

“What it comes down to is that the children just need support,”



News Source: The Star

PPR youth face towering troubles

Written by admin

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<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2023/03/22/ppr-youth-face-towering-troubles>

News story based on UNICEF Malaysia Report at link below:-

<https://www.unicef.org/malaysia/reports/contributing-factors-psychological-distress>

Children living in the People's Housing Projects (PPR) need more support and opportunities as they could be exposed to conditions that make them vulnerable to mental health issues.

Factors such as denser households, cramped living conditions, the unavailability of youth-friendly facilities, and, in some cases, a lack of adult supervision, could make growing up in a PPR harder.

A teenager who only wanted to be known as Adam, 16, said his parents, who work as kuih sellers, were toiling hard to make ends meet and support his five siblings.

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“Sometimes, I feel down and have trouble concentrating at school. This has been more so since the Covid-19 pandemic.

“It is hard to communicate what I am going through with my parents, as they don’t understand, and I don’t want to burden them because they are also struggling,” said the youth who lives at a PPR in Cheras.

Adam, who has turned to smoking as a coping mechanism, said he would sometimes play football at a nearby field but he wasn’t always occupied.

“We have nothing much to do besides play football or play in the parking lot. We have to share phones with our parents, so there isn’t much to do,” he said.

Adam felt that a community centre with free Internet access and computers would be helpful as not everyone can afford to have their own devices.

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Another teenager, who only wanted to be known as Azkiyah, 17, felt pressured as her parents have to work day and night at their roadside beverage stall. So most chores would fall on her, she said.

Azkiyah, who stays at PPR Jelatek, said that she was also tasked with looking after her three younger siblings, aged 15, 12 and eight.

“If I don’t sleep late, then I cannot finish my homework because I have lots of chores during the day, such as washing the clothes and cooking.

“It’s also stressful when my parents fight about money,” she said.

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She said her home environment was too noisy for her to study and she was unable to study at the library because she was needed at home to care for her siblings.

“It can get really hard, and I do feel really sad and misunderstood sometimes, but I listen to Korean songs or watch TikTok videos to make myself happy,” she said.

Azkiyah said there is needed to be more youth empowerment activities and classes to help build confidence and fill their time with beneficial activities.

Meanwhile, a resident at one of Kuala Lumpur’s oldest flats, Sri Selangor, located in Jalan San Peng, Pudu, said the community “has seen a lot”.

“The reason I am saying that is because this place was once notorious for drug activities, brawls, vandalism and more.

“It is better now. But we do not know if the exposure to such activities has actually left an impact on mental health,” she said of the 51-year-old housing complex, which had grabbed headlines in the past for social ills, especially drug abuse.

However, the 50-year-old resident who did not wish to be named, said the flats, which are located at the golden triangle, had facilities that children and teenagers could use, such as a playground and a futsal court, as well as shops.

The housing complex is also a five-minute walk from the Pudu LRT station.

“We have people who have become successful in life and have stayed away from drugs and other activities despite growing up in this environment, and we have those who got involved,” she said.

A resident at PPR Intan Baiduri in Kepong, Kuala Lumpur, said what they needed was a one-stop health centre for residents, especially in higher-density PPRs.

“If the Health Ministry could consider setting up a clinic in the PPR, like in PPR Batu Muda, we will be very thankful because it costs us money to travel to the nearest health clinic in Jinjang.

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“A counselling service could also be set up within the PPR clinic for the children,” said Khairul Anuwar Yusoff, 56.

He said that mental health issues and social ills were not unique to PPRs, adding that there were a number of units with healthy environments and strong community links.

“I don’t agree with pinpointing the PPRs as the source of this issue. Problems like depression or drug abuse can be found in any home, not just the PPR,” he said.

He said that young people in PPR projects needed more help to improve their skills and that even though there were many National Youth Skills Institutes, getting into them was hard and there was a lot of bureaucracy.

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The government should look into providing more facilities for PPR youngsters, such as a futsal field, a training kitchen, or an automotive workshop, depending on their interests, said Khairul Anuwar.

“What it comes down to is that the children just need support,” he said.

Source: The Star & UNICEF Malaysia