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Protect, Promote and Prevent

Spearheading Social Protection Initiatives for All

VOMORO



Social Wellbeing Research Centre (SWRC)



Social Protection for the Informal Sector

The Chronicle of the Informal Sector





RECOMMENDED READINGS:

Social Protection for Workers in the Informal Sector

Malaysia Needs an All-encompassing National Pension System

THE PERSPECTIVE: Social Protection for the Informal Sector

The informal sector plays a significant role in the economy. It works like a shock absorber smoothing out the system. Sometimes it fills the cracks in the system; while at other times informal sector competes with the formal counterpart making the latter more efficient, benefiting the masses. Most importantly, the informal sector employs many who otherwise would be unemployed. In total, it helps maintain social stability.

Due to its informality, people involved in the sector have the least income protection. They do not have effective coverage by any standard social insurance to prepare them for retirement or unexpected unemployment.

The importance of the informal sector in Malaysia cannot be overemphasised. The pandemic COVID-19 has validated its relevancy by absorbing some displaced workers. The slowdown in economic activities drove many people temporarily out of jobs. Some have resorted to the informal sector to supplement their income. Unwarranted event but the pandemic has taught us an important lesson about how crucial social protection is.

COVID-19 The pandemic has also contributed to structural unemployment as some businesses have permanently adjusted their operations. This adjustment is commonly dubbed the new norms resulting from the pandemic. Some jobs became irrelevant, while some others may require some modifications. Both employers and employees are resorting to more pragmatic



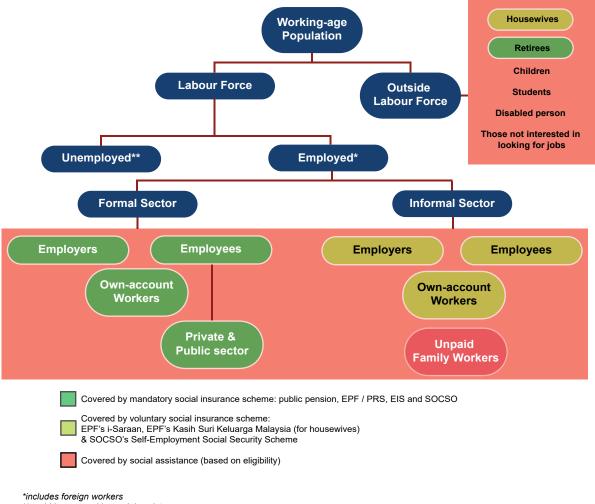
approaches to doing business, through the gig economy.

The notion of the gig economy is becoming more comprehensible to many, thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic. A labour market in the gig economy is characterised by the dominance of short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs. It benefited both employers and employees through efficiency improvement. That bring the case, the gig economy is most likely here permanently rather than just a temporary adjustment. It might be good for the economy as a whole. Nevertheless, it raises the issue of income protection, the subject we are currently grappling with for the right balance.

The main contention about the gig workers is their legal classification. It falls between employees and independent contractors, and therefore has repercussions on the employment benefits. In the Malaysian context, freelance gig workers are classified as own-account workers according to the classification by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) (Figure 1). They can be within the ambit of formal or informal sectors depending on their registration status. Coming up with the right treatment for them could result in a long drawn debate. Meanwhile, they are facing the issue of lacking in income protection.

We need to first recognise them in order to understand the extent of inadequacy of social protection among the informal workers. Figure 1 details the job classification according to DOSM. While Table 1 defines the categories and highlights the extent of social protection coverage for all.

Figure 1: Overview of social security coverage



could be covered by social assistance

Table 1: Social protection topography

Category	Definition	Social Protection Coverage	Notes
Working-age Population	15-64 years old residents.	Social insurance, social assistance and labour market interventions.	Including non-citizens
Labour Force	People of the working age who are working or looking for employment.	Unemployed: unemployment insurance, social assistance.	Employed (including foreign workers) + unemployed
Outside Labour Force	People of the working age who are voluntarily not employed or not looking for employment.	Retirement income/pension and social assistance.	Children 0-14 years old, retirees, full-time students, people with disability, housewives or anyone not interested to work
Workers in the formal sector	Employer/employee of public and private sectors.	Social insurance: public pension scheme, EPF, SOCSO and social assistance.	Can be either employer, employee or own-account worker (one-man establishment). Private establishments that are registered with SSM, ROS, SKM etc.
Workers in the informal sector	Employer/employee in the unregistered establishments and unpaid family workers.	Social insurance (voluntary contribution for EPF and SOCSO) and social assistance.	Can be either employer, employee or own-account workers and unpaid family workers. Note that unpaid family workers can be either with registered or unregistered establishments.

