

REPORT FROM THE CHILDREN OF MALAYSIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON

THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

OCTOBER 2024



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Foreword

This Report captures the thoughts, feelings, and voices of children under 18 from both urban and rural communities, based on insights from eight consultations held between June and September 2024. It marks a historic moment as the first-ever report by children in Malaysia to the UNCRC Committee, responding to the Government of Malaysia's 2nd–5th State Reports submitted in 2021.

We are grateful to the NGOs, government agencies, UNICEF Malaysia, Study Hub Asia, trainers, facilitators, rapporteurs, parents and—most importantly—the children who made this child-centered, participatory journey possible. Special thanks to the Child Councils for their candid feedback on policies and programs that impact them. Their ideas and recommendations form the heart of this Report. We also appreciate the guidance provided by CRC Connect and CRC Asia.

This Report is just the first step towards meaningful child participation, and we hope to see children's voices embraced in decision-making by government, schools, peers, and parents alike. Rather than cover every right outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 ("UNCRC"), this Report focuses on the issues that matter most to the children themselves, as raised during consultations. Children are the true experts on their own lives and have the potential to be powerful changemakers in their communities.

Participants were fully informed about the purpose of these Consultations, and parental and child consent were obtained for the use of their statements, artwork, voices, images, and videos. To protect their privacy, all materials are anonymized, and the best interests of the children were prioritized throughout the process.

We hope future reports will be primarily child-led, with adults providing only supporting roles—ensuring that children's perspectives remain at the forefront.

**CHILDLINE FOUNDATION
MALAYSIA**

30 October 2024

Introduction

This UNCRC Children's Report 2024 offers an in-depth look at the state of children's rights in Malaysia, rooted directly in the lived experiences and voices of children from diverse regions and backgrounds. Through inclusive consultations with children aged 9 to 17, the Report captures the realities faced by children living in both urban and rural areas, across various ethnicities and socio-economic contexts.

These consultations provide an authentic lens into the challenges, hopes, and aspirations of children in Malaysia in key areas such as education, healthcare, protection, and participation in decisions that shape their lives. Children shared their struggles to access quality education, voiced concerns about gaps in healthcare, highlighted their vulnerability to violence, and expressed a clear desire to be heard in matters that affect their future.

The Report not only acknowledges Malaysia's progress in implementing the UNCRC but also identifies critical gaps that require urgent action from policymakers and stakeholders. It serves as a call to create a more inclusive, supportive environment where every child including non Malaysians can thrive.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the children who courageously shared their stories, and to the facilitators, organizations, and partners whose efforts made these consultations possible. This Report is a testament to the importance of elevating children's voices—they hold the key to understanding and addressing the realities they face.

Aligned with Malaysia's commitments to global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UNCRC, this Report underscores the nation's role in advancing children's rights on both local and international stages. It is a crucial step in the collective journey towards ensuring that every child enjoys their right to survival, protection, development and participation



Figure 1: Children Are Our Future

UNCRC Children's Report Consultations in Malaysia

Eight (8) locations in 7 states (Selangor, Perak, Pulau Pinang, Kelantan, Negeri Sembilan, Sabah, and Sarawak) and one (1) Federal Territory (Kuala Lumpur) were selected as locations for consultations with children. The exact locations are:



Justification on the Selected Locations for Consultations in Malaysia

The locations cover both Peninsular Malaysia (West Malaysia) and East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak), ensuring representation from different regions of the country, each with its own unique challenges and experiences. This provides a more holistic understanding of children's needs across Malaysia. These locations represent a broad mix of ethnicities, cultures, and socioeconomic conditions. For example, urban centres like Kuala Lumpur, Petaling Jaya, and Georgetown have different dynamics compared to more rural areas like Kuala Krai, Keningau, Royal Belum, Dalat, and Bahau. This allows the consultations to capture diverse perspectives from children living in different contexts. Furthermore, the inclusion of both urban and rural areas as consultation locations guarantees the inclusion of the voices of both urban and rural children, recognizing their unique challenges in accessing education and social services. While all consultations involved children with disabilities, to ensure further inclusiveness, the consultation in Petaling Jaya focused on deaf and Children Of Deaf Adults (CODA). In addition, realising that there were not many children from the Indian community in the consultations, a special session was conducted with children in Bahau.

Georgetown was chosen as it is home to many stateless and refugee children from Myanmar, and Keningau was selected due to its diverse population, which includes children from various Sabahan ethnic backgrounds such as Dusun, Suluk, Murut, Javanese, and Malay communities. Keningau also has large population of undocumented and refugee children, primarily from the Philippines and Indonesia.

The Royal Belum Rainforest is home to indigenous tribes of Jahai and Temiar while Dalat is predominantly a Melanau area, representing one of Sarawak's indigenous ethnic groups. Incorporating children from rural areas guarantees the representation of minority cultures in the consultations, facilitating a deeper understanding of their unique cultural, educational, environmental and social challenges.

Child Participants in the UNCRC Consultations in Malaysia

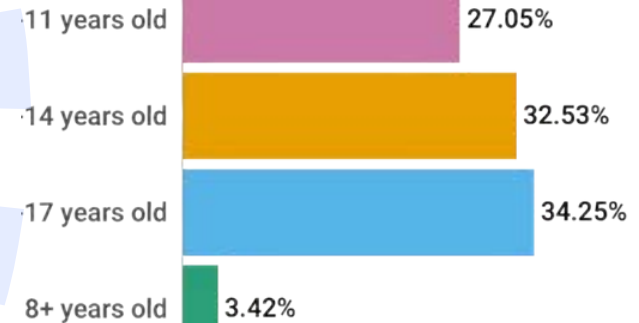
Gender

44.52% Boy

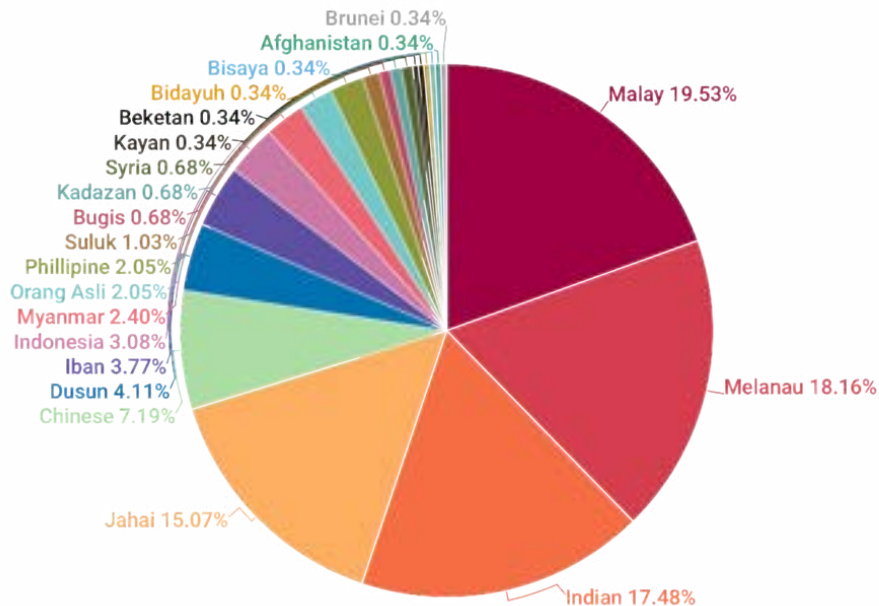
55.48% Girl



Age



Ethnicity



Children with Disabilities

Learning Disabilities

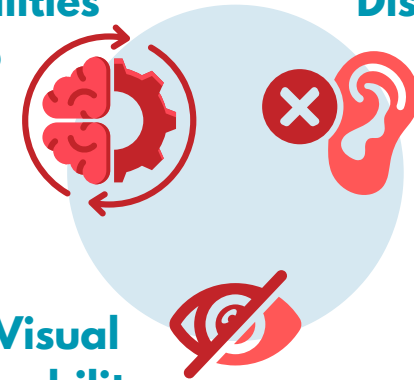
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Hearing Disabilities

23

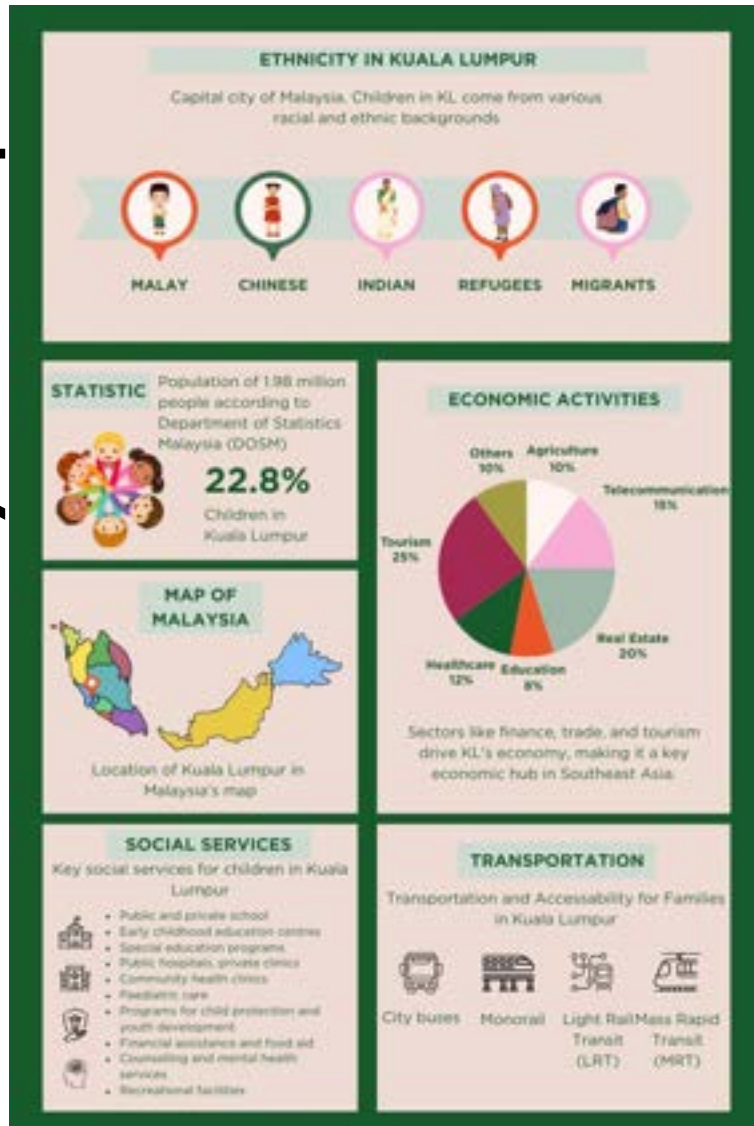
Visual Disability

1

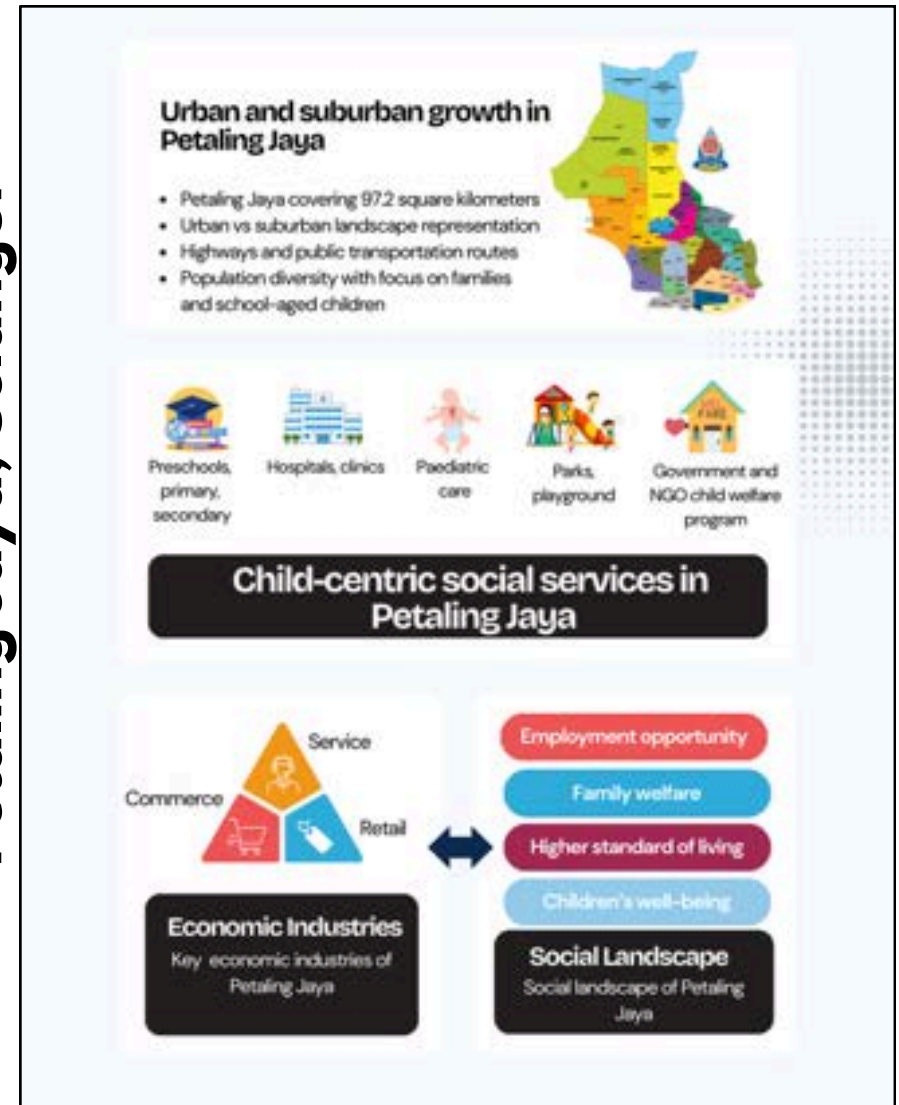


Overview of Locations, Demography of Children, Social Services, Economic Background and Facilities for Children

Federal Territory Kuala Lumpur



Petaling Jaya, Selangor



Georgetown, Pulau Pinang



Bahau, Negeri Sembilan

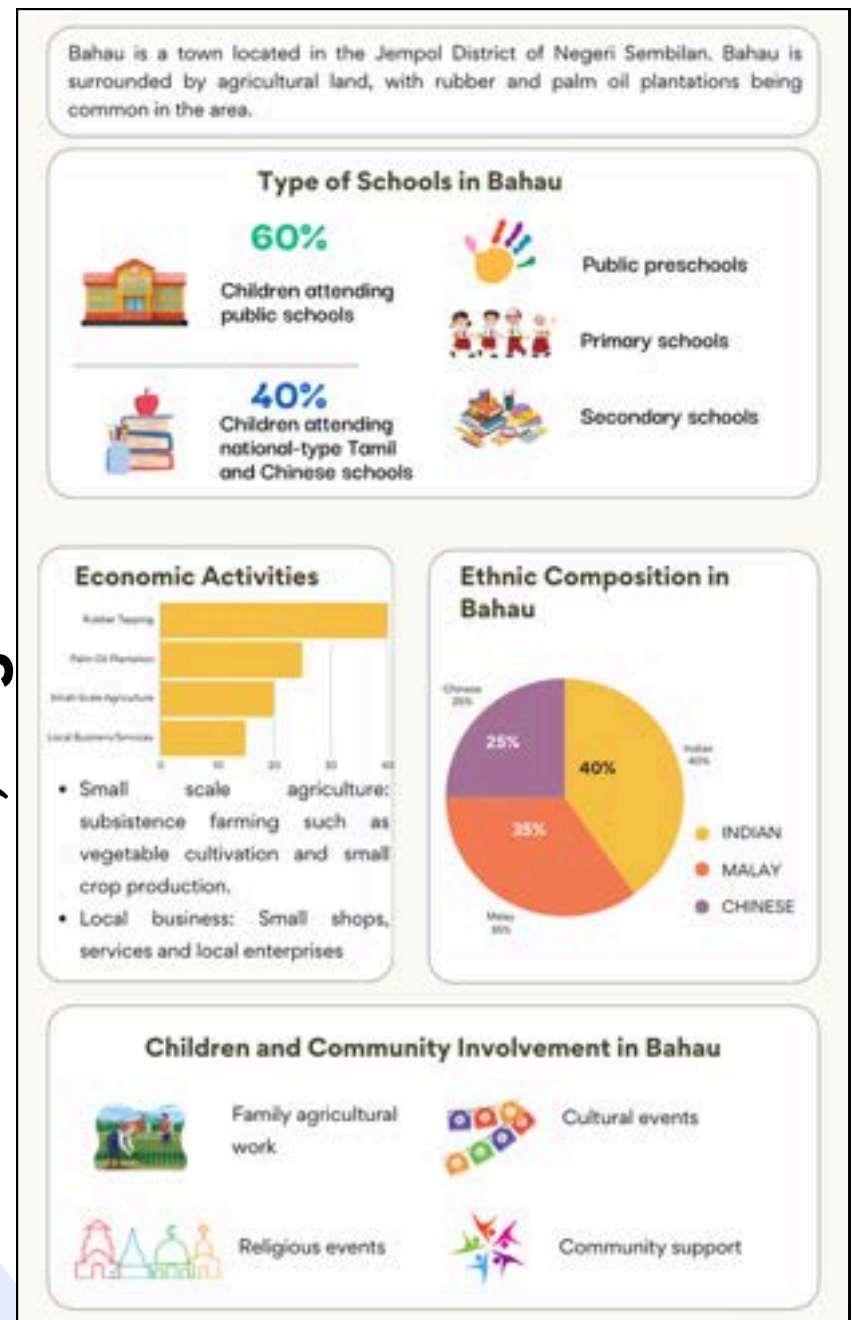




Figure 2: Orang Asli house in Sungai Tiang, Royal Belum



Figure 3: Orang Asli Mothers washing clothes in the lake

Royal Belum, Perak

Royal Belum is the northern part of Peninsular Malaysia and the home to indigenous tribes.

Indigenous Communities and Livelihoods in Royal Belum

- Fishing
- Looking for honey
- Looking for agarwood
- Most of the men works in the Gerik town
- Homes are built from natural materials
- Community is deeply connected to the surrounding forest

Education and Healthcare Access for Jahai Children in Royal Belum

- 1 primary school
- Accommodate 60-70 students
- No secondary school
- Must travel to SMK Gerik, 45 km from Pulau Banding jetty
- Nearest hospital in Gerik, 44km from jetty
- Time taken: 2 hours and more
- Reliance on speedboat

Map from Kampung Sungai Tiang to Gerik

- From Sungai Tiang to Pulau Banding Jetty is 30 minutes by boat
- Pulau Banding jetty is the nearest jetty
- From Pulau Banding jetty to Gerik is 44km by speedboat
- Gerik has public healthcare and secondary school

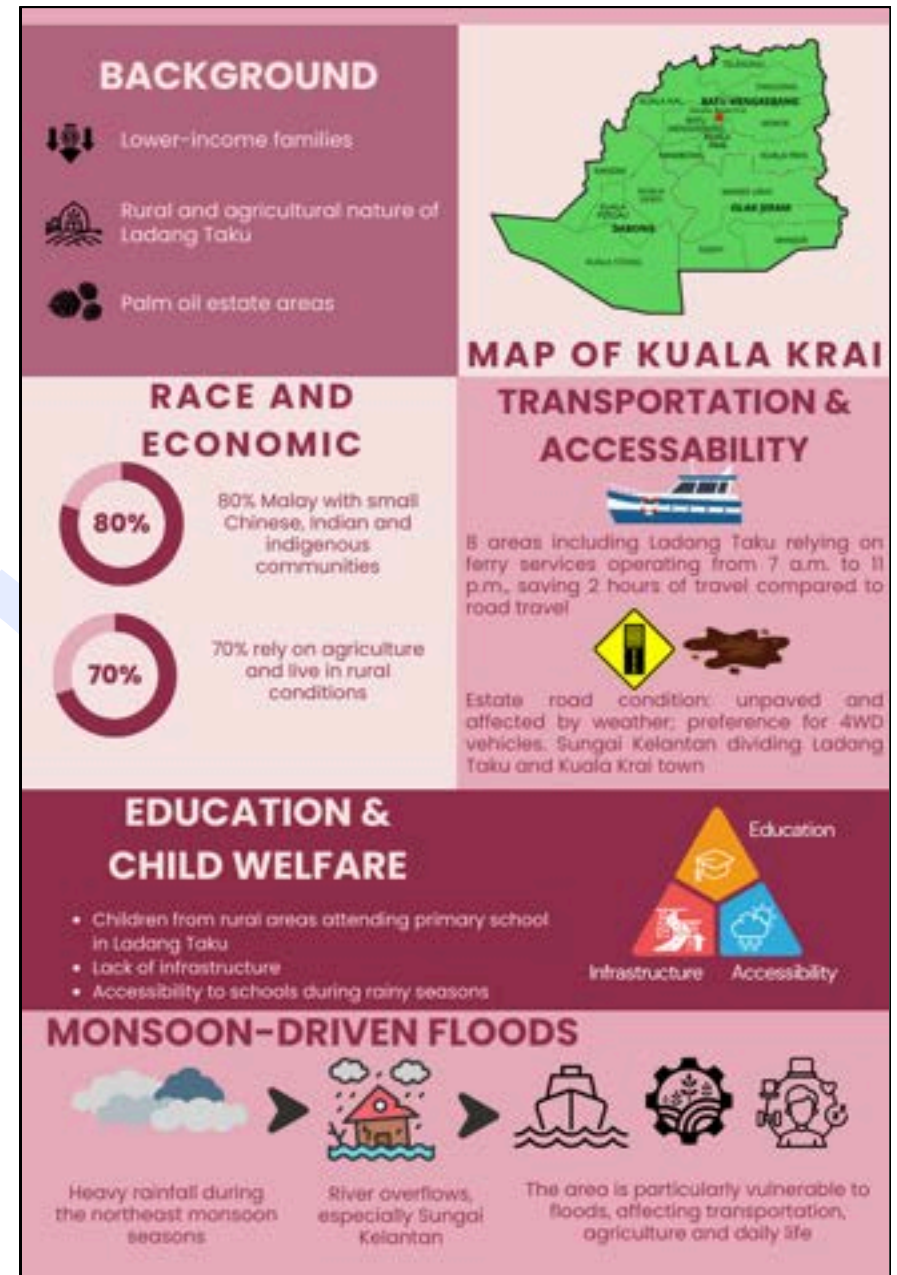


Figure 4: Transportation from Ladang Taku to Kuala Krai town

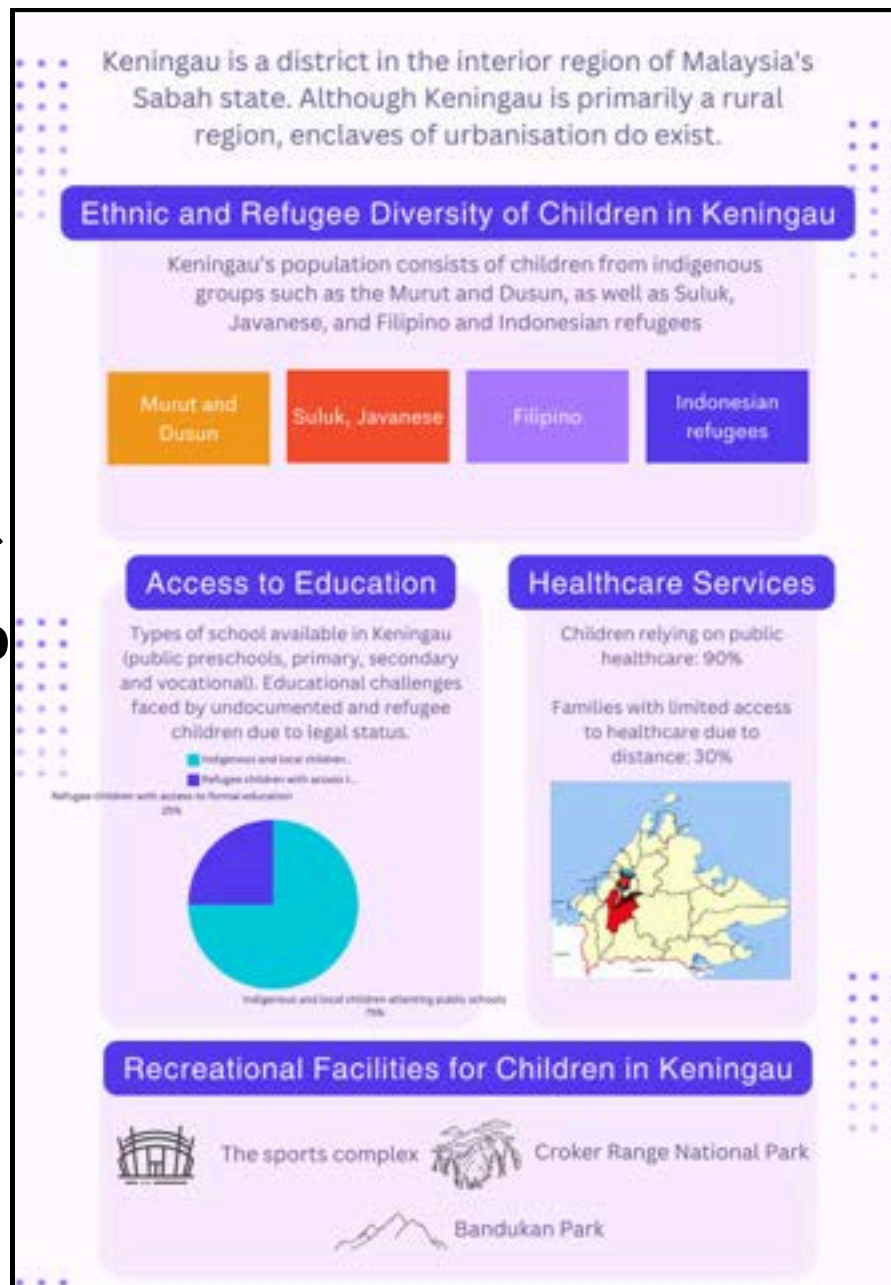


Figure 5: Children at Ladang Taku School

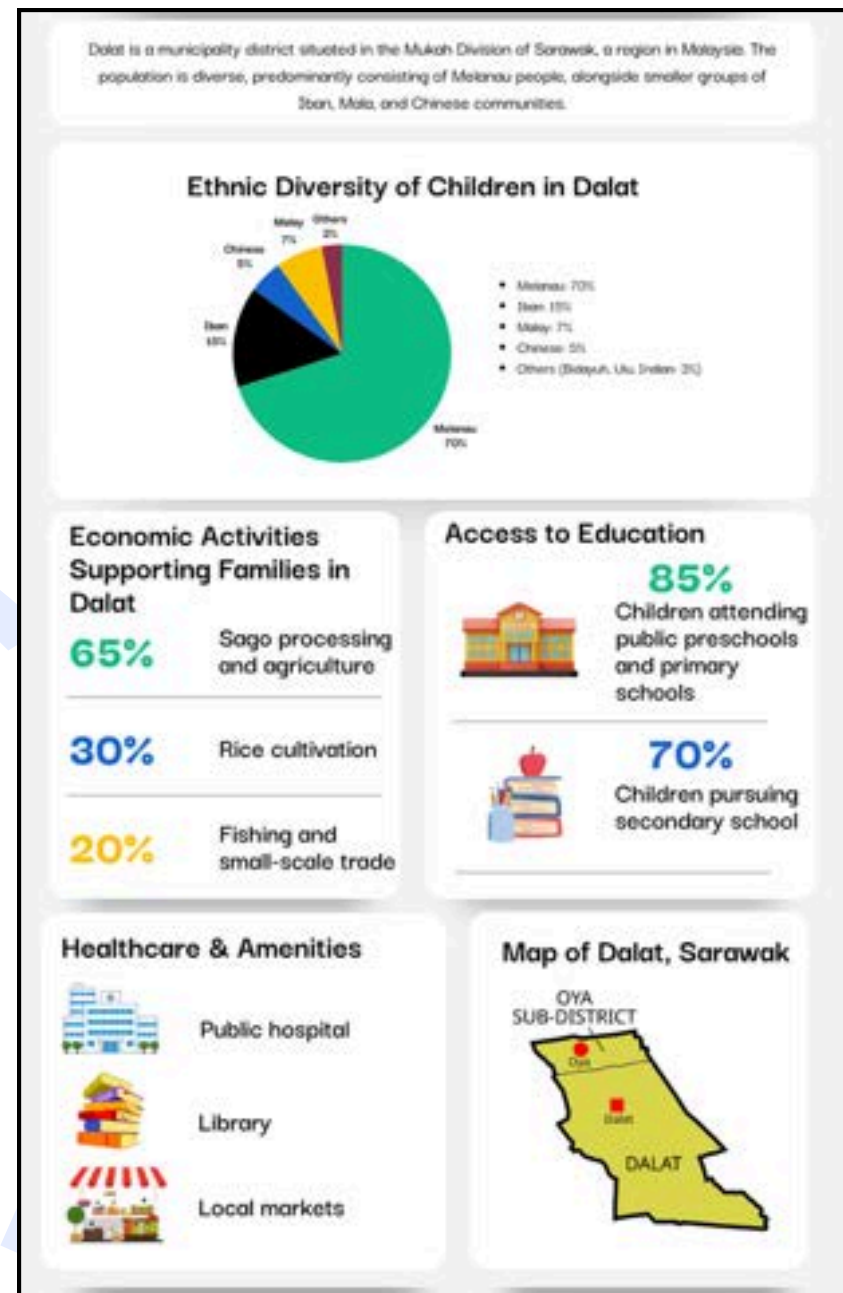
Kuala Krai, Kelantan



Keningau, Sabah



Dalat, Sarawak



Engagement Methodology

The Consultation activities were organized to enable interactive engagements while being informative, educational, safe, entertaining, and meaningful for the children. To achieve that, wherever possible, the engagement sessions complied with the nine (9) principles of meaningful and ethical child participation [1] :-

Transparent and informative:

Children were given access to information about their participation and about their rights to express their views and for their views to be acted on at the start of each consultation

Inclusive: The activities were open equally to all children to take part from all communities and backgrounds, including children with disabilities.

