



UNITED NATIONS
MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE,
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM



UN COUNTRY RESULTS REPORT

MALAYSIA 2023

Supporting Malaysia's Path to Sustainability and Inclusion in Turbulent Times



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Foreword



KARIMA EL KORRI
UN Resident Coordinator
United Nations in Malaysia,
Singapore & Brunei Darussalam

Under the leadership of the Unity Government, Malaysia continues to show remarkable economic resilience and political maturity in its journey to high-income country status. These concerted efforts reflect the nation's commitment to sustainable growth and underscore its capacity to navigate complex challenges while fostering stability and inclusivity.

Nevertheless, challenges remain in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ensuring no region, community, group, or person is left behind. These obstacles span the economic, social and governance spheres and encompass three sets of issues: last-mile challenges associated with delivering the highest standards of public service delivery and regulation; the tackling of deep-seated inequities and vulnerabilities; and addressing the existential threats of climate change and biodiversity loss. This report spotlights the key results of the UN system's programming and advocacy in 2023 rather than the entirety of its contributions.

Working under the umbrella of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021-2025 (CF) and drawing on information available on our website via the UN INFO platform, this report reflects the dynamism of 2023. In line with the UN development system reforms, the UNCT continues to deliver tangible results, under the leadership and coordination of the Resident Coordinator.

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Together, we look forward to greater socioeconomic inclusion, a sustainable environment and strengthened social harmony”

The UNCT's commitment to leaving no one behind remains steadfast. The UN's focus extends to all people living in Malaysia, especially those groups at risk of being left behind, including migrants and refugees, stateless persons, asylum-seekers, people living with HIV and AIDS, children, persons with disabilities, indigenous people and the undocumented population. This report documents various UN interventions aimed at improving access to education, healthcare and essential services while mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment.

In response to Malaysia's expanding labour force, the UNCT, in collaboration with its diverse partners, also works towards fostering an equitable and inclusive economy guided by a human rights approach to development. Programmes include enhancing the skills of women entrepreneurs, combating forced and child labour in the palm oil industry, expanding social protection, and ensuring youth access to technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

Amid the escalating triple planetary crisis, the UN remains dedicated to assisting the Government in safeguarding Malaysia's abundant biodiversity, protecting the environment and combating climate change. Our work includes helping with the gazetting of state land and supporting the reduction of ozone-depleting substances. We support and applaud Malaysia's commitment to halt deforestation by 2030, as declared during COP28, and its aspiration to deliver net zero by 2050.

The UN remains resolute in fulfilling its commitments to the Government and civil society by actively exploring new opportunities to accelerate SDG progress through systems and institutional strengthening. We also strongly welcome the Government's positive approach to human rights as Malaysia enters its fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycle in 2024.

Together, we look forward to greater socioeconomic inclusion, a sustainable environment and strengthened social harmony.



Resident Agencies



Non-Resident Agencies



Global And Regional Centres



Meet the UN Team in Malaysia



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Director of Administration



Chapter 1

MALAYSIA IN 2023

Population



Age 14 years and under



7.6 million

Age 15 to 64 years



23.6 million

Age 65 years and above



2.5 million



Unemployment Rate



Poverty level (in 2022)