social insurance; they are people outside vention in this perspective would unleash the labour force and those in the informal potential economic growth for the country. sector. Hence, in terms of social security, they are heavily dependent on social Labour market intervention could also assistance. Therefore, labour market focus on 'formalising' the informal sector. intervention is crucial for optimising social The standard treatment security distribution horizontally vertically. to enable coverage adequacy, respectively. An effective labour could also be done by recognising the market intervention focusing on improving unconventional method, like the gig labour force participation would reduce the economy, by assuring sufficient social number of people outside the labour force, insurance coverage for those affected. It which will in turn benefit social assistance, means the category of informal sector particularly in terms of adequacy, because employment in Figure 1 is maintained as of more allocation for lesser recipients. per the status quo, but workers are fully Such intervention is particularly crucial for covered by social insurance. women that currently has labour force approach has merit as it is not disturbing participation rate of about 55.3% (2020). the current labour market operation. Housework or family responsibilities Conversely, transforming the sector into a appeared to be the main reason for people formal one could be counterproductive. not joining the labour force accounting for 45.6% (some 3.3 million people) of people The gig workers can also fall in the formal them are women, majority

Two groups are typically not protected by housewives. A fruitful labour market inter-

of social and insurance will prevail in transforming this and sector. On the other hand, formalisation This

outside the labour force in 2019: most of sector if they are registered, own-account are workers. In that case, they are covered



under the However, the bulk of own-account workers due to insufficient demand matching their is in the informal sector with the skills in the market. In that sense, this conventional type of work (non-gig), for sector should be 'formalised' as it provides instance, people in the petty trading a job opportunity to those unemployed. A businesses, odd jobs, and other self- sector that is most likely quite efficient as it employments. Currently, they are only is market-based. Therefore, a deliberate covered by a voluntary social insurance policy measure should be designed scheme under EPF and SOCSO, which is targeting social insurance but with broad less effective due to its voluntary nature.

The significance of employment in the fostering economic growth. informal sector is growing, filling up the vacuum of labour demand in the job Recognising the informal sector should be market, especially with the influx of foreign aimed at making its members legal entities labours (refer to Figure 2). This sector has without converting them to the formal even attracted more skilled workers, like sector. Being a legal entity, the workers in

current social insurance. people with tertiary qualification, maybe objectives, including promoting entrepreneur development and eventually

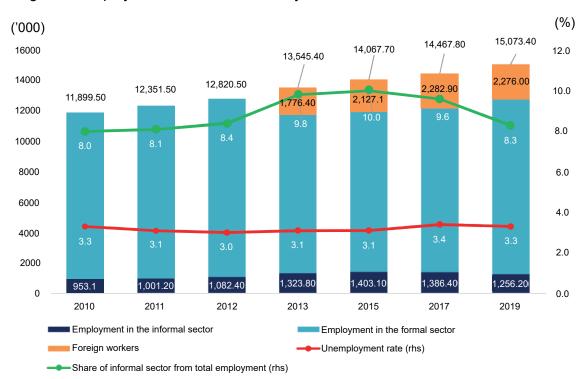


Figure 2: Employment distribution in Malaysia, 2010-2019

Source:

i. Department of Statistics Malaysia. (various years). Informal Sector Workforce Survey Report. Putrajaya: Department of Statistics Malaysia ii. Department of Statistics Malaysia. (various years). Labour Force Survey Report. Putrajaya: Department of Statistics Malaysia

Note: No data for foreign labours prior to 2013

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the informal sector would be able to make more meaningful contributions to the economy. Notwithstanding that their incomes are taxable, they should be able to benefit from the social protection system, for instance, through direct deduction of social insurance premiums. The lower-income group should be fully covered by social insurance. Some may be eligible for negative tax through social assistance.



