



Better lives for the hardcore poor

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Shahrizat: Four months after NKRA implementation, we only have 32,271 hardcore poor families left in the list from 44,643.

WOMEN, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil has vouched to help families that are categorised as hardcore poor under the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) by the end of 2010. Under the GTP, hardcore poverty is defined as households with income less than RM440 per month.

She said that her confidence in achieving this goal was based on the positive advances made under the Low Income Household National Key Result Area (LIH-NKRA).

"When the NKRA was first introduced, we had 44,643 hardcore poor families listed in the eKasih system. Now, after four months of implementation, we have managed to reduce this number to 32,271 hardcore poor families," she said.

Shahrizat explained that the reduction of 12,372 households is a result of Government financial assistants. Reduction is further attributed to the commencement of poverty eradication programmes, hence resulting in the migration of those in the hardcore poor to the poor category.

According to Shahrizat, the Ministry has been allocated RM580 million to implement IAZAM, an income-generating programme aimed at lifting the poor out of poverty through productive means (productive welfare). The IAZAM programme, which consists of four sub-categories - AZAM Tani, AZAM Khidmat, AZAM Kerja and AZAM Niaga - is intended to decrease sole reliance on the government's financial aid as a method to reduce poverty.



Fighting poverty: Shahrizat in a light moment with recipients of a special donation from the National Welfare Foundation after launching the IAZam programme at Serian in Sarawak in mid-March. 102 individuals received RM300 each.

The IAZAM initiative also aims to instill in participants self-reliance in order for them to be independent.

"The approach to tackle poverty must be holistic and comprehensive in nature. We are currently differentiating between those who are able to work (productive) and those who are unable to work due to factors such as disability and age (non-productive)," she said, adding that while her ministry will continue disbursing monetary aid to non-productive individuals, MWFCD will also provide productive heads of

households' opportunities to become self-reliant.

At present, the Ministry is undertaking a needs-based analysis to determine which of the four IAZAM programmes best suits the target groups' interests. AZAM Niaga aims to assist participants generate business opportunities through training and micro-credit facilities; AZAM Tani facilitates participation in agriculture-based activities; AZAM Kerja offers participants low and semi-skilled employment opportunities that do not require high education qualifications; and AZAM

Khidmat is tailored for individuals interested in self-employment.

Implementation of these initiatives is spearheaded by the MWFCD, in collaboration with other project 'champions' - relevant ministries that will be implementing each of the IAZAM initiatives. The Ministry is also working closely with State Governments, particularly in Sabah and Sarawak, where 78 percent of Malaysia's hardcore poor population is located.

Rural basic infrastructure progress

The Rural and Regional Development Ministry will spend RM3.29 billion to provide various infrastructure facilities for the rural community including in Sabah and Sarawak under the National Key Results Areas (NKRAs) this year.

Its minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal said the Cabinet had given the green light to his ministry to spend the allocation.

According to him, the amount was part of the RM18 billion allocation provided by the government to implement NKRA programmes nationwide.

"This is part of the government's efforts to intensify rural development and we will implement these programmes in a comprehensive manner in line with the Prime Minister's vision to give first priority to the people, especially those in rural areas," he said in March.

"The focus is not just in providing basic amenities such as water, electricity supply and village roads but also in helping the rural people to enhance their economy," he added.

Rural basic infrastructure development has been on track, according to PEMANDU. As of March, numerous four key areas are on target to meet its 2012 goals.

A total of 403.4km of roads were completed in the first three months of the year.

From the figure, 219km were in Peninsular Malaysia, 178.8km in Sabah and 5.2km in Sarawak.

Another 349km of roads, spanning 940km, will be completed by year-end.

Delivery is above target with 347 homes supplied with electricity - 49 homes in Peninsular Malaysia, 236 homes in Sabah and 62 homes in Sarawak.

Currently, there are 650 projects being implemented under the rural electrification supply initiative.

Once completed, 34,400 households stand to benefit from it.

Meanwhile, 818 homes in Peninsular Malaysia were connected with water supply.

There are 11 water treatment plants under construction, with a further 786 projects underway to connect 70,181 households to clean water.

Other than that, 387 houses in Peninsular Malaysia were also awarded to deserving recipients. By September, 7,000 families are expected to be the first beneficiaries of the programme.

To elevate the standards of living, over 16,000 rural houses will be built or restored. PEMANDU CEO Datuk Seri Idris Jala said between 2010 and 2012, the number of roads built would increase by 1,100 percent, water projects by 700 percent and electricity projects by 250 percent and there will be "massive improvements."

Education progress - programmes off to a good start

THE new literacy and numeracy screening programme (Linus) for Year One pupils has got off to a favourable start.

Introduced by the Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin in January, pupils would be monitored and subsequently tested after two months on where they stand on these skills.

The aim was to ensure pupils mastered the three R's - reading, writing and arithmetic - after three years of primary schooling.

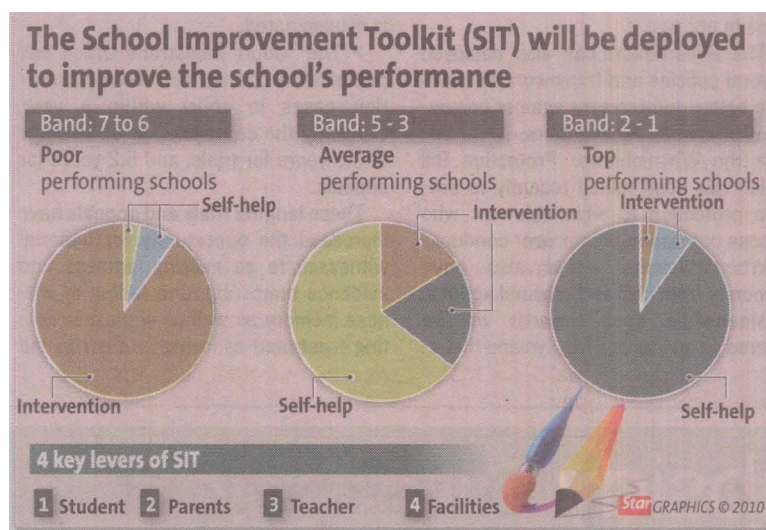
The roadmap states that student-screening will be done three times a year in March, June and September, to help identify those who do not meet the relevant standards.

Students will then be placed into the Linus programme or into a special education programme if they have a learning disability.

To date 15,500 teachers have been trained to effectively deliver the learning modules.

The Education Ministry has also provided support to schools which identify problems they are facing through the School Improvement Programme (SIP).

Muhyiddin, who is also the Education Minister said with the SIP, schools were not left alone to solve their problems.



"This support is known as the service line and the needs of each school will be identified through the tool kit application on the SIP," he said, during the launch of the SIP on April 29.

The National Pre-School Curriculum Standard has been developed to ensure the level of standard and consistency among the schools.

It incorporates the principles of holistic education and includes activities to promote understanding among the different races.

Targeted training programmes will

be offered to both teacher and teacher assistants to improve the skills of approximately 30,000 existing and new staff over the next three years.

For newly-hired teachers and teacher assistants, the minimum qualification requirements will be elevated to graduate and Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) level respectively.

The government also hopes that all children will have acquired basic literacy and numeracy skills after three years of education.