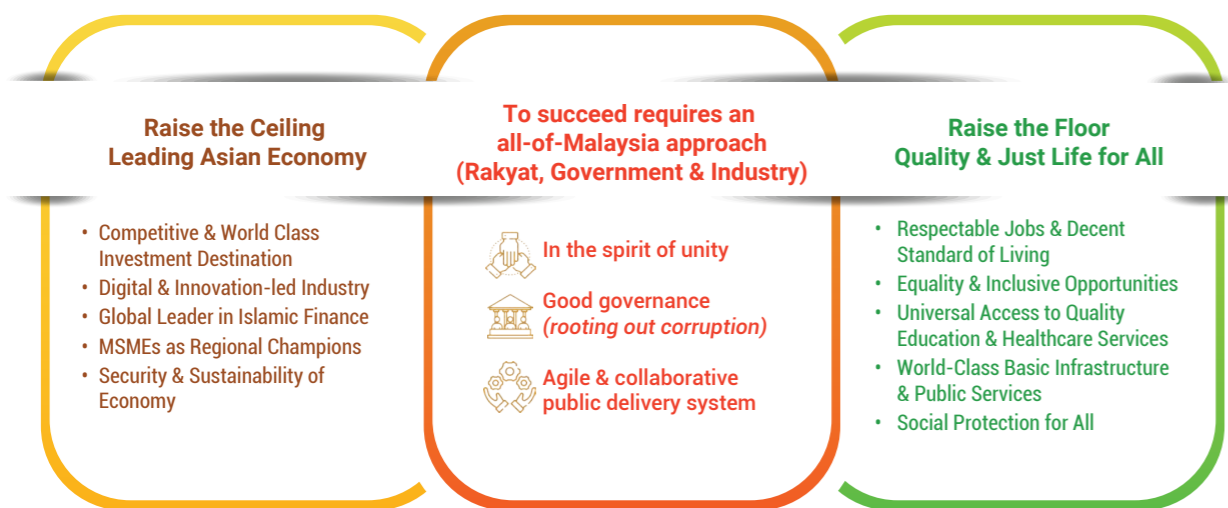
CPI Index between



In the wake of the 15th General Elections held in November 2022, Malaysia found itself at a pivotal moment. Under the stewardship of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and the banner of *Malaysia Madani*, the Government was tasked with charting a course toward political stability, economic prosperity, social cohesion and environmental sustainability.

A key early task was the Mid-term Review of the 12th Malaysia Plan (MTR 12 MP), which delivered a more focused and streamlined national plan. This reflected the Government's socioeconomic vision set out in *Ekonomi Madani*, which emphasised both its mission and the importance of policy execution to build a *better Malaysia for all* – with efforts to *Raise the ceiling* via measures to accelerate growth and development and *Raise the floor* via measures to ensure equity and a better quality of life.

EKONOMI MADANI: MEMPERKASA RAKYAT Building a Better Malaysia Together



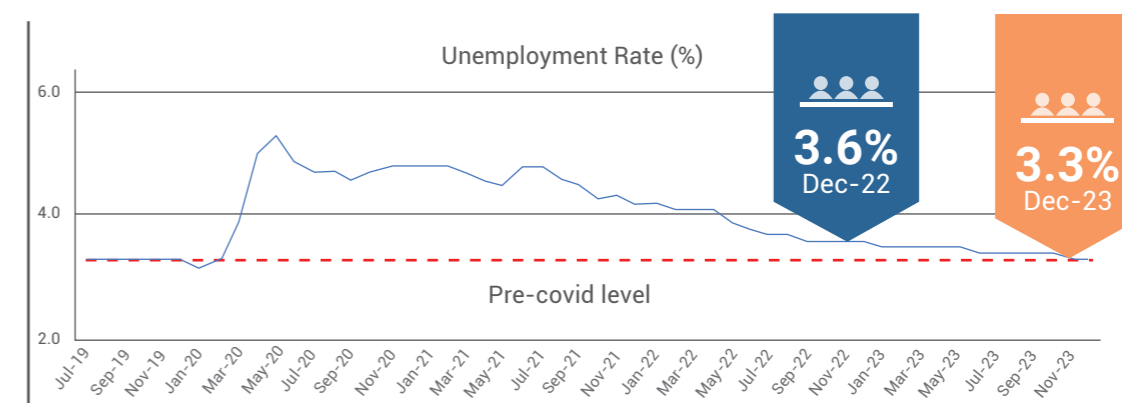
Malaysia Anchored on MADANI Values

[Sustainability, Care & Compassion, Respect, Innovation, Prosperity & Trust]

Ensuring ethical underpinnings in pursuit of progress, institutional reform and societal cohesion

Malaysia continued its march towards High-Income Country (HIC) status, with an estimated GNI of USD12,100, some 12 per cent below the current HIC threshold. In 2023, Malaysia's GDP growth slowed to 3.7 per cent, below initial projections of 4.0 per cent and significantly below the exceptional 8.7 per cent delivered in 2022. This sluggish performance reflected weaker global demand, which particularly affected manufacturing exports. Projections for 2024 suggest a return to trend growth levels of around 4.5% a year.