PROTECT, PROMOTE AND PREVENT

e Chronicle o the Informal Sector

Lately, the informal sector, particularly Let us look at the informal sector closely self-employment, is becoming more and ascertain who are the people prominent. As illustrated in Figure 2, the involved. The Department of Statistics number of employment in the informal Malaysia (DOSM) defines the informal sector has gained momentum from just sector as an informal enterprise that 953.1 thousand in 2010 to 1.256 million in produces at least one or more goods and 2019. The flourishing gig economy adds services for sale or barter transactions up to the upsurge in the informal sector. (exclude agriculture-related sectors and Often, the gig economy managed to serve activities). It should be an enterprise that is as an alternative source of additional not registered with the Companies income for the people. During the Commission of Malaysia (CCM) or any COVID-19 pandemic, it even serves as a professional bodies, buffer to assist affected people in authorities. Those working in the informal sustaining their livelihood. The flexibility sector can either be an employer, and the dynamic working hours offered by employee, own-account worker (selfthe gig economy make it more attractive to employment), or unpaid family worker. many compared to the typical 8-5 working hours of the traditional formal sector.

including local

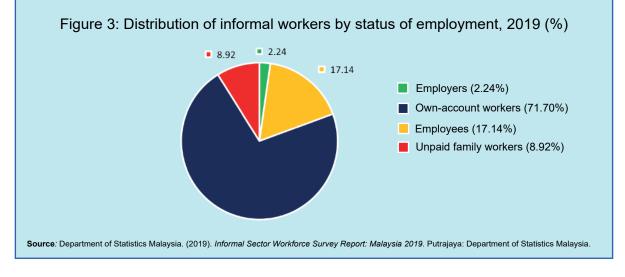
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Due to its informality, the sector has a drawback despite its positive contribution to the economy. First, tax collection from the informal sector is less efficient, reducing revenues for the government. Second, the workers do not have sufficient social security protection because they are not mandatorily obliged to contribute to the social protection schemes as compared to their formal counterparts. Although several voluntarv social protection schemes are available such as EPF's voluntary retirement programme, i-Saraan, and SOCSO's Self-Employment Social Security Scheme, the penetration within the informal sector remains low. As of December 2020, the number of members registered under the i-Saraan programme is 329,202, amounting to a RM223.11 million contribution. Meanwhile, SOCSO's Self-Employment Social Security Scheme fares better, with 2.72 million self-employed registered under this scheme as of July 2021.

Own account workers (self-employment) made up the highest proportion of informal employment (71.7% in 2019) (Figure 3), amounting to 6.0% of total jobs in the country, and it is on the rising trend. In 2011, self-employment made up a lower proportion of 64.1% of informal employment or 5.2% of total jobs. Number of self-employments in the labour force

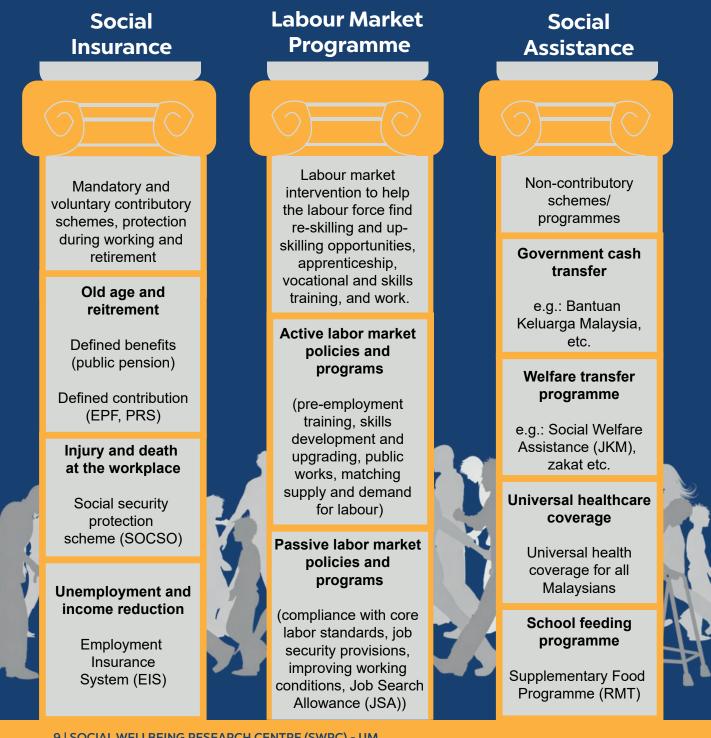


could be even higher if the people in the agriculture-related sectors and activities are considered. It is crucial to recognize the importance of self-employment in the agriculture-related activities to promote the industry, particularly with the current issues of food security and rising food prices in the country. Therefore, self-employment might not be just employment of the last resort as widely believed; it could just be the chosen type of employment for the future. The democratisation of education leads to more skilled labour being produced faster than the creation of formal jobs. Self-employees also ought to be more productive due to intense competition.



