Sam)	Coordinator	Kachin Learning Centre	Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur	29-05-2015
Deborah Henry	Founder	Fugee School	Jalan Jernai 2, Kuala Lumpur	02-06-2015
Mariam Abdi Rahim	Student	Fugee School	Jalan Jernai 2, Kuala Lumpur	02-06-2015
Pastor Michael Moey	Founder and director	Ruth Education Centre	Cheras, Kuala Lumpur	03-06-2015
Yin Wei Chong	Education Associate, Education Unit	UNHCR Malaysia	UNHCR, Kuala Lumpur	03-06-2015
Trine Engskov Paludan	Former staff	Ideas Academy	KLCC Suria Mall	05-06-2015
Christina Chung	Head of Education Services	Dignity for Children Foundation	Sentul, Kuala Lumpur	08-06-2015
Sivaselvi Supramaniam	Child Protection Specialist	UNICEF Malaysia	UNICEF, Kuala Lumpur	09-06-2015
Rosalyn Venning	Founder	PKPKM, Sabah	KL Sentral Mall	10-06-2015
Alexius Collette	Coach & consultant	Energise & be Energised Workshops	Bangsar Village 1	10-06-2015
Jenifer Lasimbang	Programme and Partnership Development - Sabah/ Sarawak	UNICEF Malaysia	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	16-06-2015

Name of person	Designation	Organisation	Place of meeting	Date
Haslinda binti Mohd Fauzi	Principal Assistant Secretary	NSC, Sabah (former FSTF S/L)	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	15-06-2015
Malai Fazian Azwad	Former Assistant Secretary	NSC, Sabah (former FSTF S/L)	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	15-06-2015
Roholmen	Student	Kg. Numbak Learning Centre	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	15-06-2015
Nazrulla bin Hasan	Student	Kg. Numbak Learning Centre	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	15-06-2015
Norika Binti Raup	Student	Kg. Telipok Learning Centre	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	15-06-2015
Charmalyn Kadir	Parent	Kg. Telipok Learning Centre	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	15-06-2015
Adela Abdullah	Parent	Kg. Telipok Learning Centre	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	15-06-2015
Yakub Buldae	Teacher	Kg. Telipok Learning Centre	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	15-06-2015
Amina	Head Teacher	Kg. Numbak Learning Centre	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	15-06-2015
Jool Bin Ogg Ong	English Teacher	Kg. Numbak Learning Centre	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	15-06-2015
Nor Shila	Bahasa Melayu Teacher	Kg. Numbak Learning Centre	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	15-06-2015
Andhika Bambang Supeno	Minister Counselor	Indonesian consulate	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	16-06-2015
Suwandi Permana	Coordinator CLC/ Liaison Officer	Indonesian consulate	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	16-06-2015
Dr Jamal Kastari	Exco Member, Humana Board	Humana Child Aid Society Sabah (HCASS)	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	16-06-2015
Viswalingam Suppiah	Vice Chairman	Humana Child Aid Society Sabah (HCASS)	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	16-06-2015
Marilou Salgatar Chin	Project Director	Stairway to Hope	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	17-06-2015
Frenie Victor	Teacher	Hope Learning Centre	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	17-06-2015
Peter Jacob Bidion	Founder	The Bethel Kids in Penampang	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	17-06-2015
Dr Vincent Pang	Professor & Dean, Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning	Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS)	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	17-06-2015
Jaw Tu Hkawng	Teacher	Kachin Learning Centre	Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur	24-06-2015

Name of person	Designation	Organisation	Place of meeting	Date
Lu Mai Tashi	Grandparent/ guardian	Kachin Learning Centre	Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur	24-06-2015
Nur Jamila	Student	Refugee CLC	Kuala Lumpur	25-06-2015
Soraya Alkaff-Gilmour	Project coordinator	Soroptimist International Club of Johor Bahru	Johor Baru (Interview via email)	03-07-2015
Mohammed Hussein	Student	Sahabat Support Centre (SSC)	Ampang Point, Kuala Lumpur	06-07-2015
Mohammed Yousaf	Parent	Sahabat Support Centre (SSC)	Ampang Point, Kuala Lumpur	06-07-2015
Mariam Abdi Rahim	Parent	Sahabat Support Centre (SSC)	Ampang Point, Kuala Lumpur	06-07-2015
Foroogh Naghashzadeh	Teacher	Sahabat Support Centre (SSC)	Ampang Point, Kuala Lumpur	06-07-2015
Hanan Kbiaa	Teacher	Sahabat Support Centre (SSC)	Ampang Point, Kuala Lumpur	06-07-2015
Alvin C Malasig	Third Secretary and Vice Consul	Philippine Embassy	Changkat Kia Peng, Kuala Lumpur	21-07-2015
Jan Mohd	Acting Executive Director	Humana Child Aid Society Sabah (HCASS)	Tawau, Sabah	27-07-2015
Aida Binthi Madikala	Head Teacher	Sungai Balung ALC	Tawau, Sabah	27-07-2015
Rozaidi bin Mohd Arshad	Assistant Manager	Sawit Kinabalu, Pegagau	Tawau, Sabah	27-07-2015
Lina Hasnawati	Teacher	Pegagau CLC	Semporna, Sabah	27-07-2015
Christie Salazar	Treasurer	Humana Child Aid Society Sabah (HCASS)	Tawau, Sabah	27-07-2015
Nerisah Ile	Teacher	Holy Trinity CLC	Tawau, Sabah	28-07-2015
Francis Kamuntah	Head Teacher	Holy Trinity CLC	Tawau, Sabah	28-07-2015
Dian Ratri Astuti	Vice Consul	Indonesian Consulate	Tawau, Sabah	28-07-2015
Galih Satria	Teacher	Sungai Balung CLC	Tawau, Sabah	27-07-2015
Chok Fuilin	Founder	Grace Alternative Guidance Centre	Tawau, Sabah	27-07-2015
Kirushanth Ramesh	Student	IUMW University	Kuala Lumpur	14-08-2015
Joseph Phun UK Thang	Student	Lim Kok Wing University	Kuala Lumpur	14-08-2015



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