Child-friendly environment: Preparations were made so that all children feel happy to participate in the activities , within comfortable and friendly spaces.

Relevant: The activities were adapted to children's best interests to enable children to put forward any issues that matter to them.

Respectful: Children's views and ideas were respected by adults and children were given opportunities to bring forward their ideas and activities.

Voluntary: Children were informed that they could choose to participate and can decide not to take part at any point of the consultations

Supported by training: Different activities in both English and the local languages were designed so that all children feel supported and listened to

Safe and sensitive to risk: At all times childrens' safety and health were a priority and they know who to talk to if they feel unsafe.

Accountable/Follow-up: Children will be given feedback on how their views have been acted on by adults .

Before the sessions began, children were briefed about confidentiality, anonymity, and volunteering and helped set their house rules A variety of methodologies were deployed including surveys, interviews, group discussions, and participatory activities like building blocks, board games, toys and drawing, to elicit meaningful perspectives and insights from the children.

(Refer to Appendices 1 - 2 for the details of each of the methods utilized)



Figure 6: Group discussions

[1] <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/nine-basic-requirements-meaningful-and-ethical-childrens-participation/>

General Measure of Implementation

Implementation of the UNCRC

Malaysia ratified the **United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNCRC)** on 28 December 1994. Until now, Malaysia has maintained five (5) exceptions to the UNCRC, namely in Article (2) (discrimination), Article 7 (name and nationality), Article 14 (freedom of thought, conscience, and religion), Article 28(1)(a) (free and compulsory education at the primary level), and Article 37 (freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment and arbitrary detention). Malaysia's reservations about the provisions of the UNCRC are due to the fact that they do not comply with Malaysia's Constitution, national laws, and policies, which include Shariah law. The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development is primarily responsible for upholding the rights of children as accorded under the UNCRC as well as the **Child Act 2001**, the **Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017** and other relevant legislation and policies related to children.

The presence of the **Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC)** parked under the **Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)** since 2019 is one of the notable steps in the direction of meaningful implementation of the UNCRC in Malaysia. The primary responsibility of the Office of the Children's Commissioner is to safeguard and advance the human rights of all children under the age of 18 throughout Malaysia, regardless of their social or economic status.

The recent amendments to the Human Rights Commission Act 597 (Amendment) 2023 (New Section 6A) have facilitated the appointment of a Children's Commissioner Chief and two Children's Commissioners, one each for the states of Sabah and Sarawak. In addition, the amendment to Clause 2 allows for the amendment of Section 4 of the SUHAKAM Act to explicitly provide the Commission with the power to carry out its functions which includes the right to visit, among other places, any detention centre, institution, or other places as stipulated by written law or outlined in guidelines related to the institution and place.

UNCRC Awareness

Awareness of the UNCRC in Malaysia has grown significantly thanks to the combined efforts of the government, educational institutions, NGOs, the media, and community initiatives. The Malaysian government has programs for raising awareness about the UNCRC. The Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development (MWFCD), Ministry of Education (MOE), and the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform) are among the key players in conducting campaigns and programs to educate the public and stakeholders about the importance of children's rights. MWFCD conducted workshops on the National Child Policy and its Strategic Action Plan in June 2024. In April 2024, the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) held the International Symposium on Empowerment of Children's Commissions, inviting children to participate in dialogues with the Government and key duty bearers. In 2023, the Young People's Consultation for Malaysia's National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAPBHR) was initiated by the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform).

Schools and educational institutions in Malaysia also play a vital role in spreading awareness about the UNCRC. The children recommended that children's rights should be put into the curriculum so that children can learn about their rights and responsibilities. This will help to foster a culture of respect and understanding, empowering children to advocate for their rights as well as the rights of their peers.

CSOs in Malaysia are instrumental in promoting the UNCRC. Organizations such as the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia, Childline Foundation, the Child Rights Coalition of Malaysia, PS The Children, Make It Right Movement, ANAK Sabah, Sarawak Women for Women Society, CRIB Foundation, National Early Childhood Intervention Council (NECIC), Yayasan Chow Kit, Vanguard4 Change, Monsters Amongst Us and various other child-focused CSOs work tirelessly to educate communities, provide resources, and advocate for the implementation of children's rights. These CSOs often collaborate with international bodies such as UNICEF Malaysia and UNHCR to ensure that their programs align with global standards and best practices on a wide range of child rights and protection issues.

Since 2023 when the city of Petaling Jaya was recognized as the first UNICEF Child Friendly City (CFCI) in the country, greater awareness of the rights of children to have a voice and to thrive in child friendly and safe environments can be seen in the commitments made by 27 other Local Councils to embark on the CFCI journey. Despite the progress, challenges remain in ensuring widespread awareness and implementation of the UNCRC. Cultural and societal norms, resource constraints, and varying levels of commitments among different stakeholders are some challenges that hinder efforts. However, these challenges also present opportunities for continuous improvement and innovation in advocacy and education efforts.

During the Consultation in Kuala Lumpur, children were asked whether Malaysian children have enough awareness of the UNCRC.

"In my opinion, Malaysian children still didn't have enough awareness of the UNCRC. Since some Malaysian children may not understand the UNCRC or their rights under it, especially those with limited education or other resources. (Girl, 17; Kuala Lumpur).

"Malaysian children lack awareness of the UNCRC, primarily because the general public is also unaware of it. Neither schools nor parents teach this information. Consequently, the absence of education on this topic leads to a lack of awareness about the UNCRC." (Girl, 17, Selangor)

"No, I did not know that children have rights but I would like to learn more" (Boy, 13, Kuala Lumpur)

Yes, I would like to present my views on how my school can be more child friendly and safe if given the opportunity by my teachers and headmistress (Girl, 15, Keningau)

Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA)

CRIAs can assist governments in safeguarding and advancing the rights of children. CRIAs can provide a space for children to have a voice, and its utilization is of great assistance to children who are vulnerable and live in disadvantaged areas. Malaysia has not yet implemented CRIA and CRIE (Child Rights Impact Evaluation). There are still knowledge and understanding gaps in Malaysia regarding how to incorporate children in the participatory process, as well as opportunities for children to have their views heard in the decisions that are being made at the community and local authority levels.

During the Consultations, children expressed their interest to participate in conducting CRIA as a way for their voices to be heard

"Conducting a CRIA requires you to work with other children, decision-makers, and adult facilitators. All three parties need a lot of key resources and support. Therefore, attending classes or seminars can help you gain knowledge on this topic. Other than that, working with a specialist such as a child psychologist or experienced facilitators can tremendously smoothen the assessment." (Girl, 17, Selangor)

"Things that can help to conduct CRIA by providing training, resources, and facilities that enable them to conduct CRIA, such as computers and technology, will help to analyse data as well as guidance from trained adults as support." (Girl, 16, Kuala Lumpur)

General Principles Non discrimination

Figure 7 is a reflection of an Indian girl's personal experience of feeling excluded or ignored in a social setting. She described trying to fit in with her Malay friends by discussing topics they could relate to, but despite her efforts, she felt overlooked as conversations quickly shifted away from her. Over time, she came to realize that trying to conform to someone else's expectations was not worth the emotional strain. This highlights how exclusion based on group identity is discriminatory-whether cultural, racial, or ethnic origins. The girl tried to engage, but her efforts went unrecognised, leading to a sense of isolation.

Non-discrimination, a key principle under the UNCRC, emphasizes that no child should be treated unfairly, regardless of their background. Discrimination can manifest not just in overt actions but also in subtle, interactions where certain individuals are unintentionally sidelined. In discussions the children highlighted that racial discrimination is common. They would like to see inclusive environments where everyone has equal opportunities to be heard and respected.

In a consultation with a small group of LGBTQ, gender diverse and unlabelled young people, ages 18 -20 years, they expressed that since their school days the anti-LGBTQ sentiments by society in general increased their fear, isolation and hopelessness. One of them noted that "the political and religious conservatism are tied to Malaysian identity norms, making it hard to feel like things will improve for LGBTQ children and young people." Another noted that the "comments on media about LGBTQ people are so dehumanizing that "I feel like there's no hope for living in this country".

They hope for decriminalization of LGBTQ identities, enactment of an anti-discrimination law and other protection measures, and government support in educating the public about LGBTQ issues.

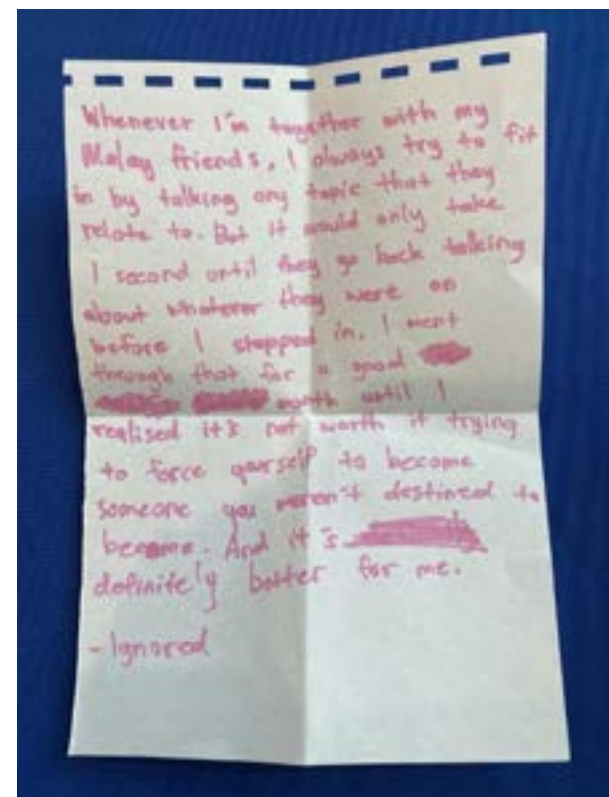


Figure 7: Issues of discrimination highlighted by children

Respect for the views of the child

Respecting the views of children is a fundamental principle that recognizes the importance of considering their opinions in matters affecting their lives. This principle, enshrined in the UNCRC, emphasizes that children have the right to express their views freely and have those views given due weight according to their age and maturity.

During the consultation in Kuala Lumpur, the issue of the lack of children's voices in Parliament came up. Children themselves brought this topic to the forefront. The fact that most of the participants from Kuala Lumpur were representatives of Child Councils located in KL and Selangor could account for their awareness of children's voices in policy and legislative domains

As shown in Figure 8, children were of the opinion that among the reasons why children were not allowed to have voices in Parliament is because of the attitude of adults who think *"children and youth are too young to be heard, lack of opportunities and platforms being given, resulting in them not being brave to speak out about issues related to them"* (Boy, 17, Kuala Lumpur).

The other reasons highlighted were that **"children and youth lack information about child rights organizations."** (Girl, 17 (Kuala Lumpur)

According to Malaysia's National Youth Development Policy, youth are defined as people aged between 15 and 40 years. As a result, children 15 to 17-year-olds can be designated as either children or youth.



Figure 8: Discussion on Lack of Child and Youth Opportunities and Voices in Parliament

Role of Duty bearers and Stakeholders



Figure 9: Discussion on Lack of Child and Youth Opportunities and Voices in Parliament

As shown in Figure 9, in terms of solutions to what needs to be done for their views to be taken into account, children looked at several stakeholders, namely individual, family, educational institution, community, and government. To effectively promote child rights, the children thought that individuals should educate themselves about their rights as outlined in the UNCRC, conduct research on issues affecting children, participate in workshops and discussions to deepen their understanding, read relevant books for inspiration, and support child candidates to ensure the representation of children's perspectives in legislative processes.

Families should also actively listen to children's thoughts, feelings, and concerns, monitor changes in behaviour and emotions, establish trusting relationships where children feel safe to express themselves, and show empathy to understand their unique needs.

Educational institutions should understand and address students' difficulties; have teachers actively educate students about their rights; and provide information on child rights to parents and other adults.

Communities should form Child Councils, support each other to create safe neighbourhoods, and conduct numerous awareness sessions on child rights.

Governments should implement effective child rights programs, allocate funds, participate in international consultations, provide avenues for children to express themselves, endorse mental health initiatives, offer opportunities for disabled children, and guarantee the representation of child and youth voices in Parliament.

Meaningful Participation

Children in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor have access to several different ways of exercising their rights to engage in society. The National Children's Representative Council (MPKK), the largest group of Child Councils was set up under the Child Act 2001 where every State and District has a MPKK under the purview of the Department of Social Welfare. The Petaling Jaya Child Council (PJCC) is the oldest, having been established since 2010. The Office of the Children's Commissioner Children's Consultative Council (CCC) was set up in 2020, while the UNICEF Young Leaders were appointed in 2022. Members of these Child Councils have been invited for consultations with governments and UNICEF Malaysia on issues related to child rights and protection including the national budget and presentations to members of Parliament. Several children from the Young Leaders Programme and PS the Children have also represented Malaysia at regional meetings on child rights, mental wellbeing and online child protection

Under the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) a number of Child Councils based with Local Councils are being set up in the State of Sarawak, Sabah, Penang Island along with all 16 municipalities in Johor. This expands the commitment to child inclusivity and representation across Malaysia.

Some of the Children's Councils have drawn attention to the shortcomings in the Child Councils' organizational structure as follows:-

"In one year, there were only four (4) face-to-face meetings with the members of the representative councils. I propose to have a meeting six times a year, which is every two months."

"So far, I don't believe we have been in direct communication with the responsible adult. We make proposals, and then our [children's representative council] chairman or vice chairman takes the initiative to speak with the higher-ups, not us directly." To be honest, it's not so convenient because it's not from our voice; it's just like we give them our words, and then someone will propose. So, it's our issue, but we can't voice them directly." (Girl, 17, Kuala Lumpur)

"Like there was this time where the Chairman and Vice Chairman made proposals for three years in a row, but the issues were not responded to, the actions were not responded to, so even though they brought out an issue, there was no response towards it." (Girl, 16, Kuala Lumpur)

Children also emphasized the importance of providing training to adults, particularly those who interact with children, regarding child rights and how to interact with them in a meaningful, ethical, and effective manner.

"For me, it is necessary for adults to undergo training and have knowledge about children's rights. To encourage adults to listen to children's voices, they must recognize that children also have rights and that their opinions are valuable, especially given that today's children belong to Generation ZZ. Children's opinions are relevant for today. The opinion of adults can be used in the present, but if mixed with the opinion of children, it will be more solid and relevant to children's lives today." (Boy, 17, Selangor)

"I would like them to gain more knowledge about children's rights, so that during meetings with other children or us, they can provide more details, thereby enhancing our understanding of the process." (Girl, 17, Kuala Lumpur)

In a consultation in October with four LGBTQ, gender diverse and unlabeled young people between the ages of 18 and 20 years they talked about their experiences during their school days. They hope for a school curriculum that includes diverse perspectives and fosters a respectful environments, allowing students to explore their identities without fear. They advocated that LGBTQ issues should be openly addressed in schools, with supportive educators who understand the challenges faced by LGBTQ students. They felt it was necessary to provide training to educators on child rights, non discrimination and ending any form of violence against children due to discrimination

"My vernacular school, they treated queer people as a joke, as if they didn't exist. It was hard to even talk about being queer."

"In boarding school, hazing was normalised. Girls suspected of being lesbians were stripped and harassed by their seniors."

"In primary school, the teacher bullied me, and I had a friend who was assaulted because of her perceived queerness."

Challenges in Child Participation

Children shared their views on what they felt were the biggest issues on child participation, which is related to adult unwillingness to understand and listen to children.

"The biggest issue is dealing with adults with a mindset that doesn't want to listen to children's voices." Therefore, it is the responsibility of adults to alter their mindset, realising that the world and country will progress if they give voice to the opinions of children. (Boy, 17, Selangor)

"I think adults don't really listen to us because they think that people could do that in those days, but it's different now." Adults often make comparisons, arguing that while it was once possible to do this, it is now impossible for children. (Girl, 17, KL)

"My hope for adults is to avoid overly optimistic expectations; if you are unable to achieve something, simply inform us." Another issue is that when we receive instructions, they often set unrealistic expectations that we can never meet, leading to a lifetime of disappointment. When faced with an exam or a challenging situation, it's common for individuals to experience burnout. This can hinder their ability to excel, leading to questions from teachers such as, "Why are you acting like this and making faces?" (Girl, 16, KL)

The application of Article 12 often fails because adults doubt children's decision-making abilities and worry that allowing children more control will undermine their authority. In summary, it is related to the power relationship between children and adults. In Southeast and East Asia, where adults typically hold more power over children and view childhood as a period of dependence rather than innocence and independence, putting Article 12 into practice is even more challenging.

The construction of child participation, which involves the sharing or transferring of power between adults and children, has been acknowledged to be crucial and potentially transformative of adult-child relations; yet there are issues with acceptability among adults in Malaysia. This is evidenced in the survey conducted during the consultation sessions (Figures 58 to 70).

The Need for a Participation Framework

Children also highlighted the need for Malaysia to have their own child participation policy or child and adolescent participation framework in decision-making. The participation framework employs a structured approach to incorporate the voices and perspectives of children and adolescents into the decision making processes that impact their lives. Based on the principles of child rights, this framework aims to empower young people by acknowledging their capacity to meaningfully contribute to decision-making.

"The availability of the Child Participation Policy would help improve Malaysia's efforts in promoting children's involvement in decision-making processes. A dedicated policy would establish guidelines for integrating children's voices into decision-making processes. (Girl, 17, Selangor)

"It would ensure that children's views and needs are considered and included in decision-making processes across all sectors, which can help empower children and improve their well-being." (Girl, 16, Selangor)

Children also shared how they can contribute and support the effort to ensure their participation in decision-making is meaningful and impactful.

"Children have many more ways to contribute to decision-making than adults do." Active participation, creative expression, peer-to-peer discussion, focus group discussions, and advocacy can help children participate in decision-making." (Girl, 17, Selangor)

Finally, children also expressed their aspirations for more meaningful participation in various aspects of decision-making that affect their lives.

"For children to be actively involved in decision-making on laws or policies about them instead of the tokenism we usually see by the government." (Girl, 17, Selangor)

Violence Against Children (Article 19, 25, 34, SDG 5, 16)

Child Marriage

In Malaysia, people view child marriage as a socially unacceptable practice. Despite the government's efforts to raise the minimum age for marriage to 18 years old, this custom continues to endure as a communal institution. The Islamic Family Law (Federal Territory) Act 1984 governs Muslims in Malaysia, setting the minimum age for marriage at 18 years for males and 16 years for females. Nevertheless, in Malaysia, if a Muslim individual who is below the specified ages desires to marry, they may proceed by acquiring the permission of their parents or guardian, as well as the endorsement of a judge in the Shariah court.

Researchers have highlighted premarital sex and out-of-wedlock pregnancy as the main factors contributing to child marriage in Asia (Bahari et al., 2021). The other reason is due to poverty. Girls from poor households use marriage as a "survival strategy" (Stark, 2017; Rembe et al., 2018).

Two (2) of the refugee child participants in Georgetown discussed child marriage in terms of customs and tradition.

"This is happening within our people [Myanmar's community]. They simply marry a woman off if she has her period; it is a custom that our people enjoy. (Refugee Girl, 13, Georgetown)

"We're still small and young; it's like we have another life." Marriage is difficult for children; we must take on bigger responsibilities. Then the man can't even believe it [be trusted], one way or the other he'll get a divorce; the man will just go away like that." (Refugee Girl, 12, Georgetown)

When asked about the age at which children in their community got married, the reasons for marriage, and the frequency of wedding feasts held within their community, one of the girls mentioned the following reasons.

"If you are 15 or 13. I've heard a story about a wedding feast taking place every Sunday, but I don't understand why people are getting married at such an early age. I want to stop it; if possible, I also asked my friends why. She said, 'If we don't listen to our parents, like we will not be happy, like we will be sin,' so he must listen to mom and dad." (Refugee Girl, 18, Georgetown)

Other than local customs and tradition, the refugee children were also asked why parents in their community force their girls to get married.

"Maybe because the parents want to get rid of their responsibilities." (Refugee Girl, 13, Georgetown)

When asked whether any parents did not allow their children to go to school, the following response was given:

"There are many of them. That's why in the flat I stay in, there are many girls who have already had their period, so the father did not let them go out." (Refugee Girl, 18, Georgetown)

Both girls emphasize the importance of education for both parents and children in order to prevent child marriage.

"Now we're kind of hard [have their own stand], not afraid, we don't want to because we seem to have knowledge, we have lessons [education]. That's why we can refuse our mom and dad's offer; if that's the case, people like that don't learn [go to school] like us; they just accept what their parents said." (Refugee Girl, 18, Georgetown)

"For parents, they must understand [that education is important]. However, there are parents who are stubborn, difficult; despite our attempts to persuade them, they refuse to listen, believing that education is unimportant, especially for girls. If the child is a boy, they are likely to allow them to continue their education, particularly if they are intelligent. However, if the child is a girl and has reached adulthood, they are unlikely to relinquish their education. (Refugee Girl, 13, Georgetown)

Child Abuse

A 17-year-old girl from Georgetown shared her experience of being abused by her father (Figure 10).

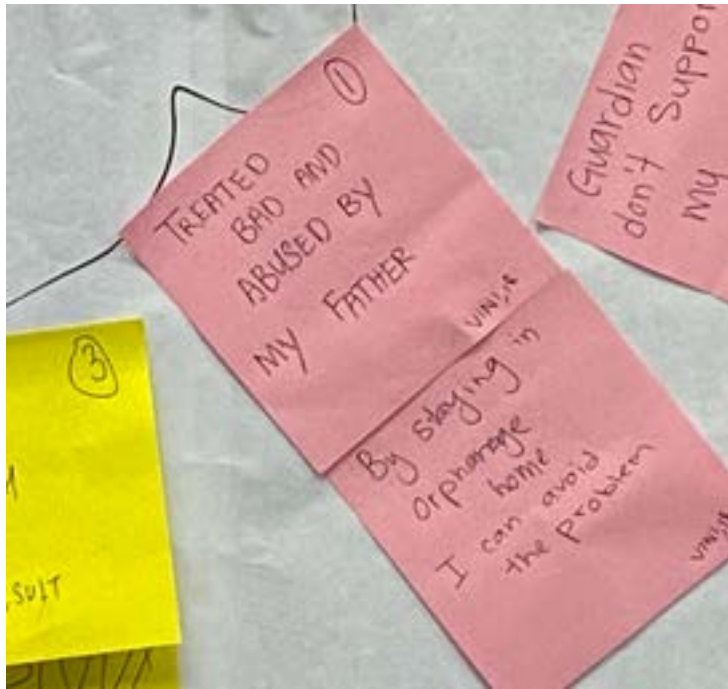


Figure 10: Child abuse victim confession in Georgetown

During the interview, she further explained what she had been going through during the interview:

"He [the father] normally whacks me, but it starts terribly in Form 1 [13 years old], and it gets worse when I'm small; I get whacked until I'm bleeding." When I was younger, I didn't realise I was doing something wrong, which led to my father hitting me. Therefore, I believe it is acceptable; he became drunk after work and subsequently struck me without justification.