PROTECT, PROMOTE AND PREVENT

Pillars of Social Protection



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i-SARAAN

i-Saraan Voluntary Retirement Incentive allows EPF members who are self-employed and do not earn a regular income to make voluntary contributions towards your retirement, and at the same time receive additional contribution as an incentive from the government. They are also entitled to receive annual dividends and death benefits up to RM2,500.

The number of members registered under the i-Saraan programme is 329,202 members, amounting to contributions of RM223.11 million as of December 2020.



FOR INFORMAL WORKERS



Self-Employment Social Security Scheme

Self-Employment Social Security Scheme is implemented under the provisions of the Self-Employment Social Security Act 2017.

This voluntary scheme is a great innovation to protect self-employed workers against risks and injuries while working.

Initially, this scheme is compulsory for the self-employed in the Passenger Transportation Sector including taxi, e-hailing and bus drivers. On January 2020, the scheme extends its coverage to 19 other sectors in the informal sectors.

As of July 2021, there are 2.72 million self-employed registered under this scheme.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Social Protection for **Workers in the Informal Sector**

by Emeritus Professor Datuk Norma Mansor, as featured in BERNAMA on 18 March 2022

total employed persons in Malaysia fall sector was a significant contributor to the under the category of employees. As labour market in the country before the employees in the formal sector, they are rapid growth of the export-oriented providentially protected by the Social industries in the 1980s and 1990s, Security Organisation (PERKESO) and tracing back to the early days of prethe Employees Provident Fund (EPF).

employees in the formal sector from of informal jobs. vulnerabilities such as injuries at the workplace, critical illnesses or loss of With the rapid advancement of the gig employment while EPF safequards its economy, and further accentuated by the members with financial security following impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, a large retirement.

Informality and growth

total employed persons in Malaysia are made up of self-employed or own-account Flexibility versus fragility workers. Representing the second biggest segment of employment in Malaysia, However, the prominent rise of the these workers fall under the category of informal sector has raised some alarming employees in the informal sector.

sector, employees in the informal sector workers in the informal sector are not are not protected by either PERKESO or protected by any form of safety net. They EPF. This places them at a higher risk of are not covered by PERKESO and neither exposure to vulnerabilities.

The scope of jobs in the informal sector is vast. The informal sector has gained The informal sector is essentially a prominence not merely due to the lack of non-contractual entity with no obligations opportunities in the formal sector, but it is other than payment for the services also fuelled by the current labour market rendered. Such a business entity can

Recent data shows that 77 per cent of the development. Historically, the informal independence where a large majority of the population worked as paddy planters PERKESO is designed to protect and fishermen and in other various types

number of people have become selfemployed, either by choice or by force. The gig economy has subsequently become an alternative option for many to On the other hand, 16.8 per cent of the earn income and sustain their livelihood.

concerns that need to be addressed by the government. Despite becoming Unlike their counterparts in the formal important source of income for many, do they have to make the obligatory contribution to EPF for retirement.

any official authorities.

them to various risks such as death or workers in the informal sector should be injury at the workplace. An example of given serious consideration. This is to such a job is that of a fisherman. ensure that the workers are protected Fishermen have to venture into the vast against seas for their livelihood. The sea is their inadequate or no income during old age. only source of revenue but fraught with perils such as stormy weather, assaults The most immediate solution is to ensure from sea pirates, or death from drowning. that the workers have adequate protection A popular occupation that emerged from against any injury or illness in the course the COVID-19 pandemic is the food of their employment that can lead to delivery service. The food delivery riders invalidity for the rest of their lives. The face the risk of injury or death due to road safety net should safeguard workers accidents while performing their duties.

Voluntary Measures: are they sufficient?

