**FEEDBACK ON POVERTY & INEQUALITY IN MALAYSIA**

Comments by Prof Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria

**1 The nature of poverty and inequality in Malaysia, including how poverty is or should be defined and measured, its prevalence, and its distribution.**

Malaysian data provides for end to hard core poverty based on a low PLI (as pockets of poverty) however if we use higher income figures based on median or medium or multi-dimensional poverty (using quality of life or SDGs) we will see about 30 to 40 % poor especially in urban and interior locations.

Malaysia cannot benchmark itself among the poorer countries as it is a middle income country and therefore if we place our self with USA or UK then we too will have higher poverty levels based on how we are measuring it especially the rise of inequalities and low wages for ordinary people.

The face of poverty has changed and while the Midterm review of the Eleventh Malaysia plan adopts a multi-dimensional poverty their focus is still on the very poor as the indicators in the four dimensions will not capture urban poverty or rising inequalities and low income in urban locations.

**2 The major challenges and human rights-related problems facing people living in poverty.**

While Malaysia signed the UN Declaration to the Right of Development, Malaysia’s inclusive development policy and now shared prosperity agenda and accepting SDGs, Malaysia has not adopted a rights based approach to development. Its approach is very ethnic focused. Human rights is viewed as a western concept and the universality of human rights has been challenged as noted in the National Human rights action plan which was formulated by the previous government but not reviewed by the post may 2018 government.

If one viewed some of the major delivery institutions, the focus is on Malay poverty and little attention to others in the B40 via AIM, Yayasan Tekun and a majority of special interventions. Both Bumiputra minority communities of natives in Sabah, Sarawak and among the Orang Asli and minority B40 Indians (largely displaced from the plantations/estates) feel neglected and also lack access to the special initiatives.

There is much political rhetoric of equal opportunities but at the bottom especially among the poor this might not be their experience. Also the Ekasih or the data base on poverty has major issues with registering people into the system. Its not transparent and accessible to all.

The civil service has not adopted a multi-dimensional approach at the local levels - district office and local government and the staff team are majority one ethnic and religious group. This is also the case on SDGs and localising the SDGs in Malaysian society. This could again be a problem for communication, hand holding process and empathy with ethnic community different from the majority due to race, ethnicity, religion, age and gender.

Disaggregated data is not available and therefore the real situation is not captured. By way of general data Malaysia has done well but it does not capture is the reality on the ground nor the deprivations faced by new hidden poor like single mothers, unemployed youth, ethnic and religious minorities, disabled people, the elderly etc.

We have weak laws in social protection for the informal sector, low wages as minimum is too low and weakening of the trade unions and workers collectives as well as weak barraging power of workers.

**3 People disproportionately impacted by poverty, including women, children, minorities, non-citizens, and people living in urban and rural areas.**

Have submitted on urban poor. Yes the non-citizens are neglected and others have worked on these.

**4 The impact of poverty on civil and political rights, as well as on economic, social and cultural rights such as the rights to health, housing, food, education and social security**.

These are major concerns and others have worked on these and have highlighted ion other reports submitted.

**5 The impact of environmental issues and climate change on people living in poverty.**

The SUHAKAM – Human Rights commission of Malaysia has undertaken a comprehensive land inquiry and this report will link poverty, natives and indigenous people especially their flight for the land. Similar reports on blockades will reveal the take over of forest for plantation development, dam development and others purposes like golf course

**6 The role of infrastructure and development projects; international financial institutions; the management of public finances; and multinational or domestic corporations in relation to poverty.**

**7 Regions, provinces, districts, or cities in Malaysia that the Special Rapporteur should visit because of their particular relevance to poverty and human rights.**

Urban poor low cost flats like Petaling Utama & Desa mentari in Petaling Jaya will highlight the urban poor and low income situation. Issues of inequality, lack of public space and facilities.

Visit South Kelantan (Gua Musang, Kuala Krai, Tanah Merah and Jeli) based on a poverty study undertaken by UKM academics on rural Malay poverty. Contact person Dr Rospidah Binti Ghazali. Email: rospidah@ukm.edu.my

Kelantan is divided by two regions namely North Kelantan Region and South Kelantan Region. The also known as rural areas of Kelantan. In Peninsular Malaysia, the number of household B40 in rural areas is highest in Kelantan compared to other state.

The issues facing minority indigenous Christians of Sabah and some innovations like community learning centres by PACOS Ms Anne Lasimbang. Email: annelasimbang@gmail.com

Community forest project – Gumantong Hill at Kudat, Sabah and the socio-economic community based projects Dr Paul Porodong. Email: pporodong@yahoo.co.uk

**8 Individuals and organizations with whom the Special Rapporteur should meet during his country visit.**

Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance – a grouping of over 200 CSO National, regional and local working on SDGs in Malaysia, can host a CSO discussion and dialogue. We are also linked with a network of academics at UKM and they too can join us. We hosted 2 pre visit discussion on May 23, 2019 with KSI & June 13, 2019 with Commact Malaysia. Contact : Prof Denison Jayasooria email: denisonjayasooria@gmail.com

Request to visit CSO in Sabah and Sarawak via the Jaringan Orang Asal Malaysia (Mr Thomas Jajong email: rakankomuniti@gmail.com) and the CSO SDG Alliance, Sarawak (Ms Alexandra John. Email: alexandranastassia@gmail.com)

Submitted by Prof Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria

June 15, 2019