"I stayed at 'The Home' since Form 1. Then, when I was in Form 3 [15 years old], I came out. My 'third mother' was crying; she wanted a witness. You know, when my father comes and beats her, you need an eyewitness to say yes, and then only the police will take care of the case. So, she called me out, and I went there, but I still had terrible problems. I continued to work with her at the food stall for approximately six months, until the Welfare Team intervened and compelled me to live with my biological father. Because they were not married, I cannot stay with my 'third mother'. I hesitate to follow him because he doesn't seem like the right person [to take care of me]. However, I am compelled to do so because he is my biological father. He is a drunken individual who asks me to feed him and then expects me to do all the work, which is extremely distressing. He even slaps me when I fail to feed him properly.

The child finally went back to 'The Home' when she was in Form 4, after her father was arrested for beating her 'third mother'. When the victim was asked about her opinion on child protection in Malaysia, her response was as follows:

"When I confronted the Welfare Department, they were aware of my father's terrible behaviour, yet they still referred me to him." We should not care whether it's biological or nonbiological, by the way, because humans are not the same all the time. I tell you, so if the biological parents are really good, it's okay to send them, but when they are not okay, it's not logic to send, like we cannot send a child when we know he's a killer; we cannot send them; we know she's going to die, and we still send to a killer. So, we should change; not biological or nonbiological is like nonsense for me when it attacks and affects the safety of the child; we really should care. We are entitled to safety, which takes precedence over biological or nonbiological factors. Do you think that biological parents cannot kill?"

The victim also stated she had never considered suicide in light of the challenges she had faced in her life.

"No, I am concerned that if I were to pass away, people would comment that I died as a result of family issues. I do not want to be remembered as a person who overcame numerous challenges and achieved success. I would prefer to be remembered as someone who succeeded and died, rather than as someone who was suicidal due to... yeah, I don't want to be a loser."

Below is her advice to the other victims of child abuse.

"I believe that children who experience abuse should be strong and brave to ensure their safety. It's not enough to complain when parents hit them; there may be valid reasons. However, if you recognise that you are truly experiencing abuse, you must exhibit extreme bravery and strength to confront all challenges and protect yourself. Therefore, I believe that these children should possess immense strength and confidence. They should be confident in their ability to escape and know their future."

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The note in Figure 13 conveys deep frustration with the lack of action from both peers and authority figures in a school setting, where power dynamics, fear of judgement, and apathy prevent any meaningful change from happening.

The first note talks about a "cycle of conflict," where people repeatedly fall into jealousy and revenge, yet those in positions of power do nothing to change the situation. The writer suggests that those with power could fix the situation but chose not to, leading to a sense of stagnation and frustration. It reflects on how this affects everyone negatively and questions the logic of allowing such a situation to persist, calling it "stupid."

The second note describes life in a boarding school, where the children feel surrounded by the same people daily. The note mentions sensitivity among students as a significant issue, yet no one expresses their concerns due to fear of damaging their reputation or facing backlash. Even if someone does speak up, the writer believes that the teachers and parents would not take the concerns seriously, thus perpetuating the problem. This note highlights feelings of helplessness and the belief that no one truly cares about addressing these issues.



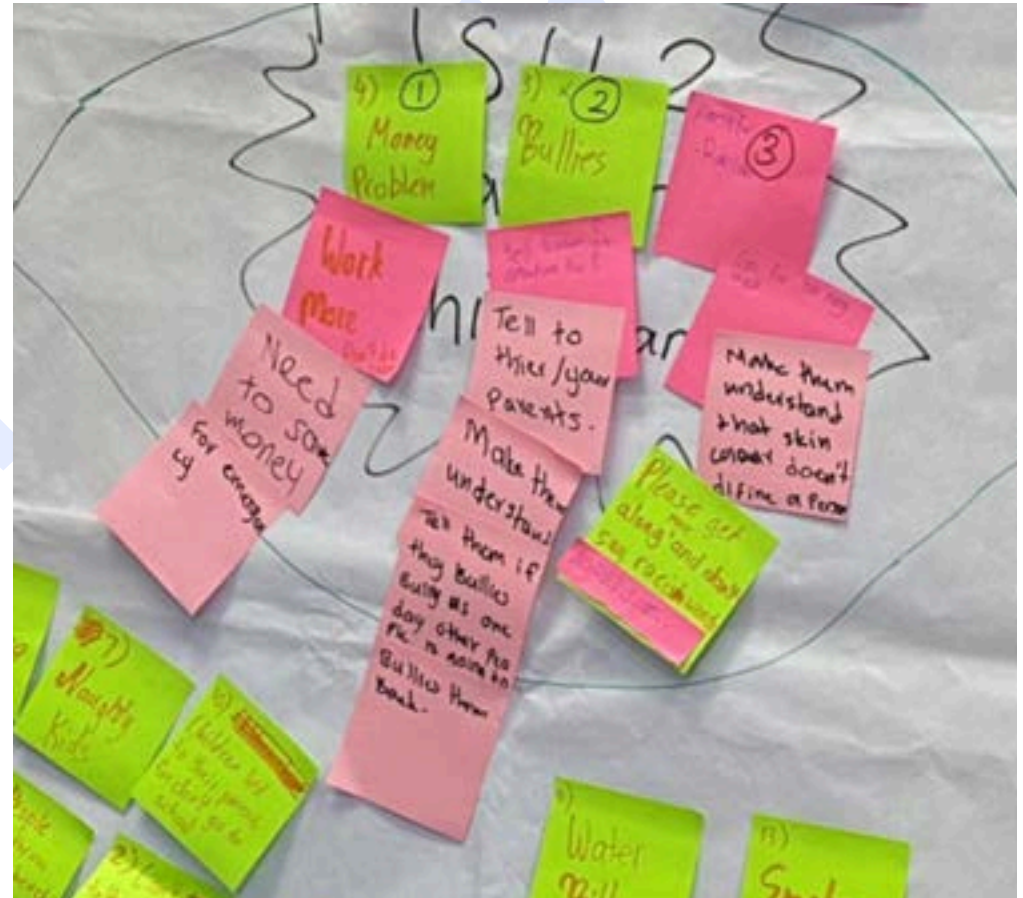
Figure 13: Children shared unpleasant experiences in school

Four of the LGBTQ, gender diverse and unlabeled young people felt that the lack of recognition of diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression (SOGIESC) resulted **"in the dismissal or erasure of our identities"** This not only hinders their rights to identity but also violates their best interests.

They reported multiple forms of barriers and discriminations in public school, including boarding and vernacular schools by teachers, school prefects, peers, among others. This included being mocked, ridiculed, bullied, harassed, surveillance by school prefects and subjected to multiple forms of microaggression

[illegible]

Children proposed various solutions, including informing others (parents, teachers, or best friends), issuing warnings to the offender, and retaliating with bullying (Figures 14 and 15).



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One of the participants in Kuala Lumpur blamed the lack of serious action to prevent bullying.

"The reason bullying continues to happen, whether online or offline, even when we have so many discussions about it, is because we are only having debates and not taking the actions required to protect these children from bullying." Even when action is taken, it is never enough, as these predators will find other ways to harm the victims via text, call, comments, physically, and so on." (Girl, 16, KL).

She recommended creating a safe space for the victims to address the issue.

"The most effective approach to addressing the bullying issue is to prevent trusted adults from providing passive, aggressive, or vague answers that do not provide comfort to the victim. We must adopt a more receptive mindset and allow them sufficient time to process their trauma. We shouldn't ask them to confront their bullies, because this isn't easy for everyone. We must establish a secure environment for these victims, enabling them to disclose their problems without the fear of their bullies discovering them and potentially ruining their lives. When victims confide in trusted adults about their problems, we must act swiftly and without delay." (Girl, 16, KL).

A child with hearing impairment in Kuala Lumpur recounted an incident in which his companion, who had previously assisted him, inflicted harm on him.

"I had a new friend come to school, but he didn't know the rules." I guided him and explained a few of the school rules. Then, 7 months later, he insulted me and hurt me. At that time, I was in need of help. I don't understand why, because when I helped someone, it was obvious that the other person would help me back to reciprocate the help once given. At first, I was patient and didn't share my struggles with anyone. However, when I reached my breaking point, I confided in my teacher, explaining my situation and the reasons behind my friend's actions." (Boy, 11, Kuala Lumpur).

One girl quoted the solution for racism issue is by "making them understand that skin colour doesn't define a person"

Bullying also happened to the children who were asylum seekers, refugees, and Orang Asli children.

"Actually, someone at school said to me, 'Why are you here? Go away; you're a Syrian; you're not Malaysian; why did you live there? Go back to your country.'" (Asylum seeker children, 13, KL)

Staying Safe Online

According to the 2022 Disrupting Harm in Malaysia [2] data, as of 2021, 96% of 995 internet-using children aged 12–17 go online at least once a day. The primary method of internet access for children is from their homes, followed by access at school and at malls/internet cafes. Almost all of the children surveyed used smartphones to access the internet, and only 25% of them, particularly those aged 12–13 shared their smartphones with others. 28% of minors utilised computers for internet access.

At least once each week, most of the children who were polled (91%) used social media (91%) and instant messaging apps (90%), viewed video clips (88%), and used the internet for schooling (86%). It is common for children in Malaysia to use the internet frequently, and they claim that they can choose which pictures of themselves or their classmates they want to share online. In addition, 67 percent of children stated that they were aware of how to change the privacy settings on their devices, and 66 percent of children were aware of how to report dangerous content that was posted on social media. The children who self-reported having the lowest levels of digital abilities were those who lived in rural areas and were between the ages of 12 and 13.

More worrying, 4% (38 children) reported that they had been subjected to a clear form of online sexual exploitation and abuse, and did not know what to do. The Malaysian Internet Watch Foundation UK (IWF) Portal run by Childline Foundation in partnership with IWK UK reported an alarmingly high increase of online Child Sexual Abuse Materials (CSAM) that were sent to local law enforcement for further action. The total number of CSAM in 2023 was 4472 cases while in January- March 2024 the cases rose to 8602 cases that were actionable. In addition, in the 2023 National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) Cyber Tipline Report for Malaysia, [3] stated that there were 195,642 suspected CSAM reported by ESPs on their platforms and servers.

In view of the increased scale of online harms involving children in Malaysia one of the key areas explored in discussions with the children in all of the Consultations focused on online child protection and how children used the internet in their daily lives.

[2]<https://www.unicef.org/malaysia/media/3316/file/Disrupting%20Harm%20Malaysia%20Executive%20Summary%20English.pdf>

[3] <https://www.missingkids.org/content/dam/missingkids/pdfs/2023-reports-by-country.pdf>

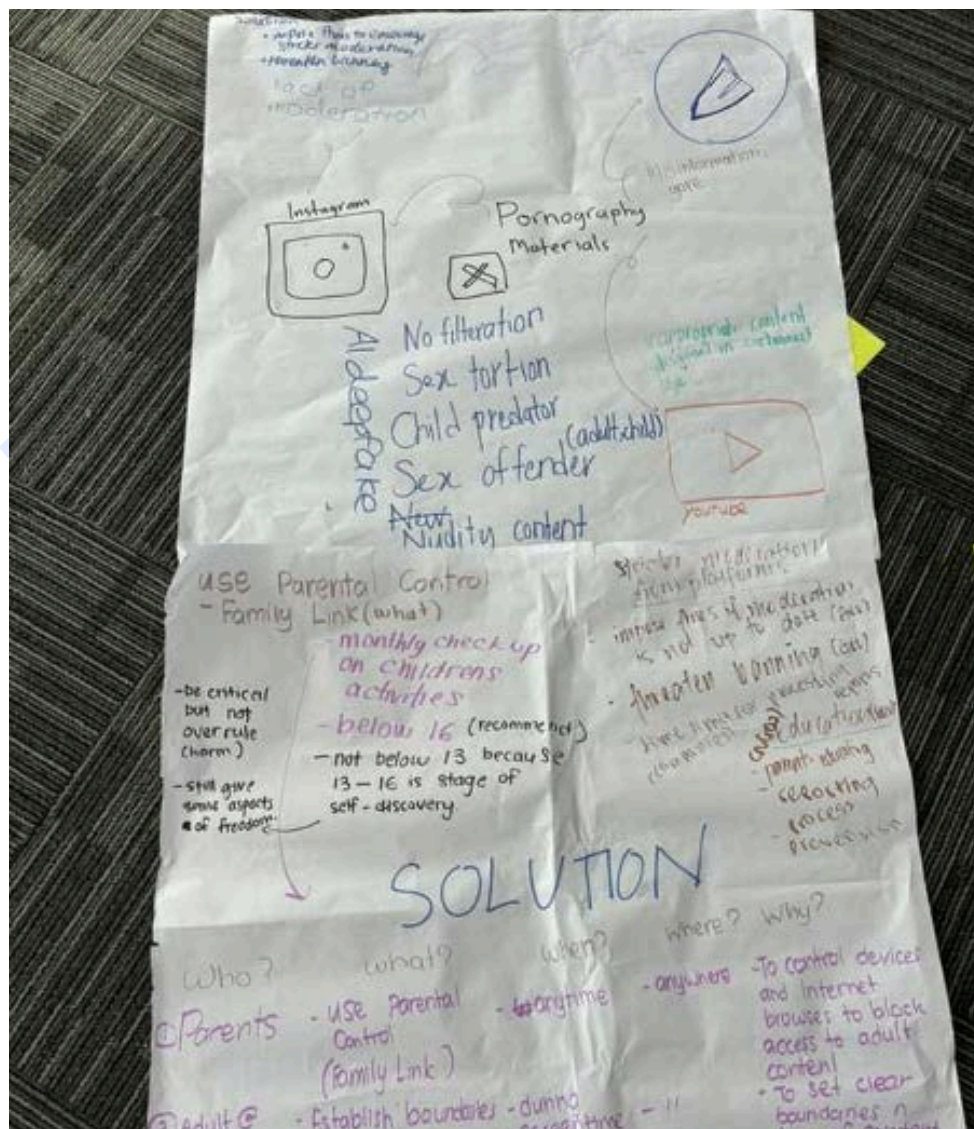


Figure 16: Discussion on Issues in Social Media in Kuala Lumpur

During the consultation in Kuala Lumpur, children discussed the dangers of inappropriate content, particularly CSAM and harmful materials, on social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube (Figure 16). They highlighted the problem of insufficient moderation, which allows young users to be exposed to dangerous content such as sex tortures, child predators, and nudity. This lack of proper filtering presents significant risks to children's online safety.

To address these concerns, it was recommended to use parental control tools like "Family Link" to monitor children's activities. They suggested that parents should conduct checkups on their children's online behavior and restrict access to certain content, particularly for children under 16 years of age. The importance of being vigilant about rule-setting and adjusting access based on the child's age and stage of development was also emphasized.

The proposed solutions suggested by children involve parents, adults, and governments working together to ensure children's online safety. Parental controls, open discussions with children, and the blocking of inappropriate content are key measures that can help. Additionally, support from the government and private sector is needed to enforce these controls and make online platforms safer for children.

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Figure 18: Discussion on Issues in Social Media in Georgetown

Figure 18 outlines the discussions that children in Georgetown had. The issues highlighted can be categorised into six (6) main areas: cyberbullying and teasing, technical issues, cybercrime and theft, explicit content, mental health issues, loss of privacy, and identity theft. Cyberbullying and teasing through the use of the Internet, encompasses teasing, lying, gossiping, being ugly (insulting someone's appearance or personality), spreading hate, and displaying arrogance. Damaged devices are among the technical problems. Hacking, stealing money, and gambling are all examples of cybercrime and theft. Explicit content refers to access to inappropriate or explicit content, such as seduction, pornography, or online prostitution. Staying awake overnight and being subjected to bullying and threats are examples of mental health issues. Finally, stolen email includes loss of privacy and identity theft.

Family Environment (Article 20, SDG 1)

Despite the survey's positive results, children identified ongoing family issues that led to a lack of emotional connection. A key finding was that the children usually keep any abuse to themselves as they did not know where to get help

"So, like sometimes the kids, they have their phones and then the family, the parents are too busy working, they don't even have time for the kids, and then the kids are doing something on the phone. Then at dinner time they also don't talk to each other like the kids do their work and then the parents do their work, so they don't have any communication with each other." (Girl, 17, Georgetown)

A young female residing in a protective shelter in Georgetown expressed her sadness over her inability to stay with her family. When she was a year old, her mother abandoned her, forcing her to separate from her abusive father.

"I really cannot tell I am 100% happy because the pain I carry is like I have everyone, I have a mother, I have a father, I have a lot of siblings but still cannot live with them and still cannot have fun. It's like the biggest pain that I should carry my whole life." (Girl, 17, Georgetown).

"It's like you have a parent, they're always there with you, they're still alive but they don't act like they're there." (Girl, 16, Keningau).

Disability and Inclusion (Article 23, 24, SDG 3,4,10)

Issues of Hearing Impaired Children

A special consultation session for children with hearing impairment and Children Of Deaf Adults (CODA) was held in Petaling Jaya. Among the prevalent concerns expressed by these children were the teachers' proficiency in sign language.

"I won't say all, but there are some teachers who are competent and some teachers who are not. Some teachers sign very little. Those who are competent, I am happy because I can understand, but those who are not, whatever they sign, doesn't make sense"(Boy, 13, Petaling Jaya)

"I normally used Malaysian Sign Language (BIM), it is more simple. But most of my teachers sign verbatim, which is very long and I don't really understand. They used Malay Hand Code (KTMB)."(Boy, 13, Petaling Jaya)



Figure 19: Children with learning difficulties in Dalat discussed in their most comfortable positions

Figure 20: Deaf children having a conversation in Dalat

Living as a Child of Deaf Children (CODA)

Among the common issues highlighted by CODA children was their inability to understand certain signs since most of them did not go to formal sign language class.

"When I communicated with my parents, there were lots of signs that I did not understand, signs that my parents knew that I didn't know. I want to learn. I didn't go to any specific sign language class, it's just my parents taught me." (Boy, 12, Petaling Jaya)

"Sometimes when I do not know how to sign, I will sign using the alphabet." (Boy, 13, Petaling Jaya)

"Deaf parents, they do take initiative to teach their kids sign language, but they didn't teach us to be fully well-versed in sign language, so that we can have proper conversation with deaf people." (Girl, 15, Petaling Jaya).

CODA explained that if there is teacher-parents day, their grandparents are the ones who will come to help

They also had strong views about the need for inclusion. When asked what they would want the Prime Minister or any other person in authority to do to help them one wrote: "Please make BIM (Malaysian Sign Language) as official language "

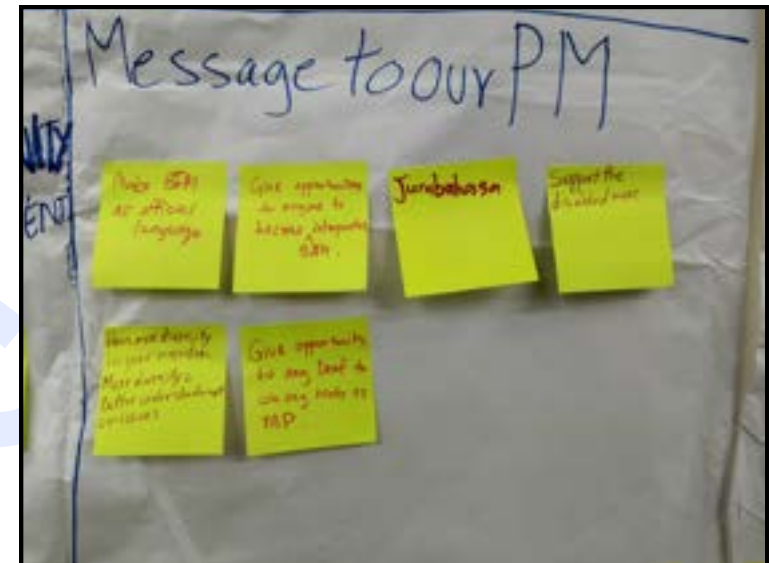


Figure 21 : Make Malaysian Sign Language official language



Figure 22: Deaf children in Petaling Jaya- more sports

When asked how they feel about being a CODA,

"I'm not sad, but I'm just very curious. Like why me?, why both of my parents are deaf, why my all other friends their parents are normal" (Boy, 12, Petaling Jaya)

"When I was younger, I wasn't confident about my status as CODA. I was very shy about it, I didn't want to show it, I felt embarrassed. But when I got older, like 12 or 13, I started to think that this is nothing to be embarrassed about, this is something to be proud of. Like why I should be embarrassed to have another skill [able to sign] that not everyone has." (Girl, 15, Petaling Jaya).

One girl, 15 from Petaling Jaya, expressed disappointment over the assumptions made about CODA.

" There are a lot of assumptions about CODA's lives, most of the time regarding the fact that you are not as educated as others, which for me it's not true at all. I met a lot of CODA who are very intelligent."

"The other assumption is that because your parents are deaf and you are CODA, they assume that you cannot communicate very well. Another thing about CODA is that they give us some sort of trophy, like for example there is deaf parents who said to my parents owh you are so lucky that your kids are not deaf. Personally I feel this is not a compliment, it doesn't mean that you have impaired kids, you're unlucky and not lucky enough to have normal kids."

(Girl, 15, Petaling Jaya)

Asylum seeking, Refugee and Migrant children

We asked refugee and asylum-seeking children whether they knew the situation in their country and the issues they faced as refugees.



Figure 23: Refugee children presenting their views , Penang

"We are Myanmar people but because we are Muslims, some are Buddhists, some people don't like it, they kind of hate the Islamic religion, that's why there is a plan to kill all Muslims." (Refugee Boy, 12, Georgetown)

"Actually, my issue is if I become 18 years old and in Malaysia I cannot work because I'm a refugee. If I'm older enough to work like 18 and above I will just get arrested and maybe I will go back to Syria. If I go back to my country, they will arrest me because I travel other than Syria. If I get arrested, they will like torture me in the prison and they will say "Why did you leave this country? This country (Syria) is the best, why did you leave?" and they will torture me. That is why I want to be a citizen [of Malaysia]." (Asylum seeker boy, 13, Kuala Lumpur).

Health and Nutrition (Article 24, SDG 3)

Children with learning difficulties in Dalat engaged in a conversation about the prevalent health problems among their peers (Figure 24). They identified a few diseases associated with children, such as hand-foot-and-mouth disease, COVID-19, rabies, and dengue caused by Aedes mosquitoes. Among the issues highlighted are long waits at hospitals due to too many patients and a lack of doctors. They proposed increasing the number of hospitals and doctors, vaccinating dogs, ensuring constant cleanliness through hand washing, showering, and mask use.

In the Royal Belum Rainforest, nutrition is an ongoing issue due to poverty. In addition, families are unable to grow crops or rear livestock due to destruction by elephants and tigers, so they mainly subsist on fish from the lake as their main protein



Figure 24: Discussion on health by children with learning difficulties in Dalat

Figure 25: Picture of girl in Royal Belum with her lunch

Psychosocial Mental Health (Article 2, 24, SDG 3)

The National Health and Morbidity Survey 2022 [3] showed that one in four teenagers in Malaysia had experienced depression, one in eight had suicidal thoughts, and one in ten had attempted suicide. The findings highlighted significant issues among adolescents, underscoring the urgent need for attention and intervention. Stresses at home and in school due to family circumstances can have a negative impact on children's lives.

"If at home it's always stressful because my father is too strict, like when I want to go out to study, he doesn't want to believe that. My mom passed away a few months ago, so I must do all her tasks. If other children always come back from school to rest, I must do all the tasks, even when I'm too tired. I must cook and do all the house chores." (Girl, 16, Keningau)

"Just shut up, shut up in the room; I've been so stressed that I've done barcode (self-harm)." (Girl, 16, Keningau)

"Never, but if it's like in high school, they had a counselor. Then they me asked to answer a mental health quiz. Then they called about 2 times [to discuss], then that's it." (Girl, 16, Keningau)

" My parents always shout, fight and argue and this makes me sad and worried I don't really know what to do " (Boy ,10 Kuala Lumpur)

[3] https://iku.gov.my/images/nhms-2022/1a_Infografic_AHS_BI_15062023.pdf

Figures 26 and 27 depicted children in Kuala Lumpur sharing their unpleasant life experiences. The child in Figure 17 expressed feelings of frustration and disappointment after seeking help from a school counsellor. The child describes an incident with a friend who repeatedly hurt him by hitting and poking him, causing physical and emotional pain. The counsellor dismissed her concerns when she sought their advice. The counsellor trivialized the issue by telling the child that they would encounter similar people in the future and would have to handle it on their own.

The child was not looking for this kind of response; she wanted someone to listen, take her seriously, and provide solutions. Instead, the dismissive attitude of the counsellor left the child feeling hurt, disappointed, and angry. The note underscores the children's aspiration for a counsellor to establish a secure environment where students can discuss their issues without facing judgment or dismissal. The child also mentions feeling isolated, as even their peers were unwilling to listen at the time.

