

Budget 2022: A Resilient National Recovery for Women

Recommendations to empower women and families across employment, livelihoods, and healthcare in a post pandemic society



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This report by Women's Aid Organisation (WAO) is co-authored by Kiran Kaur and Anis Farid, with assistance by Abinaya Mohan and input provided by Yu Ren Chung, Rusni Tajari, and other WAO colleagues. To mainstream gender-responsive budgeting in Malaysia, WAO as part of the Gender Budget Group are jointly organising a series of offline workshops and other advocacy activities around the theme. Our advocacy work is generously funded by Yayasan Sime Darby, who bear no responsibility for the contents of this report.

About WAO

Since 1982, Women's Aid Organisation has provided free shelter, counselling, and crisis support to women and children who experience abuse. We help women and their children rebuild their lives, after surviving domestic violence, rape, trafficking, and other atrocities. Learning from women's experiences, we advocate to improve public policies and shift public mindsets. Together, we change lives. For enquiries, you may contact us at info@wao.org.my.

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SUMMARY

This is the second iteration of Women's Aid Organisation's Budget Report. To begin, we summarise our assessment of last year's budget and allocations, drawing from three major findings.

Our assessment of Budget 2021:

- 1. The structure of financial assistance disbursement and the qualifying criteria needs to be more inclusive of women from marginalised and vulnerable groups such as single mothers, survivors of gender based violence, women and girls with disability, and must be sustainable.
- 2. There is a need for improved tracking of government programmes and fiscal policy. Assessment of the budget is made difficult by the lack of sex-disaggregated data as well as lack of transparency in the monitoring and evaluation of allocations and spending specifically relating to women and families.
- 3. In Budget 2021, the Domestic Violence (DV) specific allocation of RM21 million was a welcome investment. However, it must be acknowledged that it was limited in investments to effectively address long-term gender gaps.
 - A. Additionally, the monitoring and evaluation process of key allocations such as the has not been made public leaving stakeholders, civil society organisations and the public unaware of the impact it may have had in supporting DV survivors.
 - B. Agencies such as Laksana who have been tasked with monitoring the progress of budgetary allocations must be transparent in its findings.

In planning for Budget 2022:

It is crucial to focus on the ways women can be supported to promote resilience as we move towards national recovery. As covered in our last budget report, women have been hit hard by the pandemic¹, are more likely to lose their jobs, and are expected to absorb the increased need for unpaid care work. Gender stereotypes both at home and in the workplace have made it even more difficult for women. This holds true, even when accounting for the ways the Government has attempted to alleviate the burden of the pandemic through the introduction of stimulus packages. WAO found that women are especially impacted by three major areas. As such we propose recommendations based on the following three pillars for Budget 2022 to address crucial and crosscutting gender gaps in our society.

¹ Women's Aid Organisation (2020). "A Better County for Women." Accessed from https://bit.ly/2WO6RUp

I. Domestic Violence (DV) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

The past two years have seen multiple Movement Control Orders (MCOs) and enforced confinement at home in efforts to manage the pandemic. This has exacerbated instances of domestic violence and gender-based violence across Malaysia.² Additionally, we must recognise that the pandemic has made it increasingly difficult and costly to ensure the continued availability of service provisions to survivors.

Reflecting on last year's allocations and in moving forward to better empowering women, we centre our recommendations for Budget 2022 on strengthening available resources and support services for survivors, strengthening the capacity of these support services, and helping essential service providers cope with new circumstances we live in.

Our key recommendations are as follows:

1. Allocate RM50 million to the Ministry of Health and public hospitals specifically towards One-Stop Crisis

Centres, including implementing a monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

- 2. Allocate RM30.6 million to implement training modules and management standards to train front-line responders (police, medical, and social welfare officers), and ensure the efficiency and standardization of gender-based violence case management.
- 3. Devote RM153.2 million in total to strengthen the capacity of social workers in Malaysia, including a designation of 4,000 spots for the hiring of social workers, child protectors, and crisis support personnel. This will also include an allocation of RM1.2 million to the Ministry of Education annually to increase the number of students studying social work.
- 4. Invest RM22 million to expand the scope of services of Legal Aid Departments for them to better assist B40, lower middle-income groups, and non-Malaysians.

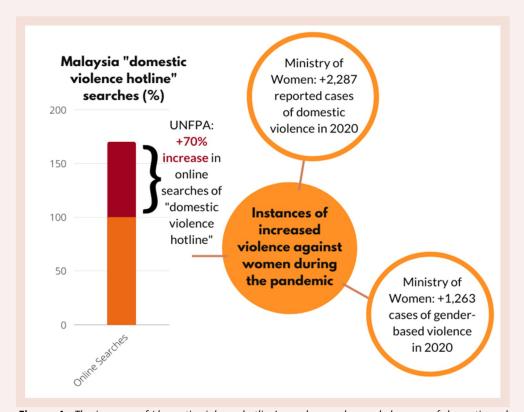


Figure 1. The increase of 'domestic violence hotline' searches, and recorded cases of domestic and gender-based violence according to UNFPA and MoW/KPWKM statistics. Sources: Ministry of Women statistics from https://bit.ly/3CzTt6N and https://bit.ly/3AyBwU5; UNFPA Statistics from https://bit.ly/3iAejee

² View Figure 1.

- 5. Allocate RM8 million to the Department of Social Welfare (JKM) to ensure Domestic Violence shelters can run in compliance with COVID-19 quarantine and SOP requirements.
- 6. Set up a Crisis Preparedness Response Budget of RM25 million for women and children, to be allocated to strengthen strategic partnerships between ministries such as the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (KPWKM) and Ministry of Health.
- 7. Allocate emergency funds of RM5 million for services such as national and NGO hotlines in times of crisis, where demand for some hotlines may increase more than three fold.
- 8. Allocate RM30 million to KPWKM to set up crisis shelters for domestic violence survivors. In Budget 2021, RM21 million was allocated to KPWKM; however the programme could not be implemented due to MCO construction restrictions.

II. Employment and job security

The extant gender gaps in employment require more investment to properly address the lack of gendersensitive hiring incentives implemented and decreased childcare support last year. As it stands, women only make 38.8% of the formal workforce in Malaysia.³ As such, childcare remains one of the biggest barriers to employment for women, compounded by the burden of indirect care work, such as cooking and cleaning, of which women do more than double of men.⁴ Budget 2022 must consider the informal workforce, and the ways in which we can better support these employees -- nearly half of which are vulnerable women. Measures must be implemented to work toward formalising jobs and reducing precarity within informal sectors.

In doing so, we recommend the following:

1. Raise awareness on the burden of unpaid care

- work that disproportionately affects women as part of the series of campaigns the MoW highlighted they would run as part of their 2021-2025 Strategic Plan for Women.⁵
- Invest RM20 million in upskilling and education programmes for women to better equip them with necessary skills to enter the formal workforce.
- 3. Allocate RM247.5 million for childcare programmes, including RM60 million to build community childcare centres, RM49.6 million to assist childcare centres in becoming SOP-friendly, and RM157.5 million in allowance for childcare centres and JKM registered babysitters for essentials, such as food and diapers, to reduce the burden of costs on parents.
- Implement incentive-based hiring programmes to promote the (re-)hiring of women, targeting especially vulnerable groups such as single mothers, with a budget allocation of RM776 million.

III. Mental Healthcare

We must address the current gaps in mental healthcare which will allow us to emerge from the pandemic more resilient. With nearly 30% of our population suffering from a mental health issue as of 2016⁶, rates of mental illness have only soared following the onset of the pandemic, with those reporting suicidal tendencies increasing from 30% to 40% from 2020 to 2021. In the first quarter of 2021, 336 suicide cases were reported in Malaysia—more than 50% of the cumulative number of cases reported in the whole of 2020.8 A more robust mental health budget allocation is key especially for vulnerable populations such as women who have experienced violence, as they are three times more likely to suffer from a mental illness. 9

³ Department of Statistics Malaysian (DOSM) (2021). "Principal Statistics of Labour Force Q4." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3jecbrz

⁴ Khazanah Research Institute (2020). "Work in an Evolving Malaysia." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3rOW1J6

⁵ Ministry of Women (2021). "Pelan Strategik." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3jgnoYH

⁶ Ministry of Health (2016). "Malaysian Mental Healthcare Performance." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3yxyUFm

⁷ Ainaa Aiman for Free Malaysia Today (25 June 2021). "The call for help is getting louder, says Befrienders." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3A3SqtH

⁸ Jerry Choong for Malay Mail (29 June 2021). "Covid-19: On average, almost four suicide cases reported to police every day in first quarter of 2021, says Dr Noor Hisham." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3jgybWr

⁹ Sarah Research for the Guardian. "Departic abuse visiting more likely to suffer more alligner, study." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3ye50lb

⁹ Sarah Boseley for the Guardian. "Domestic abuse victims more likely to suffer mental illness - study." Accessed from https://bit.ly/2Vp5Qlb

- 1. Increase the mental health budget from 0.98% of the national healthcare budget to 2.4% of the national healthcare budget, resulting in an allocation of RM765.6 million. This would put our mental health budget on par with international standards.¹⁰
 - A. From this, RM50 million should be allocated to setting up community mental health centres (MENTARIs) to ensure that the most vulnerable populations, including women who have faced violence, the B40 community, single mothers, and refugees can have access to mental health care.
 - B. RM9.3 million to be allocated towards training more mental health professionals who are equipped to counsel and provide interventions for Domestic Violence and Gender Based Violence survivors.



INTRODUCTION

Last year, the World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Gender Gap report stated that it would take 99.5 years to close the global gender gap. 11 Following the COVID-19 pandemic and its far-reaching effects, the recently released 2021 report says that gap will now take another generation to close, totalling 135.6 years. 12 In the same report, which also measures and ranks the gender gap in countries, where Malaysia ranked 104 globally last year out of 156, we slipped 8 spots to number 112, lower than all of our ASEAN peers (last year, we were ahead of Myanmar).13

Budget 2021 allocated RM21 million towards local support centres to help address the growing problem of domestic violence. Additionally, under the MyStep programme, the Ministry of Women (KPWKM) was given an allocation of temporary hires, meant to bolster their service provision. These were welcomed.

That said, many aspects of Budget 2021 still lacked a gender lens, neglecting to address the ways in which women and girls were differently impacted, not only in terms of vulnerability to domestic violence and gender-based violence, but also access to employment, education, healthcare, and opportunities.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, with our planned goal of national recovery, it is critical now, more than ever, to address these inequalities so women and girls will not be left behind. Women, especially low-income earners, remain the hardest hit by the pandemic. If left unaddressed, these inequalities compound, perpetuating cycles of violence and poverty.

Thus, as with our last budget report, we advocate for gender-responsive budgeting.

WHAT IS GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDG-ETING (GRB)?

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is critical to ensuring that gender equality considerations are taken systematically into account in tax and spending decisions. According to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)¹⁴, genderresponsive budgeting:

- Recognises that budgets are not neutral and have different benefits on and impacts to men and women.
- Incorporates a gendered perspective and analysis into all stages of the budget cycle in order to ensure that women and girls benefit equally from government expenditure.
- Promotes gender equality by analysing who gets the most benefit from government revenue, who has the greatest and least tax burden, and what the impact of government spending is on phenomena like the unpaid care burden on women.
- May involve increasing spending in certain sectors that benefit women and girls and reduce inequality.

GRB not only considers spending, but also the impact that spending has on people. The end-goal of GRB is to create a budget that works for everyone and all sectors of the community - not just women and girls. In addressing inequalities, everyone will be better off. With that in mind, the allocations we are putting forth this year aim to better represent women and girl's needs, facilitating more involvement in the public sphere, and addressing specifically the vulnerabilities that were exacerbated by the pandemic and putting forth strategies to adequately provide support as we move into recovery.

¹¹ World Economic Forum (2020). "Global Gender Gap Report 2020." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3sF00a1 ¹² World Economic Forum (2021). "Global Gender Gap Report 2021." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3rT8HPo

¹⁴ United Nations ESCAP (2017). "Gender Responsive Budgeting in Asia and the Pacific: Key Concepts and Good Practices." Accessed from https:// bit.ly/3rNgQoi

ASSESSMENT OF GENDER-BASED ALLOCATIONS IN BUDGET 2021



1. FINANCIAL AID NEEDS RESTRUCTURING

There is a serious need to alter the structure of financial assistance disbursement and qualifying criteria to promote more inclusive, long-term, and sustainable financial relief.

Some government financial payouts included:

 RM150-200 allocated per child in low income families, with a maximum amount of RM1,000 per family - an increase compared to child aid in 2020. On a case by case basis, this aid can span for a few months.¹⁵

Budget 2021: Financial assistance for children is increased from RM100 per child with a maximum of RM450 per family, to RM150 per child aged seven to 18, or RM200 per child aged six and below, with a maximum of RM1,000 per family.			
	Children Under 6	Children Above 6	Mix of children below and above 6
**	RM400	RM300	RM350
† † †	RM600	RM450	RM500-RM550
፟ វ.វ.វ.វ.វ	RM800	RM600	RM650-RM750
፟ វ.វ.វ.វ.វ	RM1000	RM750	RM800-RM950
* ****	RM1000	RM900	RM950-RM1000

Figure 2. How much each family can expect to receive based on age and number of children.

