

# Raising Living Standards of Low-Income Households



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“ A very significant achievement in 2010 was that more than 44,000 households were taken out of extreme poverty. However, there is still a dire need to reduce the number of poor and low-income households. Our commitment is to ensure that even though we may not be able to eradicate poverty in the country, that we pursue this reduction in a steady and sure manner. We also commit to raising the living standards of the poor and low-income households, both the rural and urban folks. In all this, we will work to ensure that no single Malaysian gets left behind as the nation progresses forward.

”

**Dato' Sri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil**  
**Minister of Women,**  
**Family and Community Development**

## Raising Living Standards of Low-Income Households continued



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### SNAPSHOT OF 2010'S ACHIEVEMENTS

## Real Results, Real Changes

While Malaysia has made remarkable progress in fighting poverty these last 40 years, however, just under 4% of the rakyat are still classified as living in poverty. In managing the divide between Malaysia's economically well-off and the disadvantaged, the raising of living standards of low-income households (LIH) was designated as a NKRA. In 2010, despite the many difficulties it encountered, the Lead Ministry for the LIH NKRA – the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat or better known by the acronym KPWK) – successfully achieved most of its outlined NKPI targets.

# Raising Living Standards of Low-Income Households continued

For 2010, 44,643 extreme poor households were uplifted from this category (reduced to zero percent) while the number of poor households was also reduced significantly. The various measures introduced such as the 1AZAM programme, the provision of low-cost homes and other initiatives yielded positive results in uplifting those at the lower rungs of society. The following are some of the major LIH NKRA wins in 2010:

**44,535**  
EXTREME POOR HOUSEHOLDS REMOVED FROM THE EXTREME POOR CATEGORY

**15,868**  
POOR HOUSEHOLDS REMOVED FROM THE POOR CATEGORY

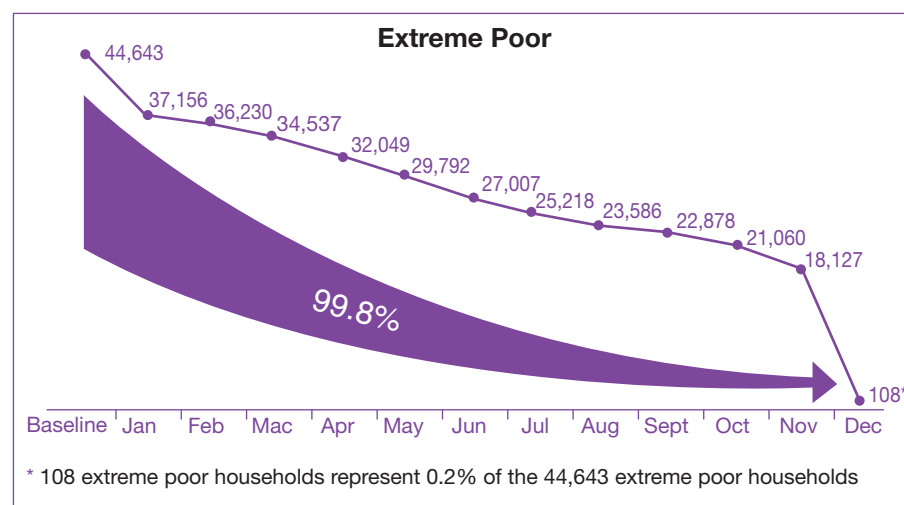
**2,000**  
WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS TRAINED & DEVELOPED

## Big Wins

- 44,535 extreme poor households removed from the extreme poor category
- 15,868 or 34% poor households removed from the poor category
- 2,000 women entrepreneurs developed
- 35,095 (80%) Projek Perumahan Rakyat (PPR) and Perumahan Awam (PA) units under Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL) offered for sale to current tenants
- Disbursement of RM1,163.07 billion. As of 9 December 2010, KPWKM had already disbursed 99.9% (RM415.23 million) of its Development Expenditure (DE) and 99.6% (RM747.84 million) of its Operational Expenditure (OE) in order to finance NKRA LIH programmes and activities

While we made some good progress in 2010, there is still much more to be done. Having reduced 44,643 extreme poor households to zero percent, we have set our sights on further reductions in the number of poor households. The lessons learnt and insights gained in 2010 will enable us to be successful for the remainder of Horizon 1 (2010-2012) of the GTP.