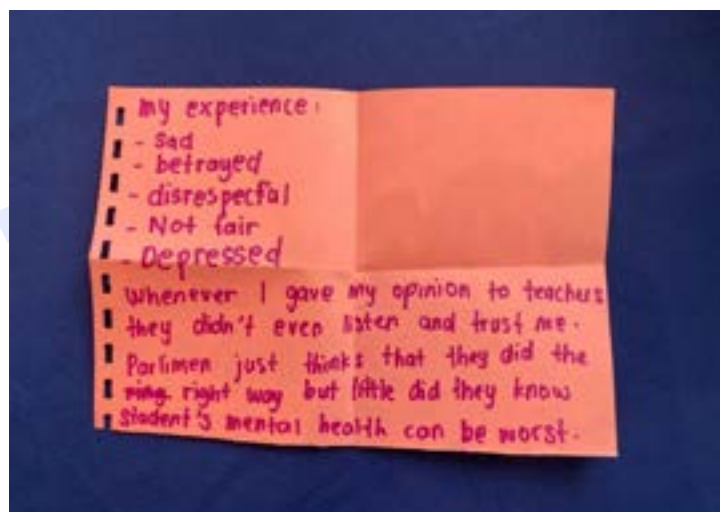


Figure 27: A Kuala Lumpur girl shared unpleasant experiences in school

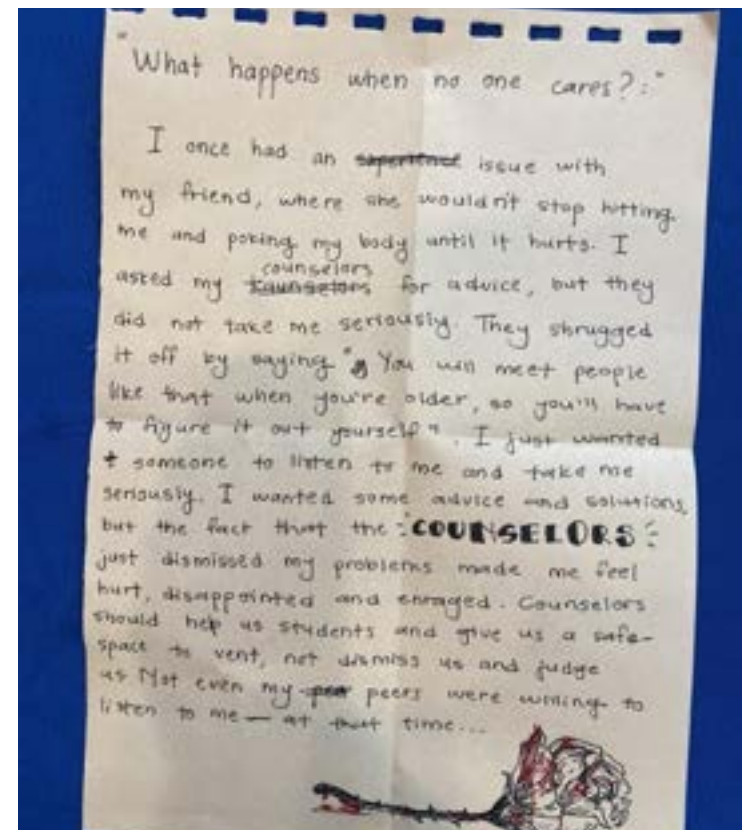


Figure 26: A Kuala Lumpur girl shared unpleasant experiences in school

The child in Figure 27 lists several emotions where she was experiencing sadness, betrayal, disrespect, unfairness, depression, and unheard opinions. The child perceives that teachers ignore or mistrust her whenever she expresses her opinions. The child believes that the authorities are unaware of how their decisions are negatively affecting students' mental health.

Drugs and Substances (Article 33, SDG 3)

Children in Keningau participated in discussions regarding substances and drugs and illicit substances. In Figure 28, the diverse economic, personal, and social repercussions of substance abuse are illustrated. Children emphasized that the consequences or effects of drug abuse and substance misuse included the following: the dishonouring of family names, the increase in the number of crimes, the decrease in the value of the country's currency, the burden on society, the ostracism of drug addicts by their family and society, the potential harm to others, the disappointment of family members and the resulting tension, the harm to oneself and others, suicidal thoughts, depression, being too high to be aware of one's surroundings, causing health issues, and not setting a positive example for future generations.



Figure 28: Discussion on drugs and substance by children in Keningau

Poverty and Child Labour (Article 27, 32 & 35, SDG 1, 8)

Poverty is a primary driver of child labour. Many low-income families expect every member, including children, to contribute to the household income to ensure survival. Children's often minimal income can play a crucial role in meeting basic needs like food, shelter, and healthcare.

The children in the Royal Belum Rainforest discussed the issue of poverty (Figure 29). They were aware of the consequences of poverty, such as being unable to attend school and having inadequate food. It was noted that some children mentioned that sometimes they only have rice and nothing else as in the rainforest. It was difficult for them to grow crops as these were destroyed by elephants while they could not rear animals as these attracted tigers and other predators. Note that they proposed that to survive, one needs to work, whether searching for firewood, selling agarwood, or catching fish for food.

For Orang Asli in Royal Belum, as mentioned in Figure 29 the main source of income for them is to look for the agarwood (gaharu).

"I work in the forest, helping my father to look for agarwood. My father gave me RM50 or RM60. There's not much now [agarwood tree], because everything has fallen" (Orang Asli, boy, 17, Royal Belum).

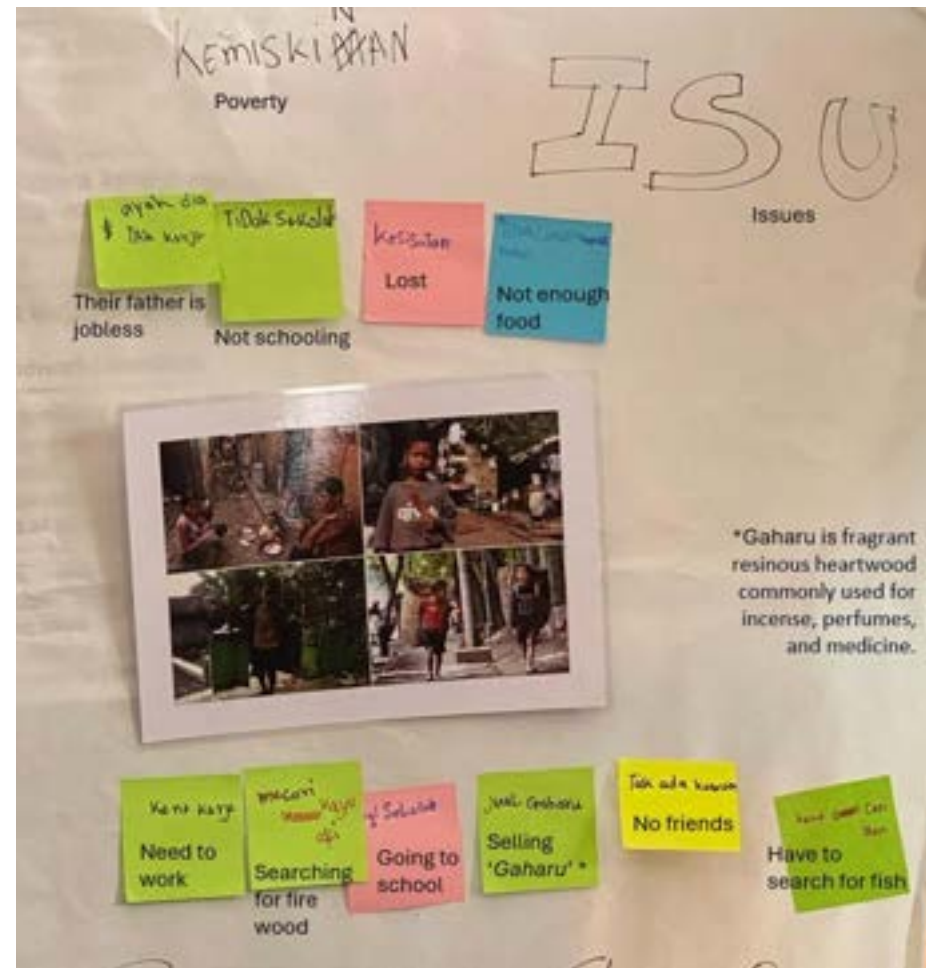


Figure 29 : Discussion on poverty with children in Royal Belum

Child labour is prevalent among refugees, stateless children, and Orang Asli children.

"Yes, children work on the side of the road; they are 14 years old or so; it's not that they don't want to go to school, but their parents don't have money to send them there; they have to go to another type of school, which they have to pay for." (Refugee Girl, 12, Georgetown)

"We know someone who never attended school." He works as a bread maker (roti canai). It's not that he doesn't want to go to school, but it's due to poverty. They attended various alternative schools, each of which required payment. (Refugee, girl, 12, Georgetown)

One of the stateless girls in Keningau shared her experience of having to work because of poverty.

"I've been working since I was little, maybe 11 years old; I'm already working. I am responsible for taking care of children, including those of other people, from the age of 2 months to 1 year.

"Tired. Children are naughty. I receive 10 ringgit daily; if they give it to me today, I won't receive payment for tomorrow. That marks the beginning of my babysitting career, but I'm comfortable with it. However, I am able to earn between MYR400 and MYR300 ringgit per month. I'm thankful I collected close to MYR2,000, but I use it to pay house rent and water for my grandmother in Sarawak." (Stateless Girl, 17, Keningau)

When asked whether children should be allowed to work or not, the girl gave the following response:

"No, because children are still young and still need knowledge in school. Learn first." (Stateless girl, 15, Keningau)

"As for me, I want to go to school. I go to school 5 times a week, so if I want to help my family, I will work on Saturdays and Sundays." (Stateless girl, 16, Keningau)

Play, Leisure and Cultural Activities (Article 31)

Cultural and Leisure Activities of Orang Asli Children in the Royal Belum Rainforest

The Jahai, an indigenous group that is part of the Orang Asli (indigenous Peoples) in Malaysia, inhabit the rainforests of northern Peninsular Malaysia, primarily in the areas of Royal Belum and Gerik, Perak. The Royal Belum Rainforest is the oldest rainforest in the world and is home to a rich and diverse fauna, flora and animals. The Jahai are one of the smallest indigenous groups in Malaysia and one most marginalized.

The Jahai children participated in their own 'The Royal Belum Met Gala Show' as a child-led event during the consultation (Figure 30-32) to showcase their leaf crafting skills and embrace their cultural heritage. The Jahai's leaf craft exemplifies their deep connection with the natural world and their ability to create functional and culturally significant items from the forest. This tradition not only serves practical purposes but also reinforces the cultural identity and environmental stewardship of the Jahai people. Preserving and promoting these crafts is vital for maintaining the cultural heritage and sustainable practices of the Jahai tribe.



Figure 30: Preparation for exhibition



Figure 31: The Jahai children show creativity crafting headdress



Figure 32: Royal Belum Met Gala "models"



Figure 33: Group Discussion on Play

The Jahai children demonstrated their swimming abilities during their time aboard the houseboat (Figure 33). Children were required to wear a safety jacket and have an adult accompany them while playing in the water to ensure their safety.

"I learnt how to swim by myself." (Boy, 10, Royal Belum)



Figure 34: The Jahai children enjoy nature

For the Jahai, swimming is more than just a practical skill; it is a vital aspect of their daily life, cultural heritage, and survival strategy. Preserving and promoting swimming skills within the Jahai community is crucial for maintaining their connection to their environment and ensuring their safety and resilience in a changing world. The Jahai's relationship with water exemplifies their deep bond with nature and their resourcefulness in adapting to and thriving within their forest home. Many of the children are natural athletes, swimmers and divers and constantly outdoors rain or shine unlike their peers in urban environments. They expressed a need for better facilities for sports especially traditional game like sepak takraw, badminton and football.

Cultural and Leisure Activities of Melanau Children in Dalat

A significant proportion of the children residing in Dalat belong to the Melanau ethnic group, which is among the indigenous peoples of Sarawak. Melanau culture is replete with festivals, traditional customs, and languages. Depending on the community, children frequently develop into multilingual adults who speak Melanau, Malay (the official language), and occasionally additional local dialects or languages.

"Anik umit gak Dalet manah" is a Melanau dialect, which means "children in Dalat are happy."

When asked about their cultural background, almost all of the children interviewed acknowledged their annual Kaul Festival, expressing delight in discussing it. This demonstrates their cherished and valued culture.

Kaul Festival is a significant event for the Melanau people, deeply embedded in their cultural and spiritual life. It combines elements of ritual, community celebration, and cultural preservation, making it a unique and meaningful festival.

"My grandfather said that the Kaul Festival has its own story. Orang Melanau from our village attacked Melanau in Daro near Oya. They burnt longhouses in Daro. There is one shed with a stored sword which did not burnt" (Boy, 17 y.o. Dalat)

"Various traditional games and competitions are held during the festival. Traditional Melanau dishes are prepared and shared among villagers. Boat races are also a highlight of the festival." (Boy, 15, Dalat).

"Children were also involved in the Kaul Festival. They normally dance Melanau traditional dance"

"The peak of Kaul Festival is where a flotilla boat brings a special decorated pole called Seraheng to be put in the river mouth. Loads of small boats will accompany the big boat" (Boy, 16, Dalat)

Additionally, the children demonstrated their awareness of the do's and don'ts that every Melanau person should avoid after the Kaul Festival.

"After Kaul Festive, we cannot make noise for three (3) days, for example we cannot do karaoke or play with fireworks. Everyone must stay in silence" (Boy, 17, Dalat)

The Muslim population in Dalat is the largest, followed by the Christian and Buddhist populations. When asked if they had any issues with that, they responded as follows:

"We don't have a problem friends with Muslims, no issues, between Christians and Muslims here. (Girl, 16, Dalat)

The river and sea play a crucial role in many parts of Sarawak, including Dalat. Activities such as fishing, transportation, and washing often take place. In addition, the natural environment provides ample opportunities for recreational swimming. Children play and swim in rivers, streams, and the sea, enhancing their skills through regular practice. They enjoy the outdoors and are at one with the green spaces in their communities

"Since small, we normally go to swim in the river, especially during hot weather. We don't go to any class to learn swim, we learnt by ourselves" (Boy, 15, Dalat)

The older children in Dalat are keen on water sports like rowing races and boat engine races and hoped for support to enhance their skills and knowledge

"There is a sports water competition in Dalat called Regatta Dalat. Villagers work together to build the Bidar boat." (Boy, 16, Dalat)

"We hope to be given monetary assistance in expanding our water sports activities. We also want to learn skills in fixing the boat engine and building the boat." (Boy, 17, Dalat)

Motor racing is another activity that older children in Dalat participate in. They have even asked for the construction of a suitable racing track to ensure their safe participation in motor racing activities and their pursuit of professional status.



Figure 35: Drawing by one of children in Dalat

Education (Article 28 & SDG 4)

Every consultation involved discussing education-related issues, either through group discussions or individual and paired interviews with the participants. However, the details or context of discussions varied across locations. During a consultation in Kuala Lumpur, for example, children brought attention to issues with the educational curriculum and the importance of children's voices in school. Children in Keningau and Georgetown highlighted the quality of education they received because of their statelessness and refugee status. On the other hand, children in Royal Belum highlighted the problem of accessibility to schools as well as the issue of dropouts owing to a lack of interest in studying, as shown in Figure 36.

It was also noted that in general the children in the rural areas enjoyed school as they see it as one of the few places where they can meet their friends and have fun. On the other hand the children in urban areas especially in Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya stated that the stresses of travelling to school, the burden of lots of homework and the high expectations of parents and teachers make it hard for them to enjoy school.



Figure 36: Issues in education by children in Royal Belum

School Accessibility

The indigenous children, also known as the Jahai in the Royal Belum, face several educational challenges. These issues often stem from the area's remote and rural nature, as well as socioeconomic and infrastructural factors which makes school largely inaccessible, as it was very difficult for the children to travel to their schools. The lack of proper roads and transportation options exacerbates this issue. The primary school of RPS Banun, located in a remote Orang Asli village in Gerik, Perak, serves as a vital link for the 18 adjacent villages in the area. Some villages are about an hour's boat ride away from school. Most of the students must commute to school by boating across the lake and taking a four-wheeler through the forest. Some simply do not go to school due to poverty as they could not afford the fees for the boat travel.

"I don't want to go to school because there are no cars" (Boy, 10, Royal Belum).

The children brought to light the safety concerns associated with walking to school. Elephants are everywhere in Gerik, and so are other wild animals such as tigers, bears, and snakes. On their way to the Royal Belum, some of the Consultation team members also met a herd of elephants.

The indigenous communities living in the Royal Belum and Gerik have their own languages and cultural practices. The mainstream educational curriculum may not be culturally relevant or linguistically accessible to these children. This may explain children's disinterest in school. They look forward to the outdoors and sports and are keen to learn skills that they can use to earn an income from the rainforest. The children were clearly happy with the simple joys of swimming, diving, running and playing football.

Literacy issues are common among children in the area. Based on observation, they barely know how to spell a word, even at age 12. With no preschool their only access to early education in the past 20 years is via a community toy library funded by a philanthropist. Even with just one primary school in the largest village Sg Tiang many are unable to access education due to the distance between the villages and the cost of hiring a speedboat.



Figure 37: Children in Royal Belum using toys and pictures in doing the CRC Activity

"School in Gerik is hard, too far, book, pencils and pens have to be bought by yourself" (Orang Asli, boy, 17, Royal Belum)

The nearest school, the primary school of RPS Banun, only offers classes until Form 3, posing additional educational obstacles for the indigenous children in Gerik. To attend the other secondary school in Gerik, children would be required to travel approximately one hour from their residence. Despite the provision of hostels, the children remained hesitant to continue their studies and are known to have run away from the hostels as they missed their families and their home. The Royal Belum region is home to extremely impoverished families so in lieu of attending school, children may opt to assist with household duties or to help their fathers in the rainforest or fish for their daily food needs.



Figure 38: Orang Asli boys helping to fish for their family dinner

Inequalities

Stateless children in Keningau brought the issues of inequality to light.

"Because we are not citizens here, that is why we won't be able to go to the Malaysian government school. It's sad, because we won't be able to go to big school" (Stateless boy, 13, Keningau)

One child in Bahau explained the differences between schools in the town area versus the estate area.

"I think there are a lot of differences between schools in the town area and outside town area. Schools in the outside town area do not have many facilities like the town area. I have friends in estates, their schools do not have enough fans, and there is a broken toilet. The school in the town area is more comfortable like we have quality teachers and enough teachers. There are no teachers who like to go to outside town school areas, as the road to go there is broken." (Boy, 17, Bahau).

The Rohingya refugee community in Georgetown is plagued by the problem of parents not allowing their children to attend school, (run by their own communities) particularly those who have reached puberty, particularly girls.

"There is, because people don't let you go to school, but when you're older, you leave, and when you're 12 years old, parents don't let you go." (Refugee girl, 12, Georgetown)



Figure 39: Refugee child with his new friends in Kuala Lumpur

Student's Voices in School

Schools are an important space for children to express themselves and participate in daily activities. Doing so can boost self-esteem, help children think critically and creatively, encourage children to persuade others more effectively, and allow children to be more comfortable with others, thereby improving personal relationships.

Based on the interview, only one child highlighted that his school (categorized as a trust school by the Ministry of Education) just set up a group called the Student's Voice group. Generally, the children stated that most of their schools have prefects but in many these are recommended by teachers and not elected by their peers. They hoped this will change

"There is a group leader, assistant and other members [in the Student's Voice group]. The members are among the non-prefect, normal students who do not have any position in school. Students do a voting to select the Student's Voice committee members. But, I felt that the group was not functioning because no students reported any issues to the group." (Boy, 17, Bahau)



Figure 40: Children having their say , Kuala Lumpur



Figure 41: Child, 12 presenting his views, Kuala Lumpur

However, the rest of the interviews with children echoed differently, as below.

"No, school never talks about child rights. However, I try to advocate my friends because okay this is your rights because one thing that I have seen, I have heard before was the rape cases. When you get raped most of the girls do not know the way to handle it. You should go to the police station or hospital, you should not change your clothes, but I think most people are not aware of it. I am aware of a few things like child rights, rights to education, what's your rights in development but something like between my classmates because I didn't get the platform to talk about it." (Girl, 17, Kuala Lumpur)

"One thing is the teacher, to be honest, I don't think the teacher wants to take any kind of action if their students make a complaint, it doesn't matter if the student is smart or not. Teachers won't take it seriously because they are afraid of being hurt, attacking back with the student's parents." (Girl, 17, Kuala Lumpur)

"Student's voice [in school], the best thing the head prefect must do is play their roles because students and teachers, our gap is very far. I think the head prefect is, of course, got friends and all I think the way you want to solve the issues is that you talk to your head prefect. Your head prefect needs to be someone that is loud, someone that wants to help, and what to do is that your teacher must be interactive." (Girl, 17, Kuala Lumpur)

Students' voices in schools are critical for creating a supportive and empowering educational environment. The insights from the students in Kuala Lumpur underscore the significant role schools play in enabling children to express themselves, advocate for their rights, and participate actively in their communities.

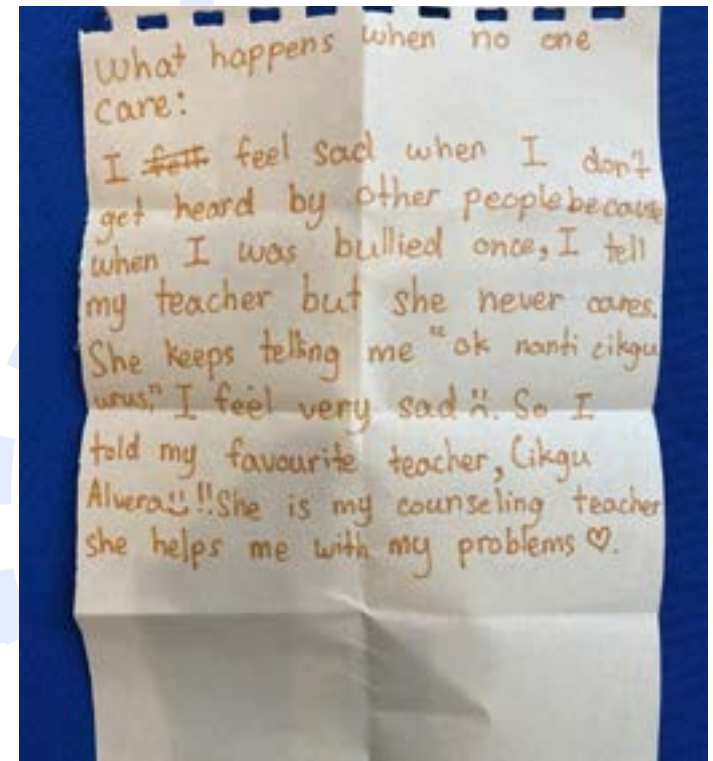



Figure 42: Child shared experience being bullied



Fear of negative evaluation from teachers can significantly hinder students' willingness to speak up in class. When teachers exhibit authoritarian attitudes, prioritizing their own authority and dismissing student perspectives, it creates a classroom climate where students feel unsafe to express their ideas or challenge existing notions. The fear of shutting down, ridiculing, or penalising students for voicing dissenting opinions can lead to self-censorship, thereby hindering their intellectual growth and development. Numerous students agree with these statements:

"Fear of being judged by teachers and friends." (Girl, 17, Selangor)

"Most students believe that their opinions do not matter. Hence, they do not bother to put effort into expressing their views." (Girl, 17, Kuala Lumpur)

"People, especially adults saying that we're too young to voice our opinions, makes students underestimate their opinions." (Girl, 15, Selangor)

"We don't have a way to voice our opinions. Our opinions are not taken seriously by teachers." (Girl, 15, Selangor)

We are scared because the teachers might see us differently and treat us differently when we voice our opinions or our rights especially when it involves our teachers' mistakes" (Girl, 15, Selangor)

Curriculum Density

Malaysia's education system has undergone several reforms to improve and modernise its curricula. Over the years, the key curriculum frameworks include the Kurikulum Lama Sekolah Menengah (KLSM), Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah (KBSR), Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah (KBSM), and Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (KSSM). In 2017, the introduction of KSSM took the place of KBSM. The objective of KSSM is to prepare students for the demands of the 21st century by fostering critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration skills.

When it comes to the educational curriculum, a few of the children have stated their dissatisfaction with the sheer volume of topics that they are required to cover, and they have emphasised the importance of having a capable teacher who can assist them in their academic pursuits.

"The upper secondary form subjects, the syllabus is a lot, but it is a good thing, maybe we are ready for the next step, just like in university, or college. But as a student we have a lot of commitment, we have other things such as co-curriculum. When we miss one topic, it's hard to catch up after one. All the topics are related. I think the reason is that it is always changing, like now, we just entered KSSM, and teachers and students must adapt to these new topics." (Girl, 16, Kuala Lumpur)

"The subjects are really hard. For example, the upper secondary form subjects are really tough especially Additional Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. Even though it is hard, it is doable, but we need someone that is very good to teach us. I think what the Ministry of Education can do for the STEM subjects is that they really must hold meetings about how to teach, because not all teachers are bad. I know that some Youtube teachers (from government school) are really amazing. Imagine if we had that type of teacher at all schools." Girl, 17, Selangor)

"It's true that if we can learn a lot, we may produce good quality students and be able to make very great young people. But now when there are so many of those kinds of things, they are no longer of good quality where the SPM graph is lowered. So, it's not that people say that there is a lot of syllabus to make the younger generation smarter, but they are not smart because MOE has to download the graph, every year they download the graph, it's like a new score of 10% can pass, because the student's score is too bad." (Boy, 17, Selangor)

All fifth-year secondary school students in Malaysia take the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM), also known as the Malaysian Certificate of Education, as a national examination. The SPM serves as a crucial qualification for Malaysian students, similar to the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in the United Kingdom. The recent 2023 SPM results showed 26% of students, or one in every four, failed, and 22% only passed (grades D and E) the additional math exam.

Additionally, Dalat children who participated in the interview stated that mathematics is the topic they find most challenging. During their group discussion, children from Kuala Krai also brought up similar points. In a group discussion in Kuala Krai, one group highlighted that English is also a difficult subject (Figure 43).

During an interview with a deaf child in Kuala Lumpur, he expressed difficulties in learning the Malay language subjects due to the abundance of words, which often lead to confusion about their meanings.

When asked what his hopes are for education in Malaysia:

"I hope for a clearer, better explanation when teaching, and currently my teacher can go sign language, but I hope they can sign better, in a more fluent and a clearer manner." (Boy, 11, Kuala Lumpur)

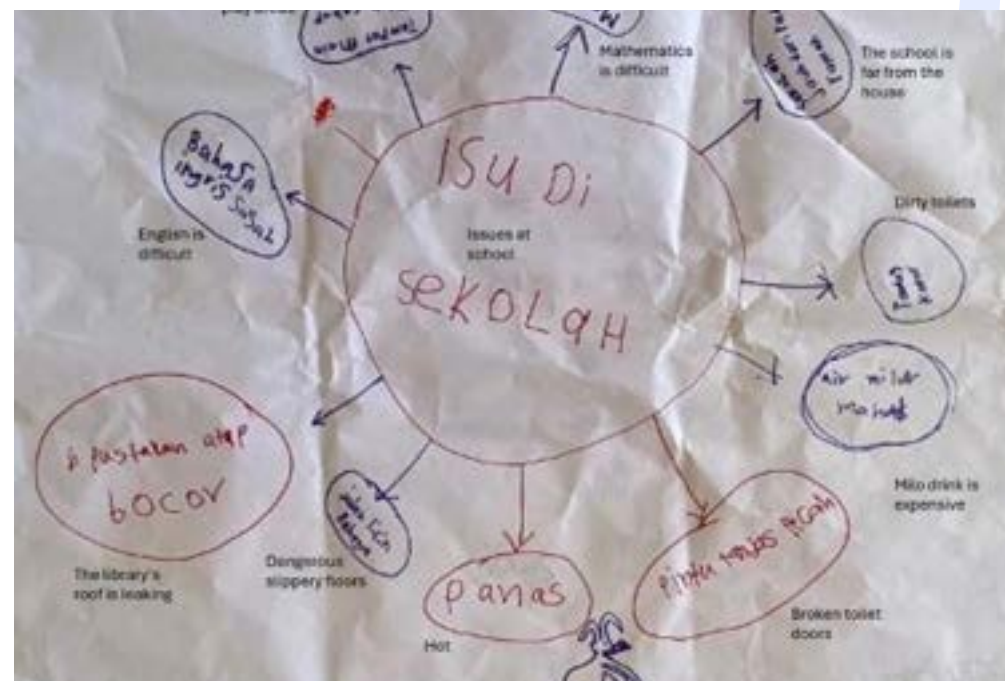


Figure 43: 'Mathematic and English is difficult' by children in Kuala Krai

Quality of Teachers

The children also mentioned that some of their teachers lacked the skills required to answer the high-order thinking questions their school asked.