¹⁵ Jabatan Kebajikan Malaysia (2021). "Bantuan Kanak-kanak." Accessed from https://bit.ly/2TSE67W

	Prihatin (BPN)	Prihatin 2.0	PEMERKASA	PEMULIH	Total aid re- ceived*
B40 Family	RM1,000 in April 2020, RM600 in May 2020	RM700 October 2020, RM300 in January 2021	RM500 if the applicant lost their job, paid in June 2021. An additional RM500 if they are earning less than RM1,000 a month.	RM500 in August 2021 and RM300 in December 2021. *note: those in extreme poverty to receive RM500 in August, November, and December 2021	RM3,400 (standard) RM4,600 if earning less than RM1,000 and qualify as being in extreme poverty. RM5,100 if the applicant lost their job, or is earning less than RM1,000 and is in extreme poverty.
M40 Family	RM500 in April 2020, RM500 in May 2020	RM400 in October 2020, RM200 in January 2021	-	RM250 in August 2021	RM1,850
Female Head- ed House- holds**	There was no specific aid given to single mothers, other than the one off Single Mothers Aid (Bantuan Khas Ibu Tunggal BKIT) of RM300 provided in 2020. 16				Depends on if mother falls under B40 or M40

Table 1. According to UNICEF-UNFPA's report, B40 families apportion the largest amount of household income towards food (32% per month or approximately RM588).¹⁷ This spending has decreased 9% from pre-pandemic times. This means the standard aid of RM3,400, spread over 20 months, lasts at most 5.5 months if spent only on food.

^{*}The Penjana package has not been included in this table because there were no specific aid allocations released with the package.

^{**}Additionally, the Social Welfare department website cites that Single Mothers can either apply for general aid, or aid for their children aside from the BKIT listed above. This is despite single mothers being hardest hit by the pandemic, with an unemployment rate of 32% when the pandemic first hit in May last year, as surveyed by UNICEF-UNFPA¹⁸ and 89.4% of single mothers surveyed by LPPKN falling into B40.¹⁹ It is important to realise that one-off aid is an unsustainable model to adopt in supporting single mothers, and a single mother specific assistance scheme that offers regular disbursements of financial aid is essential.

¹⁶ Jabatan Kebajikan Malaysia (2021). "Perkhidmatan Ibu Tunggal" Accessed from https://bit.ly/3Cai0Ps UNICEF-UNFPA (2021). "Families on the Edge, Issue 4." Accessed from https://uni.cf/3fqnagr

¹⁸ ibid

¹⁹ LPPKN (2020). "Household Income and Life Satisfaction of Single Mothers in Malaysia." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3C6tGmm

GOVERNMENT AID REMAINS INSUFFICIENT AND UNSUSTAINABLE

The majority of assistance is structured as inconsistent or one-off disbursements. Small and shortterm disbursements are unlikely to have a sufficient relieving impact on vulnerable groups who have lost jobs or income sources as a result of the pandemic.

The government has reported distributing 2.315 million food baskets²⁰, though YB Hannah Yeoh has pointed out that food basket allocations do not provide flexibility to meet the needs of various families.²¹ A need for more sustainable aid mechanisms, especially for food insecurity, was mentioned in UNICEF-UNFPA's March 2021 report.²²

Many vulnerable groups still remained dependent²³ on assistance from private sectors and NGOs. In February and March 2020, the WAO hotline alone recorded 24 non-gender-based violence related calls, largely constituting requests for financial and livelihood aid. This saw a tremendous increase of more than 579% after the lockdown was imposed in April and May 2020, where the hotline recorded 163 non-gender-based violence related calls.

It was found that due to the increased need of aid, the private sector also provided aid toward targeted communities during MCOs. In 2020, the Sunway group allocated RM34 million to support at least 40,000 beneficiaries, in addition to a food bank program which distributed 53,000 kilograms of food.²⁴ Another example, the MyKasih foundation²⁵, which works with corporate firms and NGOs to set up aid schemes, developed a program in July 2020 which provides aid for a period of 6 to 12 months. This assisted low income families who have been some of the hardest hit by the pandemic to break out of the cycle of poverty, and therefore be able to more independently sustain themselves moving forward.

These serve to highlight the necessity of restructuring aid and assistance programmes particularly during a crisis. Relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Finance and KPWKM who oversee these programmes must work on implementing an altered and sustainable structure in administering crisis response assistance to ensure longer term solutions for vulnerable communities.

GAPS IN INCLUSIVITY AND ACCESSIBIL-ITY IN FINANCIAL AID

The increased reliance on aid from the private sector is, in part, due to the limited accessibility of government aid. Eligibility requirements for many government schemes exclude lower middle income groups. For example, the assistance provided to children in low income families requires household income to not be above the national poverty line.²⁶ This means that the aid is given to households earning RM2,208 and below²⁷, which comprises only B1 groups within the bottom 40% of income earners. Families who do not meet these criteria may be considered on a case by case basis.

Eligibility requirements for government aid also require applicants to be Malaysians, groups such as migrants and refugees who are severely affected by income loss during the pandemic are excluded from governmental aid.²⁸ The government must recognise the barrier this poses and demonstrate unity and humanity in providing livelihood assistance in times of crises regardless of nationality.

Furthermore, there exists gaps in the public financial assistance schemes. Some single-parent families, particularly single mothers, were not able to access BPN financial assistance schemes given in 2020. The distributed amounts were fully credited to their spouses who did not shoulder childcare obligations, if they were not legally divorced.

²⁰ Malay Mail (15 Jul 2021). "PM Muhyiddin: National food basket programme is govt's proactive response to Covid-19 crisis." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3Af2HDd

²¹ Ida Lim for Malay Mail (1 Jul 2021). "MPs: Putrajaya's 13-item list for RM300,000 food basket inflexible, neglects nutrition needs; will reach only 3,000 families in some constituencies." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3inGmxe ²² UNICEF-UNFPA (2021). "Families on the Edge, Issue 4." Accessed from https://uni.cf/3fqnagr

²³ Shanmugan et al. (2020). "Impacts of COVID-19 on Mental Health in Malaysia: A Single Thread of Hope." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3xkdTwJ ²⁴ Sunway Group (2020). "Lifting Communities During the Pandemic." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3CcLj3O

²⁵ Syahirah Syed Jaafar for the Edge Markets (17 September 2020). "The Role of Foundations: A lifeline for families on a shoestring" Accessed from https://bit.ly/2Vsq4tU

²⁶ Jabatan Kebajikan Malaysia (2021). "Bantuan Kanak-kanak." Accessed from https://bit.ly/2TSE67W

²⁷ Ida Lim for the Malay Mail (10 Jul 2020). "Statistics Dept: Malaysia's new poverty line income is RM2,208, over 400k households considered poor." Accessed from https://bit.ly/2V8SRUV ²⁸ Civicus (23 Jun 2021). "MALAYSIA: The government should have assisted refugees under the pandemic'." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3fkGgon

- For instance, in May 2020, 8 WAO clients, despite being eligible for BPN assistance, reported being unable to access this due to not having finalised divorces.
- Evidently, this disadvantages single parents who may have separated from spouses as a result of domestic violence, or are estranged from their spouses. Such challenges remain for assistance schemes in 2021.

Programmes and initiatives that clearly recognise the status of single parents could be implemented to prevent the misallocation of financial assistance. This can be done by:

- Providing options for single parents to get verification from local governance offices, NGOs and Commissioners of Oaths.
- Establishing a streamlined appeal process.
- Acknowledge such limitations and work to eliminate them in future financial and livelihood aid planning.

Finally, Government assistance is often only accessible through online means, with the Government stat-

ing a desire to shift financial disbursement to a completely online model by the end of 2021²⁹, with 60% of disbursements occurring through e-payments by end 2020.³⁰ While internet penetration is 90.1% and 98.2% of households have access to a smartphone as of 2019³¹, what the pandemic has shown us is **not** everyone has equal access to the internet as many struggled with online schooling and navigating the digital landscape.³² Internet penetration and household access to a smartphone is not a proxy for digital literacy. According to the UNICEF-UNFPA Families on the Edge report, the B40 families surveyed said accessing aid is a problem, citing illiteracy, procedural issues, and logistical issues as barriers.³³

Approximately 1.7 million people or 8% of adults in Malaysia remain unbanked.34 Of these, 88% either earn low or no income and 55% are women. In light of how most financial aid is disbursed through epayments, these individuals likely do not benefit from receiving aid.

Reforms in aid accessibility are critically needed as part of a whole-society approach to recovery.

2. EXPANSION OF PREVIOUS ALLOCATIONS FOR LOCAL SOCIAL SUPPORT CENTRES

In 2021, RM21 million was allocated to local social support centres in recognition of the pressing need for more support for survivors of domestic violence.³⁵ The allocation was commended not only by WAO, but other organisations, including the UNFPA.36

Following the Government's announcement of the allocation, we put together a substantive list of demands and ways the RM21 million should be spent, including a strong need for good implementation and a mechanism to monitor and evaluate its impact and

implementation. We also recommended the guidelines for the new centres follow WAO's own Domestic Violence Shelter Standards and Toolkit.³⁷

The resulting investment was to be launched in July 2021, according to the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (KPWKM).³⁸ Known as Pusat Sokongan Sosial (PSS) or Social Support Centres, the PSS comprises seven buses functioning as mobile training centres.³⁹ As stated by KPWKM Minister Rina Harun, those suffering social issues, specifi-

²⁹ Ministry of Finance (2021). "57th LAKSANA Report", pp. 3. Accessed from https://bit.ly/2WNXoMS

The Star (10 Apr 2020). "Malaysian households' access to Internet rose to 90.1% end-2019" Accessed from https://bit.ly/3A5t7aw

³² Jennifer Jacobs and Pathma Subramaniam for the Edge Markets (19 October 2020). "Digital Divide and Disconnection." Accessed from https://

bit.ly/2TVvygE

33 UNICEF-UNFPA (2020). "Families on the Edge, Issue 1." Accessed from https://uni.cf/3rRwzTy

³⁴ Bank Negara (2017). "Measuring Financial Inclusion in Malaysia." Accessed from https://bit.ly/36SzuBw

³⁵ S. Indramalar for the Star (6 Nov 2020). "Budget 2021: Allocation for shelters for victims of domestic violence welcomed." Accessed from https:// bit.ly/3xhruF2

⁶ UNFPA Malaysia (2020). "Malaysian women and girls need to be at the centre of Covid-19 recovery." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3xrEB6y

³⁷ Women's Aid Organisation (2020). "RM21 million allocated to domestic violence centres in Budget 2021. Here are 5 things needed to make this allocation meaningful." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3lu3Cvq

cally mental health issues, tend to be more comfortable sharing their problems with community leaders.40

Further, Minister Rina Harun, when announcing the PSS programme, also mentioned the Masjid Santuni Masyarakat programme, where select mosques have been converted to a one-stop center to address the domestic violence crisis by offering temporary shelter. This programme was launched in May 2021 and will be run as a 6-month long pilot programme. However, it is unclear whether these programmes fall under KPWKM's RM21 million spending or are separate initiatives. This uncertainty of translation of funding makes it difficult to assess the impact of such allocations.

While this programme is welcomed by WAO⁴¹, based on our experiences with facilitating trainings for simiprogrammes, we recommend these programmes be sensitive to survivors' immediate needs. As such, the transit shelters should be able to admit survivors who may not have police reports or protection orders, as is often observed in crisis periods. We additionally recommend that all staff running the transit shelters be trained to manage situations that often arise in providing temporary placements to survivors, such as security breaches involving perpetrators that may risk their safety. That said, it is too soon to conduct a full impact assessment on its efficacy in doing so thus far.

3. GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES NEED BETTER TRACKING AND MONITORING

In producing a report such as this, data is critical - not only to assess the impact of a government scheme, but to figure out how we can do better. Data and information should form the backbone of policy decisions, through the practice of evidence-based policymaking.

In the past few years, there have been initiatives led by the Government aimed at improving the lives of Malaysians. However, data is scant on the effectiveness of some of these policies and whether there have been returns on investments.

Many valuable programmes in Malaysia lack a clear monitoring mechanism to assess impacts, including many programmes we reference in this report such as community mental health centres (MENTARIs) and One-Stop Crisis Centres (OSCCs). As we move forward, more effort must be put into tracking, monitoring, and evaluating the efficacy of Government programmes to feed back into policy decisions and policy making. This will lead to better policies, smarter spending, and more targeted goals. Everyone stands to benefit from this.

³⁸ Malaya Post (1 July, 2021). "Pusat Sokongan Sosial dilaksana bulan ini, guna 7 bas." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3AaJi6K

³⁹ ibid.

⁴¹ Women's Aid Organisation (2021). "WAO Welcomes Mosques as Transit Centres for DV Survivors." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3jjOPkz





PILLAR I: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE RESPONSE AND EDUCATION

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE RESPONSE AND EDUCATION

Working with gender-based violence (GBV) and domestic violence (DV), WAO is especially sensitive to the needs of survivors and operates in a survivor-centric manner. Against the backdrop of the pandemic and several Movement Control Orders (MCOs), a concerted effort towards combating GBV and DV is needed as reports have skyrocketed.

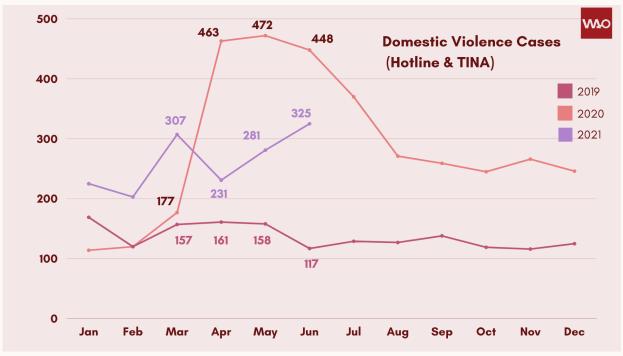


Figure 3. Line graph showing the numbers of domestic violence calls to WAO hotline, SMS and TINA in 2020 & 2021 compared to 2019. There is a drastic difference in calls between the pre-pandemic months, cases from March - June 2020 reflecting an almost four-fold spike from the same period in 2019.

WAO received a total of 1794 hotline calls and messages relating to DV from January to June 2020, during implemented lockdowns. Similarly, we received a total of 1,572 hotline calls and messages relating to domestic violence from January to June 2021 of this year alone, demonstrating the consistency of high DV and GBV instances during the pandemic.

