



Grounding Human Rights in Malaysia for All: Embracing Change

ADVOCACY BRIEF



CONTEXT SETTING: MALAYSIA

Malaysia is a multi-diverse country in Southeast Asia that comprises two non-contiguous regions, namely Peninsular & West Malaysia.¹ In the first quarter of 2021, Malaysia's population reached 32.75 million with the sex ratio at 106 males per 100 females.² Heading towards an ageing nation, Malaysia has seen an increase in the numbers of population aged 65 and above as well as a decline in both the following age categories percentages - young and working.

Women and girls in Malaysia account for 48.6% of the total population, close to the percentage of women and girls in the East Asia Pacific region which is at 49.33%.³ Even though they represent almost half of the nation's population, they are still facing many forms of gendered injustice through discriminatory and archaic laws and policies that hinder Malaysia's progress towards achieving gender equality.

Since acceding to CEDAW in 1995, Malaysia maintains its reservation to Articles 9(2) and 16(1) (a), (c), (f) and (g) while accepting several UPR recommendations to promote and empower the rights of women and awareness towards gender equality.⁴ Malaysia has participated in three cycles of the UPR – 2009, 2013 and 2018. In Malaysia's last review, it received 268 recommendations covering a wide range of areas, including international obligations, civil and political rights, discrimination, and human rights education and training. Of these, 147 recommendations were accepted in full, 37 were partially accepted and 84 were noted.⁵ Inconsistencies pertaining to gender discriminatory laws can be resolved by enacting a Gender Equality Act which will then help the Malaysian government to attain its CEDAW commitments, upholding Malaysia's women's rights to the highest level.⁶



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¹ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Malaysia/Climate>

² https://www.dosm.gov.my/v1/index.php?r=column/cthemByCat&cat=430&bul_id=aVlJRDAvbjhWWEhQa1YvSWhsSjF3QT09&menu_id=LopheU43NWJwRWVVSZkIWdzQ4TlhUUT09

³ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=Z4>

⁴ FRHAM, (2020), Monitoring Report: Gender Equality in Malaysia. Retrieved from: <https://arrow.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Gender-Equality-In-Malaysia-.pdf>

⁵ The Universal Periodic Review: A Practical Guide to the 3rd Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Malaysia 2018 -2023, https://www.suhakam.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/UPR-Booklet-ENG_FINAL.pdf

⁶ FRHAM, (2020), Monitoring Report: Gender Equality in Malaysia. Retrieved from: <https://arrow.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Gender-Equality-In-Malaysia-.pdf>