Despite economic challenges, the unemployment rate continued to fall, reaching the pre-Covid level (3.3%) in December 2023, compared to 3.6% in the previous year. The tighter labour market is a net positive for households and suggests an ongoing recovery. This was also highlighted by poverty data reported in 2023, which saw the headcount ratio fall from 8.4% (in 2020) to 6.2% (in 2022). There were, however, major state-level variations, and poverty is still above the level recorded in pre-pandemic times (5.6% in 2019).



Malaysian households faced ongoing cost of living pressures throughout 2023, and while the Consumer Price Index (CPI) remained between 2.5 and 3.0%, the cost of basic staples, particularly food, increased more rapidly. The key drivers remained global supply chain disruptions associated with the conflict in Ukraine, but a weaker Ringgit also played some role. While the full impacts were dissipated by Malaysia's extensive system of subsidies and price controls, lower-income households were affected disproportionately.

As indicated above, measures to boost short and long-run growth and reduce inequality were prioritised in line with the Ekonomi Madani framework. The Government set a minimum wage rate of RM1,500 for employers with fewer than five staff members. It maintained long-running cash assistance programmes, albeit under a new banner, and re-targeted households in the bottom 40% of the income distribution (B40). Public sector pay was also increased, alongside greater investment in infrastructure.

The Government also took a significant step by lifting price controls on chicken and eggs, allowing the market to operate more freely. Commitments to longer-term subsidy rationalisation and efficiency enhancements are evidenced by the announcement of efforts to set up a centralised database, Pangkalan Data Utama (PADU), planned for early 2024.

Budget proposals sought specifically to expand the tax base, a long-running structural constraint. Changes included the introduction of a Luxury Goods Tax and excise duties on electronic cigarettes and vape products. Income tax rates for the top 20% of earners increased, while rates for the middle 40% and bottom 40% were reduced. A Capital Gains Tax is also expected to be adopted.

Malaysia's vulnerability to climate change became more evident during the mid-2023 heatwave. While flood-related deaths and serious injuries were minimal, residents in several states suffered considerable loss and damage and remain at risk of displacement. The Government's aspiration to carbon neutrality by 2050, reiterated at COP28, and the establishment of the National Climate Change Action Council in 2023 demonstrates its recognition of climate change as a critical issue. The National Energy Transition Roadmap launched in August 2023 further emphasised the Government's green credentials.



Achievements
in 2023

Key Results in Malaysia

2.1

KEY RESULTS 1 PEOPLE

Helping to increase the resilience of the vulnerable

A prominent aspect of the work of the United Nations in Malaysia is a commitment to ensuring security, safety and access to essential services for refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants. These distinct groups of people often have specific needs as defined by human rights standards. They are also integral contributors to Malaysia's economy, with millions actively employed and playing a crucial role in delivering goods and services. Yet, they face multiple challenges. In 2023, the UNCT enhanced its efforts to support these vulnerable groups, enabling access to basic services, providing legal support and, in the case of refugees and, where applicable, facilitating their smooth resettlement. The graphic below visually represents the UNCT's dedicated initiatives for these vulnerable groups throughout 2023.



Contributing UN Entities

From displacement to resettlement

Bringing security to refugees



64,232

▶ registered individuals had documents renewed/updated

11,578

▶ refugees assessed and processed for resettlement consideration

From crisis to classroom

Ensuring access to education for refugee children



15,222

▶ eligible individuals identified, registered and issued with documentation

364

▶ individuals informed of conditions of return and voluntary return plans

8,128

▶ refugees resettled to a third country (>70% originated from Myanmar)

Keeping vulnerable groups informed

Raising awareness of legal rights and ensuring access to justice

▶ **9,148**

individuals received information on protection and assistance activities

▶ **298**

Interventions for 298 individuals engaged in court cases

▶ **622**

individuals released from detention



Teaching TVET skills to women and youth

To promote technical and vocational educational training (TVET), the UNCT implemented the Skills for Prosperity programme targeted at women and youth. This intervention improved the skills of 42 trainees, including seven women, through industry-led apprenticeships. Specifically, pilot Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) programmes for construction and food processing sectors benefited 51 participants. These interventions also imparted business management and digital skills to 50 beneficiaries in partnership with the Sabah Skills & Technology Centre, contributing to 28 participants securing full-time employment by June 2023.