Also crucial is allocating funds to areas relevant and adjacent to addressing gender-based violence, such as court proceeds and support for social workers. KPWKM's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan for Women⁴² has stated goals to expand the capacity of women's protective services and develop new intervention standards for better domestic violence case management.

In doing this, our costing comes from extensively studying the data and information available, WAO's experience in managing and running the services we offer, including gender-sensitive training programmes, case management services, and shelter costs.

Our recommendations are as follows.

1. ALLOCATE RM50 MILLION FOR IMPROVED ONE STOP CRISIS CENTRE (OSCC) OPERATIONS.

One-Stop Crisis Centres (OSCCs) are centres located within most major government hospitals that aim to holistically address the needs of a survivor of violence or child abuse. Public health facilities are often the first place survivors go to for assistance.⁴³ The services a survivor can access at

⁴² Ministry of Women (2021). "Pelan Strategik." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3jgnoYH

⁴³ Women's Aid Organisation (2020). "Strengthening Primary Healthcare Response to Domestic Violence." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3nCrxtM

these centres include lodging police reports, seeking medical assistance, and getting access to social work services. OSCCs are critical for facilitating access to tailored healthcare services, in addition to access to protection, justice, and support services.

The integrated OSCC model is a trailblazing and effective approach, but it still remains that the **implementation of the model has differed between hospital settings due to budget constraints, a lack of training, and a lack of specialised staff.** ⁴⁴ For example, some OSCCs lack designated staff, which leads to staff sharing, a practice where doctors and nurses are shared with other units. A lack of designated staff leads to several other issues stemming from capacity constraints, such as medical officers' being unable to properly identify cases of abuse or asking the necessary questions to assess a patient's emotional needs for further referral.

 This allocation will allow for expanded capacity to address gender-based violence.

Additionally, there is also a need to implement a **monitoring and evaluation system**, to ensure all OSCCs meet the same standards and deliver satisfactory service across the board.

2. ALLOCATE RM30.6 MILLION TO IM-PLEMENT TRAINING MODULES AND MANAGEMENT STANDARDS TO TRAIN FRONTLINE RESPONDERS (POLICE, MED-ICAL, AND SOCIAL WELFARE OFFICERS), AND ENSURE THE EFFICIENCY AND STANDARDIZATION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE CASE MANAGEMENT.

Currently, survivors' experiences in accessing aid and protections may vary due to inconsistencies in case management and lacking interagency case coordination. Poor, uncoordinated case management that fails to be survivor-centric could result in survivors returning to abusive circumstances.

The KPWKM's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan for Women⁴⁵ intends to expand the capacity of women's protective services and develop new intervention standards for

better domestic violence case management. Based on WAO's experiences, we recommend this includes the additional gender-based violence trauma-specific training of first responders. This allows the disparities in response effectiveness and the scope of services provided by government agencies to be addressed.

Further, increased understanding of issues of domestic violence and gender-based violence is a pathway to ensuring justice and empowering survivors.

The calculations for the cost of these trainings is on the next page (Table 2).

3. ALLOCATE A BUDGET OF RM 27.8 MILLION TO STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN MALAYSIA

Social workers form an important line of defense when addressing the bulk of welfare issues. Broadly, social workers work with vulnerable populations, including women and children facing GBV, to provide appropriate assistance and guidance. 46 They are an especially important resource in helping vulnerable populations interface with and navigate justice systems and welfare systems, ensuring a survivor's rights are protected. Despite this, Malaysia has a shortage which urgently needs to be addressed. Malaysia's current social worker per population ratio stands at one social worker per 8,756 persons, which is a huge shortage compared to other countries such as neighbouring Singapore, at 1 social worker for every 3,448 residents and far less than the UK (1:3,025), Australia (1:1040), or the United States (1:490).47

⁴⁴ Colombini et al. (2012). "An integrated health sector response to violence against women in Malaysia: lessons for supporting scale up." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3rUR8y6

⁴⁵ Ministry of Women (2021). "Pelan Strategik." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3jgnoYH

⁴⁶ Borderless News and Views (2020). "Why We Need to Stress the Importance of Social Work in Our Society." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3iitjNC

⁴⁷ Women's Aid Organisation (2020). "A Better County for Women." Accessed from https://bit.ly/2WO6RUp

Item	Amount	Trainings	Cost
Development of specific GBV module and plat- form for responder training	1 session annually for 15,000 (estimated KPWKM staff)	15,000 / 30 (amount per training group) = 500	500 * RM12,250 = RM6.1 million / 2 (estimating only half to receive training) = RM3.06 million
Increase in specific GBV training sessions for sworn in police officers	1 additional session annually for 135,000 officers	135,000 / 30 (amount per training group) = 4,500	4,500 * RM12,250 = RM55.1 million / 2 (estimating only half to receive training) = RM27.6 million
		Grand total	RM30.6 million

Table 2. As of 2018, there are 130,401 sworn-in police officers. As of 2017, there were 7,888 employees at KPWKM. Including the 8,000 that are supposed to be hired in 2021, KPWKM potentially has 15,000 employees. If we estimate the expansion of the police force and other additional frontline responders that may not be captured in the current available data, we estimate there are 150,000 employees who should receive training. If only half of these employees are frontline responders, we recommend allocating RM30.6 million for training programmes.4

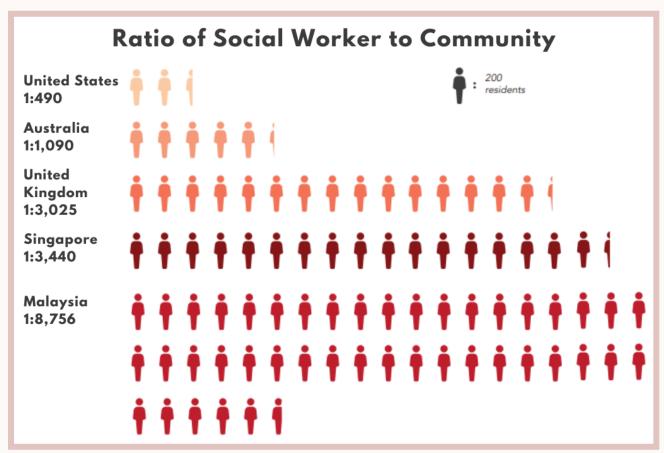


Figure 4. The ratio of social worker to community shows Malaysia has a shortage of social workers.

⁴⁸We arrived at this figure using WAO's calculations of provisions, where training for a group of 30 costs, on average, RM12,250. If the Government were to invest in training 75,000 frontline responders, this would mean 2,500 trainings.

INTERVENTION #1: DESIGNATE 4,000 SPOTS FOR THE HIRING OF SOCIAL WORKERS, CHILD PROTECTORS, AND CRISIS SUPPORT PERSONNEL.

There must be enough essential social services workers such as social workers and child protectors to ensure cases are efficiently managed, and crisis responders to ensure the responsiveness of the Talian Kasih crisis hotline.

According to KPWKM statistics, 78,451 calls were received for welfare aid in the span of a month. 35.9% or 28,153 calls were forwarded to JKM for further action.⁴⁹ WAO social workers tend to handle 20-30 cases at any given time. According to a Unison report⁵⁰, though, the ideal amount of cases a social worker should handle to avoid overwork out burnout is 13. In order to handle 28,153 cases, with 20 cases per social worker, at least 1,400 social workers are needed, supported by additional staff such as child protectors and crisis personnel. While KPWKM has recruited 208 new child protection officers, it still falls short of the required amount.⁵¹

Additionally, GBV and child abuse cases that require intervention may not only come in through the JKM hotlines, and may be referred directly to JKM social workers through hospitals, police officers, and civil society organisations. Hence, it can be safely assumed that the number of cases that social workers would need to take on would exceed 28,153 cases.

We recommend designating 4,000 new roles for the hiring of social workers, child protectors, and crisis support personnel, with each new hire paid a minimum salary of RM3,170 (falling in the B3 income range). This totals to an amount of RM 152 million of the RM153.2 million allocation we are demanding to bolster the capacity of social workers.

INTERVENTION #2: ALLOCATE RM1.2 MILLION TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AS A SCHOLAR-SHIP OR ADDITIONAL INCENTIVE FOR 200 ADDI-TIONAL STUDENTS TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF THOSE STUDYING SOCIAL WORK.

The supply of social workers needs to be expanded to increase our social worker to community ratio and overcome our current shortage.

An investment of RM1.2 million would cover the costs of a cohort of 200 students' education at local universities, which is approximately RM6,000 for a Bachelors of Social Work.⁵² This allocation should be maintained for the next five years to attain an optimal social worker to community ratio.

There must also be increased efforts to target potential social workers across racial and ethnic backgrounds to ensure the new generation of social workers are culturally competent and sensitive.

Educational considerations can also be added to the Social Worker Bill that needs to be tabled and passed by KPWKM.

In the UK, social work is an area of study that is funded by the Department of Education through the Step Up to Social Work programme, which was set up in part as a response to the COVID-19 crisis.⁵³

Under the programme, a bursary of GBP 19,833 is given to each student for the 14month programme, an accelerated-track for social work studies to increase the amount of social workers in the UK.

 ⁴⁹ Yuen Meikeng for The Star (11 Apr 2021). "Over 3,600 calls for help." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3ftnJWQ
 50 Unison (2017). "A day in the life of social work." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3jl1CTJ
 51 The Sun Daily (31 Jan 2021). "Child Protection: Welfare dept to recruit 377 new officers." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3EhTGfJ
 52 Course details. (2021). "Bachelor of Social Work." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3jc31x9
 53 Hammersmith & Fulham (2021). "Step Up to Social Work." Accessed from https://bit.ly/2VltGhr

4. ALLOCATE RM22 MILLION TO EX-PAND THE SCOPE OF SERVICES OF LE-GAL AID DEPARTMENTS AND PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO **B40** AND LOWER MID-**DLE-INCOME GROUPS.**

National Legal Aid Departments (LADs) provide free or subsidised legal services to those with limited means.⁵⁴ The availability of these services operate based on means tests. For example, to qualify for free legal aid under Category 1, an individual's annual fiscal earnings cannot exceed RM30,000, or a maximum monthly salary of RM2,500.55 This means only income groups that fall below level 2 of the bottom 40% (B2) can qualify for free legal aid. ⁵⁶

The RM30,000 and RM50,000 threshold does not sufficiently take into account an individual's commitments, dependants, and cost of living. The LAD only subtracts a total of RM1,500 from the applicants yearly salary in determining an applicants eligibility to account for living costs.

For instance, a single mother who falls into the upper -end of the B4 category with a yearly salary of RM55,000 and one dependent will not qualify for free or subsidised legal services for a divorce. This is despite the fact that the amount earned yearly is well below RM50,000 after subtracting the cost of living of her family. At a minimum level, an individual needs a monthly income of RM2,216 to survive. For a 2 person family in KL, this means a minimum of RM4,432 monthly.⁵⁷ This cost of living takes up almost the entire monthly salary of a person earning RM55,000 per year.

Thus, despite having very minimal savings, they would neither qualify for free or subsidised legal assistance, and would need to foot costs of a private lawyer. If she is a survivor of violence, her inability to access divorce from her perpetrator may jeopardize her safety.

We propose for the government to expand the income eligibility criteria of legal aid services, taking into consideration the rising cost of living in

Malaysia. Singapore's Legal Aid Bureau⁵⁸, for instance, comprehensively takes into account the number of household.

members and their collective income in determining one's eligibility for legal aid. We urge for these factors to be considered in determining eligibility.

- 1. We propose for Legal Aid services to be made accessible to all people in Malaysia, considering that migrants and refugees in Malaysia have severely limited avenues of accessing legal services.
- 2. We additionally urge for the LAD's scope of services to be widened to more effectively serve survivors of violence, taking into consideration the barriers survivors continue to face in accessing protection

Migrants and refugees are not eligible for the services of the LAD due to its Malaysian only criteria. Furthermore, the LAD does not offer subsidised legal services for restraining order applications, despite this being under the Domestic Violence Act try to access.

- a. We propose for Legal Aid services to be made accessible to all people in Malaysia, considering that migrants and refugees in Malaysia have severely limited avenues of accessing legal services.
- b. We additionally urge for the LAD's scope of services to be widened to more effectively serve survivors of violence, taking into consideration the barriers survivors continue to face in accessing protection

The 22 branches⁵⁹ of LAD's are currently funded through government allocations of RM9 million yearly -- with each branch receiving a yearly allocation of around RM400,000. The LAD also refers cases to the Bar Council-run Legal Aid Centres, which are not government funded, indicating insufficient funds to manage cases received.

⁵⁴ Legal Aid Department Official Portal (2017). "Eligibility of the Applicant." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3sFmF7E

⁵⁵ View Table 3. ⁵⁶ View **Table 3.**

Wiew **Table 3.**⁵⁷ Nur Hanana Azman for the Malaysian Reserve (26 April 2021). "Data shows average cost of living in KL is RM3,300 monthly." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3xeZJgk
⁵⁸ Ministry of Law, Singapore (2021). "Taking the Means Test." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3lkchRg
⁵⁹ Legal Aid Department (2021). "Branches." Accessed from https://bit.ly/2V9L7SA

Legal Aid Department (LAD) requirements	Eligibility	Qualifying income categories
Category 1	Applicants annual earnings cannot exceed RM30,000. This translates to a maximum of RM2,500 monthly.	Individuals who fall below level 2 of the bottom 40% (B2) can qualify for free legal services.
Category 2	Applicants annual earnings cannot exceed RM50,000. This translates to RM4,166 monthly.	Individuals who fall within levels 2 and 4 of the bottom 40% (B2- mid B4 range) can apply to receive subsidised legal services. However, in line with the requirements, those in upper B4 ranges and lower middle income ranges of the middle 40% (M1-M2) would not qualify for subsidised services.