Undeniably, the government has taken A scheme that is eligible to all working some proactive measures to protect the adults is most welcomed to protect welfare of workers in the informal sector. self-employed workers against various The Self-Employment Social Security risks. However, the contribution must be Scheme under PERKESO is currently carefully designed to ensure that it enforced under the provisions of the does not burden the workers while, Self-Employment Social Security Act concurrently, it is sufficient to secure their 2017.

In January 2020, the scheme extended its Briefings and learning sessions need to be coverage to 19 other sectors listed under further intensified to educate people on the informal sector. The scheme, as the importance of protection against risks announced in the Budget 2022 speech, in their lives, while at the same time will be expanded to cover new categories of self-employment. The and better payment method. expanded coverage is expected to benefit more than 810,000 self-employed workers In the long run, the social safety net must in the country.

i-Saraan has been extended to include the when faced with illness, work-related self-employed. Those who participate in injury, invalidity, unemployment, and old this programme are entitled to receive age. annual EPF dividends similar to regular contributors, death benefits of RM2,500 Certainly, it is a good strategy to advocate and 15 per cent government contribution for our national development to ensure (a maximum of RM250 per year on top of shared prosperity. their own contributions).

either be registered or not registered with Nevertheless, the increasing prominence of the informal sector combined with the increasing life expectancy of the country's Yet, the nature of their work might expose population affirms that social protection for injury, unemployment and

> against depletion of income, job security and absence of income during old age.

Enhancing national resilience

wellbeing in the face of fragilities.

nine providing incentives, ease of registration

be made mandatory and automatic. Getting every Malaysian adult covered Similarly, the EPF voluntary scheme would mean having a steady income, even

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Malaysia needs an all-encompassing National Pension System

by Emeritus Professor Datuk Norma Mansor, as featured in NST on 17 March 2022

As Malaysia joins the rest of the world in becoming an ageing society, it has become imperative for the government to address the challenges that increasing life expectancy pose to social security arrangements. Increasing life expectancy brings with it weeping changes in population needs and capacities. The most evident sign is the strain on the pension system as the number of people requiring protection and support is on the rise.

There are growing concerns that many are not prepared for a comfortable retirement, or might have inadequate savings for senior years. The concern is about the quality of life. Increasing life expectancy means a longer time will be spent in retirement.

It would be ideal if everyone could ensure their retirement funds are adequate by the time they retire. However, the reality is that it is almost impossible for many to secure their future and have a comfortable retirement. The retirement schemes in Malaysia do not cover everyone. The pension scheme was designed for old age protection for public sector employees.

The Employees Provident Fund (EPF) provides retirement benefits for private sector and pensionable employees. The protection against work injuries for formal sector workers is provided mainly by the Social Security Organisation (SOCSO).

These schemes have limitations. The pension scheme for civil servants covers only about 10 per cent of the working population.



Since the pension amount is tied to the last-drawn basic salary, a small percentage of retirees still live in poverty.

Though the formal sector employees have better protection under the EPF scheme, the majority of them have very low savings. It has been reported that out of 14 million EPF members, only eight million are actively contributing to it, and 46 per cent have less than RM10,000 in their accounts.

in the informal sector, contributions Korea, Japan and Australia, which have are voluntary, not compulsory. The re-examined their systems of social government has a narrow window of protection and put reforms in place. A opportunity to address the complex issue national pension system that covers a of social protection and to ensure a solid range of policies and programmes to social security infrastructure for the combat lifelong consequences of poverty nation's ageing society.

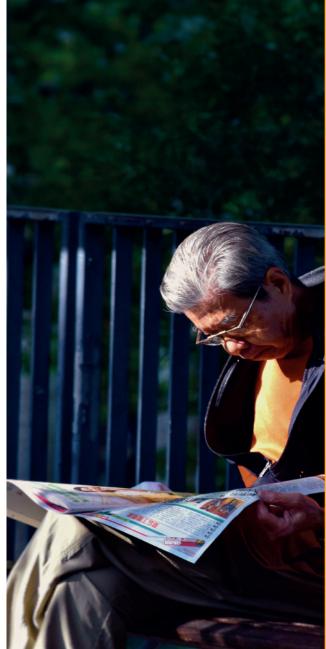
people aged 60 and over living in poverty capital development. or still working to sustain themselves financially. Most of the existing social assistance schemes cannot adequately cater to the needs of the older age group, the result of fragmented policies managed by multiple agencies at the federal and state levels.