"Some teachers cannot answer questions that are out of the box. This teacher can only teach what they read in the textbook and that is the main problem. There are students who ask questions that are a little run-off to better understand. There are students who understand that much, then okay that's enough, and there are students who want to know more, but the teacher really can't answer because this is a new chapter, this is KSSM, so they are also struggling to adapt." (Boy, 17, Selangor)

However, children were also aware of the difficulties that the teacher might encounter in dealing with the curriculum changes.

"I think that because the teacher also must adapt. We have a lot to cover. So honestly this is my opinion, even up to one subject, for example, Biology in a year must cover 15 big topics that are not included with the subtopic." (Girl, 17, Selangor)

In addition, they suggested various ways of gaining access to information to further assist in enhancing the quality of education in Malaysia.

"If we cannot train all teachers in Malaysia at least do a platform, do an accessible education on a platform and post it on YouTube, put it on television and promote it, do a simple one, tuition media, the one that all students can really access." (Girl, 16, Kuala Lumpur)

"Accessible to good quality education, for my school we did a lot of workshops in my year, but the workshop is only selected for the top students. I think the way you can do it is, do online courses, do online videos and we all will watch it." (Boy, 17, Kuala Lumpur)

"I hope in future the Ministry of Education can let students focus on the subject that students are interested in, and they can put 100% effort on it, be more flexible and follow their respective strengths." (Girl, 17, Kuala Lumpur).

Effect of Covid-19 Pandemic on Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the academic calendar for both primary and secondary schools in Malaysia. Since then, the official start of the school year has shifted from January to March. By moving the start of the academic year to March, students may have shorter breaks between academic terms, leading to increased pressure to complete the syllabus on time. The Ministry of Education announced earlier this year that they will revert the start of the academic calendar to January 2026, moving it forward to February for the 2024/2025 session. This means that the SPM for 2024/2025 students will take place in December 2025 for the listening, speaking, and practical exams, and in January 2025 for the writing examination. This means that the SPM 2024/2-25 candidates only have from mid-March 2024 until December 2024 to learn the Form 5 topics and revise their exams covering topics in Form 4. In an interview with an SPM 2024 candidate in Bahau, one student commented on the lack of time he had to revise for his SPM examination this coming December.

"I'm feeling stressed because in normal school time they have like 11 months to study, but for me, I only have 9 months. I entered school [2024 this academic year] in March and my SPM is in December. I feel like there is no time to finish the syllabus. My teachers all teach only to quickly complete the syllabus. Both of the teachers and us were stressed. Lots of topics that I did not understand, my friends also did not understand".

"This coming Tuesday I will be having my Physical trial exam, but we have not completed all the topics yet".

"I am scared to ask the teacher because I feel that I will disturb the class since the teacher is rushed to complete the syllabus. I am also scared that I will forget during the exam since I don't have enough time to do the revision."

(Boy, 17, Bahau)

Child Rights Education

Almost 90% of children participating in the Consultations stated that they had never heard about the UNCRC. Some participants were delighted to learn that children, too, possess certain rights.

"I'm kinda happy [to know] that children can voice out things, I'm just very happy." (Girl, 12, Kuala Krai)

"We should not be scared of anyone, in terms like some certain adults sometimes like the parents scolding you or something for, but you did something right and your parents scold thinking like you did something wrong. You should voice out saying that you did not do anything wrong. I did this, this way because of this thing, like explaining more better." (Girl, 16, Georgetown)



Figure 44: Learning CRC the fun way , Keningau Sabah

When asked to what extent to which schools practice children's rights and whether teachers should be aware of these rights participants noted that:

"School is a bit hard [to exercise child rights], teachers are strict, students are all scared to talk to teachers at the same time but there are some students that are not afraid of any teachers, so it depends on your personality." (Boy, 14, Kuala Lumpur).

"Yeah, they [teachers] should, some teachers do, some teachers don't, but they are a bit kind of lacking in child rights." (Girl, 13, Kuala Lumpur).

Furthermore, children believed that adults should ask more for children's opinions in order to better understand them.



Figure 45: Category of Rights , Royal Belum Perak

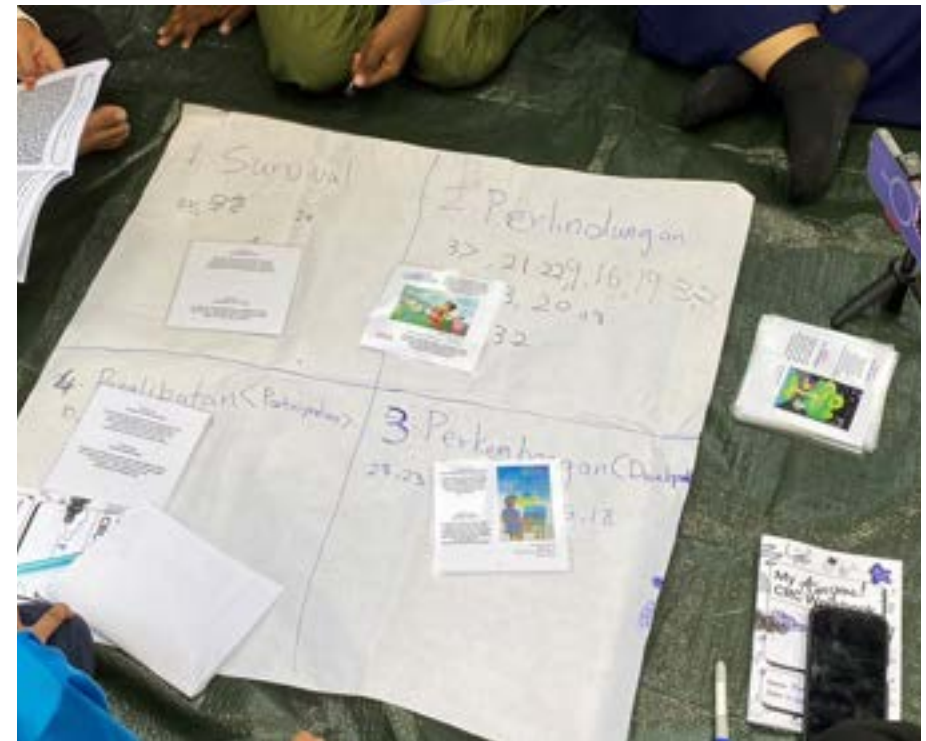


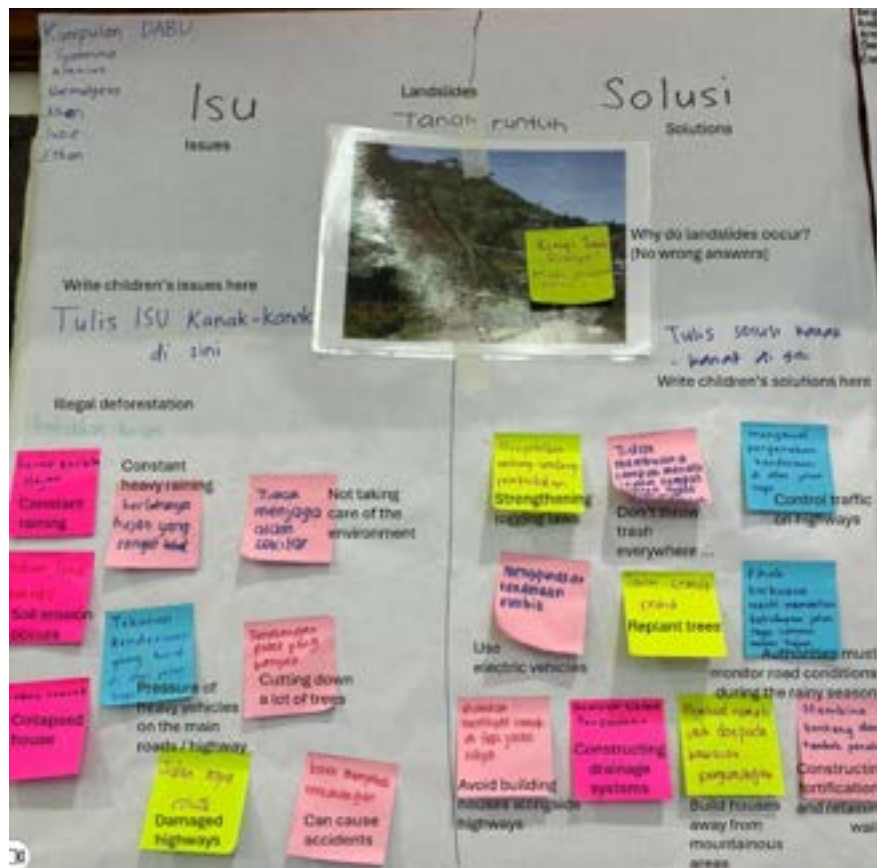
Figure 46: Rights and responsibilities Keningau Sabah

"Adults should ask what the children are thinking, like what is your opinion, like adults should tell what they feel and what they are doing, and then ask the opinion from the child. For example, ask if you think what I'm doing is right, what do you think, and ask more questions. Both adults and children must know each other first, like close, they all must be friends, like they must know each other, like in my class right now, some teachers don't even know our names, and then they should take initiatives to do more. Adults should learn about child rights too " (Girl, 15, Georgetown)

Environmental Issues (Article 24, 29, SDG 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15)

Children in Royal Belum and Dalat discussed environmental issues. The primary reason this topic was mooted for discussion in these two (2) locations is that the children in these locations have a cultural connection to the land and nature, which emphasizes the importance and relevance of environmental issues to them. Pictures were utilized to capture attention and enhance the engagement of the discussions. These visual elements sparked interest and curiosity as they explored and discussed environmental issues they encountered in their lived environments.

Landslides



Children discussed several factors that contributed to the problems of landslides (Figure 47). These factors included illegal deforestation, persistent heavy rains, and people's attitudes towards the environment, as evidenced by their frequent tree-cutting practices. They recommended strengthening laws and regulations, replanting trees, raising awareness about landslide hazards, and avoiding construction in mountainous regions as potential solutions.

Figure 47: Discussion on landslides by children in Dalat

Garbage Disposal and River Pollution

There was also a discussion among the Dalat and Royal Belum children about rubbish disposal and river pollution (Figure 46-48). According to them, the primary cause of the trash problem is once again related to people's attitudes, including their lack of appreciation for the environment, their laziness, the inadequacy of garbage bins, and the absence of an effective system for managing rubbish. Because of inefficient rubbish disposal, the river became contaminated, stinky, and dirty, leading to the extinction of aquatic creatures and odour pollution. Additionally, the river became a breeding ground for mosquitoes, rodents, and other insects. Children have requested various actions such as running campaigns to clean up villages, creating an awareness campaign using Tiktok, conducting research, imposing high fines, implementing an effective trash management system, and reminding people of the importance of recycling, reusing, and reducing waste.



Figure 48: Discussion on garbage disposal by children in Dalat



Figure 49: Discussion on garbage disposal by children in Dalat

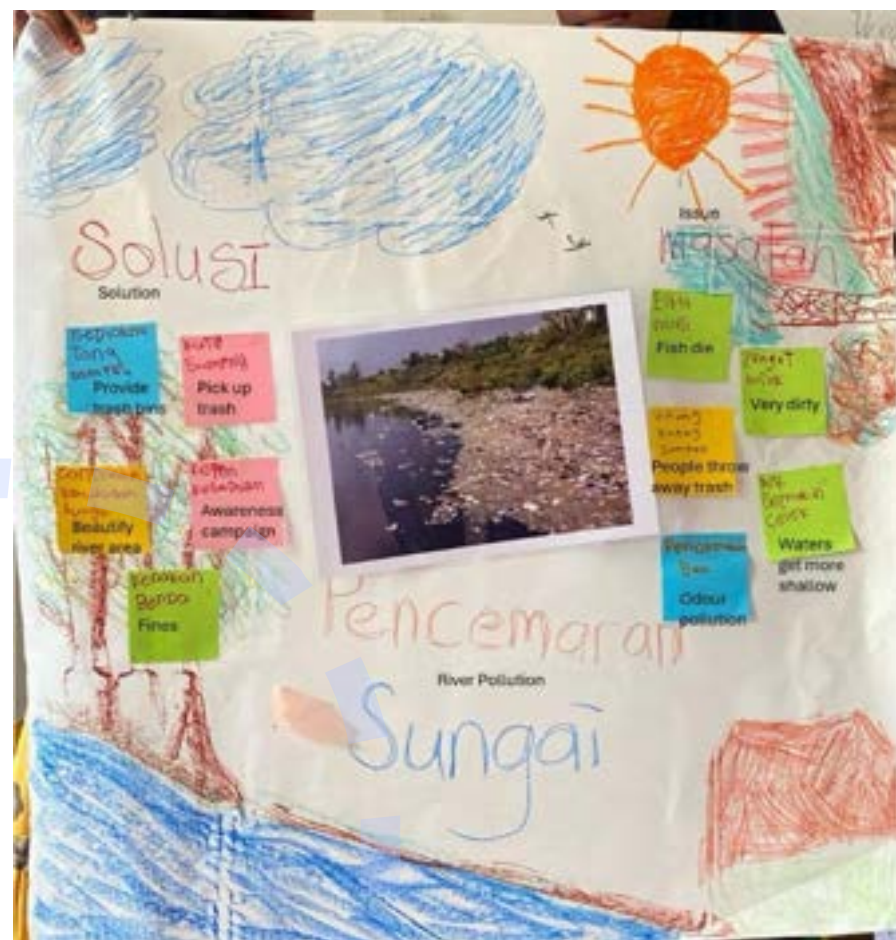


Figure 50: Discussion on river pollution by children in Royal Belum Rainforest

Floods

Flooding issues are common in Dalat, especially in low-lying areas. Flood waters forced the closure of some schools in 2018. Dalat experiences the Hide Tide event due to its proximity to the Oya River, which connects to the South China Sea (Figure 51). Traditionally, the Melanau built their houses on stilts (Figure 52). The Melanau people often live in areas prone to flooding. Building houses on stilts helps protect them from rising water levels during heavy rains or high tides.

Discussions by children in Dalat pointed out the main reasons for flooding, such as the sizes of drains, low areas surrounding the area, heavy rains, and abandoned trash. Their proposals for the flooding issue include contingency plans such as providing safety jackets and floaties, as well as the availability of boats and shelters (Figure 53).



Figure 51: Oya River connecting to South China Sea



Figure 52: Common house design in Dalat



Figure 53: Discussion flooding by children in Dalat

Open Burning

Children in Royal Belum associated open burning with the hot weather and dry places, as well as the attitude of irresponsible people who burn trash (Figure 54), while children in Dalat highlighted the effect of the open burning to a bigger context such as global warming, haze, and serious environment issues which affected people and plants' health. Law enforcement, making reports, awareness campaigns, designated as a conversation forest are among the suggestions by children in Dalat (Figure 55).

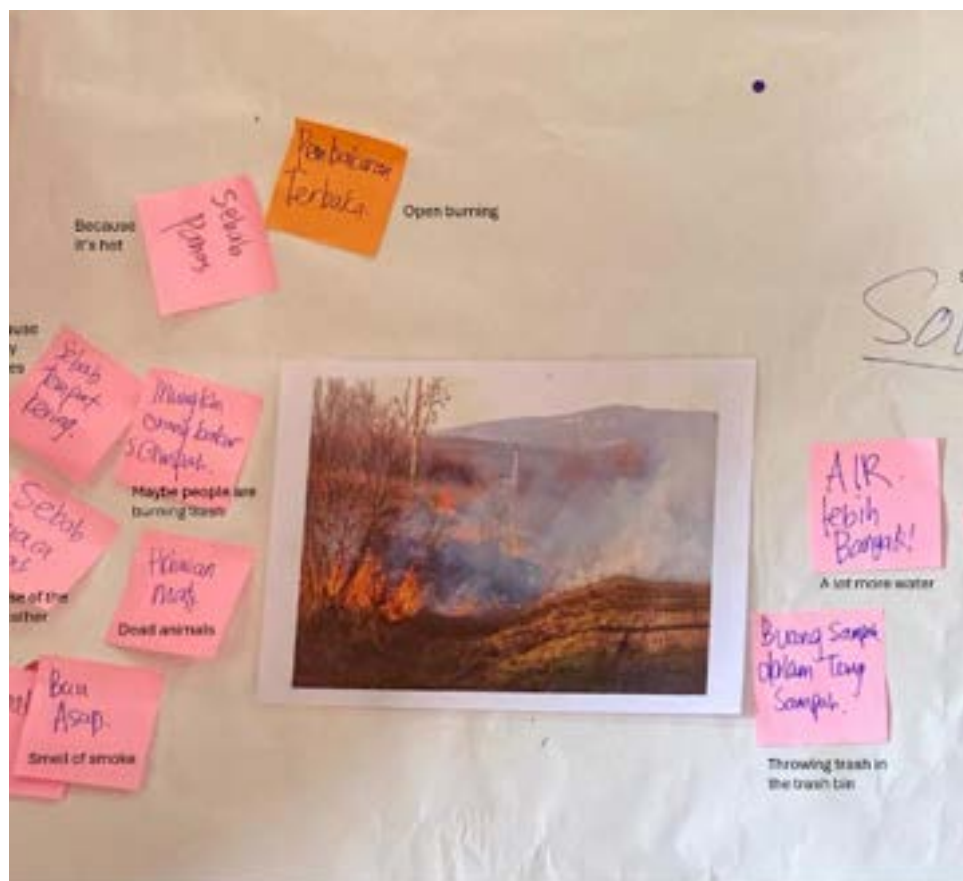


Figure 54: Discussion on open burning by children in Royal Belum



Figure 55: Discussion on open burning by children in Dalat

Our Dreams and Aspirations Sessions

"Everybody to treat like a normal person, don't treat them like if you see some Syrian or something don't tell them some bad things, like just pretend they are normal to you, everybody. Even if they don't have a passport like me, just be good to others."

~ Boy, Asylum Seeker, Age 13, Kuala Lumpur

"I would like to see schools utilize technology in class. Like overseas students are allowed to use laptops in their class. It will be easier for us to find a lot of information, but schools need to ensure students do not misuse the usage. Like school only allow students to use laptop within certain time"

~ Boy, Age 17, Bahau

"As CODA kids, I hope that government will allow us to study formal sign language for free"

*~ Boy, Age 13,
Petaling Jaya*

"I want to live in Malaysia because Malaysia is the best, I have many friends, I have lived here for 10 years. I also want to become a Malaysian citizen."

*~ Girl, Refugee,
Age 12, Georgetown*

"I hope the government will put more effort into developing the deaf sports or help the deaf. I hope for good teachers in sign language"

*~ Boy, Age 13,
Petaling Jaya*

Our Dreams and Aspirations Sessions

"Happy Families, Progressive Nation"

~ Boy, Age 10, Kuala Krai

**Clean Environment,
Fair Leadership in
Malaysia**

~ Boy, Age 11, Kuala Krai

"My hope is for Sabah to continue growing and thriving! I also wish for adults and communities to help put an end to human trafficking. One of my dreams is to build a school in the Philippines, making education accessible to more children."

~ Girl, Refugee Age 16, Keningau

My dream isn't just about asking for more. I want to "learn well" and make a positive impact by helping others, so that more people can benefit. It's not just about ourselves; sometimes, we need to consistently do good, not just once in a while. For those who support us, we should always show our appreciation by supporting them in return and helping one another. Remember, always stay happy and keep smiling.

~ Girl, Refugee Age 16, Keningau

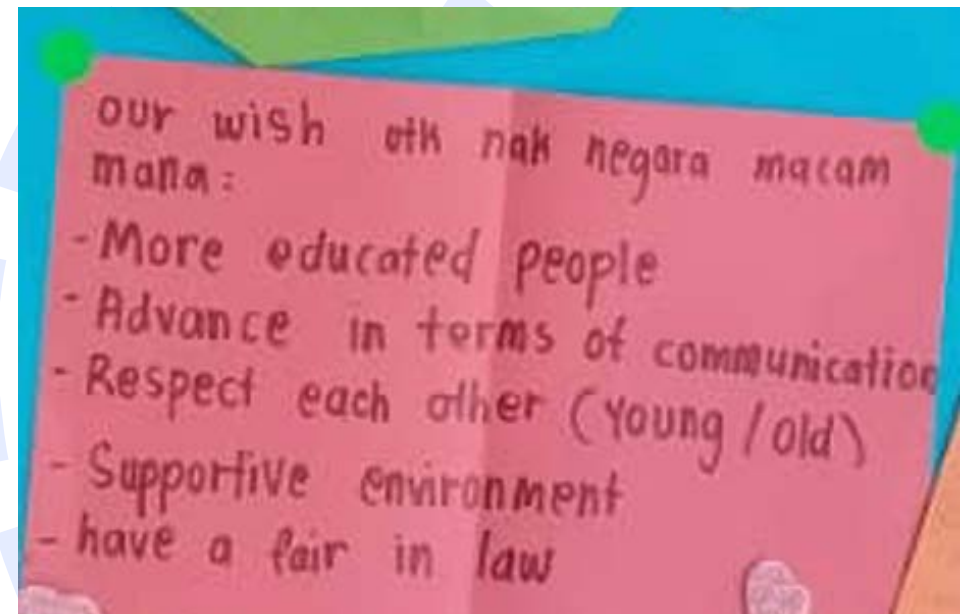
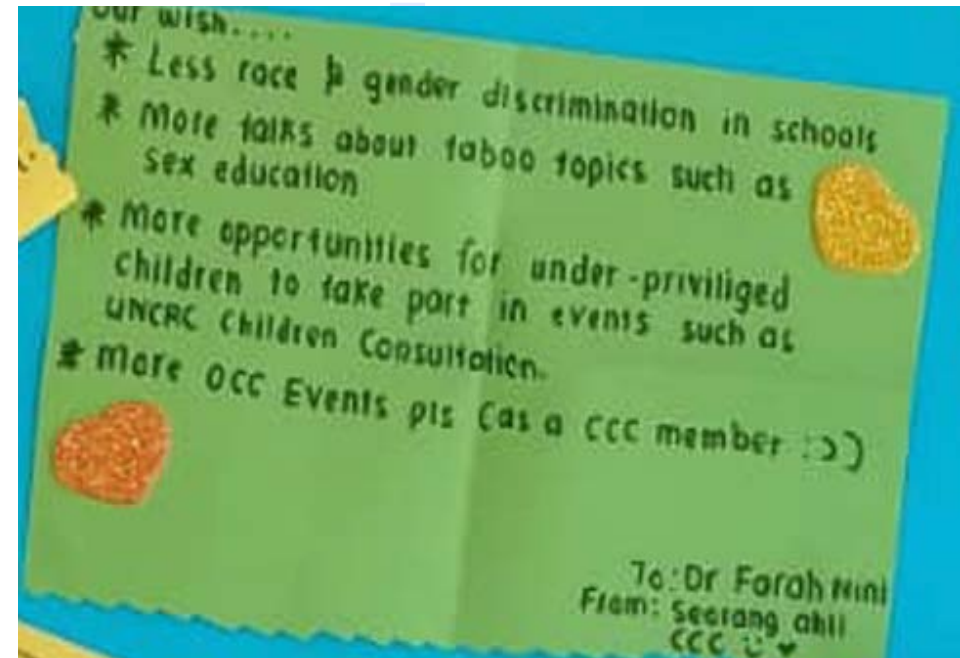
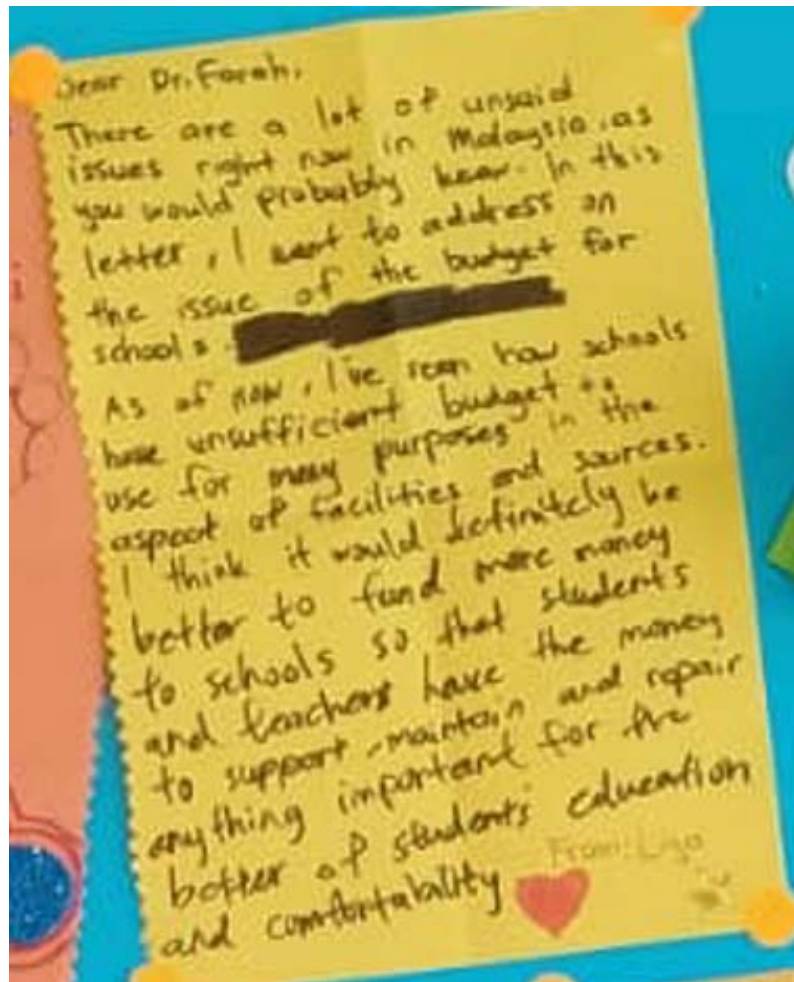


Figure 56: Children's wishes to Malaysia's Children's Commissioner

Appendix 1 Survey - 'How We Exercise Our Rights'

Before each of the Consultation activities began, children voluntarily responded to a simple survey about how they exercised their rights in their daily lives at home, at school, in their neighbourhood and on the online environment (Internet).