Table 3. Legal Aid Department qualifying criteria (information from this table is from both the Legal Aid Department website and from information received through the helpline)

- A. Considering the above factors, there is a need for LAD's to take on more cases, and provide a wider range of subsidised legal services to individuals up to M2 income categories.
- B. We recommend RM22 million in funding (hence, an increase of RM13 million) be allocated to widen the scope of LADs and increase the income threshold of means tests to improve accessibility. This would minimise systemic barriers people face in accessing legal services.

CRISIS PREPAREDNESS: LESSONS FROM COVID-19

COVID-19 has shown that we need to be better prepared to respond in times of crisis. Budget allocations for crisis situations need to be gendered and intersectional, given the disproportionate impact of crises on women, girls, and those in the B40 category. Social services, shelters, crisis hotlines, livelihood aid, and primary healthcare are all of utmost priority in these situations and must not be neglected.

Concurrently, efforts are still needed to ensure women and girls will get through the rest of the pandemic safely. As such, we also examine the pressing need for shelters to be equipped with quarantine facilities and testing kits to better handle clients moving into shelters.

5. ALLOCATE A TOTAL OF RM8 MIL-LION TO FUND OUARANTINE FACILITIES AND TESTING KITS TO SUPPORT SPECIFI-CALLY THE SERVICES OF LOCAL DOMES-TIC VIOLENCE SHELTERS FOR THE RE-MAINDER OF THE COVID-19 PANDEM-IC.

As of 2019, there are 43 known governmental and non-governmental shelters or safe spaces for survivors in Malaysia.⁶¹ From 2015-2020, WAO received a total of 487 survivors into our shelter, with an average amount of 97.4 per year.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, crisis service provisions have had to be adapted to ensure health and safety shelter standards.

A COVID-19 test kit is valued at an average of RM240.62 Based on these figures, to support local service provisions of 43 shelters amidst the pandemic, the government must allocate around RM1.1 million for the provision of testing kits to crisis shelters.

- It costs approximately RM2,700 monthly to rent a small, single story property in the Klang Valley that serves as a quarantine centre, inclusive of utility costs. Since it serves as a quarantine centre, only one family can occupy the residence at a time.
- The average quarantine period during which a family would need to stay in the quarantine centre prior to COVID-19 testing is 10 days. On average, one person would need RM30 for food daily (RM10 per person per meal, 3 meals daily). This means RM300 per person is required for food during a 10 day stay at a quarantine centre.
- From 2015-2020, WAO has received an average of 97.4 clients into our shelter yearly. This averages at 7 clients a month. Hence, this adds up to an additional RM2,100 for food costs during quarantine per month.
- Per year, personal protective equipment used by shelter staff and social workers when working with quarantine centre clients cost RM700 yearly. This averages at around RM60 per month.
- Miscellaneous costs including costs of thermometers, disinfection services and emergency needs cumulatively cost around RM500-RM1,000 monthly
- These figures total up to an additional RM6,000-RM7,000 monthly to run a quarantine center, or RM84,000 annually. around This means RM3,096,000 is needed to enable shelters in Malaysia to operate quarantine centres in line with COVID safety practices.

We must consider the fact that during lockdowns, the rates of violence greatly increase which may result in a higher demand for shelter. 63 As such, each shelter should be granted allocations to fund at least 2 quarantine centres, considering that only one family can be guarantined at one center at a time.

⁶⁰ Ravi Nekoo for the Malaysian Bar (23 Nov 2009). "Legal Aid in Malaysia: The Need for Greater Government Commitment." Accessed from

https://bit.ly/37g1mQd

61 Women's Aid Organisation (2019). "Policy Brief: The Shelter Needs of Domestic Violence Survivors and the Availability and Accessibility of Shelters and Related Services in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3xjiDCH

62 While there are COVID test kits available for less than RM30, these are rapid antigen test kits. Per shelter regulation, for the safety of staff and

other residents, a PCR test needs to be conducted.

63 Frankie D'Cruz for Free Malaysia Today (25 Nov 2020). "Domestic violence at crisis level months after lockdown." Accessed from https:// bit.ly/3jfTvYH



Figure 5. Costs to consider for shelters.

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Item	Costing	Calculation	Total
COVID testing kits for 43 shelters with an average of 81 admissions annually	RM240 average cost per testing kit	RM240 * 81 yearly admissions * 43 shelters	*Cost rounded off to RM1 million to account for variations in the provision of shelter services to survivors during the pandemic.
Establishment and running of quarantine centers	RM2,700 monthly to rent a single story space in the Klang Valley. RM300 per person is required for food during a 10 day stay at a quarantine centre (RM10 per person per meal * 3 meals daily). As a shelter receives an average of 8 clients a month, this adds up to RM2,400 per month. PPE used by quarantine center staff averages at RM60 per month. Miscellaneous costs (thermometers, disinfection services and emergency needs) amount to RM500-1000 monthly.	RM2,700 (rent) + RM2,100 (food)+ RM60 (essential workers PPE)+ RM 1,000 (miscellaneous costs) = RM5,000-6,000 to run a quarantine center per month. RM6,000 *12months = RM72,000 to run a quarantine center annually. RM72,000 * 43 shelters = RM3,096,000 allocation needed to support 43 shelters with quarantine facilities. Assuming each shelter needs 2 quarantine centers to support survivors' increased shelter needs during the pandemic, RM3,096,000 * 2 = RM6,191,000 **Rounded off to RM 6.2 million to account for costing variations.	RM6.2 million
		GRAND TOTAL	RM6.2 million + RM1 million = RM7.3 million
			** Rounded off to RM8 mil- lion

Table 4. Calculation for shelter allocations for COVID-19.

6. Strengthen the capacity of helplines by setting aside an allocation of RM5 million in case of emergencies.

Helplines are often one of the first places people reach out to for help. This is evidenced by how several gender-based violence-related hotlines, such as Talian Kasih and WAO, were flooded by calls during the lockdown.⁶⁴

The increase of staff needed to operate hotlines in case of a crisis will be covered by this emergency fund. The cost of covering increased call back rates of hotlines will also be covered

- Hotlines are a worthy investment, especially in times of crisis, because of how they can be easily accessed (a person only needs to have a phone) and hotlines can easily disseminate information, including alternative referral pathways in case routine services are disrupted due to the crisis.
- Most importantly, a portion of this budget must be allocated to raising awareness of hotline services.

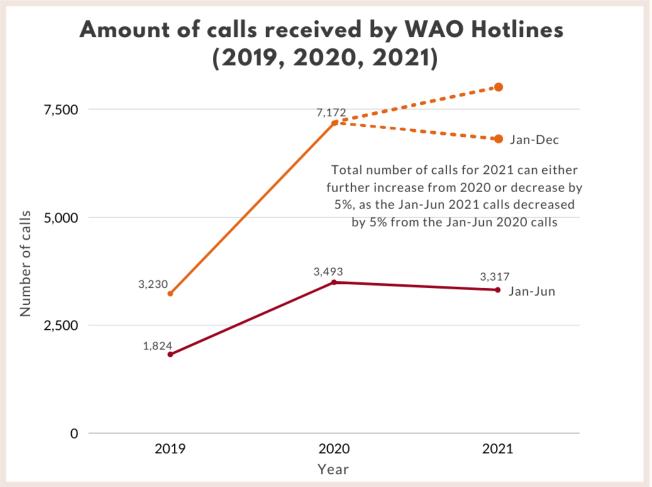


Figure 6. The increase in calls received by WAO's hotline during lockdowns demonstrates that hotlines are often one of the first places people reach out to for help.

⁶⁴ The Star (4 Aug 2020). "Talian Kasih sees 500% increase in calls during MCO, says Rina Harun." Accessed from https://bit.ly/385miKa

7. RM25 MILLION FUND FOR WOMEN'S **HEALTH IN CASE OF EMERGENCIES.**

The 2021 National Budget allocates RM10 million for cervical cancer screenings and subsidized mammograms yet, there are no other women's physical healthcare initiatives.⁶⁵

The healthcare of women and girls has been set back by the pandemic, as reflected by increases in domestic violence, child abuse, unplanned pregnancies, and unassisted home births. School closures have also contributed to a rise in cases of child marriage. 66 Access to essential items such as menstrual hygiene products and contraception have also been affected, particularly in rural areas.⁶⁷

Hence, a concerted effort to ensure the availability of resources to prevent women's and girls' health from declining further, especially in case of other crises, such as natural disasters. To effectively address this disparity, strategic and urgent action through partnerships and collaboration between the Ministry of Women, Ministry of Health, and other stakeholders, including civil society, must be coordinated. We propose a RM25 million fund be set up in order to enable better coordination between relevant stakeholders to plan for times of crises. They must focus on upscaling resource allocation to increase the capacity of community clinics, developing community outreach centers in rural areas, and ensuring women and girls have access to the necessary healthcare resources, including feminine hygiene products⁶⁸, in times of crisis.

8. ALLOCATE RM5 MILLION TO FUND **ONLINE COURT PROCEEDINGS FOR DOMES-**TIC VIOLENCE AND GENDER-BASED VIO-LENCE CASES.

Online court proceedings are crucial to ensure the safety and protection of survivors is not disrupted by national crises. Certain courts in Malaysia have already tested the viability of online court proceedings⁶⁹, Therefore ensuring that courts in Malaysia can functionally carry out these proceedings is crucial. Should this transition to online court proceedings be implemented in stages, we recommend cases pertaining to gender-based violence, domestic violence, protection orders, and divorce be prioritised.

Based on WAO's experience, cases following the pandemic have been delayed upwards of six months. This places survivors in a limbo, not knowing whether or not their divorces will be finalised, whether they can get protection orders, and blocking or delaying their access to justice.

As mentioned previously, divorce finalisations are crucial sometimes to ensuring whether government aid is received by intended recipients - therefore delayed court proceedings do not only potentially place survivors in harm's way, but can also interfere with their ability to access aid.

Sufficient funds must be allocated to enable the commencement of online court proceedings. This will come in handy not only in the duration of the rest of the pandemic, but also in circumstances where it may be safer to hold online proceedings.

9. **A**LLOCATE **RM30 MILLION** TO **KPWKM** TO SET UP CRISIS FOR DOMESTIC **VIOLENCE SURVIVORS.**

In Budget 2021, RM21 million was allocated to KPWKM to set up one stop support centres (Pusat Sokongan Sosial Setempat) for survivors of domestic violence and others in need of crisis shelter.

However the programme could not be implemented due to MCO construction restrictions. Instead, KPWKM used the fund to set up mobile centres (Pusat Sokongan Sosial (PSS) Setempat Secara Bergerak) focusing on mental health.⁷⁰

While the mobile centres are welcomed, Malaysia's shortage in crisis shelter space remains unaddressed.

According to international best practices developed by the Council of Europe, countries should have one

⁶⁵ Ministry of Finance (6 Nov 2020). "Bernama - Budget 2021 Highlights." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3CDVtuB
66 Thasha Jayamanogaran for Yahoo! News (10 Mar 2021). "Unicef Malaysia: Child marriage likely rose during Covid-19 pandemic as schools closed, economy worsened." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3Atl5HL
67 S. Indralamar for The Star (24 Mar 2021). "What is period poverty and why we must end it." Accessed from https://bit.ly/2XkHQQZ
68 A pack for 16 sanitary pads costs RM10, but if one needs to change their pads 4 times a day, and considering the average period lasts between

²⁻⁷ days, someone may need between RM10-RM20 worth of pads a month.

⁶⁹ Donovan and Ho (8 Jun 2021). "Conducting Court Proceedings Remotely in Malaysia." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3lWDdqG

⁷⁰ Malaya Post (1 July, 2021). "Pusat Sokongan Sosial dilaksana bulan ini, guna 7 bas." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3AaJi6K

family place in a women's shelter per 10,000 inhabiants as a minimum standard.⁷¹ However, according to a WAO study, Malaysia has roughly one family place per 72,538 inhabitants⁷², which is far below the

recommended standard. This means Malaysia needs to increase its amount of shelters by approximately 7.3 times, for a total of 314 shelters.

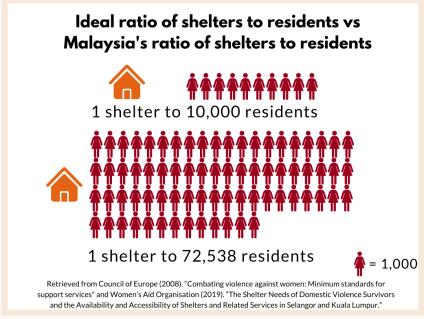


Figure 7. Malaysia needs to increase its supply of shelters by 7.3 times in order to meet the needs of the community.

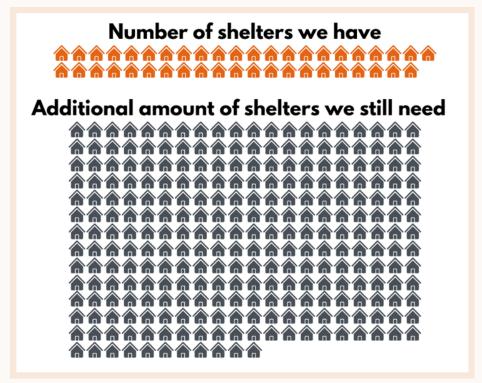


Figure 8. We have 43 shelters and require an additional 271.