**Figure 1: Reduction of Extreme Poor Households**



## GENERAL OVERVIEW

### Successfully Managing Poverty since the First Malaysia Plan

In its Human Development Report 2010 (HDR 2010), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) highlighted that from 1970 to 2010, per capita income in developed or rich countries increased 2.3% a year on average compared to just 1.5% growth for developing countries. However, there were exceptions, with several developing countries – including Botswana, China, Malaysia and Thailand – identified as having grown faster than any developed country. In fact these countries were cited as having undergone truly spectacular economic growth: between 1970 and 2010, China's per capita income escalated twenty one-fold, Botswana's ascended more than nine-fold and both Malaysia's and Thailand's climbed more than five-fold.

Since the launch of the First Malaysia Plan in 1970, poverty nationwide has been progressively reduced from 50% in that year to 3.8% in 2009. The programmes and initiatives put in place have seen Malaysia realise its Millennium Development Goal on poverty well before the projected 2015 period. For its noteworthy achievements, Malaysia has won international accolades from the United Nations and World Bank, both of which regard Malaysia as a model for managing and reducing poverty.

### Despite Robust Growth, the Income Gap Persists

While these results are noteworthy, the HDR 2010 also called attention to the fact that many developing countries including Malaysia still have some way to go before they cross the threshold that separates the developed and developing countries. China's per capita income for instance, is only a fifth of the average for developed countries, while Botswana, Malaysia and Thailand are also far from this mark.

Malaysia has undoubtedly made tremendous progress in fighting poverty but still just fewer than 4% of the rakyat are classified as living in poverty. To manage the divide between the economically well-off and the disadvantaged, the raising of living standards of low-income households or LIH was designated as a NKRA. It called for us to set our sights on the ambitious goals of eradicating 44,643 extreme poor households by the end of 2010 and further reducing poverty between 2010 and 2012.

## Raising Living Standards of Low-Income Households continued



### 2010 LIH NKRA OBJECTIVES

#### 2010 NKPIs

The LIH NKRA calls for us to raise the living standards of low-income households in a sustainable manner, to ensure aid reaches the needy quickly and efficiently, and to create opportunities for low-income households to earn income independently. In line with this, we committed to achieving the following NKPI targets by the end of 2010:

**Table 1: 2010 NKPIs Targets**

- To eradicate 44,643 extreme poor households by 31 December 2010
- To reduce the incidence of poverty from 3.6% to 2.8% by 31 December 2010 (this NKPI was later modified)
- To train and develop 2,000 women entrepreneurs by 31 December 2010
- To offer 44,146 low-cost units under DBKL for sale to current tenants by 31 December 2010

## Raising Living Standards of Low-Income Households continued

In addressing poverty under the LIH NKRA, we further identified three key areas:

### *To Standardise the Definition of Low-Income Groups to Ensure we Target Support at the Right People*

The need for a common definition between low-income households, poor and extreme poor that could be adopted across the board by all ministries and agencies was critical not only for streamlining and co-ordinating working relationships within the Government, but also to ensure that aid and initiatives were targeted correctly at the appropriate communities. 2010 saw us successfully defining these categories of low-income groups in line with their monthly income.