The objective of the survey was to understand the extent to which children are aware of and able to practice their rights in different aspects of their daily lives. It aims to identify areas where their rights are upheld or neglected, such as participation in decision-making, access to education and safety, and community involvement. By gathering this data, the survey sought to highlight challenges and opportunities for improving the fulfilment of children's rights in various environments.



Survey 1-Home



Survey 2-School



Survey 3-Neighbourhood



Survey 4-Social Media

The Survey covered 4 areas as stated above. The questions for each of the areas are on the next page.

Rumah <i>Home</i>	Setiap Hari (Sangat Kerap) Every day	Seminggu Sekali (Kadang-Kadang) Once a week	2 Bulan Sekali (Jarang- Jarang) Twice a month	Sebulan Sekali (Sangat Jarang) Once a month	Tidak Pernah Never
Saya mempunyai bilik sendiri di rumah I have my own room at home	●●●●●	●			●●●●●
Saya boleh belajar di rumah saya I can study at home	●●●●●	●			●
Saya dapat rehat yang cukup di rumah I get enough rest at home	●●●●●	●			
Saya boleh bermain di kawasan rumah I can play at home	●●●●●	●			
Saya berasa selamat (tidak dibuli / tidak dimarahi) di rumah saya I feel safe (not bullied / not scolded) at home	●●●●●	●			
Saya berasa gembira kerana saya boleh memberi cadangan / pendapat / idea semasa di rumah I feel happy because I can give suggestions / opinions / ideas at home	●●●●●	●			●
Saya berasa gembira kerana ibubapa / penjaga saya mendengar dan menerima cadangan / pendapat / idea saya I feel happy because my parents / guardian listens to my suggestions / opinions / ideas	●●●●●	●			●
Saya berasa gembira kerana adik-beradik saya mendengar dan menerima cadangan / pendapat / idea saya I feel happy because my siblings listens to my suggestions / opinions / ideas	●●●●●	●			●

Survey 1 : Rights in Our Home

Sekolah <i>School</i>	Setiap Hari (Sangat Kerap) Every day	Seminggu Sekali (Kadang-Kadang) Once a week	2 Bulan Sekali (Jarang- Jarang) Twice a month	Sebulan Sekali (Sangat Jarang) Once a month	Tidak Pernah Never
Saya pergi ke sekolah I go to school	●●●●●	●			●●
Saya berasa selamat (tidak dibuli / tidak dimarahi) di sekolah I feel safe (not bullied / not scolded) at school	●●●●●	●			●
Saya berasa gembira kerana saya boleh belajar subjek kegemaran saya I am happy because I get to learn my favourite subject	●●●●●	●			
Saya mendapat kerja rumah / latihan yang banyak I get a lot of homework / exercises	●●●●●	●			●
Saya berasa gembira kerana saya boleh memberi cadangan / pendapat / idea semasa di sekolah I am happy because I get to give suggestion / opinions / ideas at school	●●●●●	●			●●
Saya berasa gembira kerana guru mendengar dan menerima cadangan / pendapat / idea saya I am happy because teachers listen to my suggestion / opinions / ideas at school	●●●●●	●			●

Survey 2 : Rights in Our School

Kampung/ Kejiranan <i>Neighbourhood</i>	Setiap Hari (Sangat Kerap) Every day	Seminggu Sekali (Kadang-Kadang) Once a week	2 Bulan Sekali (Jarang- Jarang) Twice a month	Sebulan Sekali (Sangat Jarang) Once a month	Tidak Pernah Never
Saya mempunyai tempat bermain di kampung / kejiranan saya I have a play area in my neighbourhood	●●●●●	●			●●●●●
Saya berasa selamat (tidak dibuli / tidak dimarahi) di kampung / kejiranan saya I feel safe (not bullied / not scolded) in my neighbourhood	●●●●●	●			●●
Saya berasa gembira kerana orang kampung / kejiranan bertanya pendapat saya I feel happy because my neighbours ask about my opinions	●●●●●	●			●●●●●
Saya berasa gembira kerana orang kampung / kejiranan mendengar dan melakukan cadangan / pendapat / idea saya I feel happy because my neighbours listen and carry out my suggestions / opinions / ideas	●●●●●	●			●●●●●
Saya berasa gembira kerana ada acara karakarak semasa majlis keramaian di kampung / kejiranan I feel happy because there children activities during community events in my neighbourhood	●●●●●	●			●●●●●
Orang kampung / jiran melindungi saya dari sebarang bahaya My neighbours protect me from any harm	●●●●●	●			●●●●●

Survey 3 : Rights in Our Neighbourhood

Internet / Media Sosial <i>Social Media</i>	Setiap Hari (Sangat Kerap) Every day	Seminggu Sekali (Kadang-Kadang) Once a week	2 Bulan Sekali (Jarang- Jarang) Twice a month	Sebulan Sekali (Sangat Jarang) Once a month	Tidak Pernah Never
Saya menggunakan media sosial I use social media	●●●●●	●			●●●●●
Saya membuat pos/komen di media sosial I upload posts and comments on social media	●●●●●	●			●●●●●
Saya berasa selamat (tidak dibuli / tidak diejek) di media sosial I feel safe (not bullied / not made fun of) on social media	●●●●●	●			●●●●●
Orang yang tidak dikenali mesej / mengikuti saya di media sosial Unknown people message / follow me on social media	●●●●●	●			●●●●●
Saya menghubungi ahli keluarga dan rakan-rakan menggunakan media sosial I contact family and friends using social media	●●●●●	●			●●●●●
Saya mendapatkan maklumat yang berguna dari media sosial I find useful information from social media	●●●●●	●			●●●●●

Survey 4 : Rights in Our Social Media

Survey on 'How Do We Exercise Our Rights?'

To differentiate the answers, different coloured stickers were given for girls and boys to complete the survey. The facilitators assisted children who struggled to read or understand the survey questions or in comprehending them.



Figure 57: Children filling in survey in Dalat



Figure 58: Hearing impairment children filling in survey



Survey 1 Question 5 'How We Exercise Our Rights at Home'

The survey asked children whether they feel safe (not bullied/not scolded) at home. As illustrated in Figure 59, the survey reveals that a notable percentage of children in **Kuala Lumpur** (16% for boys and 12% for girls) and a significant percentage of girls in **Keningau** (28%) report never feeling safe at home. This indicates a concerning level of insecurity that may stem from bullying, scolding, or other negative home environments. Children in **Dalat** also report feeling unsafe, with 15.38% of boys and 14.29% of girls expressing similar sentiments. The consistent reports of insecurity across these regions highlight a critical need for interventions to foster safer home environments for children.

The alarming levels of insecurity in **Keningau** and other areas suggest a pressing need for targeted interventions, such as educational programs for parents and community support services, to improve children's safety and emotional well-being at home.

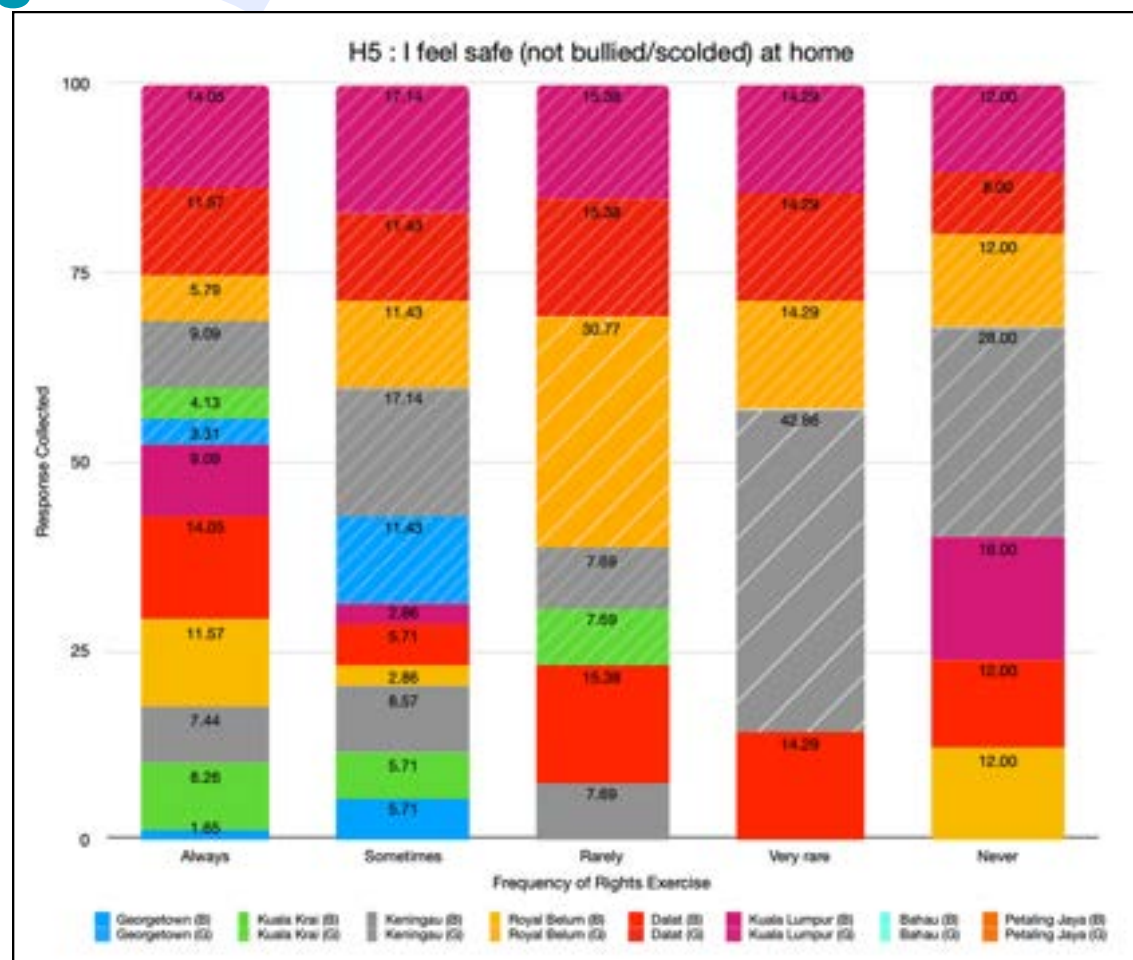


Figure 59: I feel safe (not bullied/scolded) at home



Survey 1 Question 6

‘How We Exercise Our Rights at Home’

The survey asked children whether they feel happy that they can give suggestions/ opinions/ ideas at home. Figure 60 shows that in **Dalat**, a significant percentage of children (40.91% of boys and 9.09% of girls) feel they cannot give suggestions or opinions at home. This reflects a lack of agency and voice among children, which can impact their overall well-being and development. The survey notes high percentages of children in **Kuala Krai** feeling unable to express their opinions at home, reinforcing the idea that children in some regions are struggling to have their voices heard. Although girls in **Kuala Lumpur** (21.43%) report sometimes being listened to, this percentage still indicates that there is significant room for improvement in allowing children to express themselves and ensuring their opinions are valued.

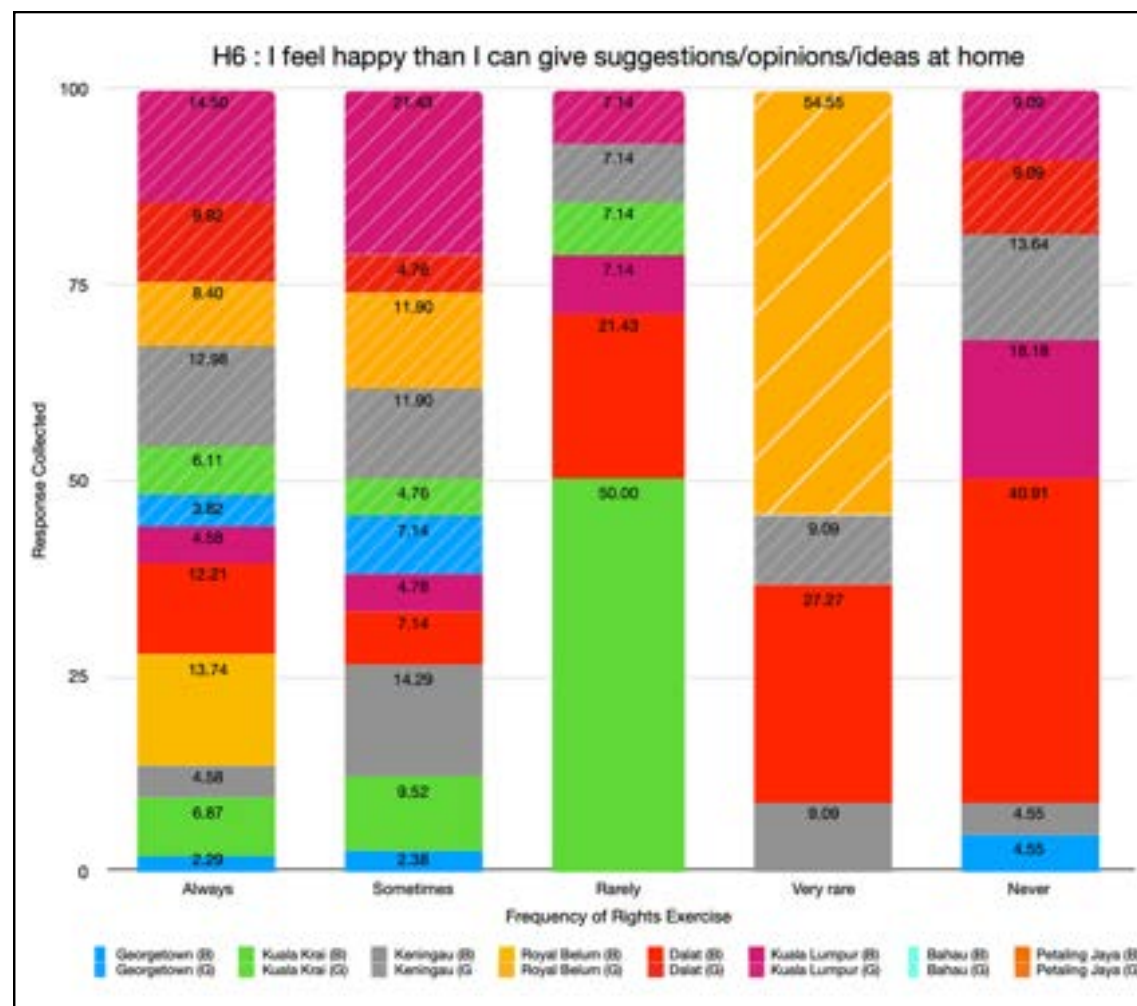


Figure 60: I feel happy that I can give suggestions/opinions/ideas at home



Survey 1 Question 7 'How We Exercise Our Rights at Home'

The survey asked children whether they feel happy that their parents/guardians listen and accept their suggestions/opinions/ideas. As shown in Figure 61 many children in **Dalat** and Kuala Lumpur report feeling unheard, suggesting that parental engagement in listening to children's opinions is inadequate. This feeling is exacerbated by high percentages of children in **Dalat** who feel their parents rarely pay attention to them. Girls in **Keningau** and boys in **Kuala Krai** also report very rarely being heard by their parents, highlighting a broader trend of low responsiveness to children's voices in these areas. Although some children in **Dalat** report being sometimes listened to, the overall findings indicate a clear need for improvement in how children's voices are acknowledged and acted upon by parents and guardians. This could involve training for parents on active listening and validating children's feelings and opinions.

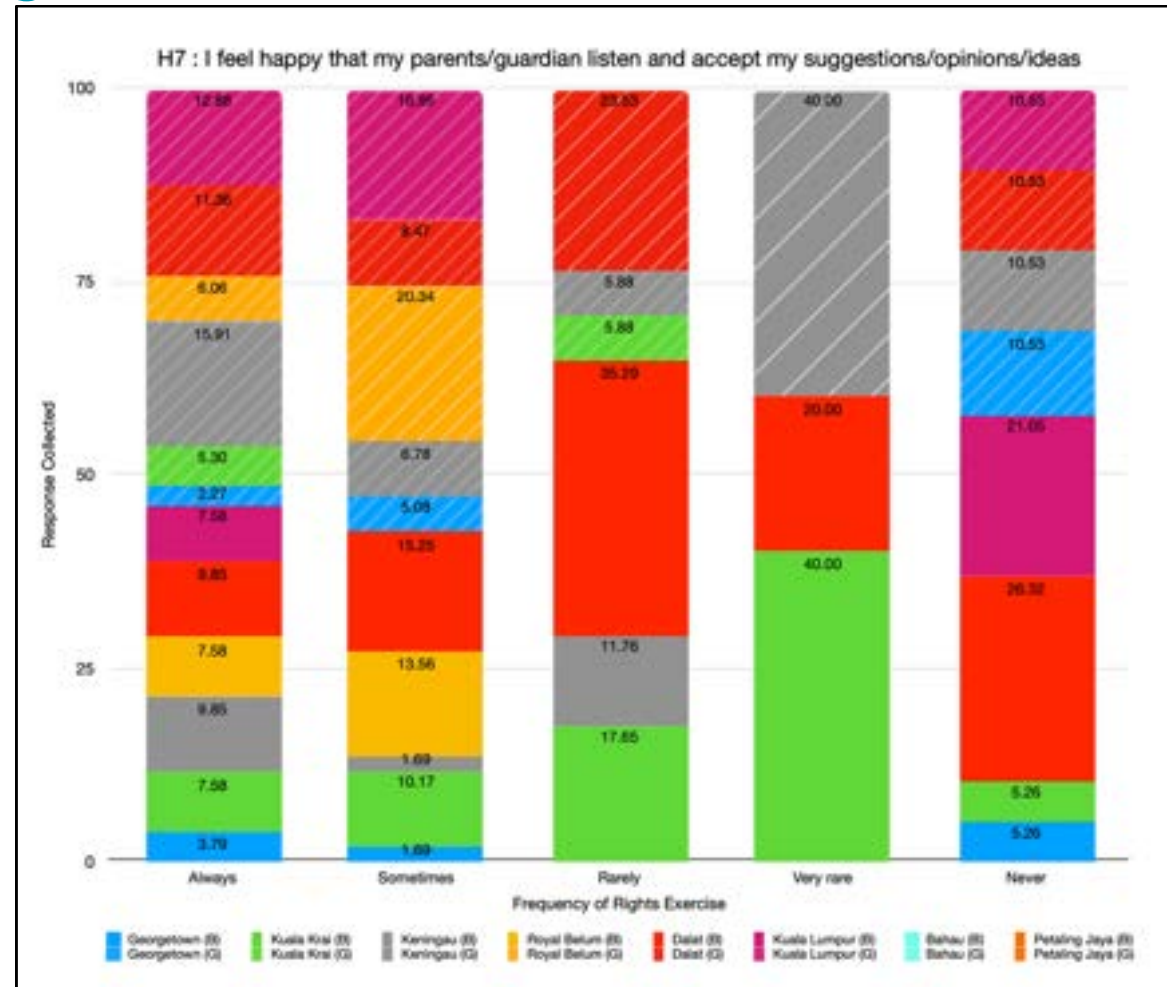
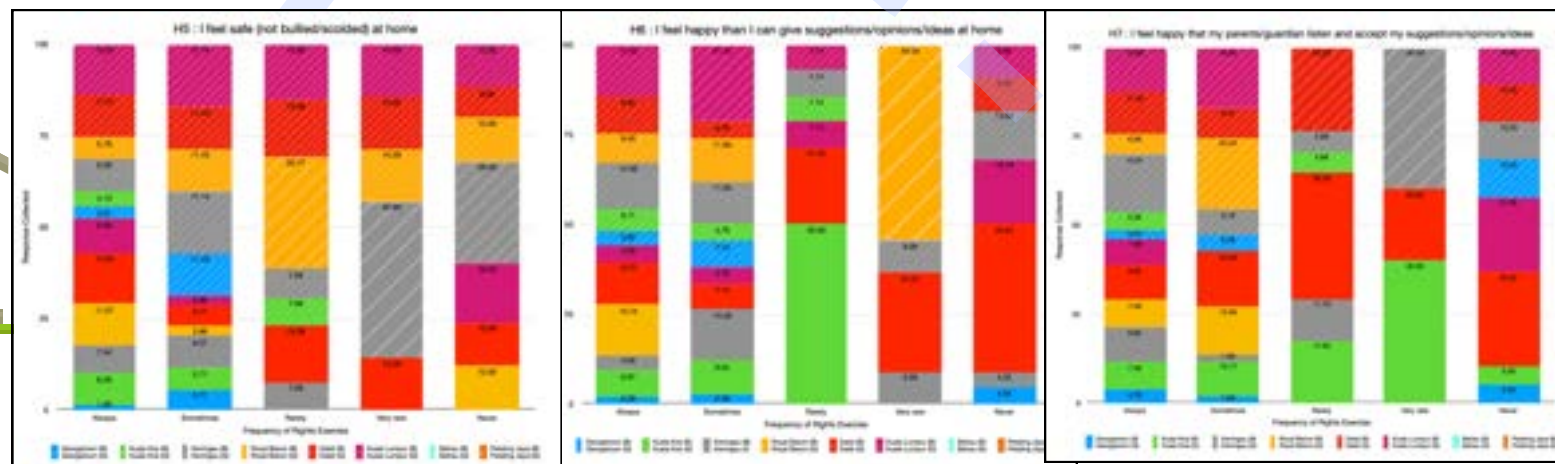


Figure 61: I feel happy that my parents/guardian listens and accept my suggestions/opinions/ideas at home

Summary - 'How We Exercise Our Rights at Home'



Overall, the above three (3) findings reveal several critical insights about children's experiences at home across urban and rural areas. **The high percentages of children feeling unsafe at home, especially in Keningau and Kuala Lumpur,** underscore the need for community and family interventions to enhance children's emotional security. Many children, **particularly in Dalat and Kuala Krai, feel unable to express their opinions at home,** which can hinder their development and self-esteem. Promoting environments where children feel safe to share their thoughts is crucial. The low percentages of children feeling heard by their parents point to a need for parents to engage more actively in listening to and accepting their children's suggestions and opinions. This could foster stronger family relationships and support children's emotional health. These findings suggest that targeted initiatives, including educational workshops for parents, community programs, and policies promoting children's rights, are necessary to address the disparities and improve children's well-being at home.



Survey 2 Question 1 'How We Exercise Our Rights at School'

The survey investigated how frequently children attend school. As shown in Figure 62, children in larger cities like **Georgetown** and **Kuala Lumpur**, as well as stable locations like **Bahau** report attending school every day, suggesting better access to education and perhaps more supportive educational environments. In contrast, children in smaller towns like **Kuala Krai** and **Dalat** attend school much less frequently, with some reporting only "Twice a Month" or "Once a Month." A significant number of children in these areas also indicate that they never attend school, which raises concerns about educational access and engagement in these regions. This analysis underscores a stark disparity in school attendance across urban and rural areas, highlighting the challenges faced by children in smaller towns compared to those in more urbanized locations.

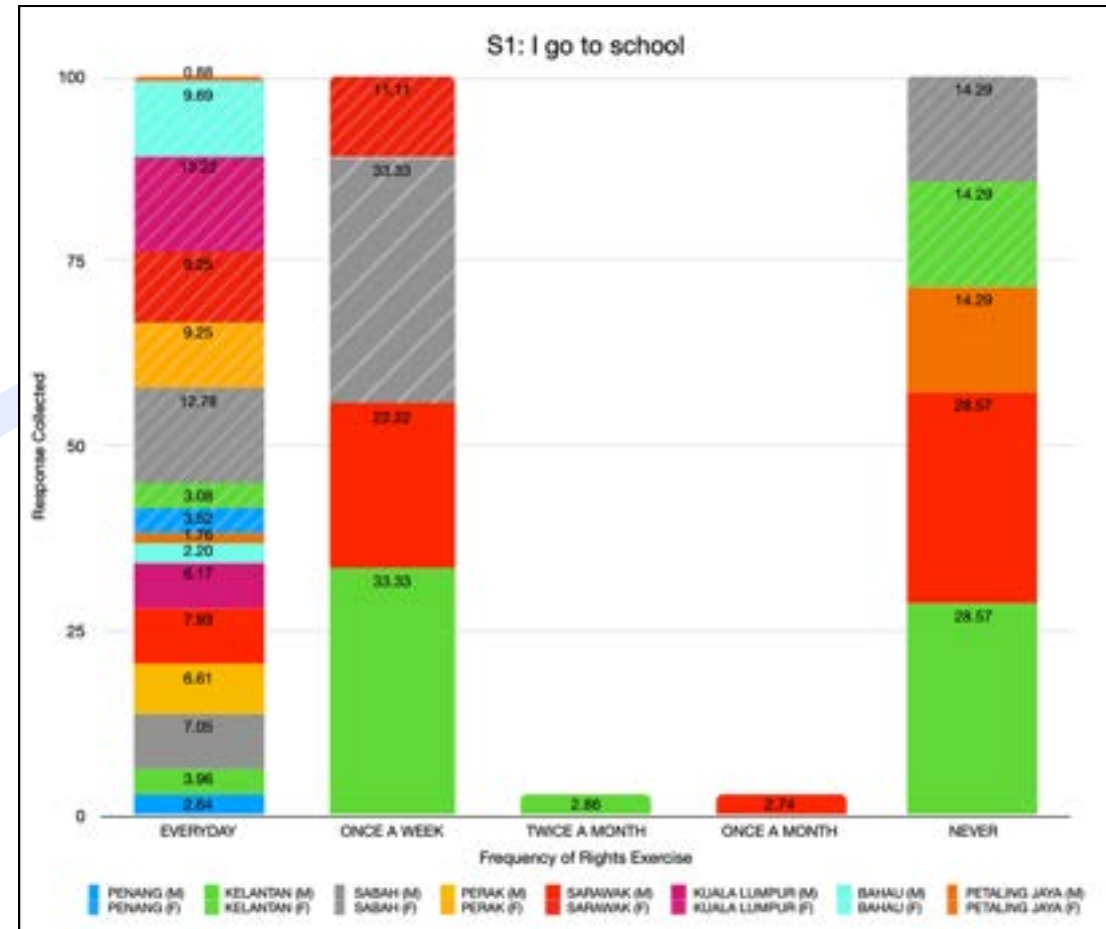


Figure 62: I go to school



Survey 2 Question 2 'How We Exercise Our Rights at School'

The survey asked children whether they feel safe at school. As illustrated in Figure 63 a significant percentage of **girls in Royal Belum (35.29%)** report never feeling safe at school, indicating serious safety concerns that could affect their well-being and educational experience. The findings suggest that some children in **Petaling Jaya** rarely feel safe and boys across various towns report similar feelings of insecurity. The data reveal differences in perceptions of safety among different regions and genders. Some areas, like **Keningau**, show alarming levels of insecurity among children, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to improve safety in schools.