⁷¹ Council of Europe (2008). "Combating violence against women: Minimum standards for support services." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3tF1Jyh ⁷² Women's Aid Organisation (2019). "The Shelter Needs of Domestic Violence Survivors and the Availability and Accessibility of Shelters and Related Services in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur." https://bit.ly/3CdT0pL



LIVELIHOOD AND CHILDCARE

Pillar II looks at recommendations aimed at achieving better social support for women, especially against the backdrop of Malaysia as it moves towards pandemic recovery. These recommendations will be crucial in building resilience because, as highlighted in our report last year, women have been hit the hardest during the pandemic. Globally, 5% of the jobs lost during the pandemic were held by women, compared to 3.9% of the jobs lost by men last year.⁷³

The government has invested in the economy through stimulus packages in the past year, including a variety of employment schemes. However, while these schemes have benefitted upwards of millions of employees⁷⁴, this data is not gender disaggregated, therefore it remains unclear the proportion of women who have benefitted.

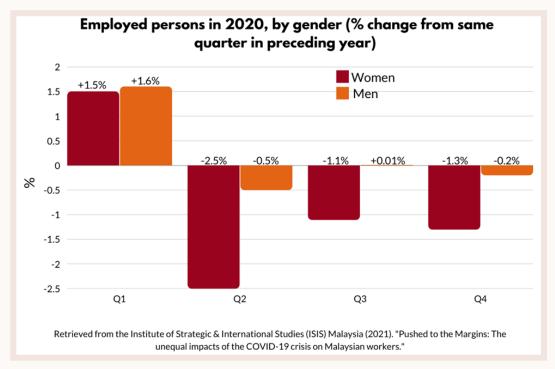


Figure 9. COVID-19 impacted employment from Q2 onwards. Women have experienced a far greater fall in employment compared to men and women's employment has been much slower to recover, on aggregate.

⁷³ Oxfam International (2021). "COVID-19 cost women globally over \$800 billion in lost income." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3lta45Y Ministry of Finance LAKSANA reports (2020-2021). Accessed from https://bit.ly/3foXhOg

Importantly, women constitute a large portion of the informal workforce - a figure that has grown in the past few years. In Malaysia, women's participation in the informal economy has increased from 38.7% in 2017 to 43.7% in 2019.⁷⁵ These women, who constitute the most vulnerable and precarious, are missed by the bulk of the government's employment schemes, which narrowly target formal work.

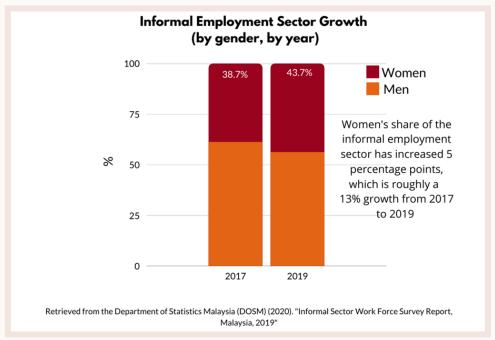


Figure 10. The Malaysian women's share of the informal sector has grown 13% from 2017 to 2019.

Finally, a lack of childcare support also remains one of the biggest barriers to women's participation in the labour force. Macroeconomic simulations have implied that **closing gaps between men's and women's economic opportunities could boost Malaysia's income per capita by 26.2 percent**—an average annual income gain of about RM9,400 for each Malaysian.⁷⁶ If women reach their full potential in the labor market, forecasters say that this could lead to global GDP growth of 26% by 2025.⁷⁷ As such, offering women the support to make this a reality should be one of the main goals of Budget 2022.

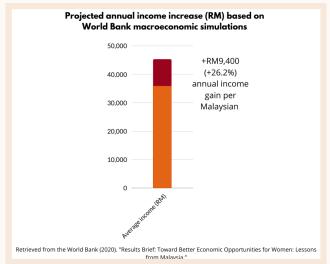


Figure 11. Macroeconomic simulations have implied that closing gaps between men's and women's economic opportunities could boost Malaysia's income per capita by 26.2 percent—an average annual income gain of about RM9,400 per Malaysian

⁷⁵ Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) (2020). "Informal Work Force Survey Report, Malaysia, 2019." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3foDKgR ⁷⁶ IMF Blog (2018). "Malaysia needs more women in the workforce." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3xkgmHv

⁷⁷ Habrich et al. (2021). "The Influence of Economic Activity of Women in Malaysia and Guatemala on National Development." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3xkrgwT

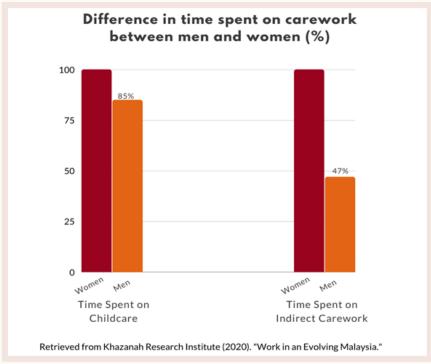


Figure 12. Men only spent 15% less time on childcare, meaning there is a normalisation of men's involvement in taking care of the kids. Meanwhile, men spent 53% less time than women on indirect care work, which means more needs to be done to normalise men's participation in these activities.

1. IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE BURDEN OF UN-PAID CARE WORK THAT DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTS WOMEN, TO PROMOTE EQUAL DISTRIBUTIONS OF CARE WORK.

As part of the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan for Women⁷⁸, KPWKM plans to roll out a number of awareness campaigns. We recommend one of these campaigns centre on raising awareness of the burden of unpaid care work on women.

The pandemic has forced more women out of the labor force due to the burden of unpaid care work. Before the pandemic, women took on three times as much care work compared to men.⁷⁹ This has further increased due to the pandemic, evident as the number of employed women during the pandemic in Malaysia fell by 2.5% (or 148,000 women), while the number of employed men fell by 0.5% (68,000 men), based on estimates by the Institute of Strategic and

International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia 80

According to Khazanah Research Institute's (KRI) work, M40 women spent 144% more time on unpaid care work than M40 men.⁸¹ Generally, women spent more than twice as much time than men on indirect care work, which includes cooking and cleaning.⁸²

As we move towards recovery, it is crucial to alleviate the burden of care work on women so they can actively engage with the labour market. The first step towards this is to raise awareness and normalise men's participation in care work, especially indirect care work.

In KRI's work, men only spent 15% less time on child-care, meaning there is a normalisation of men's involvement in taking care of the kids.⁸³ Meanwhile, men spent 53% less time than women on indirect care work⁸⁴, which means more needs to be done to normalise men's participation in these activities.

 $^{^{78}}$ Ministry of Women (2021). "Pelan Strategik." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3jgnoYH

<sup>1010
80</sup> Cheng (2021). "Pushed to the margins: The unequal impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Malaysian workers." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3A3BrHP
81 Khazanah Research Institute (2020). "Work in an Evolving Malaysia." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3rOW1J6

⁸³ ibid

⁸⁴ ibid

2. INCENTIVE-BASED HIRING SCHEMES SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED TO PRO-MOTE THE RE-HIRING OF WOMEN.

Women made up two-thirds of the total employment decline in Q2 of 2020 following the pandemic.85 Women's labour force participation rate at the end of 2020 was down by 0.8%, when compared to previous years.86

According to DOSM, employment rates have increased, in part due to Government programmes.⁸⁷ However, this data is not gender disaggregated, therefore it is unclear the proportion of women who have benefitted.

Gender-sensitive programmes are crucial to aid recovery and bring women (back) into the workforce.

When we look at the structures of incentive schemes, it is clear that these incentives need to be different for single mothers in comparison to other women who work simply because single mothers tend to be at a disadvantage due to having to take on the double burden of being the sole breadwinner and primary caregiver.

89.4% of single mothers surveyed by the National Population and Family Development Board fell in the B40 category.88

> **Australia's Government is investing \$12.2 million** in their 2021-2022 budget, aimed at facilitating more career opportunities and supported career pathways for women.⁸⁹

INTERVENTION #1: ALLOCATE RM776 MILLION TO IMPLEMENT A GENDER-SENSITIVE HIRING SCHEME WITH THE GOAL OF BRINGING (BACK) WOMEN INTO THE LABOUR FORCE.

Last year, there were no gender-sensitive hiring schemes. Instead, the Penjana Kerjaya scheme was rolled out, with a RM2 billion allocation. The Penjana Kerjaya scheme has persisted as the government's main employment scheme throughout the pandemic, with adjustments made to broaden the coverage of the scheme. Nevertheless, the adjustments to incentive structures and qualifying thresholds are usually done in a gender-blind manner.90

Gender-sensitive schemes are necessary because they take into account the effect of inequalities, including existing systemic issues, such as wage gaps, and the disproportionate burden of care work on women, which affects women's economic participation.

For example, the 2020 'Women@Work'91 programme offered income tax exemptions, employee wage incentives, and employer hiring incentives to encourage women to re-enter the workforce, applying an understanding of how the structures which shape women's unemployment differed from men's and targeting an employment scheme specifically designed to alleviate and address women's burdens.

In light of this, for Budget 2022, we recommend allocating an additional RM776 million for a specific gender-sensitive hiring scheme which prioritises bringing women into the workforce, on top of current employment incentives.⁹² This figure was derived from taking 38.8% of RM2 billion, which was what was allocated in Budget 2021 for employment, as women make up 38.8% of the formal labour force. This allocation functions as an additional amount to be spent on women's employment to address women's job loss following the pandemic. While this is a specific incentive for women, women should also not be ex-

 ⁸⁵ Cheng (2021). "Pushed to the margins: The unequal impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Malaysian workers." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3A3BrHP
 86 Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) (2020). "Labour Market Review Malaysia Second Quarter 2020." Accessed from https://bit.ly/2VeHQ48
 87 Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) (2021). "Key Statistics of Labour Force in Malaysia, April 2021." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3ike9r7

⁸⁸ LPPKN (2020). "Household Income and Life Satisfaction of Single Mothers in Malaysia." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3C6tGmm

⁸⁹ Australian Government Department of Health (2021). "Budget's historic \$2.3 billion investment in mental health and suicide prevention." Ac-

cessed from https://bit.ly/3C7GgSh

10 Initially, the scheme offered 40% incentives for employers hiring those making between RM1,500-RM4,000, it is unclear the proportion of women who benefitted from this, especially since women in Malaysia, as of 2019, earn an average 19.5% less than men (refer to https://bit.ly/3C8w6AU for more info on gender wage gap). The maximum qualifying threshold under PenjanaKerjaya 2.0 was expanded to RM6,000 while the lower qualifying threshold was reduced to RM1,200 under the PEMULIH package.

⁹² If this allocation were structured similarly to Women@Work, it would include a RM500 monthly incentive for women who (re)entered the workforce for two years and an additional RM300 incentive was given to employers for the same period of time.

cluded from any non-gender specific hiring incentives either. In order to promote women's job recovery and build resilience following the effects of the pandemic, more must be done to support women.

This allocation can beneficially be channelled towards a programme such as Women@Work, which aims to bring 33,000 women into the workforce⁹⁴ and should be continued long-term. Given the RM776 million allocation we are recommending, this could bring on an additional 40.000-45.000 women into the workforce if channelled towards Women@Work's efforts. Simultaneously, this allocation must also consider the costs of introducing specific policies to address women's short-term job losses caused by **COVID** because, as pointed out by ISIS Malaysia's report, women's employment has been slow to recover compared to men's.95

INTERVENTION #2: IMPLEMENT A SPECIFIC SCHEME TO TARGET THE HIRING OF SINGLE **MOTHERS.**

In May 2020, after the onset of the pandemic, UNICEF -UNFPA found B40 female-headed households had a 32% unemployment rate. 96 As of March 2021, the **B40** female-headed household unemployment rate is 15.9%, which, despite decreasing, is 3x higher than the national average and still higher than prepandemic rates. 97 This means B40 female-headed households have been slower to recover from the effects of the pandemic. 42% of these female heads of households have reported using savings to mitigate reduction of income⁹⁸, suggesting that while these women are now considered "employed", they likely still are in some sort of precarious employment.

Last year, under the Penjana Kerjaya scheme, a 60% incentive was offered to employers who hired single mothers.99 While we applaud this initiative, many single mothers were left out because the scheme required employees having a salary of at least RM1,500. Under the new PenjanaKerjaya 3.0 scheme unveiled as part of the PEMULIH package, this threshold has been reduced to RM1,200. Many single mothers work jobs which pay less than RM980¹⁰⁰, likely a function of how many single mothers are employed in informal work. More must be done to incentivise employers to hire and value single mothers.

- a. Exceptions for employment contract lengths have been made under the PEMULIH package for those who are over 50, disabled, or former convicts, but these exceptions were not extended to single mothers. 101
- b. Further, in impact assessments of the Penjaya Kerjaya scheme, single mothers are completely left out, suggesting they may not have benefitted as much as other vulnerable groups. 102

Thus, in Budget 2022, we recommend a specific employment scheme be implemented to target single mothers, with a minimum wage to ensure these mothers can adequately provide for their families.

INTERVENTION #3: DISPERSE RM20 MILLION IN CHILDCARE ALLOWANCE AS INCENTIVE FOR SIN-GLE MOTHERS TO SEEK JOBS

To incentivise job-seeking and participation in the labour force, the government should disperse childcare allowance to single mothers, either through employers or directly to employed single mothers.

Last year, RM20 million was allocated to the private sector to establish childcare centres for their employees. 103 It is unclear how much of this went towards establishing childcare centres, especially as most of 2021 was spent working from home. Additionally, the Government did not release clear guidelines on how to establish childcare centres, which likely hampered private sector participation.

This year, instead of continued investment in the private sector to set up childcare centres, we recommend redirecting the allocation towards single mothers as a childcare allowance or subsidy. This, then, forms an incentive for single mothers to seek employment while reducing the burden of childcare.