**Table 2: Definition of Extreme Poor, Poor and Low-Income Households based on Monthly Income**

	Peninsular Malaysia	Sabah	Sarawak
<b>Extreme Poor</b>	RM440 and below	RM540 and below	RM520 and below
<b>Poor</b>	RM750 and below	RM960 and below	RM830 and below
<b>Low-income Households</b>	RM2,000 and below	RM2,000 and below	RM2,000 and below



Courtesy of Info Centre, Menara Star, Star Publications (Malaysia) Bhd

## Raising Living Standards of Low-Income Households *continued*

### ***To Implement Quick, High-Impact Initiatives Immediately and Lay the Groundwork for Longer-Term Actions***

These initiatives will improve immediate welfare as well as build income-earning potential to ensure sustainability. Several visible measures that allowed for rapid effect were identified. These included welfare assistance programmes, housing support and the 1AZAM (Akhiri Zaman Miskin) programme. 1AZAM is a specific initiative that sets out to lift low-income households out of poverty through means of employment, entrepreneurship, agricultural activities and services.



### ***To Put Enablers in Place to Ensure that our Poverty Eradication Programmes are both Effective and Efficient***

The full effectiveness of any programme can only materialise when it is delivered with efficiency. With that in mind, the eKasih database has been designated as the sole database for low-income households and the Implementation Coordination Unit of the Prime Minister's Department as the sole manager for this database. This will facilitate easier identification, approval and tracking of low-income households.

### **Teaching Them to Fish**

Under the LIH NKRA, we set out to reduce poverty and eradicate extreme poverty by the end of 2010. We focussed our efforts on providing welfare assistance and housing support as well as increasing productivity through the 1AZAM programme. In approaching this NKRA, we have had to balance the polarities between providing direct aid to the needy and making economic opportunities available to them so that they become self-sustaining. In essence, we had to focus our efforts on not merely giving those in need a fish to feed them for a day, but we had to teach them to fish, to feed them for a lifetime.

## Raising Living Standards of Low-Income Households continued

### KEY PARTICIPANTS

#### A Collaborative Effort

The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, better known by the acronym KPWKM, is the designated Lead Ministry and coordinator for the LIH NKRA. Today, KPWKM continues to work in close collaboration with several other ministries and agencies to roll out the LIH NKRA initiatives. For instance, the Ministry of Agriculture & Agro-based Industry is responsible for the AZAM Tani initiative; the Ministry of Human Resources for AZAM Kerja; Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia for AZAM Niaga and AZAM Khidmat; the Ministry of Health for the nutrition programme for children from low-income households; and the Ministry of Education for the dilapidated schools project.



#### Ancillary Support

In Sabah and Sarawak, the state agencies assist in the identification of 1AZAM participants and the implementation of the LIH NKRA initiatives. In Sabah, the agencies involved are Yayasan Usaha Maju, Jabatan Pertanian Negeri, Ko-Nelayan, Jabatan Perikanan Negeri, Koperasi Pembangunan Desa, Jabatan Hal-Ehwal Wanita, Jabatan Perkhidmatan Haiwan dan Perusahaan Ternak, Kementerian Pembangunan Masyarakat dan Hal Ehwal Pengguna and Jabatan Pembangunan Sumber Manusia, among others. In Sarawak, agencies such as the Department of Agriculture, Lembaga Kemajuan Ikan Malaysia, Unit Pembangunan Usahawan Bumiputera, Sarawak Economic Development Corporation, Giatmara, Sarawak Timber Industry Development Corporation, Bintulu Development Authority, Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority and Jabatan Tenaga Kerja have come forward with support.

## Raising Living Standards of Low-Income Households continued

The various community programmes and community projects undertaken by the National Welfare Foundation (Yayasan Kebajikan Negara) were also incorporated as part of the LIH NKRA. The foundation is chaired by the Minister of Women, Family and Community Development and consists of a Board of Directors from the fields of welfare and financial management. Yayasan Kebajikan Negara undertakes NKRA activities such as Programme Kemasyarakatan – Gempur NKRA, the Mindset Change Programme, Projek Sistem Kumbahan, Anjung Damai and an insurance initiative.

In addition to the efforts by the Government to raise the living standards of low-income households, government-linked companies such as PETRONAS have also provided assistance through their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes. PETRONAS, with cooperation from the MyKasih Foundation, is providing subsidies for low-income households through their Kedai Mesra convenient stores at selected PETRONAS petrol stations.