Keeping women migrant workers informed of their rights

The Safe and Fair: Realizing Women Migrant Workers' Rights and Opportunities in the ASEAN region project achieved significant milestones through its comprehensive approach. This project trained 700 participants from various sectors on safe migration, prevention of violence, social security and decent work. A key achievement was the provision of high-quality legal assistance to 213 migrant workers, including 199 women. Outreach and support services also reached 41,992 migrant workers, including 5,793 women. The project also produced knowledge products such as the guidelines on violence and harassment, company policy templates on discrimination, and the adoption of flexible working arrangements.

Other initiatives included a knowledge-sharing seminar with 133 government, industry and TVET participants. This enabled the formulation of an alliance for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) mainstreaming, identified practical solutions and launched the "1st Malaysia Skills Challenge Innovation Call," generating 13 proposals. These efforts included the organisation of six TVET network meetings, dissemination of international digital skills frameworks and development of a digital talent roadmap in collaboration with the Ministry of Human Resources. This was validated in August 2023 and will inform the Ministry's Strategic Plan.



The Skills for Prosperity programme improved the skills of 42 trainees, including seven women, through industry-led apprenticeships. © ILO Malaysia

Providing support in marginal areas

Preventing the risk of gender-based violence and providing healthcare to refugees and asylum-seekers

25,616

▶ Health consultations provided for 11,275 refugees and asylum-seekers through primary care clinic

183

▶ persons living with HIV were monitored to ensure Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy adherence and assisted with needed care

849

▶ individuals benefitted from SRH support

155

▶ individuals at risk of GBV and survivors benefitted from emergency safe shelters, 652 received psychosocial support

849

▶ women and girls participated in targeted empowerment activities prevention program

Bridging gaps

Capacity building and knowledge sharing with people of influence

299

Through eight separate events/meetings/workshops, 299 high-level government officials, the diplomatic community and policymaker officials, including seven parliamentarians, state assembly persons and high-level party leaders, were engaged in strengthening law and policy on refugee protection.



KEY RELATED SDGs



KEY RESULTS 2 PEOPLE

Helping to strengthen the Health System

On the path to transform Malaysia's healthcare system

Malaysia's healthcare system, though highly trusted globally, grapples with multifaceted challenges, as highlighted in the Health White Paper presented to Parliament in June 2023. In close collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the UNCT actively contributed to enhancing the healthcare system by training and building the capacity of public health officials, procuring health equipment and test kits, and conducting public health communication campaigns.

In 2023, the UNCT helped six hospitals and public laboratories to procure GeneXpert machines for tuberculosis testing.

To address remaining gaps in COVID-19 immunisation, the UNCT facilitated the acquisition of IT equipment for information management in states with low booster coverage, prioritising healthcare workers and the elderly in seven states, including Sabah and Sarawak. Additionally, 1,100 Hepatitis C and 1,500 Hepatitis B test kits were donated to health programmes for refugees.

Recognising the surge in infectious diseases, the UNCT initiated a behavioural change communication campaign. This effort included backing industry engagement for product reformulation, implementing front-pack labelling and exploring collaborations with food delivery apps to promote healthier food choices and enhance the nutritional status of both adults and children.

The UNCT conducted a more comprehensive capacity-building programme, including training sessions for health officials. This focused on applying the Lawa Model after zoonotic outbreaks, developing comprehensive Risk Communication Guidelines for Public Health Emergencies, and conducting viral genomic sequencing. These initiatives signify the UNCT's commitment to fortifying Malaysia's healthcare resilience and response capabilities.

Contributing UN Entities



© UNFPA Malaysia

Tackling rising HIV rates

In 2023, the UNCT Joint Team on HIV provided significant support to the Government in ensuring sustainable funding and expanding HIV services, focusing on preventing mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) and reaching hard-to-reach and often excluded communities.

NGOs received support from the UNCT for treatment adherence, rehabilitative and nursing care, and reproductive health services for hard-to-reach women and girls. Technical support to the Ministry of Health led to the recognition of the need to strengthen laboratory capacity and advocacy resulted in the transition towards voluntary community-based treatment for drug users.

The UNCT provided technical support on community-based treatment, harm reduction, comprehensive HIV services in prisons, and the development of an investment case for these initiatives. This includes advocacy for optimal antiretroviral treatments for people living with HIV.