Ine star (2019). "Budget 2020: Women reentering workforce to enjoy RM500 incentive, income tax exemptions until 2023." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3jdEx5u

95 Cheng (2021). "Pushed to the margins: The unequal impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Malaysian workers." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3A3BrHP

96 UNICEF-UNFPA (2021). "Families on the Edge, Issue 4." Accessed from https://uni.cf/3fqnagr

97 libid

98 libid

⁹⁹ Donovan and Ho (10 Nov 2020). "Budget 2021: Key Employment & HR Highlights." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3jbQtWn

¹⁰⁰ LPPKN (2020). "Household Income and Life Satisfaction of Single Mothers in Malaysia." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3C6tGmm
101 The Edge Markets. (28 June 2021). "Highlights of the PEMULIH Package." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3B8R7tQ
102 Ministry of Finance LAKSANA reports (2020-2021). Accessed from https://bit.ly/3foXhOg

¹⁰³ Free Malaysia Today (6 Nov 2020). "Highlights of the 2021 Budget." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3sHdp2U

- a. We recommend employers offer an allowance of at least RM2,500 yearly, as childcare often costs upwards of RM5,000 yearly per child.
- This is a good start and would benefit 8,000 single mothers, of the 235,240 single mothers that exist in the country.¹⁰⁴

3. ALLOCATE RM20 MILLION FOR WOMEN'S EDUCATION OR UPSKILLING PROGRAMMES.

Last year's budget allocations included women's entrepreneurial skill training programs, such as RM50 million allocation for the 'Ar-Rahnu Biznita' and 'Bizme' programmes which aim to train women entrepreneurs in marketing. Programmes such as these are great in helping women harness their knowledge and training into profitable businesses.

Inspired by these training programmes, the government must offer women other avenues to upskill themselves outside of entrepreneurship with streamlined pathways into careers in the formal workforce.

Under the PEMULIH package, the Janapreneur initiative was launched, aiming to aid over 30,000 jobseekers find employment through a Place & Train initiative. However, this effort is aimed towards school leavers and new graduates. Similar efforts must be made specifically for women who, most of the time, suffer from long-term unemployment and either need to upskill or reskill to find jobs.

For example, YWCA's Vocational Training Opportunity Centre provides five different courses from kindergarten teacher teaching to a certificate in commerce which equips women with the necessary skills to become self-sufficient.

i. This programme is able to train 100 women a year and requires RM1.5 million in operational costs, including lodging.¹⁰⁷

We propose further investment in such vocational learning programmes, with a starting allocation of RM20 million offered to any organisations which currently offer such programmes in order to support them or increase their capacities.

Furthermore, the government should aim to roll out similar programmes, learning from community-based organisations offering successful programmes, potentially with the Ministry of Education, to equip women with the necessary skills for success.

4. COORDINATE EFFORTS TO TARGET WOMEN IN THE INFORMAL WORKFORCE TO EDUCATE THEM ABOUT AVAILABLE SUBSIDIES AND TO FORMALISE THEIR WORK, COORDINATED BY JKM.

While the government has been implementing wage subsidies with each of their economic packages, these policies narrowly target workers in formal employment, ignoring a substantial segment of individuals in informal employment, including the selfemployed, informal workers, and unpaid family workers, who are disproportionately women. Coupled with the digital divide, large swaths of the informal workforce may remain informal not because they want to be, but because they lack access to formalising the work they do and, as a direct result, they lack access to the grants the government offers. While these women may qualify for schemes aimed at small-business owners, including schemes which can formalise the work they do, such as TEKUN, findings from a UNICEF-UNFPA report indicates that 86% of the B40 community surveyed did not receive any small-business assistance, despite qualifying. 108 A meagre 3% reported receiving TEKUN. Finding a way to break this cycle is key to better support the especially vulnerable in our society.

¹⁰⁴ Noor Watee Rahman et al. (2017). "Key Challenges Contributing to the Survival of Single Mothers." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3xnG2mx
105 Sophia Admad for Berita Harian (6 Nov 2020). "Belanjawan 2021: Pembiayaan mikro kredit, Ar-Rahnu Biznita perkasa golongan wanita." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3/C/96iC

cessed from https://bit.ly/3Ck96iC 106 Jocelyn Tan for the Vulcan Post (2021). "With MCO 3.0 extended, here's how the new Pemulih package can help employees." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3xk4BAW 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.00 | 107.0

¹⁰⁰ Sheela Chandran from the Star (18 Nov 2018). "Women empowerment through vocational training." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3lp1mpx 108 UNICEF-UNFPA (2021). "Families on the Edge, Issue 4." Accessed from https://uni.cf/3fqnagr

INTERVENTION #1: TARGETED OUTREACH BY IKM

We propose targeted outreach by JKM in two ways:

- (1) Increased outreach to raise awareness of the available programmes and the importance of formalising work (in this case, registering for EPF and SOCSO) and,
- (2) Launching community drives to assist in applica-

As of March 2021, of those in the B40 community surveyed by UNICEF-UNFPA, among those who are self-employed, 90% do not have EPF or SOCSO. 108

Additionally, the bulk of the programmes that the government rolls out, including programmes which can aid women working in the informal sector running small businesses, remain inaccessible. If JKM were to directly visit these communities and help women apply, the increase in women participating in formal work could greatly benefit our economy while

ensuring these women have greater social security.

In the short term, this solution can be beneficial.

INTERVENTION #2: SETTING UP COMMUNITY REGISTRATION CENTRES OR HELPLINES DEDICAT-ED SPECIFICALLY TO AIDING THESE COMMUNITIES FORMALISE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

In the long term, setting up Community Registration centres in targeted areas can help alleviate this problem as those looking to navigate government websites and grants can directly report to these centres for help.

These centres would be a bigger investment because it would require setting up physical locations, which can cost anywhere between RM20,000 to RM50,000 per year depending on the location. 110

Item	Cost	Amount	Total
Physical location	RM20,000 - RM50,000	50	RM1.8 million in total
Staff	RM2,500-RM3,140	5 per centre	RM169,200 per location RM169,200 x 50 locations = RM8.5 million
		Grand Total	RM10.3 million

Table 5. If this includes at least 5 staff per location being paid a salary between RM2,500 to RM3,140, depending on what a livable wage is in a given location, this would require around a RM169,200 allocation per location. If the Government plans to roll out at least 50 of these centres to target specific communities, it would require an investment of at least RM10 million.

Alternatively, the Government can also **dedicate a helpline** specifically to aid these communities in both formalising their work and signing up to the available subsidies.

• A helpline would be relatively affordable to roll out. For example, it might only need 15 dedicated staff.

Item	Cost	Amount	Total
Staff	RM3,170 per month	15 people 12 months	RM47,550 per month x 12 months = RM570,600 per year
Hotline	RM1800 per year	1	RM1,800
High Speed wifi	RM89 per month	12	RM1,068
One-off Equipment costs (phones, computers, etc.)	RM44,000	15	RM44,000
		Grand Total	~RM618,000

Table 6. If each staff member is paid a livable wage of RM3,170 per month, the salary allocation would be RM565,200 per year. The hotline itself costs roughly RM1,800 per year. Including equipment costs, which are a one time investment, the allocation for the first year should be RM615,000.

 $^{^{111}\,\}mathrm{Based}$ on WAO's own costing for our hotline, which is roughly RM150 per month.

5. ALLOCATE RM247.5 MILLION FOR CHILDCARE PROGRAMMES.

Accessibility, affordability, and availability of childcare is one of the most crucial factors affecting women's employment in the country. 112 As of 2018, 60.2% of women cited housework, including caring for children, as the main reason for not seeking work, while only 3.6% of men cited the same reason. 113 As such, investment in childcare programmes becomes crucial to facilitating women's workforce participation, including the return of women who were forced out of the labour force during the pandemic.

INTERVENTION #1: ROLL OUT A 5 YEAR PLAN TO ADDRESS THE LACK OF REGISTERED CHILDCARE CENTRES BY ALLOCATING RM60 MILLION PER YEAR TO BUILD COMMUNITY CHILDCARE CENTRES WITHIN SOP RANGE FOR B40 COMMUNITIES.

Research released in 2019 by the National Child Data Centre (NCDC), shows that Malaysia currently has 4,968 TASKAs or childcare centres operating with an average of 30 children attending. Given that the population of children under 5 in Malaysia is estimated at 2.5 million, the NCDC suggests that there is a shortfall of 80,091 TASKAs. 114

- This means over 2 million children do not have access to a childcare centre. 115
- To address this shortfall, over the next 5 years, Malaysia must roll out a concrete investment plan.

According to World Bank calculations, for every preschool opened, an additional 89 women in Malaysia joined the workforce 116, where the World Bank defined preschool-aged children as 4-6 years old. If so, the opening of childcare centres, which cater to children ages 0-6, would likely draw in more women to the workforce.

The same World Bank report cited especially the difficulties that B40 families had with accessing childcare¹¹⁷, which highlights the need to prioritise the B40 community and laying out a strategic plan to build and provide community childcare centres that are based in and managed by the communities. 118

> Neighbouring Singapore, as of 2020, allocates SGD 2 billion for the early childhood sector, including subsidies of up to 80% for government-supported childcare centres specifically targeted to

> As of April 2021, Canada has committed to investing \$30 billion over the next 5 years for early education and childcare programmes 121, with the aim of growing more affordable childcare spaces while also reducing the cost of childcare. Women in Quebec, a province in Canada, with children under 3 years of age have the highest rates of employment in the world and previous studies have shown that investments in childcare have raised Quebec's GDP by 1.7%. 122 Further studies in Canada have shown that for every dollar invested in childcare, the wider economy receives between \$1.50 and \$2.80 in return. 123

> Australia is investing \$1.7 billion over the next 5 years on childcare, especially targeted towards low-income families. 124

¹¹² Khazanah Research Institute (2019). "Time Use Survey: Fact Sheet." Accessed from https://bit.ly/2VtAwSd
113 World Bank Group (2019). "Breaking Barriers: Toward Better Economic Opportunities for Women", pp. 45. Accessed from https://bit.ly/3jk0VKa
114 National Child Data Centre (2019). "Children and Childcare Centres Overview." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3jfRfRd

¹¹⁶ World Bank Group (2019). "Breaking Barriers: Toward Better Economic Opportunities for Women", pp. 47. Accessed from https://bit.ly/3jk0VKa

¹¹⁸ Community Child Care Association. "What is a community-based child care centre?" Accessed from https://bit.ly/3A60jPg

¹¹⁹ View the Early Childhood Development Agency's resources at https://bit.ly/3samwsK or https://bit.ly/3jQdNrO.
120 Calvin Yang for the Straits Times (19 Feb 2020). "Singapore Budget 2020: More help to give every Singaporean child a good start in life." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3|UOLuk

121 Price (2021). "Canadian Government Announces a \$30 Billion Investment in a National Childcare Program." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3jfxb1a

Department of Finance, Canada 2021). "Budget 2021: A Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3xk5olo 123 ibid

¹²⁴Connor Duffy for ABC News (13 May 2021). "Child care and preschool is getting a boost in the 2021 federal budget. So what's in it for you?" Accessed from https://ab.co/3jkTW41

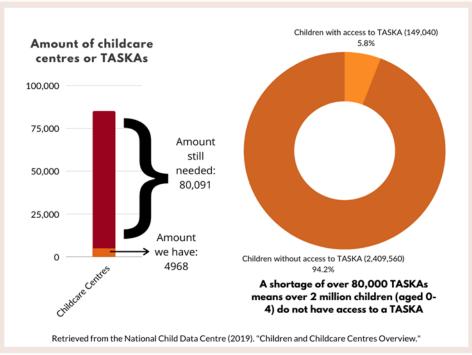


Figure 13. According to research done by the National Child Data Centre, Malaysia currently has 4,968 TASKAs or childcare centres. Given the population of children under 5 in Malaysia, this is a shortfall of 80,091 TASKAs, which means over 2 million children do not have access to a childcare centre.

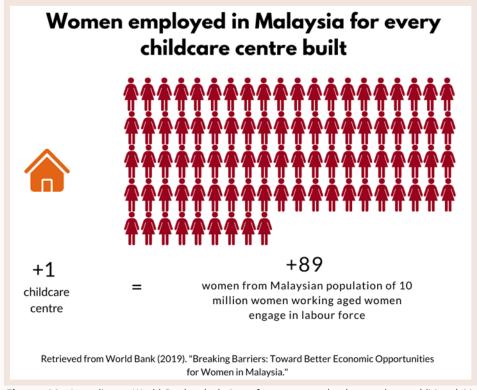


Figure 14. According to World Bank calculations, for every preschool opened, an additional 89 women in Malaysia joined the workforce.

 With this, informal childcare providers can be incorporated into this model of formal childcare provision within their communities. This would have benefits all around, drawing informal childcare providers into the formal workforce and allowing parents dependable childcare, which would facilitate their own labour participation.

Based on WAO's own costing for running our child-care centre, we require RM40,000 a year to cover the costs of rent, licensing, and utilities. On the other hand, according to PWDC, they spent approximately RM200,000 to build a childcare centre from scratch.

- If the government intends to grow the number of community childcare centres by 500 each year this would mean an expansion of 2,500 community childcare centres over the next five years.
- If the goal is for half to be built from scratch and half to be rented properties, this would mean a RM10 million for rented community childcare centres and RM50 million for community childcare centres built from scratch, for a total of RM60 million per year for the next five years.

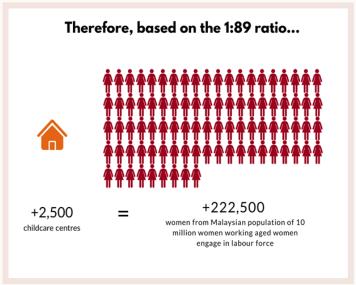


Figure 15. Potential increase in labour force of 222,500 as a result of an additional 2,500 childcare centres.

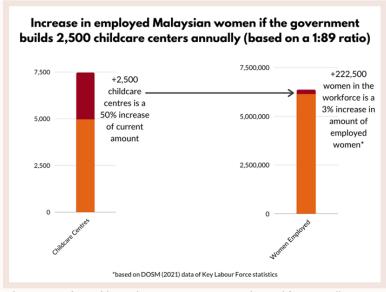


Figure 16. If an additional 222,500 women enter the workforce, it will amount to a 3% increase of employed women.