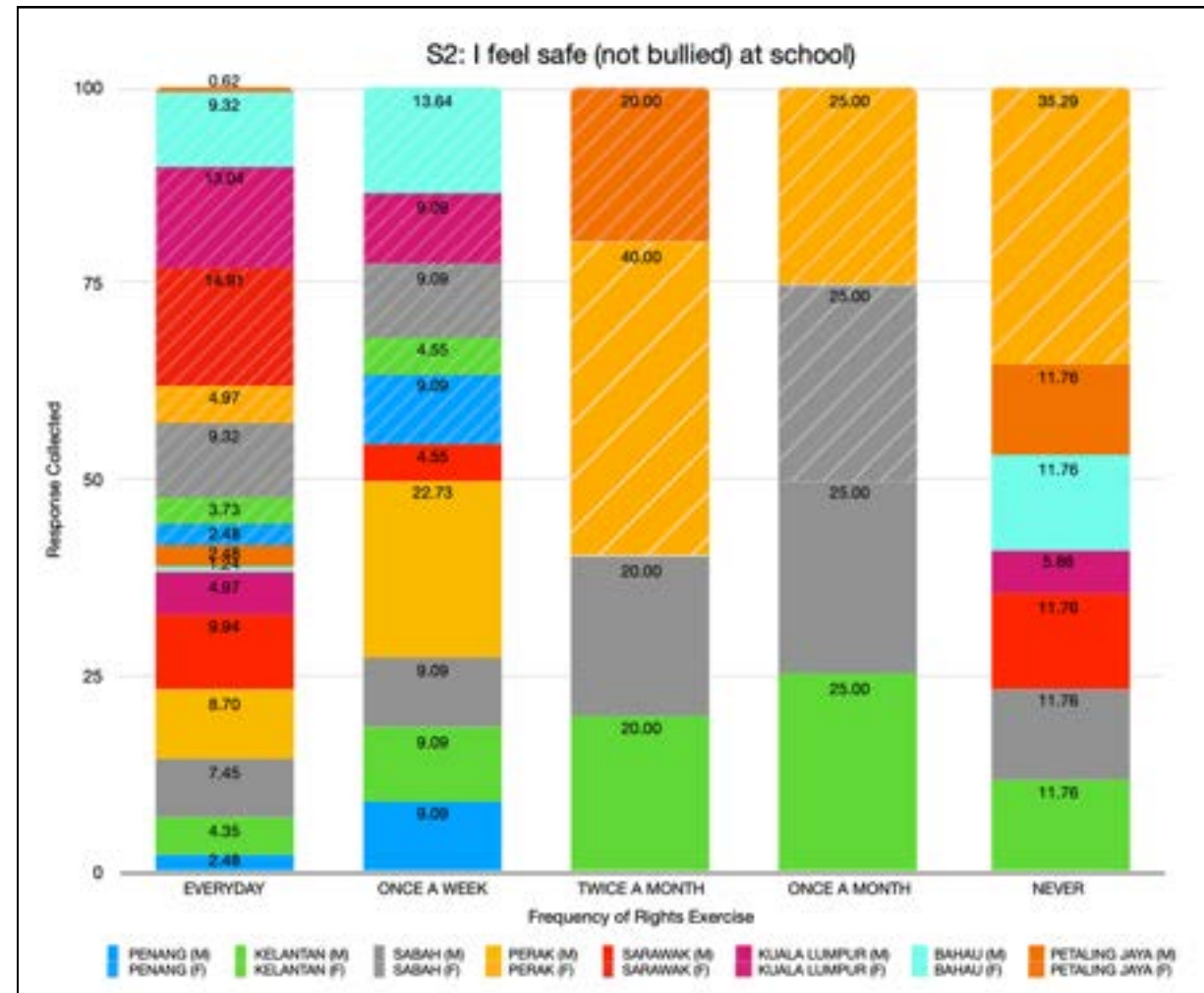


Figure 63: I feel safe (not bullied) at school



Survey 2 Question 6 'How We Exercise Our Rights at School'

The survey asked children whether their teacher listened to them. Figure 64 shows that in **Royal Belum**, a significant number of children report feeling unheard, with **29.03% of boys and 22.58% of girls** stating they are never listened to. This is compounded by high percentages of children in **Petaling Jaya** feeling that their teachers rarely pay attention to them. While girls in **Kuala Lumpur (25.64%)** report being sometimes listened to, this still indicates a need for improvement in how children's voices are acknowledged and acted upon in the education system. The feelings of being unheard can negatively impact children's engagement and participation in school, suggesting that schools need to create more inclusive environments where students feel valued and listened to.

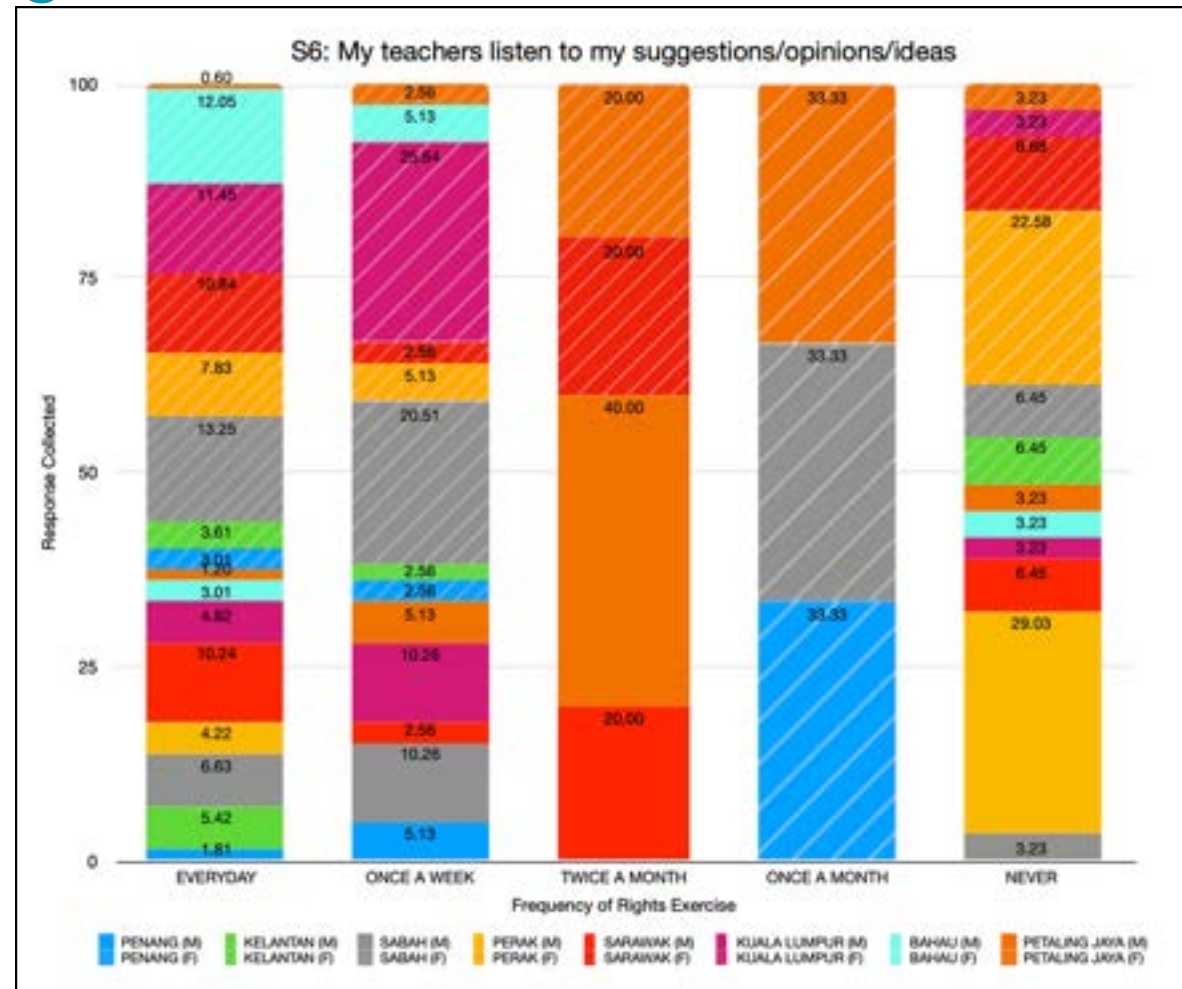
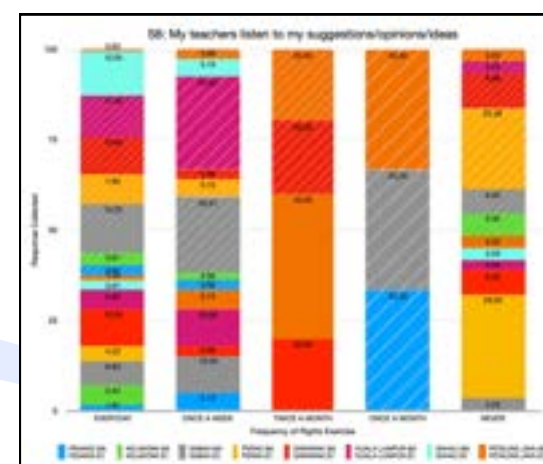
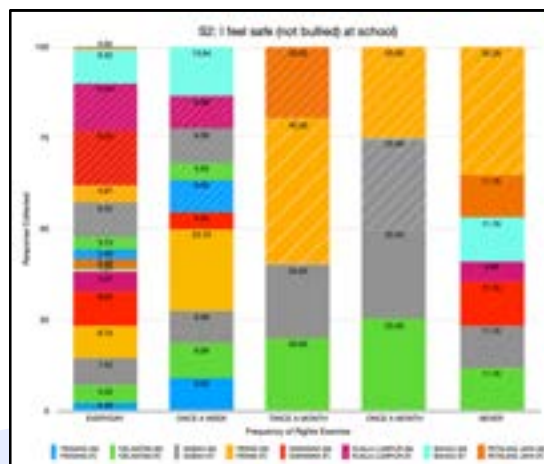


Figure 64: My teachers listen to my suggestions/opinions/ideas

Summary - 'How We Exercise Our Rights at School'



In summary, the above three findings indicate significant regional disparities in school attendance, safety perceptions, and feelings of being heard among children, with urban areas generally showing more positive outcomes compared to smaller towns. These disparities highlighted the need for targeted policies and interventions to address educational access, safety concerns, and the importance of listening to children's voices in all regions.



Survey 3 Question 1

‘How We Exercise Our Rights in Our Neighbourhood’

The survey asked children whether there is a play area in their neighbourhood. As illustrated in Figure 65, children in **Kuala Lumpur and Dalat** report better access to nearby play areas, indicating that these regions likely offer more recreational facilities and opportunities for outdoor activities. A significant percentage (**33.33%**) of girls in **Georgetown** feel that playgrounds are "Very Far," suggesting frustration and dissatisfaction with the accessibility of recreational spaces. Similarly, children in **Keningau** report a high percentage in the "Far" category, reflecting possible dissatisfaction with the distance to play areas. The reports of significant percentages of children in both **Kuala Lumpur and Keningau** stating there is **no playground** nearby indicate a notable lack of recreational infrastructure in these regions.

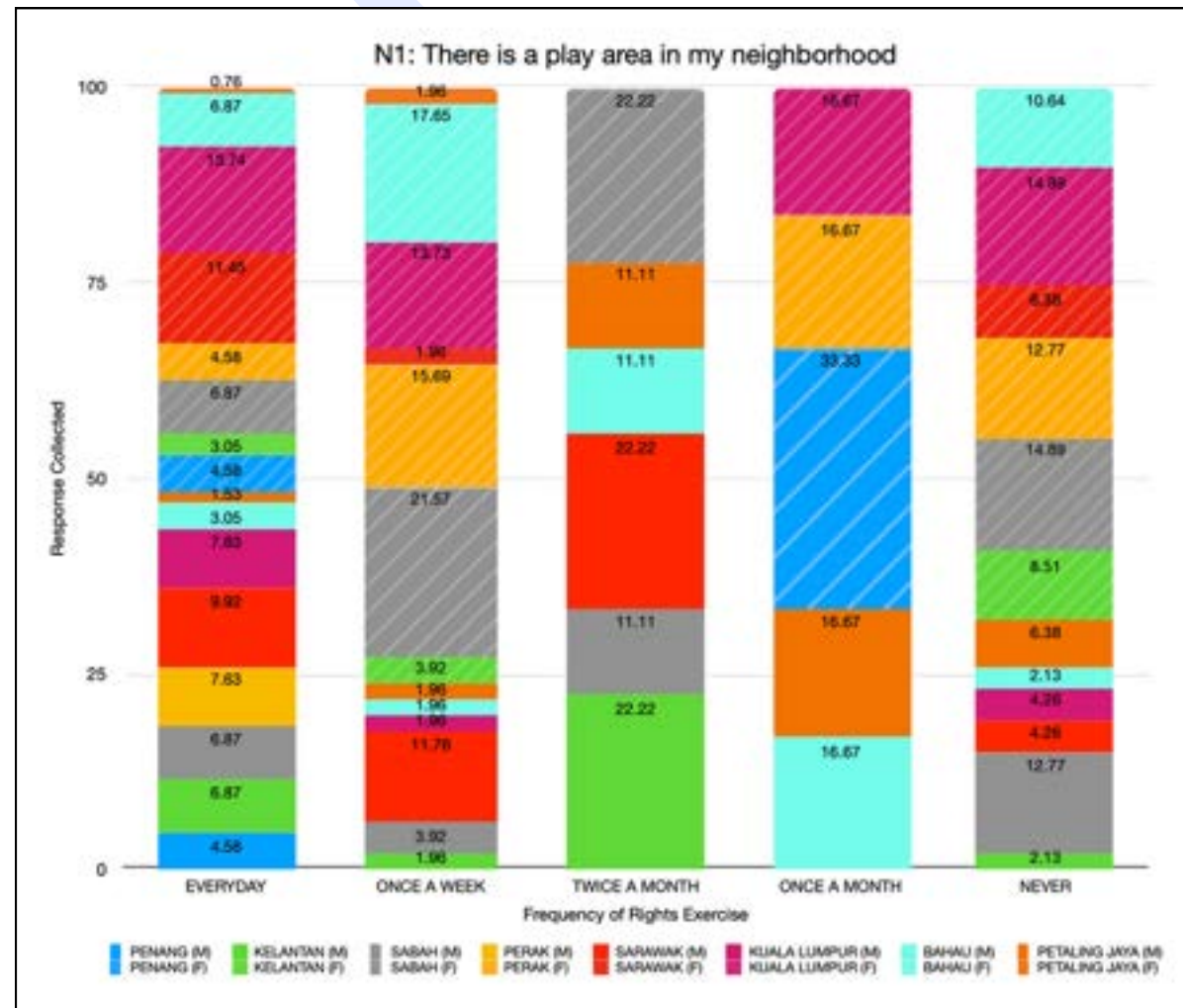


Figure 65: There is a play area in my neighbourhood



Survey 3 Question 3

‘How We Exercise Our Rights in our Neighbourhood’

The survey asked children whether adults in their neighbourhood asked for their opinions on any community activities. As shown in Figure 66, in **Dalat**, responses were more evenly distributed regarding the frequency of interaction, with a higher percentage of children reporting that they were **“Always”** engaged (13.24% for girls and 14.71% for boys) compared to other regions. This suggested that children in **Dalat** may have more opportunities for engagement and involvement in their communities. **Royal Belum and Kuala Lumpur (girls)** have significant percentages of children reporting **“Sometimes”** or **“Rarely”** engaging with their communities, indicating a moderate level of interaction in these areas.



Figure 66: People from my neighbourhood ask my opinion



Survey 3 Question 4

‘How We Exercise Our Rights in Our Neighbourhood’

The survey asked children whether adults in their neighbourhood listen and act on their suggestions. As illustrated in Figure 67, in **Kuala Lumpur**, a significant percentage of respondents report being **"Very Rarely"** or **"Never"** asked for their opinions. This highlighted a lack of engagement and responsiveness to children's voices in this urban setting. Similarly, respondents from **Petaling Jaya** are even more likely to report being **"Never"** asked for their opinions, suggesting a concerning trend of neglect regarding children's input in decision-making processes. **Boys in Dalat (17.39%)** and **girls in Bahau (14.49%)** indicated that their suggestions are regularly heard and acted upon, showcasing positive engagement in these areas. This could imply a more supportive and responsive environment for children's voices. **Girls in Royal Belum** report a higher frequency in the **"Sometimes"** category (**25%**), suggesting some level of engagement, while children in **Keningau and Petaling Jaya** show lower engagement levels, with many reporting that their suggestions are rarely or never considered. This indicated a need for improved channels for children to express their opinions and have them taken seriously.

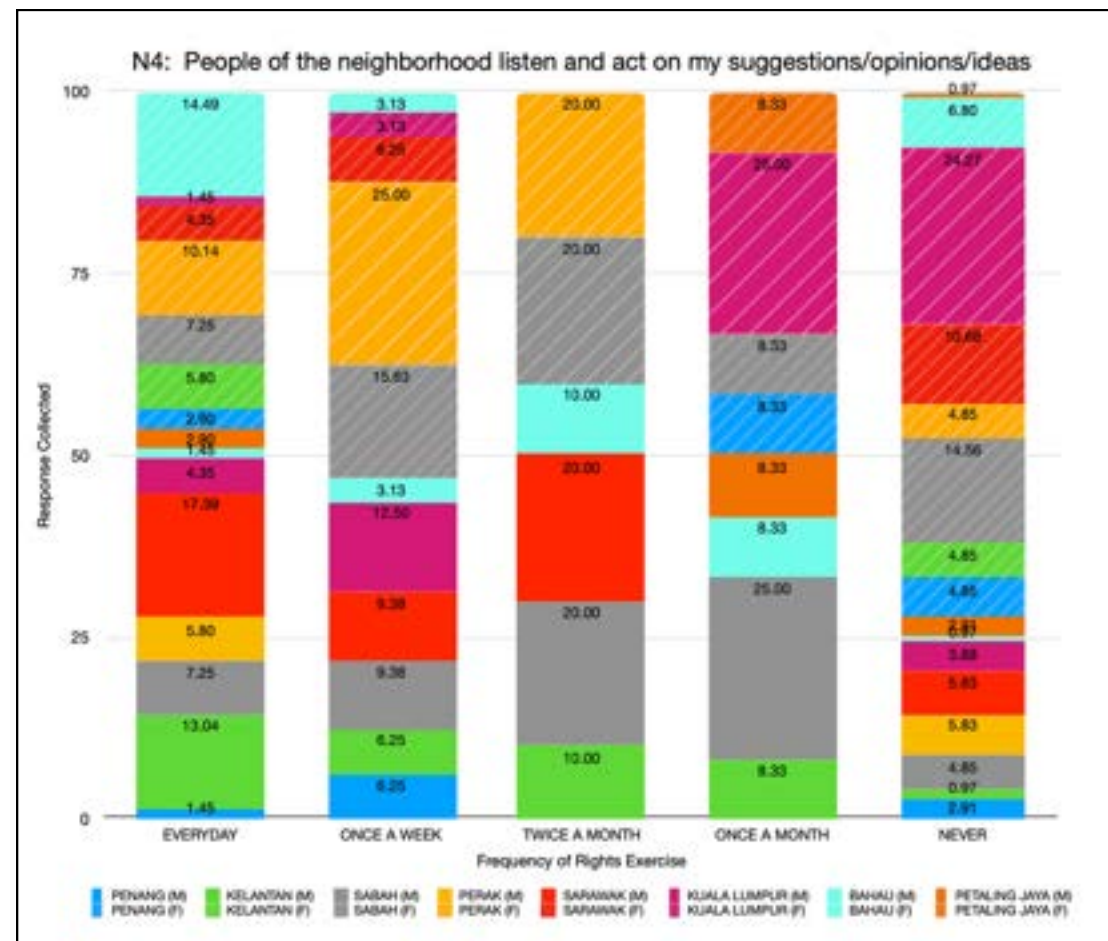
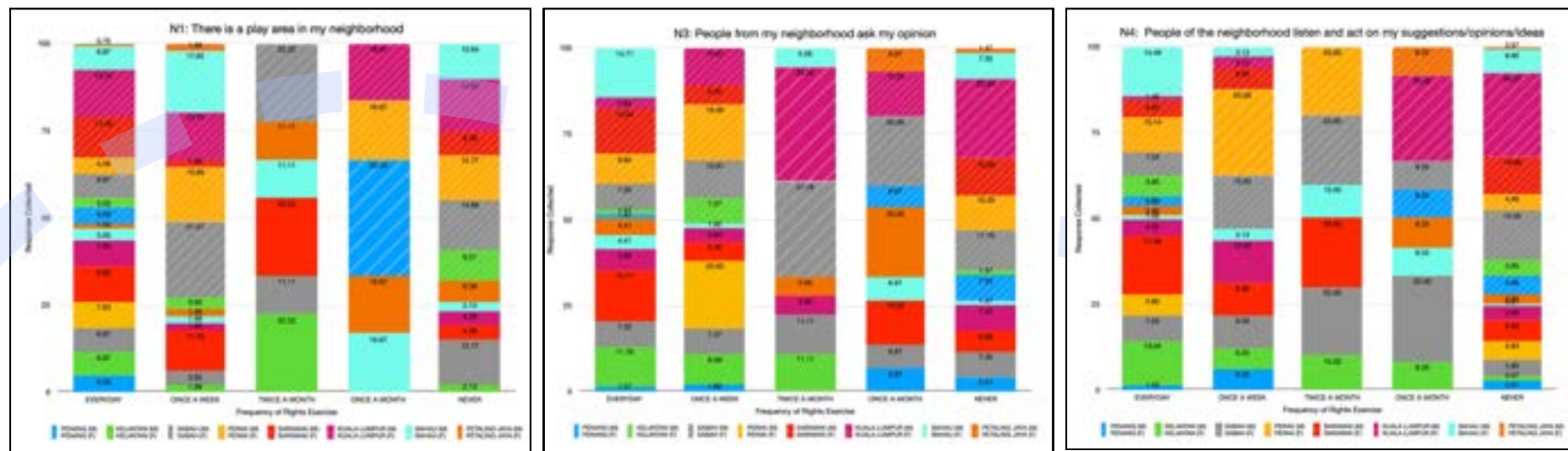


Figure 67: People of the neighbourhood listen and act on my suggestions/opinions/ideas



Summary - 'How We Exercise Our Rights in Our Neighbourhoods'



Overall, the findings suggest that urban areas like **Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya** faced challenges in engaging children and providing adequate recreational spaces, while smaller towns like **Dalat and Bahau** appeared to foster more supportive environments where children's voices are more frequently heard. These insights emphasize the need for targeted efforts to enhance access to recreational facilities and improve children's engagement in decision-making processes across various regions.

Survey 4 Question 4

‘How We Exercise Our Rights in Online Environment’



The survey asked children whether unknown people message or follow them on their social media. Figure 68 shows that **girls in Keningau (23.81%)** and **Royal Belum (20.63%)** have a significant number of unknown people following them on social media. This raises concerns about the potential risks associated with social media, including privacy issues and exposure to inappropriate content. Girls in **Dalat** report a notable percentage **(19.44%)** of unknown people sometimes following them, suggesting that interactions with unfamiliar accounts are a common experience. In contrast, girls in **Kuala Lumpur** have reported lower levels of unknown follow requests, with **21.05%** and **22.73%** indicating they have been rarely or very rarely followed, pointing to a more secure social media experience. A significant percentage **(15.91%)** of children in Dalat report never being followed by unknown accounts, which may reflect lower engagement or fewer connections on social media compared to other regions.

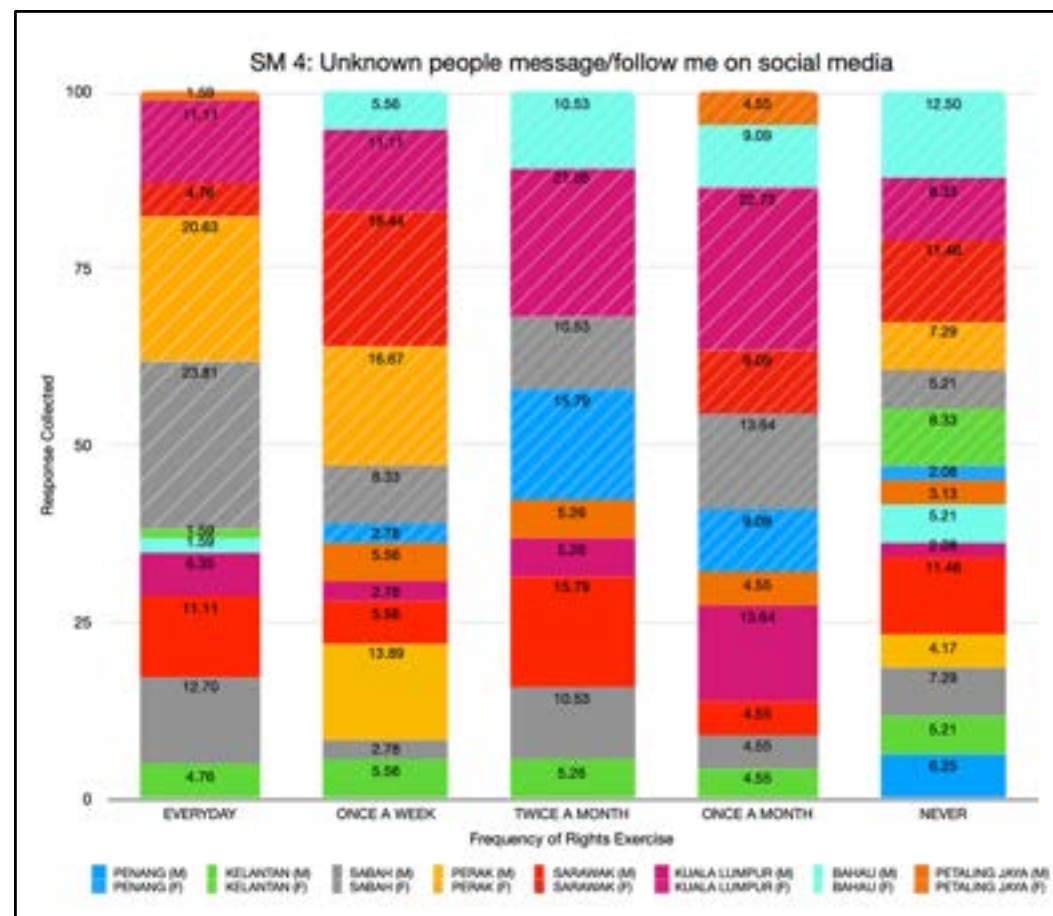


Figure 68: I feel happy that I can give suggestions / opinions/ ideas at home

Survey 4 Question 5

How We Exercise Our Rights in Online Environment'



The survey asked children whether they contacted their family and friends using social media. As shown in Figure 69, **girls in Kuala Lumpur (14.89%)** frequently use social media to contact family and friends, indicating a high reliance on these platforms for maintaining social connections. In **Dalat**, a significant portion of both girls **(18.52%)** and boys **(14.81%)** report sometimes using social media for communication, suggesting that while social media is a tool for connection, it may not be the primary means of communication. In contrast, girls in **Bahau** and **Kuala Krai**, as well as boys in **Dalat**, report a high percentage **(15.91%)** of never using social media to contact family and friends, highlighting a significant gap in social media engagement compared to more urbanized regions.