It is time that we reviewed the sustainability and adequacy of the pension and social security systems in ensuring that basic needs are met, resilience against poverty is achieved and economic potential is maximised. Reassess the social protection system in terms of coverage, adequacy and equity. The social protection programmes should include self-employed and informal sector workers.

Addressing the lack of retirement savings in the private and informal sectors is the next best step. Strengthening public pension schemes and promoting the private pension market are among the priorities given by South Korea as her traditional system of old-age support within families is on the decline.

The United Kingdom links retirement age to life expectancy as it believes this could improve the sustainability of the pension system. In Japan, everyone aged between 20 and 59, irrespective of nationality, must be covered by the National Pension System and must make contributions.

Though there are schemes for employees Malaysia should emulate the UK, South and exclusion is necessary to strike a balance between the provision of safety If it's not addressed now, we will see more nets, financial resilience and human



Activities and Gallery

11 May 2022

UNIVERSITI | Social Wellbeing Research Centre

MINIMUM WAGES - THEORY AND PRACTICE IN AUSTRALIA

"The setting of minimum wages is a widely debated and often controversial topic in most countries, with employers concerned with limiting the cost implications associated with any increase while workers or trade unions focused on increasing income and living standards."

sing income and

10.00AM - 10.10AM OPENING SPEECH FROM DIRECTOR OF SWRC BY PROFESSOR EMERITUS DATUR NORMA MANSO 10.10AM - 11.30AM MINIMUM WAGES - THEORY AND PRACTICE IN AUSTRALIA BY ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DR. MARTIN O'BRIEN BY ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DR. MARTIN O'BRIEN

11.30AM - 12.00PM Q & A SESSION 12.00PM END OF WEBINAR

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION. PLEASE CONTACT

Minimum Wages

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ECON101 Equilibrium - Quantity Supplied = Quantity

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SPEAKER

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DR. MARTIN O DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN AND SOCIAL CAPITAL RESEARCH SYDNEY BUSINESS SCHOOL UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

11 MAY 2022 (WEDNESDAY) 10.00AM - 12.00PM To register, please visit https://bit.ly/3KqYt04 or scan the QR code below:

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Webinar Minimum Wages - Theory and Practice in Australia

Following the implementation of the new national minimum wage, RM1,500 effective from 1st of May 2022, SWRC took the initiative in bringing the diccussion to the wide audience by conducting a webinar titled 'Minimum Wages - Theory and Practice in Australia'.

This webinar discussed the setting of minimum wages from Australia's perspective and what Malaysia can learn from, shared by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Martin O' Brien, Director of the Centre for Human and Social Capital Research at University of Wollongong, Australia.

Minimum Wages



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14-16 June 2022



CERTIFIED INTERNATIONAL PENSION AND RETIREMENT PROFESSIONAL (CIPRP) 14 - 16 JUNE 2022 8:30AM - 5:30PM





CIPRP MODULES:

CIPRP 3001 The Social Protection System

CIPRP 3002 Investment Planning

CIPRP 3003 Personal Wealth and Portfolio Management

CIPRP 3004 Old Age Protection and Health Planning

> CIPRP 3005 Policies on Retirement and Ageing

Capacity Building Programme Certified International Pension and Retirement Professional (CIPRP)

CIPRP is the highest level of the Pension and Retirement Professionals Programme (PRPP). This programme is an advanced level course designed to prepare practitioners to become a professional in the pension and retirement industry.

CIPRP took place recently from 14-16 June 2022 at Azman Hashim Building, Universiti Malaya. There are 29 participants involved in this programme, coming from various institutions including EPF, SOCSO, LTAT, ICU and PPA.