### KEY INITIATIVES IN 2010

#### Welfare Assistance

In empathising with the hardship of the poor and extreme poor, we committed to disburse federal welfare assistance on the first day of every month, rather than irregularly as before. The policy commenced on 1 September 2009 for Peninsular Malaysia and on 1 January 2010 for Sabah and Sarawak.

## Raising Living Standards of Low-Income Households continued

### Housing Support

Under Budget 2010, we allocated housing support to the needy. We offered to sell 35,095 Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL) low-cost units to current tenants at a price of between RM 21,500 and RM 35,000 per unit – up to 75% less than the market value.

**35,095**  
DBKL & JPN LOW-COST  
UNITS UP TO 75% LESS  
THAN THE MARKET VALUE

### 1AZAM Programme

To equip the poor and extreme poor with the means to increase their income, we intensified our programmes to build up the capabilities of these groups and create jobs for them. Our efforts included the 1AZAM programme to create jobs through a mixture of employment and entrepreneurship (social enterprise and productive welfare). It incorporated the various schemes announced in the 2010 Budget.

Specifically targeted were groups such as estate workers, rural farmers and fishermen as well as other segments through Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. Four initiatives were specifically created under the 1AZAM programme:

**Table 3: 1AZAM Initiatives**

Type of 1AZAM Initiative	Description	Champion
AZAM Tani	Agricultural and agro-based activities	Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry
AZAM Niaga	Small businesses	Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia
AZAM Kerja	Job matching/ job placement	Ministry of Human Resources
AZAM Khidmat	Services (self-employment)	Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia

## Raising Living Standards of Low-Income Households continued

From the 1AZAM Needs Analysis that was carried out, most of the low-income households were interested in participating in the AZAM Tani initiative followed by AZAM Niaga, AZAM Kerja and AZAM Khidmat. These four activities were selected based on the premise of tapping the inherent skills of the participants to uplift their social and economic status. These initiatives created opportunities for participants (based on their individual capabilities) to alleviate themselves from poverty and to ultimately become self-reliant enough to leave behind their lives of poverty.

**Table 4: 1AZAM Needs Analysis**

Type of 1AZAM	Peninsular Malaysia	Sabah	Sarawak	Total
AZAM Tani	7,747	1,466	3,908	13,121
AZAM Niaga	7,631	2,150	361	10,142
AZAM Kerja	3,845	300	697	4,842
AZAM Khidmat	1,379	360	224	1,963



## Raising Living Standards of Low-Income Households continued

### eKasih Database

The 1AZAM initiative was offered to extreme poor and poor households registered in the eKasih database. This close monitoring of registered households was a key element in ensuring implementation of the LIH NKRA proceeded smoothly. All households registered in the eKasih database underwent verification by the Implementation Coordination Unit (ICU) of the Prime Minister's Department. Any household that was not registered could do so online by accessing the eKasih website ([www.ekasih.gov.my](http://www.ekasih.gov.my)), after which the ICU would conduct a verification process before registering the household.



In the case where someone registers on behalf of a low-income family, that person who registers the family must provide his/her name and identification details in order to avoid abuse of the online registration system. PETRONAS is also utilising the eKasih database to identify these low-income families for its own CSR programme.



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### Delivering Opportunities to Escape Poverty

Musingah Ismun, 52 has indeed come a long way from her days of living in poverty. From not having a fixed income and having to borrow from relatives to make ends meet, the entrepreneur is now the proud owner of Mustika Hati Enterprise and enjoys a monthly income of RM9,000 from her frozen pau business in Sabak Bernam, Selangor.

This change was made possible thanks to funding from Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM), which enabled Musingah to start up her own frozen pau business.

"Before this, I was a fulltime housewife who was struggling to make ends meet. But after the loan, our lives have changed dramatically. It feels good that our family can now afford a better life. I am grateful to AIM for the opportunity given to low-income earners like me," she shared.