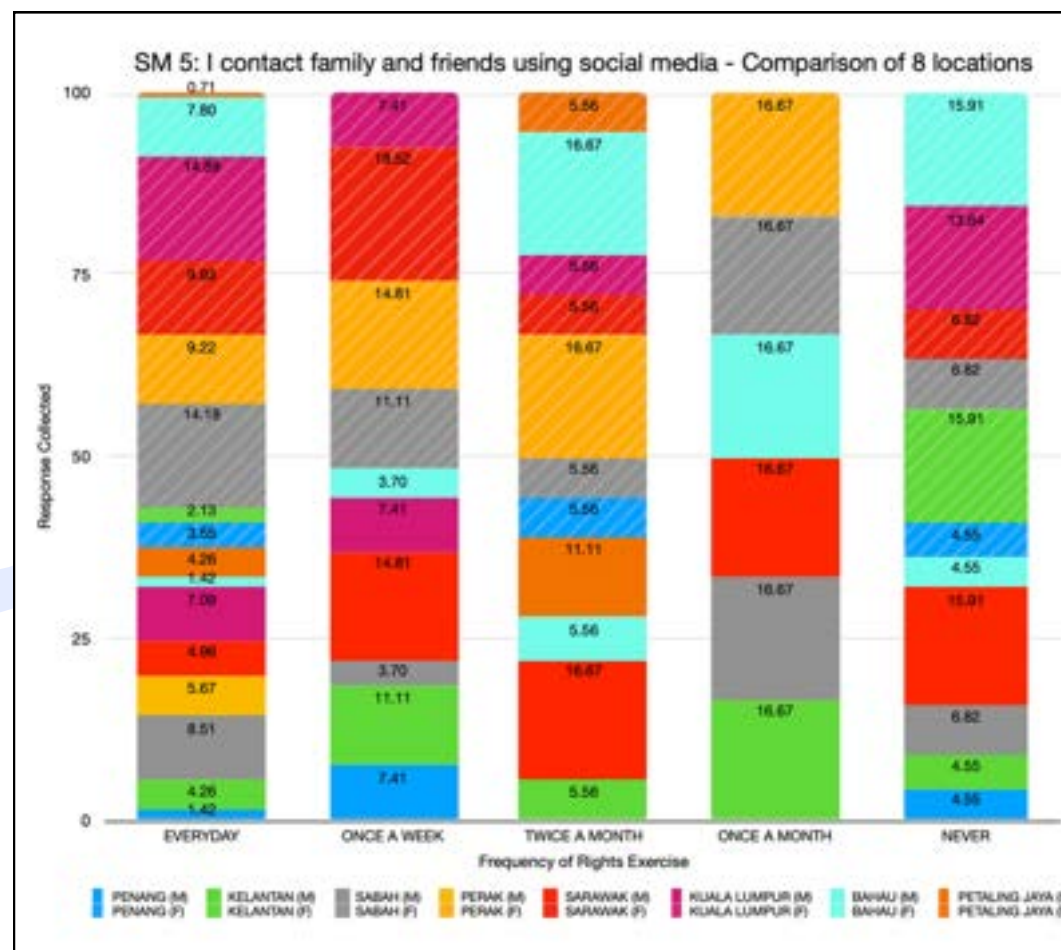
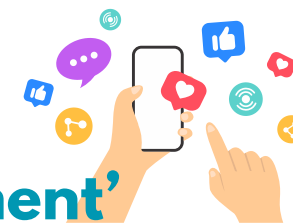


Figure 69: I contact family and friends using social media

Survey 4 Question 6

‘How We Exercise Our Rights in the Online Environment’



The survey asked children whether they use their social media to find useful information. As shown in Figure 70, children in **Kuala Lumpur** predominantly use social media to find useful information, indicating that they view these platforms as valuable resources for knowledge and updates. **Girls in Royal Belum** show moderate engagement, indicating a willingness to use social media for information, though less consistently than those in Kuala Lumpur. Significant percentages of children in **Dalat** report using social media "**Rarely**" or "**Very Rarely**" for finding useful information, suggesting that they do not view social media as a reliable source of information.

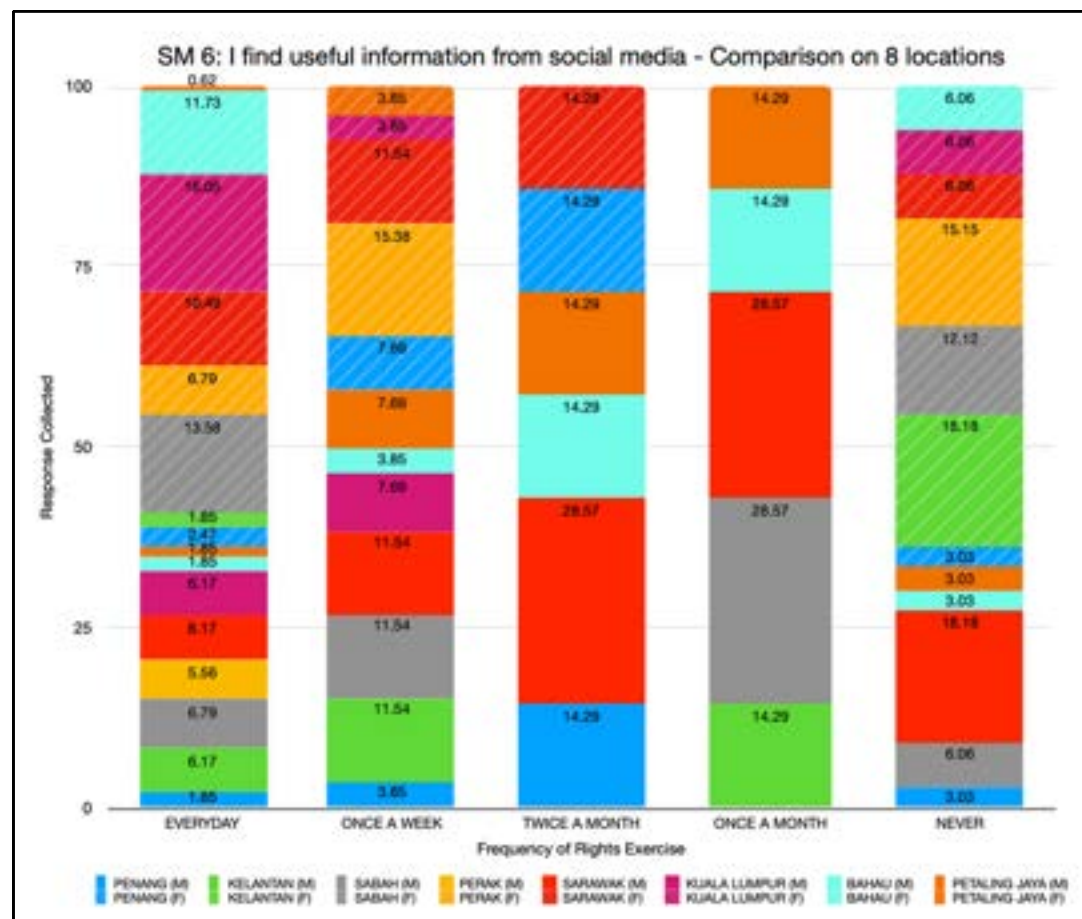
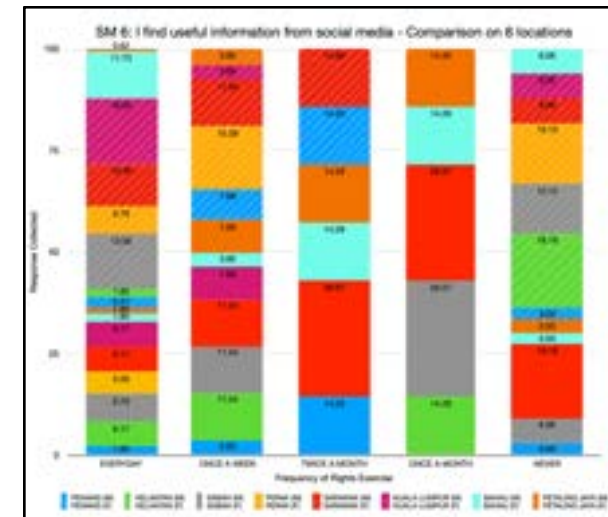
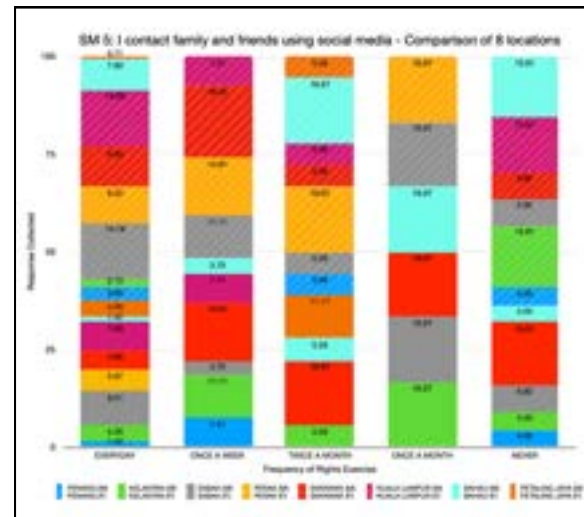


Figure 70: I find useful information from social media

Summary

'How We Exercise Our Rights in the Online Environment'



Overall, the above three findings highlighted several key points regarding children's social media experiences across urban and rural areas. The high percentages of unknown followers in Keningau and Royal Belum raises concerns about children's safety online and the need for education on digital literacy and privacy. There is a clear contrast in social media communication habits between urban (**Georgetown, Kuala Lumpur, Petaling Jaya**) and rural (**Bahau, Dalat, Royal Belum, Keningau, Kuala Krai**) areas, with **urban children more actively using social media** to maintain connections. **Urban** children are also more **inclined to utilize social media for finding useful information**, while those in rural areas seem to rely less on these platforms for that purpose. These findings suggest a need for targeted interventions to address the safety, communication, and information-seeking behaviors of children across different regions, especially focusing on enhancing digital literacy and promoting safer online practices.

Appendix 2 - Interviews with children

The interview sessions concentrated on understanding the experiences of children in areas such as school participation, student voices, violence against them, child marriage, mental health, poverty, and child labor, as well as leisure and cultural activities, education curriculum, and school access, among others. Interview topics were curated to reflect the special circumstances of the respective localities in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges children in each location faced. In most cases interviews were conducted in small groups to enable the children to feel safe and comfortable. The topics were curated to suit the locality and the issues brought up by the children:-

1. Urban areas such as Kuala Lumpur, Petaling Jaya, and Georgetown, where there was increased awareness and opportunities for engagement in educational and social activities, topics such as child participation, mental health, and students' voices in school were more relevant. In Georgetown, which has a significant population of stateless and refugee children, topics such as child labor, marriage, access to education, and violence reflect the hardships faced by marginalized communities.
2. In rural areas such as Kuala Krai, Royal Belum, Dalat, and Bahau, the focus was on education access, cultural activities, and poverty. Royal Belum, home to the indigenous Jahai tribe, faced challenges like school accessibility and preserving cultural traditions, while Dalat (a predominantly Melanau area) offered insights into indigenous education and cultural identity. Kuala Krai and Bahau represented regions with educational inequalities.
3. Diverse Ethnic Communities (Keningau and Bahau): Keningau, with its ethnic diversity, highlighted issues of child marriage, undocumented children, and refugee experiences, while Bahau, with a focus on the Indian community, offered a unique perspective on access to education and community representation.
4. Children with Disabilities (Petaling Jaya): The interview sessions here focused on children with hearing impairment and CODA, addressing issues related to sign language proficiency in education and the unique challenges of children with disabilities in accessing education and services.

Topics were also suggested by the children and discussions were encouraged on topics they have raised as important issues in their lives. The stark contrast of the lives of the indigenous children in remote rural villages and the lack of opportunities for development, education and participation with their peers in urban areas highlights the need to reduce inequalities (SDG10) to foster community-based education (SDG4) and reducing poverty (SDG1) so that these children are able to access their rights equally.

Summary of Interview Topics

By tailoring the interview topics to the specific social, cultural, and educational dynamics of each location, the Consultations ensured a thorough understanding of the distinct experiences and challenges faced by children across Malaysia. Table 1 provides a summary of the location, interview topics, and the number of children undergoing the interviews. However, if the children wished to talk about other topics that really mattered to them this was accommodated

Table 1. Summary of interviews

Location	Interview Topics	No of children being interviewed
Kuala Lumpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child participation • Education Curriculum • Students' Voices in School • Bullying • Child Rights Education • Stateless issue • Mental Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 boys (10, 15, 16 years old) • 7 girls (16, and 17 years old)
Kelantan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play and Leisure activities • Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 boys (10 years old) • 3 girls (10 years old)
Georgetown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child marriage • Education • Violence against children • Mental health • Issues of child of deaf adult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 boys (12 years old) • 6 girls (11, 12, 16, 17 years old)
Keningau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stateless issue (education and safety) • Child labour • Online issues • Mental Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 boys (16, 17 years old) • 8 girls (16, 17 years old)
Royal Belum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child labour • Education (Access to school and drop out) • Child marriage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 boys (12, 13, 17 years old) • 6 girls (12, 16, 17 years old)
Dalat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural and Leisure • Education • Stateless issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 boys (10, 16, 17 years old) • 4 girls (10, 17 years old)
Petaling Jaya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Living as a Child of Deaf Adults (CODA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 boys (12, 13 years old)
Bahau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 boys (17 years old) • 1 girl (16 year old)

Appendix 3: Consultation Activities

Ice Breaking Session

An engaging and fun warm-up session was held at the beginning of each Consultation session. This was done with the intention of fostering friendly relationships among the children, many of whom were meeting for the first time. Toy blocks were used by children as they constructed buildings or other designs based on a theme. Children were encouraged to suggest any theme they wished. For example, in Royal Belum and Kuala Krai, children proposed the construction of their ideal homes, whereas in Keningau and Dalat, they proposed the creation of transportation systems capable of transporting them far away.



Figure 71: Group work in building blocks



Figure 72: Future transport by children in Keningau

Understanding CRC: CRC Video Session and CRC Cluster Cards Activity

A child friendly video on CRC (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nIXD2yOxfg>) explained the four (4) main categories of child rights (survival, protection, development, and participation). Children then formed small groups and received a set of UNCRC Cluster Cards containing UNCRC articles. They were then encouraged to discuss and reach a consensus as a group to classify the rights on each card under the four main categories of child rights.



Figure 73: Child Rights Video Session in Royal Belum



Figure 74: CRC Cluster Cards Exercise



Figure 75: Group discussion on CRC Card Exercise in Kuala Lumpur

UNCRC 101- Basic Principles and Categories



Figure 76: CRC Card Explanation session



Figure 77: Classifying Rights

Explanations were given by the trainer on which UNCRC articles fell under the 4 main categories of child rights (Figure 76 and Figure 77).

All the activities during the Consultations were conducted in small groups of 5-6 persons. Conducting activities with children in small groups provides numerous benefits, including better interaction among children, personalized attention, enhanced participation, improved learning, and stronger focus. This approach ensures that every child has the opportunity to contribute and benefit from the activity.

CRC Cluster Cards Exercise



Figure 78: CRC Activity in Dalat using toys and pictures

During the CRC session in Kuala Krai, observations revealed that children were struggling to understand the CRC cards as they were in the younger age range and lack of exposure to such activities. As a result, the sessions were conducted differently in Royal Belum and Dalat, substituting the CRC cards with toys and pictures. This resulted in the children's active and fast responses to sort the pictures and toys into the four main categories of rights. Additionally, we encouraged the children to use clay to create items that represented the categories. One group, for instance, moulded the clay to create a handphone (Figure 78), and they disclosed that they needed it for their development (to acquire information).

CRC Ladder of Participation

In the CRC Ladder of Participation activity, children learnt about Hart's Ladder of Participation (Figure 79). After the facilitators read a passage containing a participation scenario (Figure 80), the children guessed which level of participation the scenario fit into. Introducing children to Hart's Ladder of Children's Participation is important because it empowers them to understand the different levels of participation. Children learn to distinguish between genuine and tokenized voices, which fosters critical thinking and motivates them to pursue meaningful involvement. Engaging with real-life scenarios enabled the children to understand the significance of active participation in their communities and the transformative power of their valued contributions. This activity not only built their confidence but also reinforced the principles of the CRC, emphasising that children's opinions should be considered in all matters affecting them, and that programs and decisions were to be made in the best interests of children.



Figure 79: Participants draw Ladder of Participants chart

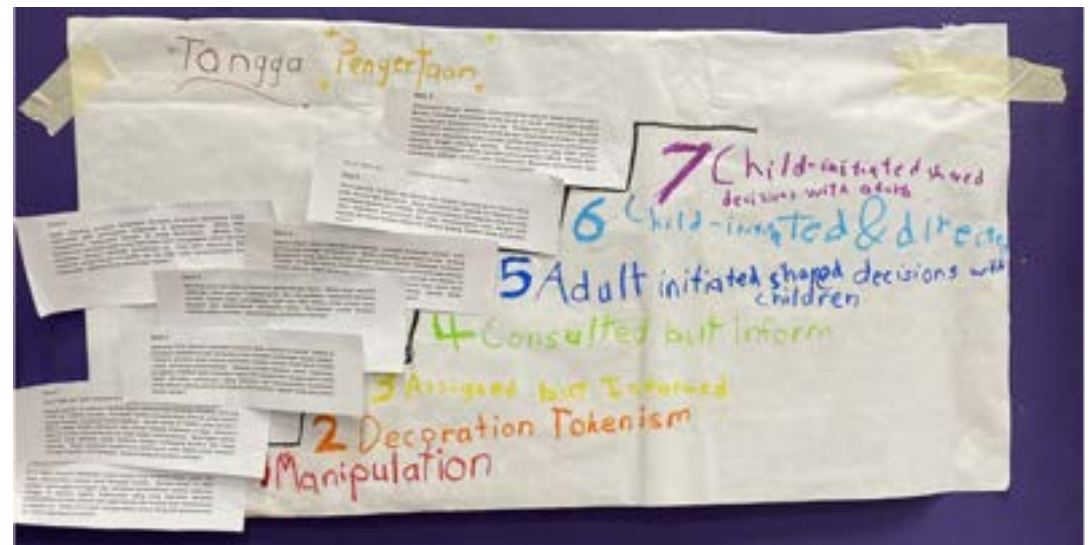


Figure 80: Ladder of participation exercise

Issues and Solutions Session

The issues and solutions sessions were intended to acquire participants' perspectives regarding issues related to children. The participants were also reminded that there were no correct or incorrect answers and that they were free to write anything based on their experiences and knowledge. Opportunities were provided to various children to lead discussions and present their group's positions whenever feasible.

Children were given opportunities to choose the topics that were related to them for discussion. Among the common topics selected were those related to home, school (education), and online issues. Children in Kuala Lumpur, who are mostly Child Councillors, chose participation as one of the topics of discussion. However, in Dalat and Royal Belum, it was suggested that children engage in discussions about environmental, health, drug (dadah), and substance issues due to the specific challenges faced by these communities. In rural or more isolated areas like Dalat and Royal Belum, environmental concerns such as pollution, deforestation, and conservation can have a significant impact on daily life. Additionally, health issues are more prevalent due to limited access to healthcare services. Substance abuse, including drugs, may be a growing concern in such regions, where children could be more vulnerable due to socioeconomic factors, lack of education, or peer influence. Addressing these topics ensured that children were aware of critical issues affecting their communities so as to be better prepared to deal with them.



Figure 81: Issues and Solution Life and Education

Voices of Children through Creative Expressions

Drawing was one of the activities that children engaged in during the Consultations. This creative activity encouraged children to actively participate in discussions about their lived realities in a comfortable and familiar way, making the consultation process more child-friendly and inclusive. Through this activity, children shared important elements in their neighbourhoods, for example, the traditional Melanau house and common leisure activities in Dalat (Figure 82), the beaches in Georgetown Island (Figure 83), and the scenery of mountains in Ladang Taku Kelantan (Figure 84), Royal Belum (Figure 85), Keningau (Figure 86) and Penang (Figure 87)



Figure 82: Pictures about My Life in Dalat Sarawak



Figure 83: Pictures about My Life in Georgetown



Figure 84: Pictures about My Life in Ladang Taku Kuala Krai ,Kelantan



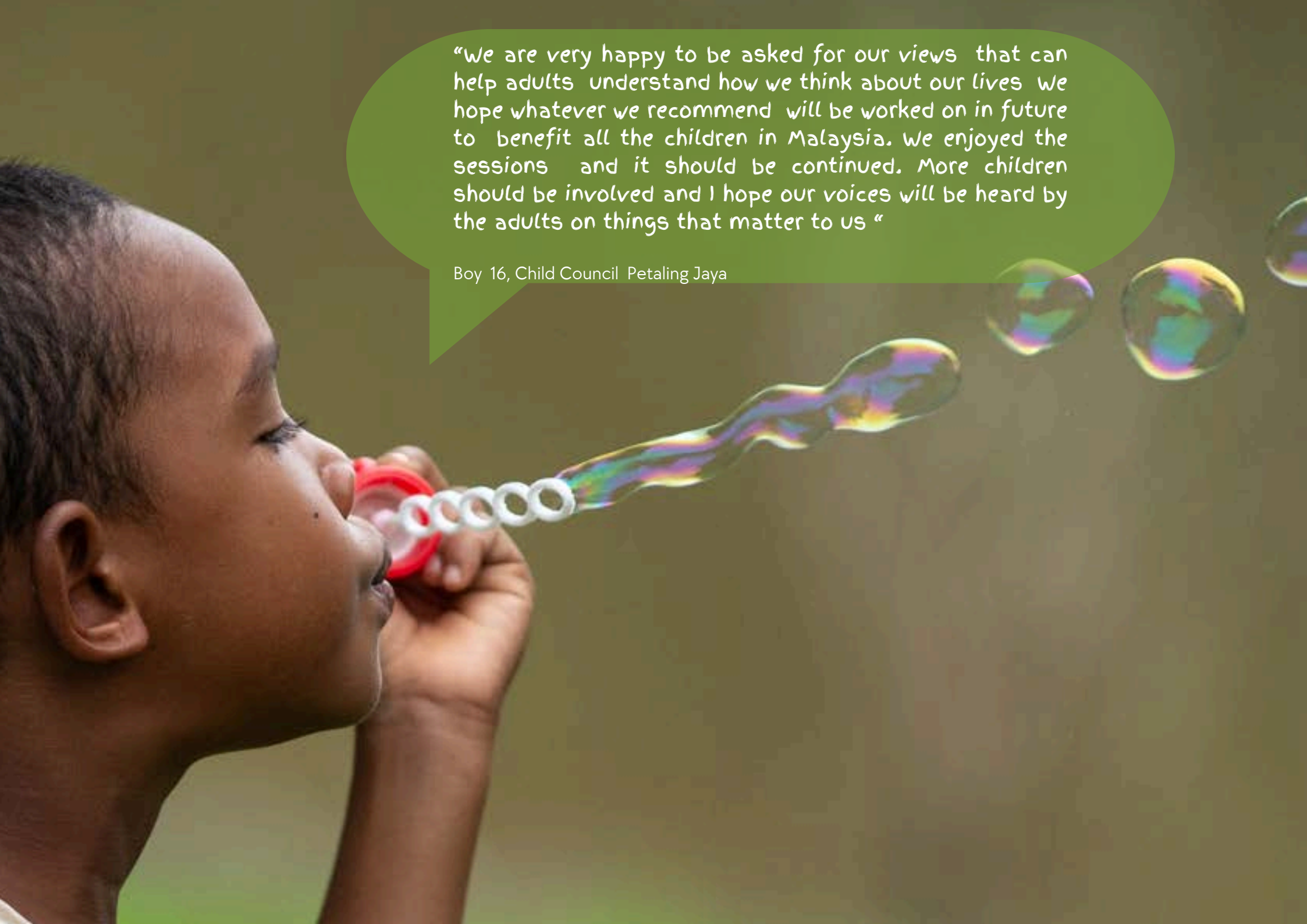
Figure 85: Pictures about My Life in Royal Belum



Figure 86: Pictures about My Life in Keningau Sabah




Figure 87: Pictures about My Life in Penang

A young boy with dark skin and short hair is shown in profile, blowing into a red bubble wand. Several iridescent bubbles are floating in the air to his right. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green. A green speech bubble is overlaid on the upper right portion of the image.

“We are very happy to be asked for our views that can help adults understand how we think about our lives. We hope whatever we recommend will be worked on in future to benefit all the children in Malaysia. We enjoyed the sessions and it should be continued. More children should be involved and I hope our voices will be heard by the adults on things that matter to us “

Boy 16, Child Council Petaling Jaya



Children

Have the right to be heard

(Article 12, UNCRC)



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