Working with key affected groups, and in collaboration with the Malaysian Country Coordinating Mechanism and the Malaysian AIDS Council, the UNCT facilitated a successful bid to the Global Fund for HIV for 2022-2025, securing over USD1.5 million for procurement of medication which prevents HIV infection (pre-exposure prophylaxis or PrEP). This was provided via 31 primary care clinics nationwide until December 2023. An additional USD1 million was allocated to strengthening community-led programmes and health management information systems.

The implementation of PrEPGov2023 and a pharmacy-based PrEP service delivery model marked crucial steps in addressing the rising HIV epidemic, ensuring accessibility and informing national policies on PrEP provision in Malaysia. The project also explored novel PrEP service delivery models, including training practitioners in 16 community pharmacies.

Combating child marriage and promoting sexual reproductive health investments

To combat child marriage, the UNCT extended technical support to women and girls-led organisations such as the #SchoolsNotSpouses Coalition. The UNCT continued its support for the Government in implementing the National Strategic Plan to address child marriage, actively engaging in

its mid-term review. Notably, the *Its About YOUTH* interview on a local news outlet reached 20,000-60,000 people and 1.8 million social media users.

The UNCT published a report highlighting the need for investments in sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and how rapid population growth and low fertility rates exacerbate the challenges of an ageing population and deepen inequalities. The *Demographic Changes in Sabah Report*, launched in 2023, stressed the need for policy changes promoting shared parental responsibilities, women's workforce inclusion and collaborative efforts to address issues like child marriage, education and literacy skills.

How behavioural change impacts adolescents

In collaboration with the Institute of Health Behavioural Research (IHBR) and the Institute for Youth Research, the UNCT implemented a behavioural change campaign that reached 1,578 adolescents. The IHBR study focused on barriers to help-seeking behaviour and informed evidence-based interventions. Additionally, the UNCT partnered with the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and the Ministry of Health to develop a national health behaviour change module. This module is designed for integration into national health officer training programmes, contributing to enhancing the capacity of healthcare professionals to promote positive health behaviour among adolescents.

Overcoming health barriers through innovative solutions

The UNCT also supported the RESPOND project, which brought together partners from leading research institutions in Malaysia, the Philippines and the United Kingdom to address systemic barriers to effectively managing high blood pressure. Emphasising local capacity building in health systems research, RESPOND employs innovative open-source mobile technology to capture real-time participant-generated content, including audio, text and video. At the forefront of health systems research, this approach explores nuanced experiences in interactions with formal and informal healthcare providers, enhancing understanding of how to control high blood pressure.



Representatives of WHO Malaysia walk towards the Orang Asli Village for the Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccination (PPV) Campaign at Orang Asli Kuala Koh, Gua Musang Kelantan (Kuala Koh Orang Asli Vaccine Centre). © WHO Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam & Singapore

KEY RESULTS **3** PROSPERITY

Championing a Fair Economy





Sensitising officials and employers and empowering the left behind

The Advoc8 On The Road campaign engaged stakeholders through social media platforms, achieving a significant reach with a social media audience of 63,756, including 16,539 X (formerly Twitter) impressions. The project addressed women's labour migration issues, helped human trafficking survivors and raised the importance of youth involvement in social issues.

In a project with the Social Security Organization (SOCSO), a feasibility study on policy measures to support the local workforce in joining formal employment was conducted. It encompassed a comprehensive review of economic and labour market trends. This information was instrumental in developing a report that was presented in a national stakeholder dialogue, offering policy insights and addressing imbalances in Malaysia's labour market.

To support the reform of labour and industrial laws, the UNCT contributed to enhancing Malaysia's adherence to international labour norms. More than 350 public officials and more than 400 industry-related personnel were equipped with the necessary knowledge of ILO's international labour standards through training courses.

The UNCT published a study on decent work opportunities and challenges in the local rubber glove supply chain. The publication and dissemination of a practical guide for employers contributed to addressing, preventing and reducing forced labour in the rubber industry.

The UNCT collaborated with SaverAsia, a digital service that aids migrant workers in comparing remittance costs and managing finances, thus enhancing financial literacy. From January to September 2023, the platforms garnered 72,848 user sessions (web visits, mobile app downloads and social media followers). The overtime calculator, created by Migrant Workers Empowerment and Advocacy, a UNCT-sponsored organisation, remains popular, recording 50,492 user sessions in 2023, surpassing the set targets.