## Developing New Women Entrepreneurs

With start-up capital from AIM, Jumaaiyah Salim, 43, was able to pursue her dream of becoming an entrepreneur. The mother of three utilised this capital to expand her small-scale homemade traditional snacks business in Sungai Nipah, Selangor, into a commercial enterprise that is now thriving.

Jumaaiyah has this to say of the entrepreneur programme: "Running a dry food business is profitable and it guarantees a consistent income for my family. This kind of assistance proves that the government believes that women can also contribute to the wellbeing of our families."

In making the most of the opportunity to participate in the women entrepreneurs programme, Jumaaiyah was able to change her lifestyle and ease her family's financial burden.

## Raising Women Entrepreneurs

Under the LIH NKRA, KPWKM with the cooperation of Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) and Jabatan Pembangunan Wanita (JPW) set out to train and develop 2,000 women entrepreneurs from low-income households by the end of 2010 and a further 2,000 by 2012. Women entrepreneurs are defined as those with a net income of RM3,500 per month or more (for a consecutive period of three months). Opportunities and training are provided so that they may venture into fields such as agriculture, services, fishery, manufacturing, farming and business.

## Other Aid

The year under review also saw the Government providing aid in the areas of education and training; health (e.g. nutrition for children of low-income households); basic amenities (sanitation and hygiene projects); monetary support and assistance in-kind; advocacy (communication and awareness); transition and reintegration (halfway houses); public and community programmes; as well as insurance and housing support.

Aside from the initiatives implemented by KPWKM, several other initiatives were implemented including the 1Malaysia Clinics by the Ministry of Health. Some 50 1Malaysia clinics have been built to provide basic medical care for the lower income group. In addition, four 1Malaysia mobile clinics are now in place to serve rural areas such as estates on scheduled visits. The year's initiatives also included income-raising programmes by the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (KKLW) and urban poverty programmes by the Ministry of Federal Territories and Urban Wellbeing (KWPKB).

With the cooperation of the Ministry of Education, RM50 million was provided for the repair and upgrading of dilapidated schools (sekolah dhaif). In terms of health, food baskets were provided to ensure children from low-income families had sufficient nutrition. This initiative, undertaken with the cooperation of the Ministry of Health, was allocated RM40 million under the LIH NKRA. For example, via the Majlis Gempur NKRA launched in Bukit Changgang, Rawang on 25 November 2010, a total of 91 extreme poor and poor households received food baskets through this programme.

## Raising Living Standards of Low-Income Households continued

In terms of family welfare, day-care centres were established for working mothers, while programmes on reproductive health were undertaken by the Population and Family Development Board (Lembaga Penduduk dan Pembangunan Keluarga Negara or LPPKN).

In the areas of sanitation and hygiene, RM12 million was provided to build toilets and septic tanks for low-income households. Other programmes included creating awareness via the 1AZAM bulletin; support for the Anjung Damai halfway-house for marginalised groups (including former drug addicts, HIV-AIDS sufferers, ex-convicts and juvenile delinquents); community programmes at religious and community centres by Yayasan Kebajikan Negara; insurance for low-income households and housing support with cooperation from DBKL and JPN. KPWKM also transferred RM2.3 million to Majlis AIDS Malaysia for the execution of the Anjung Damai programme.

### A Helping Hand to a Better Life

It was a difficult life for Lomimi Bonut, 45 of Penampang, Sabah and her nine children and three grandchildren. Sharing a small, one-room house, the family's sole income was Lomimi's earnings from selling farm produce, plus handouts from relatives. As the head of the household, Lomimi's biggest worry was how to feed her family on her meagre income.





As a result of initiatives under the LIH NKRA, Lomimi's burdens have eased. Registered as an extreme poor head of household on the eKasih list, she received monthly food baskets worth RM300 each over a six month period.






## SUCCESSSES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The overall results of the NKPI targets set for 2010 are shown in the table below.