INTERVENTION #2: PROVIDE FUNDING FOR CHILDCARE CENTRES TO ENSURE THEY CAN OPER-ATE UNDER COVID-19 SOPS WITH A BOL-STERED ALLOCATION OF RM49.6 MILLION MOV-ING INTO THE FIRST HALF OF 2022.

Under the PEMULIH package, a RM3,000 assistance was introduced for childcare centres for sanitisation needs, amounting to an allocation of RM37.2 million. 125

Childcare centres, in complying with SOPs, have to reduce the number of children they can accept, while also needing to spend more money to ensure SOP compliance. Thus, costs of operation go up and this burden can be passed on to parents, either in the form of increased costs or childcare centres being unable to reopen because they are not SOPcompliant.

To reduce this burden on childcare centres and, therefore, parents, it is necessary the Government allocates a fund for childcare centres to operate under COVID-19 SOPs. As we move into 2022, we think it is important that this allocation is maintained and further supplemented because based on WAO's own experience, ensuring our childcare centre could operate under COVID-19 SOPs for 8 children required an investment of RM1,000 for hand sanitisers, cleaning supplies, and masks for 3 months.

Using WAO's own costing, given the reduced capacity our childcare centre had to operate at, we recommend an allocation of RM49.6 million.

We arrived at this figure from the following calcula-

Item	Amount	Cost	Total
WAO's costing for san- itisation based on our Childcare Centre	8 kids for 3 months	RM1,000	RM1,000
Amount of kids in a TASKA	(based on the NCDC calculations, there are on average 30 kids in a childcare centre ¹²⁶ , but COVID-19 SOPs likely reduces this to half, therefore we calculate for 16)	RM1,000 * 2 (doubling WAO's base calcula- tion for 8 kids)	RM2,000
Number of TASKAs and childcare centres which qualified for Government's saniti- sation aid	12,400 TASKAs + child- care centres	RM2,000 (cost for the sanitisation of ~30 kids) * 12,400	RM24.8 million
Number of months the allocation should provide for	6 months	RM24.8 million * 2 (because the initial RM1,000 cost was for 3 months)	RM49.6 million

Table 7. Sanitisation needs allocation calculation. We allocate for 6 months because we hope by the latter half of 2022, COVID-19 SOPs will have eased.

¹²⁵ Calculating for 4,400 TASKAs + 8,000 private kindergartens, which received the grant.

¹²⁶ National Child Data Centre (2019). "Children and Childcare Centres Overview." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3jfRfRd

INTERVENTION #3: PROVIDE FUNDING TO CHILDCARE CENTERS FOR ESSENTIAL PRODUCTS FROM A POOL OF RM157.5 MILLION IN ORDER TO OFFER MORE AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE PROGRAMS TO SINGLE MOTHERS AND WORKING PARENTS WITHIN THE B40 OR LOWER MIDDLE-INCOME GROUPS.

Based on WAO's own experience, essential products such as food, toiletries, and household cleaning supplies cost upwards of RM1,400 per month for an average of eight children.

By providing an allocation for these costs, the price of childcare can go down as these costs will not be passed on to parents.

If a childcare centre, on average, has 30 children, then the cost per month for essential products can cost RM5,250 per month. If the government funds even half of this, childcare costs can go down.

Using the approximate 5,000 TASKAs in Malaysia figure from the NCDC¹²⁷, a 50% funding for TASKAs alone, for a year, would require an allocation of RM157.5 million.

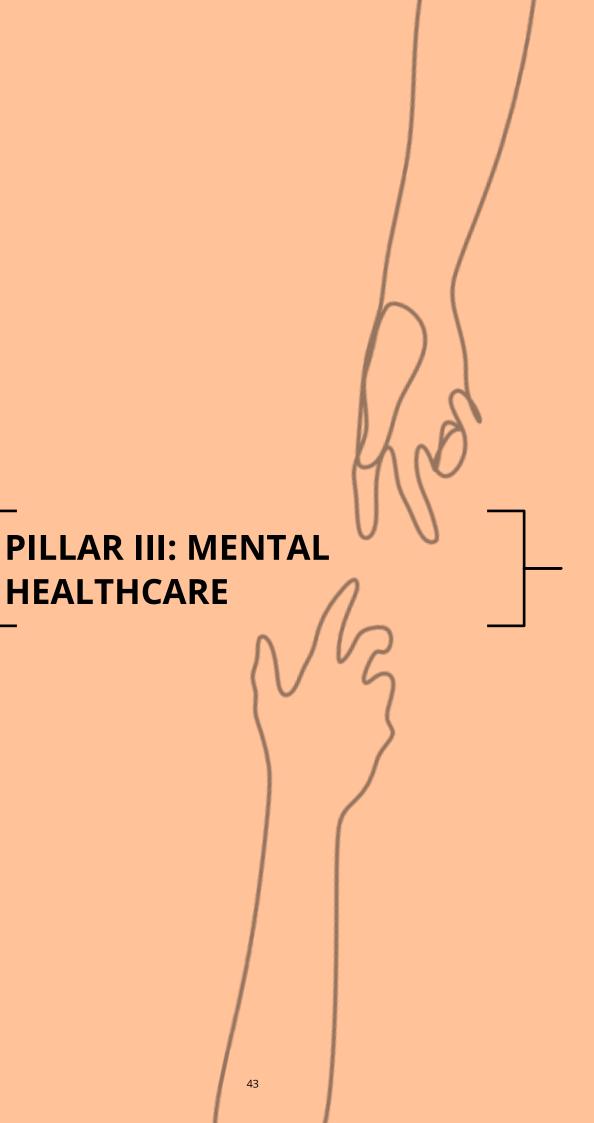
This should be overseen by KPWKM and JKM.

Item	Cost	Amount	Total
Essential products such as food, toiletries, and household cleaning supplies	RM1,400 per month for 8 children	30 kids in an average childcare centre	RM5,250 per month
Amount of TASKAs in Malaysia	5,000	50% of RM5,250 for 5,000 TASKAs for 12	RM157.5 million
Amount of TASKAs + childcare centres which qualified for Govern- ment's sanitisation aid*	12,400	50% of RM5,250 for 12,400 TASKAs for 12 months	RM390.6 million

Table 8. Allocation for essential products (calculation)

^{*}this calculation was done because these TASKAs and childcare centres qualified for government aid under PEMULIH

¹²⁷ National Child Data Centre (2019). "Children and Childcare Centres Overview." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3jfRfRd



MENTAL HEALTHCARE RESPONSE

Domestic violence and gender based violence are public health issues because those who suffer violence are likely to experience injuries and mental health issues, among other things. Thus, in prioritising healthcare investment as one of the key areas for COVID recovery, it is also important to address mental healthcare, especially for survivors of domestic violence and gender-based violence.

Our recommendations look to increase the mental health budget to provide better mental health support for everyone in Malaysia, not just domestic violence and gender-based violence survivors. In order to move towards recovery and resilience, more must be invested to ensure everyone in Malaysia has access to the support they need.

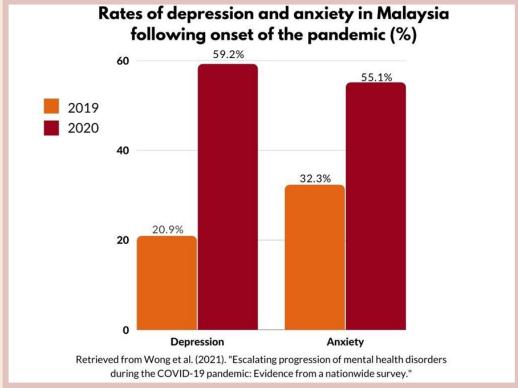


Figure 17. The escalating rates of mental health disorders in Malaysia. From 2019 to 2020, depression rates within the population increased from 20.9% to 59.2% and anxiety from 32.3% to 55.1%.

¹²⁸ Harper (2018). "Why gender-based violence is a public health issue." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3A3V4zI

1. ALLOCATE RM765.6 MILLION FOR **PSYCHIATRY AND MENTAL HEALTH SER-**VICES.

The World Health Organization (WHO) finds that, worldwide, only 2.4% of national health budgets are dedicated to mental health. 129 Malaysia falls far below this. In 2021, RM31.9 billion was set aside for healthcare. 130 Of this, only RM313 million was set aside for psychiatry and mental health services (or 0.98%), a decrease from 2020's allocation of RM343 million.¹³¹ This comes on the heels of the known impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on mental health.

Research has demonstrated an escalating progression of mental health disorders in Malaysia last year, with an increase of depression rates within the population from 20.9% to 59.2% and anxiety from **32.3% to 55.1% (Figure 17).** The same study also found that rates of depression, anxiety, and stress were higher in women than men and were especially worse for those in poor financial situations. The researchers also reported that rates of depression and anxiety did not decline despite Malaysia moving from CMCO to RMCO during the same period, meaning once mental health declined at the onset of pandemic lockdown, it did not resolve itself once restrictions were lifted. Given how 2021 has progressed much the same with MCO 3.0 being instituted, it is likely that rates of poor mental health have maintained, if not increased.

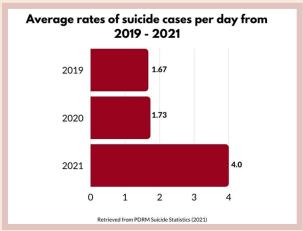


Figure 18. Daily suicide rates in 2021 have increased to 4.0 suicides daily, up from 1.73 in 2020 and 1.67 in 2019.

According to Befrienders, those reporting suicidal tendencies increased from 30% to 40% from 2020 to 2021. 133 Suicide cases for the first five months of 2021 already comprised over 70% of the annual cases in the past two years. 134 This is roughly 4 suicide cases a day¹³⁵ (compared to 1.73 cases per day in 2020 and 1.67 cases per day in 2019). Women and youth are particularly vulnerable, with women making up 83.5% of the cases of suicide from 2019 to May 2021, while more than half of the suicide victims in Malaysia are aged 15-18.¹³⁸ This signals a growing public health crisis that must be properly addressed.

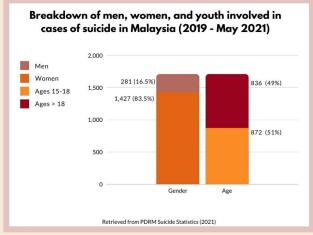


Figure 19. Rates of suicide by gender and age (2019 - May 2021)

¹²⁹ The World Health Organisation (2013). "Investing in Mental Health: Evidence for Care." Accessed from https://bit.ly/2UH4eTF ¹³⁰ Cheryl Poo for the Edge Markets (16 Nov 2020). "Budget 2021: Healthcare measures welcomed but fall short." Accessed from https://

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131 Win Li for Relate Malaysia (19 Nov 2020). "What We Know So Far: A Breakdown of Budget 2021's Allocation for Mental Health." Accessed from will Lifur Relate ivalaysia (19 Nov 2020). "What We Know So Far: A Breakdown of Budget 2021's Allocation for Mental Health." Accessed froi https://bit.ly/3rRB9Be

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135 Free Malaysia Today (29 Jun 2021). "A shocking statistic – four suicide cases a day in first three months," Accessed from https://bit.ly/3fptDID

A WHO study has shown that depression and anxietydisorders cost the global economy US \$1 trillion each year in lost productivity. 137 The same study also found that for every US \$1 (RM4.16) invested in treating common mental health disorders, there is a return of US \$4 (RM16.64) in improved health and productivity. Research from Malaysia has found that mental health issues in 2018 cost an economic loss of RM14.46 billion, or 1% of GDP. 138

Moving forward into 2022, mental health should be one of the pillars for our healthcare allocation, especially as part of the national recovery plan.

Australia allocated 5% of its national health budget towards mental health for their **2021-2022 budget cycle**¹³⁹, a total investment of AUD 6.3 billion, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic's effect on mental health.

In 2017, Singapore allocated 3% of its national health budget towards mental health¹⁴⁰, totalling SGD 300 million.

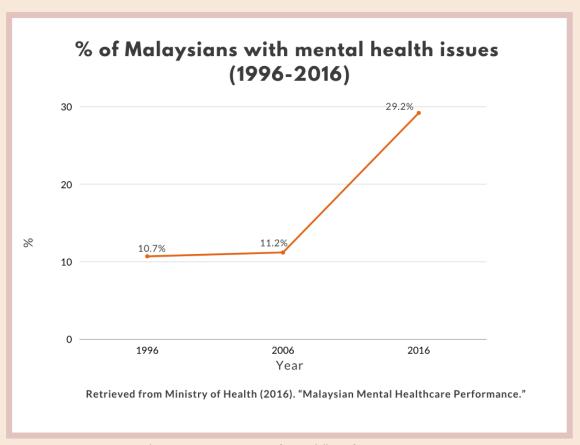


Figure 20. Increasing rates of mental illness from 1996-2016.

¹³⁶The Star (2 Jul 2021). "Most suicide cases involved females, say police." Accessed from https://bit.ly/2XTIVAD

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¹³⁹ Australian Government Department of Health (2021). "Budget's historic \$2.3 billion investment in mental health and suicide prevention." Ac-

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INTERVENTION #1: APPORTION 2.4% OF THE NATIONAL HEALTH BUDGET TOWARDS PSYCHIATRY AND MENTAL HEALTH.

If the national health budget for 2022 is around the same amount as it was for 2021, then this would mean an allocation of RM765.6 million.