CIPRP Experts

Dr. Richard Marshall (United Nations Multi Country Office)

Dr. Amjad Rabi (International Labour Organization Country Office)

> **Dr. Nuno Meira Simoes da Cunha** (International Labour Organization Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific)

Dr. Reiko Hayashi (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research)

Mr. Mark O'Dell (Life Insurance Association Malaysia)

Ms. Linnet Lee (Financial Planning Association Malaysia)

Professor Emerita Datuk Norma Mansor (Social Wellbeing Research Centre, Universiti Malaya)

Dr. Halimah Awang (Social Wellbeing Research Centre, Universiti Malaya)

Professor Dr. Noran Naqiah Mohd Hairi (Health & Wellbeing Research Cluster, Universiti Malaya)

Associate Professor Dr. Datin Izlin Ismail (Faculty of Business & Economics, Universiti Malaya)

Datin Azlaily Abd Rahman (Former Deputy Director, SOSCO and HRDcorp Trainer)



Sesi Kunjungan Hormat ke Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia (DOSM), Putrajaya, 12 April 2022



BERINGAT DEMI KESELESAAN HARI TUA

PROFESOR EMERITUS DATUK NORMA MANSOR Pengarah Pusat Penyelidikan Kesejahteraan Sesial (SWRC) UM dan Felo Akademik USM

ISNIN • 18 APRIL 2022 • 8:30 MLM Tonton di Saluran 501 | Live TV - astroawani.com & Aplikasi Astro AWA

Agenda AWANI – "Beringat Demi Keselesaan Hari Tua", Kuala Lumpur, 18 Ap<u>ril 2022</u>

GO AWANI

Dealing With Challenges in Rising Cost of Living in Malaysia, 13 April 2022



Jamuan Raya SWRC, 20 May 2022

FEATURED PUBLICATIONS

In the Spotlight

A compilation of newspaper articles by Norma Mansor



This book is a compilation of all the 29 newspaper articles by Emeritus Professor Datuk Norma Mansor, featured in Berita Harian, New Straits imes and Bernama, since 2014 until 2022.

The issues covered in these articles are diverse, ranging from macroeconomic perspectives including national economic policies, labour market situations, global trade, the global ageing phenomenon as well as microeconomic perspectives such as personal financial management.

This book is part of continuous efforts by the author in augmenting the spirit of bridging the knowledge gap between academia and the communities.

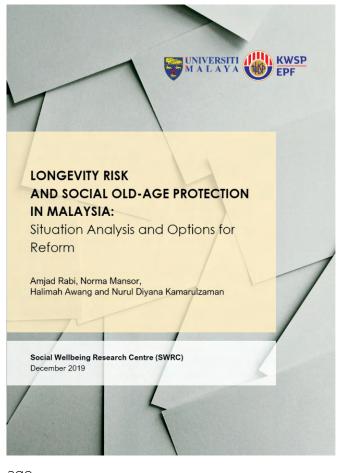
Longevity Risk and Social Old-Age Protection in Malaysia:

Situation Analysis and Options for Reform

This paper highlights critical isue currently facing the existing social protection arrangements for the old-age citizens. It provides a set of strategies and options for creating coherence betweeen the different providers to close the coverage gap among post-working age population, at the same time ensure fiscal sustainability of the next 15 years.

The paper starts with trend scanning of Malaysia's demographic amd poverty profile. Against this background, which established the demand for old-age protection, a thorough baseline review of the existing social old-age protection programmes is conducted. Together, these two chapters highlight the demand and supply for old-age protection in Malaysia with emphasis on gaps and inefficiencies.

In the last chapter, the paper proposes a framework for creating synergies between the different arrangements to close the coverage gap and achieve more impactfuland efficient system of social old-age



protection. A costed set of recommendations are presented.

For more info: please visit SWRC website https://swrc.um.edu.my/book-longevity-risk-and-social-old-age-protection-in-malaysia/

About SWRC

The Social Wellbeing Research Centre (SWRC) is an academic multi-disciplinary research entity, focusing on conceiving and implementing research in social security and old age financial protection. SWRC has been providing evidence-based expertise and consulting in the aforesaid domains to elevate economic development on social cohesion in Malaysia.

The Centre supports research in social protection in general and old-age financial protection, in particular. The Employees Provident Fund (EPF) of Malaysia has graciously provided an endowment fund to create the nation's first endowed Chair in Old Age Financial Protection (OAFPC), now known as Social Wellbeing Chair (SWC) at Universiti Malaya.



FLAGSHIP PROJECTS



Malaysia Ageing and **Retirement Survey (MARS)** BELANJAWANK

Reference Budget for Malaysian (Belanjawanku)

STRATEGIC PARTNERS







ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK



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