

## CHILD ABUSE IN MALAYSIA

### IMPACT:

**Average of 7 children in Malaysia were reported to be victims of child abuse each day in 2008.<sup>1</sup>**

- The impact of abuse is far greater than its immediate, visible effects.
- Abuse is associated with short- and long-term consequences that may include brain damage, developmental delays, learning disorders, problems forming relationships, aggressive behaviour, and depression.
- Survivors of child abuse and neglect may be at greater risk for problems later in life—such as low academic achievement, drug use, teen pregnancy, and criminal behaviour—that affect not just the child and family, but society as a whole.

### NUMBERS:

**Child abuse is on the rise in Malaysia with an increase of some 700 reported cases between 2006 and 2008.<sup>1</sup>**

- Despite significant strides made by the Government in improving child protection measures in recent years, statistics from the Department of Social Welfare show a rise in reported child abuse cases in Malaysia:
  - ☒ 2008: 2,780 child abuse reports
  - ☒ 2007: 2,279 child abuse reports
  - ☒ 2006: 1,999 child abuse reports.
- Based on 2008 reported figures, neglect is the most common form of child abuse in Malaysia. The breakdown of the three key forms of abuse are as follows:
  - ☒ **952 child victims experienced neglect**, meaning a caretaker failed to provide for the child's basic needs.
  - ☒ **863 child victims were physically abused.**
  - ☒ **733 child victims were sexually abused**, 72% were incest.
  - ☒ **58 child victims** were abandoned babies.
- Failure to provide care and supervision has become the most frequent cause of death among children.

<sup>1</sup> Based on statistics from the Department of Social Welfare, Malaysia

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### ACTUAL NUMBERS:

**Most child abuse goes unreported and the statistical snapshot could be just the “tip of the iceberg”**

- The national reported figures in Malaysia represent ONLY reported cases to the Department of Social Welfare, police or hospitals/clinics when children are treated.
- Global experience shows that only a small proportion of child abuse of children is reported and investigated, and few perpetrators are held to account.
- Very young children, for example, lack the capacity to report physical or sexual abuse. Older children also often fear reprisals by perpetrators or interventions by authorities, both of which may worsen their overall situation.
- Anecdotal evidence indicates that often only the most acute cases of child abuse are reported.

### CHILDREN:

**Child abuse affects all social, ethnic, religious and economic groups. No group of children is immune.**

- Children of all races, ethnicities, religious and socio-economic backgrounds experience child abuse.
- Boys and girls are almost equally likely to experience abuse.
- Girls are four times more likely to experience sexual abuse.
- Children of all races and ethnicities experience child abuse.

### PERPETRATORS:

**1 in 2 child victims reported in 2008 were abused by a parent.<sup>1</sup>**

- By definition, perpetrators of child abuse and neglect are the very people responsible for the child’s safety and well-being (including parents, other relatives, and babysitters).
- 2008 statistics from the Department of Social Welfare show that out of the 2,780 child abuse cases reported in Malaysia, 772 offenders were mothers of the victims, while 494 cases were attributed to fathers of the victims.

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### CHILD ABUSE COST:

Child abuse causes a country the loss of human potential.

- While the cost of child abuse to the economy and society may be difficult to determine, there are enormous direct costs which include:
  - Cost of medical care for injuries sustained or for malnourishment.
  - Cost of long-term medical and mental health care for survivors.
  - Mental health treatment for abusers and caregivers who neglected their children.
  - Counselling and follow-up costs for victims and families.
  - Foster care costs when the abused or neglected children are removed from their homes and placed in welfare homes or foster families.
  - Costs for police intervention, arrests, prosecution and imprisonment.
  - Costs incurred for legal matters.
  - Costs incurred for special education for victims.
- There are also hidden costs which include:
  - Cost of lost potential of the child victims – an abused child is less likely to be able to fulfil his/her potential to contribute to society.
  - Damage done to the country's economy due to lost productivity in the workforce.
  - Cost of pain and suffering for the child and family.

### LEGISLATION:

Child abuse is a punishable offence in Malaysia.

- Child abuse is an offence in Malaysia, punishable under the **Child Act (2001) and the Penal Code (revised 1997)**.
- Offenders may be liable to a maximum fine of RM 50,000 or up to 20 years imprisonment, or both depending on the offence. Offenders may also be punished with whipping in addition to the fine and/or imprisonment.