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EDUCATION IS A HUMAN RIGHT
LITERACY AND EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA: KEY ACTIONS

Education – a strategy to achieve Vision 2020	• Education is a top priority for the country's achievement of developed nation status, as laid out in Vision 2020, and in the National Mission (a new implementation framework to propel Malaysia towards the second phase of achieving Vision 2020). • The two key thrusts under the National Mission directly related to education are: ↻ Thrust 2: To raise the capacity for knowledge and innovation, and nurture "first class mentality". ↻ Thrust 3: To address persistent socio-economic inequalities constructively and productively. • Education enables society to obtain knowledge, develop skills and nurture values necessary in a highly competitive and globalised world impacted by rapid development in science, technology and information. • Education develops the country's human resource, which is a major thrust in ensuring sustainable socio-economic growth. • In Malaysia, efforts to develop human capital adopt a holistic approach, emphasising the mastery of knowledge, intellectual capital and developing technological and entrepreneurial skills.
Education system in Malaysia	**Early childhood education:** • Children between age four and six attend pre-schools set up by the government, non-government agencies and the private sector • In 2003, a national pre-school curriculum for children four to six years old was made compulsory for all pre-schools. **Compulsory free primary education:** • National schools: using the national language as the medium of instruction. • National-type Chinese and Tamil schools: using Mandarin and Tamil as the medium of instruction, respectively. **Free secondary education:** • National schools: using the national language. **Post-secondary education:** • Form 6 or matriculation programmes pursued in preparation for entrance to public universities. • Diploma-level programmes offered by private colleges and polytechnics in preparation for entrance to private universities or the job market.

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Current achievements[1]	Malaysia has achieved significant improvements in enrolment and literacy levels:
	Primary education:
	• More than 96% of primary-aged children were enrolled in school in 2005.
	• There are no significant gender disparities in primary enrolment rate.
	• The percentage of children who enter Year One and successfully reach Year Six had improved from 96.7% in 1989 to 98.1% in 2005.
	Secondary education:
	• Secondary education enrolment rates increased steadily during the previous decades but have now levelled out.
	• In 2005, the Net Enrolment Rate for girls was 81%, while the rate for boys was significantly lower, at 77%.
	• Learning achievements are above the international benchmarks in international comparisons, when measured for achievements in mathematics and science among eight-grade students.
	Literacy levels:
	• According to the 2000 Census, more than 91% of the population (above 10 years who were attending or had attended school) are literate.
	Education for *Orang Asli* children:
	• There have been great improvements in primary school enrolment among *Orang Asli* children in the last 10 years – 26,911 children were enrolled in primary school in 2006.
	• Dropout rates have decreased to national levels (2-4%).
	• MOE has developed a new primary school syllabus for indigenous children, to incorporate indigenous culture into the syllabus to better prepare children from indigenous communities for success in primary school.
	• A special education program was implemented in 2003 to provide school uniforms, fees, books, writing materials and transportation to school, as well as train qualified *Orang Asli* individuals as teachers.

[1] Malaysia Education For All Mid-Decade Assessment Report 2000-2007

UNICEF Malaysia Communications, 15 Aug 2008
[1] A Human Rights Based Approach to Education For All, UNICEF/UNESCO 2007, New York.

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Current gaps[2]	Challenges persist in the following areas: **Urban-rural disparities:** • Enrolment rates and achievements are slightly lower in rural areas including in Sabah & Sarawak (particularly among indigenous communities of these two states). • Literacy rates for the rural areas of Sabah and Sarawak were significantly lower, at 79% and 72% respectively. *Orang Asli* **children:** • Non-enrolment in primary school is still significantly higher than the national levels. • Only 20-40% of children completing primary school enter lower secondary school. 40-60% of those entering lower secondary school drop out. • The literacy rate among indigenous communities, measured in 2001, was 51%.
Targets[3]	Increasing institutional capacity and human resources in the following areas: **Training teachers and school counselors:** • MOE is trying to motivate teachers to work in rural and remote areas while aiming to have 100% of secondary teachers and 25% of primary teachers university-trained by 2010. • In 2006, all secondary schools had school counsellors and the MOE will ensure that all primary schools with more than 350 students will have school counsellors beginning in 2007. **Improving early childhood care and development:** • Under 9MP, Malaysia is currently expanding the coverage of pre-school education towards a national coverage by 2010. • Greater attention is currently given to training programs for pre-school teachers and child carers. • Malaysia is in the final stages of developing a policy on ECCD for children from birth to eight years old.

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[2] Malaysia Education For All Mid-Decade Assessment Report 2000-2007

[3] Malaysia Education For All Mid-Decade Assessment Report 2000-2007

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Promoting life skills-based education:

- Malaysia is paying increasing attention to the need for a life-skills based education system as a response to modernisation challenges and emerging issues.

- The concept of educational quality implemented in Malaysian schools combines an emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy skills with a more holistic view of human capital development – including the promotion of a strong spiritual, emotional and physical foundation for life.

- Traditional life skills, such as human rights, decision-making, conflict resolution and problem-solving are infused in existing subjects. Other life skills include basic skills, psycho-social skills, practical or contextual skills, and living skills.