**Table 5: Results of the 2010 NKPI Targets**

No.	NKPIs	2010 Targets	Actual Results	Remarks	Traffic Lights
1.	To eradicate 44,643 extreme poor households by 31 December 2010	44,643	44,535	108 or 0.2% extreme poor households remain as at 31 December 2010	 (99.8%)
2.	To reduce the number of poor households by 46,000 by 31 December 2010	46,000	15,868	This was modified from the original NKPI i.e. to reduce the incidence of poverty from 3.6% to 2.8% by 31 December 2010	 (34.5%)
3.	To train and develop 2,000 women entrepreneurs by 31 December 2010	2,000	2,000	3,804 still under training	 (100%)
4.	To offer 44,146 low-cost units under DBKL for sale to current tenants by 31 December 2010	44,146	35,095	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24,658 tenants (56%) agreed to purchase.</li> <li>• 10,437 tenants (24%) continue to rent or did not respond to offer letters</li> <li>• 9,051 units (20%) not offered for sale as these are reserved as transit units for squatters or rent by agencies (army &amp; police)</li> </ul>	 (79.5%)

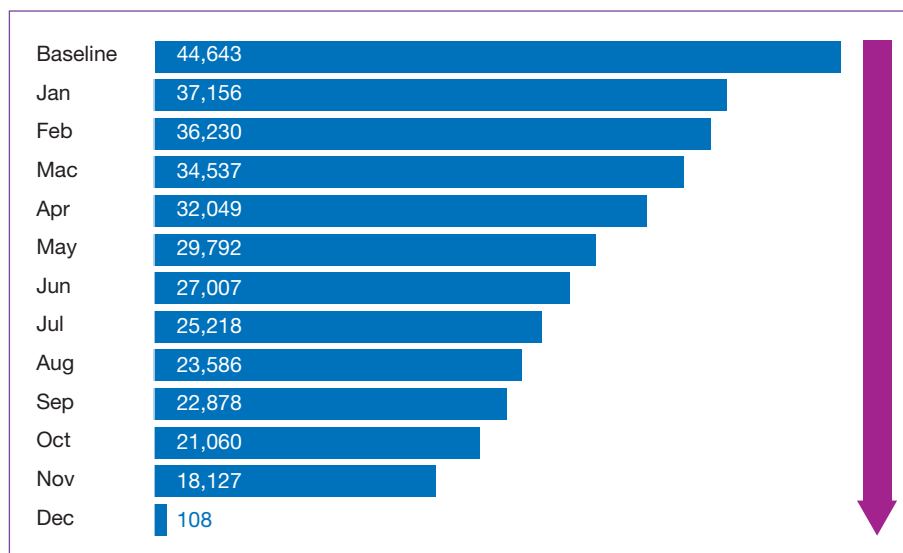
 Achievement of 90% and above    
  Achievement of 51% to 89%    
  Achievement of 50% and below

## Reduction of Extreme Poor Households

We are pleased to announce that we achieved our goal of reducing 44,643 extreme poor households to zero percent by the end of 2010. The Elaun Bulanan 1AZAM was successful in helping us achieve this NKPI target as was the initiative to leverage on the eKasih database to monitor and verify progress.

The Elaun Bulanan Sementara 1AZAM is a temporary cash assistance programme which was launched on 25 October 2010 by KPWKM. By the end of the year, 21,062 extreme poor households were eligible for the Elaun Bulanan 1AZAM which was made available to them via redemption at post offices and in the form of 1AZAM Pelaburan. Equally important is the fact that we are confident of sustaining the zero extreme poverty figure via 1AZAM. Specific measures have been instituted to track and measure the income levels of participants and to ensure they do not regress below the extreme poverty line.