An allocation of 2.4% of the national health budget specifically for mental health would put Malaysia on par with the global standard. The amount Malaysia typically spends normally falls in the range of lower- to lower-middle income countries. 141

By apportioning 2.4% of the national health budget towards mental health, this can also alleviate the burden that the reduced 2021 budget imposed on many mental health services. This budgeting can also helping address Malaysia's severe lack of mental health infrastructure:

• We only have 4 specialised mental health hospi-

tals¹⁴²

- Severe cases are referred to these hospitals¹⁴³ and they only exist in Perak, Johor, Sabah, and Sarawak
- We have 2.7 psychiatric beds per 10,000 people¹⁴⁴, which is low compared to the suggested 4-6 beds per 10,000 people.¹⁴⁵
- We have 410 registered psychiatrists in Malaysia, for a ratio 1.27 per 100,000, where WHO recommends 1:10,000.¹⁴⁶ This is a shortage of 2,818 psychiatrists.

This allocation needs to benefit psychosocial support services as well, such as those provided by Talian Kasih and NGOs such as Befrienders.

Increasing the mental health budget can help address all of these issues, especially in light of how critically mental health support and infrastructure is needed in this country.

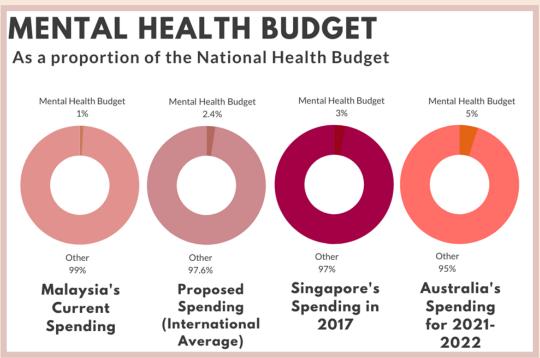


Figure 21. Visualisation of proposed spending as a proportion of national health budgets.

¹⁴¹ Win Li for Relate Malaysia (19 Nov 2020). "What We Know So Far: A Breakdown of Budget 2021's Allocation for Mental Health." Accessed from https://bit.lu/3rRR9Re

¹⁴² Ministry of Health (2016). "Malaysian Mental Healthcare Performance." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3yxyUFm

¹⁴³ Marhani Midin et al. (2018). "Mental Health Services in Malaysia." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3CdxouG

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¹⁴⁵ Treatment Advocacy Center (2016). "Psychiatric Bed Supply Need Per Capita." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3ynLlUa

Headrient Advocacy Center (2010). Haydriath's bed adaptive the Capital Accessed Horn https://bit.ly/3CdxouG

Investment	Expected Returns per unit investment	Total investment	Unit investment
RM4.16	RM16.64	RM765.6 million	RM765.6 million / RM4.16 = ~RM184 million
		Total expected returns	RM184 million * RM16.64 = ~ RM3 billion
		Losses avoided from investing and addressing mental health issues	RM14.46 billion
		Total net positive to society from an invest- ment of 2.4% of national health budget	+RM17.64 billion

Table 9. Net positive to society as a result of better mental health investment.

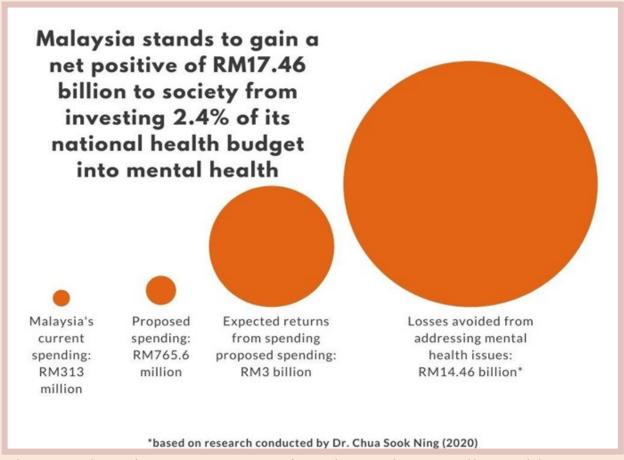


Figure 22. Visualisation of net positive to society in terms of expected returns to the economy and losses avoided.

INTERVENTION #2: PRIORITISE THE SETTING UP OF COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CLINICS BY ALLOCATING RM50 MILLION WITHIN THE MENTAL HEALTH BUDGET.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) defines a community mental health clinic as "a centre for community care treatment which includes the screening, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of any person suffering from any mental disorder (Mental Health Act 2001)."

As of 2020, Malaysia only has 25 community mental health clinics, also known as MENTARIs.¹⁴⁹ While the MOH plans on expanding the amount of MENTARIS to 40 by 2030, or a rate of 1 to 2 additional MENTARIS a year, the expansion of MENTARIS, as of 2020, is still in its initial stages and subject to Ministry of Finance and government allocations and support.¹⁵⁰ In light of the increased mental distress following the pandemic, this is simply not enough.

The slow rate of expansion signals how poorly understood the urgency of the mental health crisis is in Malaysia, especially for vulnerable groups such as domestic violence survivors, lower income groups, single parents, and refugees.

 Domestic violence survivors are at three times a higher risk of suffering from mental illness¹⁵¹, mental illness is more likely to affect those who are poor than those who are rich¹⁵², single parents are at increased risk for stressors such as anxiety and depression¹⁵³, and refugees are particularly vulnerable to anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder.¹⁵⁴

There already exists a MENTARI implementation guide¹⁵⁵ released by the MOH, which demonstrates an understanding of the need for these centres to support Malaysian's mental health needs.

We advocate for the opening of at least 5 additional MENTARIs in 2022 with a sustained rate of 5 per year until 2030, particularly focusing on states which lack mental health capacity and infrastructure.

Our RM50 million allocation proposal gives each new MENTARI location RM10 million, which includes covering the costs of:

- Equipment needed for a MENTARI which amounts to approximately RM190,000 (2013).¹⁵⁶
 Adjusting that for the cost of inflation in 2021, the same basket of goods is now RM220,000 according to the DOSM calculator¹⁵⁷, or RM1.1 million for 5 MENTARIs.
- The salaries for those employed by the MENTARI adds up to RM61,000 a month, totalling RM732,000 for a whole year or RM3.7 million for the salary of the 5 MENTARI staff.

Building costs, which will greatly vary location to location, needs to be factored in as well.

¹⁴⁸ Ministry of Health (2013). "Community Mental Health Centre Implementation Guideline." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3xEwxQ3

¹⁴⁹ CodeBlue (9 Oct 2020). "MOH Plans 40 Community Mental Health Centres By 2030." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3yENj2P

¹⁵¹ Sarah Boseley for the Guardian. "Domestic abuse victims more likely to suffer mental illness - study." Accessed from https://bit.ly/2Vp5Qlb 152 The World Health Organization (2007). "Breaking the vicious cycle between mental ill-health and poverty." Accessed from https://bit.ly/37kgwUM

¹⁵³ Theodoritsi et al. (2018). "The mental health of single-parent families in relation to psychological, societal and financial parameters." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3A2DPi2

¹⁵⁴ American Psychiatric Association. "Mental Health Facts on Refugees, Asylum-seekers, & Survivors of Forced Displacement." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3Abanq2

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¹⁵⁶ There exists clear guidelines for what is needed in a MENTARI, thus our allocation proposal is largely based on the costing according to these guidelines.

^{rs7} Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM). "Malaysia CPI Inflation Calculator." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3CdN94M

Item	Cost	Amount	Total
Equipment for a MEN- TARI	RM190,000 as of 2013 Cost adjusted for inflation in 2021 = RM220,000	5 MENTARIS	RM1.1 million
	101220,000		
Salaries for MENTARI staff	RM61,000 a month	12 months	RM732,000 for a whole year * 5 MEN- TARIs RM3.7 million
Building and other overhead costs	Varies by location	5 MENTARIS	Suggested ~RM5 mil- lion per MENTARI
		Total needed to be allocated for 1 MEN- TARI	RM10 million RM10 million * 5 MEN- TARIS = RM50 million

 Table 10. MENTARI allocation calculation.

¹⁵⁸ View Annex I for full calculations, based on the MENTARI guideline handbook

INTERVENTION #3: ALLOCATE RM9.3 MILLION AMOUNT TO TRAIN COUNSELLORS AND PSY-CHOLOGISTS SPECIFICALLY FOR DOMESTIC VIO-LENCE AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE CLIENTS.

As of 2020, our counsellor to community ratio is 1:52,000¹⁵⁹ and there are approximately 615 registered and practicing counsellors in Malaysia. According to the Health Director-General Datuk Dr. Noor Hisham Abdullah, the normal ratio is 1:500. This is a shortage of approximately 63,345 counsellors. This shortage was also highlighted in the MOH's 2016 Mental Healthcare report as a critical issue that needs to be addressed. 160

In order to practice as an effective trauma counsellor in Malaysia, a Masters in Counselling and training with populations suffering domestic violence- and gender- based violence-trauma is necessary. 161

As such, we propose an allocation of RM9.3 million for a pilot programme for 615 students in postgraduate scholarships through the Ministry of **Education** to allow those who hold appropriate Bachelors degrees to study a Masters in Counselling, with a streamlined programme that allows them exposure to domestic violence- and gender- based violence-survivors in order to better equip them to handle these clients.

- This streamlined programme should be done in conjunction with NGOs who work with the relevant populations.
- For example, if a student attends Universiti Malaya (UM) for this programme, their students can be directed to WAO to receive the appropriate training with the populations. If a student attends Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), their students can train with WCC in Penang.

The average cost for a Masters Counselling programme in Malaysia at a public university is around

RM15,000. 162, 163 The cost at a private university is around RM50,000.

The RM9.3 million allocation would ensure that 615 students who are qualified will receive RM15,000 to enroll in postgraduate studies to become counsellors.

To fully address the issue of the shortage of counsellors, we recommend this RM9.3 million allocation be maintained yearly for the next 5 years to ensure a supply of over 3,000 counsellors enter the workforce over the next 7 years.

A bolstered psychosocial support system is crucial, especially in the wake of the anticipated long -term effects the pandemic may have on the psychological well-being of the community. 164, 165

Ultimately, the government should work towards setting up an accelerated undergraduate counselling programme that can reduce the number of years required to become a licensed counsellor from 6 years (the current amount of time, as one needs to complete both undergraduate and masters degrees) to 3 or 4 years, which would ensure a trained supply of counsellors to meet community needs.

¹⁶⁰ Ministry of Health (2016). "Malaysian Mental Healthcare Performance", pp 56. Accessed from https://bit.ly/3yxyUFm

¹⁵⁹ Bernama News (4 Jun 2020). "Malaysia still short of psychologists to provide counselling - Health DG." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3ijUSpZ

¹⁶¹ According to Thrive Well, formerly known as SOLS Health, a social enterprise specialising in trauma-informed community mental health services. View more information on their website: https://www.thethrive.center/our-mission

162 Universiti Malaya (2018). "Faculty of Education." Accessed from https://bit.ly/3xivpBh

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¹⁶⁵ View also COVID-MINDS, a database of 160 longitudinal studies worldwide on the mental-health impacts of COVID-19 at https://bit.ly/3AzEUhx

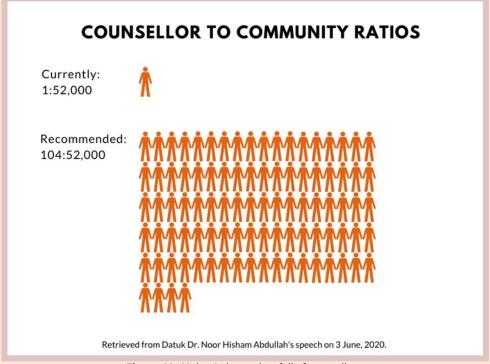


Figure 23. *Malaysia has a shortfall of counsellors.*

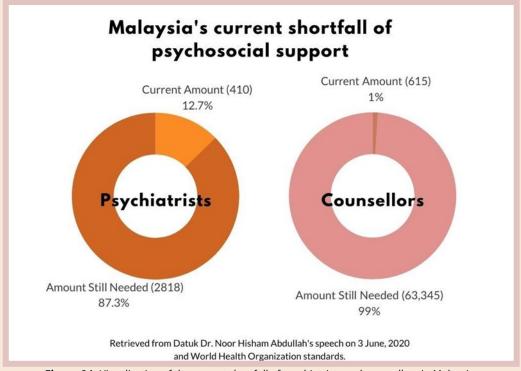


Figure 24. Visualisation of the current shortfall of psychiatrists and counsellors in Malaysia.

CONCLUSION

In making these recommendations, we also acknowledge their limitations. Accessing gender disaggregated data and information for calculations remains a barrier. Where relevant, we have included approximate costs, drawing from secondary research and benchmarking it against data, as well as incorporating costing and operational expenditure from Women's Aid Organisation. In providing costing and in depth explanations for allocations, **our hope is to communicate the value of gender-responsive budgeting**. We strongly urge the government to consider these recommendations, not only to ensure those who were most adversely affected by the pandemic can thrive, but as a necessary step towards resilient recovery that is inclusive for all in Malaysia, centred on a whole of society approach.



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ANNEX

Salaries of MENTARI Staff

(Used in the calculation on p. 50; roles drawn from MENTARI guide, numbers link to sources figures are based on)

Medical officer: RM7,700

Visiting psychiatrist: RM141 per hour (based on 25 hours a month)

2 staff nurses: RM6,300 x 2

2 assistant medical officers: RM3,000 x 2

Medical social worker: RM3,000

Counsellor or clinical psychologist: RM7,000

Pharmacist: RM8,800

Pharmacist's assistant: RM2,000

Community nurse: RM3,800

Administrative assistant: RM2,000

Health attendant: RM2,500

Driver: RM2,000

Sum total costs of salaries per month: RM61,000 (RM60,925)

WAO Hotline Costs

(Used in calculation on page 37; figures come from WAO Services team)

RM100-200 (or **RM150 on average**) for Nubitel charges per month

• At worst parts of the pandemic, 3x increase (estimated around RM450/month)

WAO's advocacy work is enabled by the generous support provided by Yayasan Sime Darby. YSD does not control, nor endorse, and is not responsible for the contents of this report.