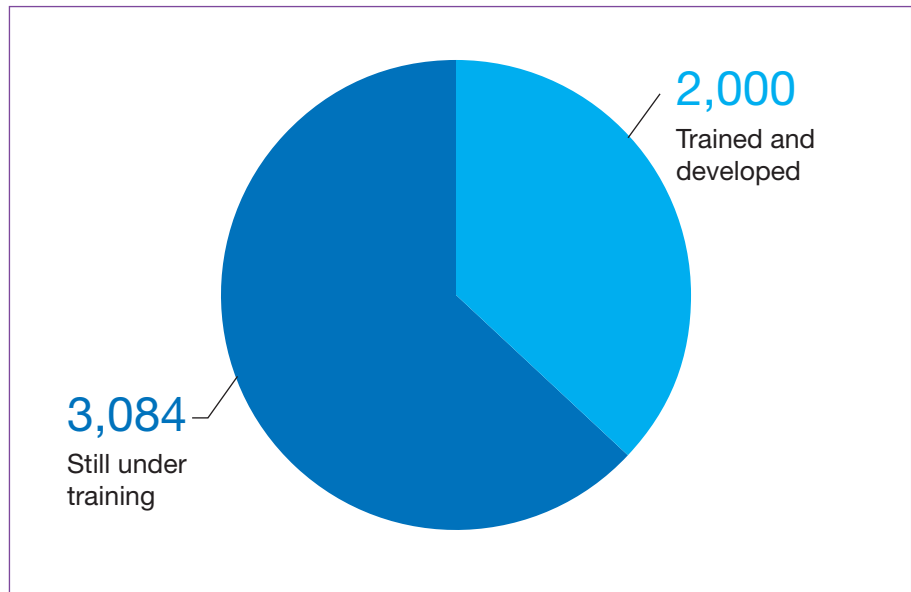
**Figure 2: Reduction of Extreme Poor Households**



## Training and Development of Women Entrepreneurs

Another major win that was achieved in 2010 was the training of women entrepreneurs. Thus far, KPWKM has trained and developed 2,000 women – thereby achieving our target for 2010. Another 3,804 candidates are currently undergoing training. Of this number, 1,000 are expected to complete their course by 2011 and the remainder thereafter. This places us on track to achieve our NKPIs for 2011 and 2012. The progress over 2010 is shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Training and Development of Women Entrepreneurs**



### **Housing Assistance**

On the housing support front, under the supervision of DBKL, 35,095 low-cost units (80%) were offered for sale to DBKL's current tenants. The units were sold to them at a low price, i.e. between RM21,500 and RM35,000 per unit – up to 75% less than the market value.

## CHALLENGES

### SHORTCOMINGS

#### **The Application of Differing Baselines**

We faced several hurdles in trying to achieve the NKPI target of reducing the incidence of poverty from 3.6% to 2.8%. The figure of 3.6% used as the baseline by the LIH NKRA Lab in 2009 originated from the Household Income Survey (HIS) results for 2007. The Ministry relied on this figure as a more recent figure was not available (the 2009 figure was only released much later).

Upon the release of the 2009 HIS results in June 2010, incidence of poverty had risen from 3.6% to 3.8% (due to the global economic crisis between 2008-2009). With the increase, the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) of the Prime Minister's Department, which is responsible for the HIS, was of the view that the 2.8% mark could not be achieved by end of 2010.

If the 3.6% incidence of poverty baseline was based on an estimate of 208,000 households and the 2.8% target based on an estimate of 162,000 households, this translates to a reduction of 46,000 households ( $208,000 - 162,000 = 46,000$ ). If this reduction is used as the 2010 target for this NKPI, i.e. to reduce the number of poor by households 46,000, then this target was not reached, since the number of households categorised as "poor" in the eKasih database was only reduced by 15,868 (34.5%).

#### **More Housing Required**

In the area of housing, 35,095 low-cost units were offered for sale to the poor and extreme poor. The remaining 9,051 units are currently reserved for the army and the police and as transit units for squatters.

## LESSONS LEARNT

One lesson learnt during the execution stage of the LIH NKRA is the fact that not all recommended initiatives under the GTP can be implemented. This is due to geographical issues as well as resource and timeline limitations. Some GTP initiatives also had to be modified in order to suit the current situation and requirements.

It is fundamental that the LIH NKRA build upon the existing poverty eradication infrastructure that the government has. Only by coordinating with and leveraging on the expertise and resources of other ministries and agencies such as KKLW and KWPKB, can we be successful. A great deal of resources and coordination can be reduced and duplication avoided since both these agencies are key players in poverty eradication. Continuous engagement with the 1AZAM Champions is also another key element to ensure the success of the programme. Detailed tracking of the status of achievements will lead to better understanding of on-the-ground issues and will at the same time provide options on how to mitigate these difficulties.

## GOING FORWARD INTO 2011

These are the 2011 NKPI Targets committed to by KPWKM:

**Table 6: NKPIs for 2011**

To verify and register all eKasih open registration i.e. backlog cases by 31 March 2011 and new cases (i.e. cases from 1 January 2011) by 31 December 2011. The verification process is to take no longer than 14 days in Peninsular Malaysia and no longer than 28 days in Sabah and Sarawak

To train and develop 1,000 women entrepreneurs by 31 December 2011

To increase home ownership amongst poor households by 4,965 units by 31 December 2011

To ensure 57,793 eKasih-registered poor households participate in the 1AZAM initiatives by 31 December 2011

## Raising Living Standards of Low-Income Households continued

### New NKPIs in 2011

Going forward into 2011, two new NKPI targets have been introduced i.e. eKasih verification and 1AZAM participation. Following criticism that the verification process for the eKasih open registration is taking too long, a new NKPI target has been set for 2011. This aims to ensure that 2010's backlog is cleared by March 2011 and that all new 2011 cases are cleared in the same year. Introduced as a target, the eKasih verification process is to take no longer than 14 days in Peninsular Malaysia and no longer than 28 days throughout Sabah and Sarawak.

The other new NKPI target that has been introduced relates to participation in the 1AZAM initiative. This new target aims to significantly reduce the number of poor households in 2011. From 2011 onwards, the LIH NKPIs will only cover households under the poor category. Extreme poor households that have only recently been identified through open registration will be included under the poor category in 2011.



By the end of 2011, another wave of initiatives will be implemented, including:

- Providing training to eligible low-income households to improve their economic value;
- Developing a mechanism to provide micro-credit to eligible low-income households;
- Increasing the number of urban, rural and mobile health clinics; and
- Extending financial support for eligible low-income households to purchase artificial limbs and prosthetics.

## Raising Living Standards of Low-Income Households continued

### Empowering Lives

Rohani Yahya, 57, who hails from Menanti, Pasir Puteh, Kelantan, believes that her participation in the AZAM Niaga programme was indeed a blessing. Through the capital received from the AZAM Niaga initiative, the single mother of eleven started her food stall and is now earning RM500 per month. The added income is helping support three of her school-going children.

“As a single mother, I truly appreciate the assistance received through AZAM Niaga. It provides the motivation for me to work hard and to lift myself out of poverty. When I first started (the business), I was earning RM300 a month. Now it’s RM500 per month,” she shared.

Lastly, some medium-term initiatives will be implemented by the end of 2012, including:

- Providing additional hostel capacity to enable students who require accommodation (e.g. those from rural areas) to continue with their studies despite financial hardship;
- Intensifying assistance to patients requiring dialysis treatment. This will involve providing financial aid, setting up more dialysis centres and providing transportation to and from those centres; and
- Offering financial assistance to eligible low-income households who are neither recipients nor purchasers of low-cost homes provided by the Government.

A minimum wage policy is also being discussed so that all Malaysians will be able to earn at least the Poverty Line Income (PLI). This will require greater discussion with all parties before any decision is made.

### Ensuring Sustainable Progress

The Elaun Bulanan 1AZAM cash assistance scheme will only continue into 2011 for household heads or members of their family who take up the 1AZAM programme. From January 2011 onwards, if a household drops out of the 1AZAM programme, their Elaun Bulanan 1AZAM will be discontinued. This is in line with the government’s strategy of encouraging self-help so that each low-income household becomes self-sustaining over the long-term.