Through the Advancing Workers' Rights in the Palm Oil Sector in Indonesia and Malaysia project, the UNCT enabled effective collaboration with the Malaysian Palm Oil Council (MPOC). Workshops, training sessions and webinars on eradicating forced labour and promoting freedom of association were conducted successfully, reaching 180 palm oil plantation smallholders in Negeri Sembilan and Sabah, 420 employers and trade union members, 38 enforcement officials and 226 workers (of whom 103 were women). The project's support of awareness-raising workshops for palm oil smallholders and technical input to booklets further strengthened its impact on labour rights in the palm oil industry.

The UNCT also enhanced human rights due diligence in the palm oil sector, training 20 stakeholders on grievance mechanisms and access to remedy. Furthermore, 48 representatives from Malaysian and Indonesian recruitment agencies received training on ethical migrant worker recruitment.



Unveiling of the two Macroeconomic Modelling Tool (MMT) reports during MyStats Day 2023

Building a resilient and inclusive economy

The UNCT facilitated a nationwide consultation to refine the revised Malaysian Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) indicators. The Global Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) conducted a training workshop for officials from the Ministry of Economy and the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM). The new MPI methodology is expected to be adopted in 2024.

In 2023, the National Baseline Assessment for Business and Human Rights (BHR) was completed and launched at the subsequent national BHR conference with the support of the UNCT. A training on Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence reached 228 SMEs in the electronic and electrical sector. The UNCT also helped to develop an SDG Investor Map, an online resource that identifies SDG-aligned investment opportunities to spark investor interest and offer attractive rates of return. A policy dialogue was organised to launch the tool and sensitise stakeholders on the untapped potential of investments aligned with SDGs to deliver economic growth and broader development progress.

The UNCT developed a macroeconomic modelling tool (the MMT) in collaboration with DOSM and organised a workshop that brought together more than 40 government and international organisations officials. This tool enables users to analyse the interrelationships and transactions within the Malaysian economy. It helps quantify the ripple effects of changes in one sector or policy area throughout the economy, making it a powerful tool for planning, policy analysis and decision-making.



Launch of the SDG Investor Map © UNDP in Malaysia, Singapore & Brunei Darussalam

Raising awareness of STEM education among low-income groups

The Young Futuremakers Malaysia project significantly contributed to promoting the career advancement of young women through upskilling and reskilling in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), particularly digital skills, and providing employment services. The project's face-to-face campaign at Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah facilitated awareness among low-income families. Utilising online platforms, collaboration with the Department of Skills Development and a social media influencer garnered significant engagement, with one video reaching over 80,000 viewers and 8,000 engagements on its premiere. The project initiated a Telegram Channel for continued engagement and conducted three online sessions with government representatives, universities and industry influencers. It appointed certified training providers to deliver technical and digital skills training to 300 TVET trainees and 300 young food service workers.



The Young Futuremakers Malaysia project held an awareness campaign in the state of Kedah to promote STEM upskilling and reskilling of young women. © ILO Malaysia



KEY RESULTS **4** PEACE

Promoting peace and a just society

Contributing UN Entities



Establishing a child-friendly justice system

In March 2023, the UNCT's sustained efforts led to crucial amendments to the Sexual Offences against Children Act and Evidence of Child Witness Act. Prior to the amendments, the UNCT published the *2022 Disrupting Harm Study on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*.

The UNCT actively pursued strategic advocacy initiatives to assist the Government in developing alternatives to immigration detention. This included conducting a comprehensive mapping study on children in immigration detention in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs. Concurrently, the UNCT has convened a policy dialogue with the government, foreign missions and non-governmental organisations. This dialogue focused on reinforcing the intersections between anti-trafficking and child protection mechanisms, aiming to foster inclusive child protection systems and prevent a fragmented approach to addressing child trafficking.

Fostering peaceful societies and promoting human rights

The UNCT collaborated on three publications on Preventing Violent Extremism. It also conducted the *Monitoring and Evaluation for Resilience with Youth (MERCY)* workshop involving 28 youth-based civil society organisations. It engaged 48 young people through the *Sports for Enhancing Resilience and Amplifying Social Inclusion (SERASI)* Youth Workshop.

A study titled *Understanding Pathways to Adolescent Pregnancy in Southeast Asia* was launched in October 2023. The study investigated the drivers of adolescent pregnancy based on interviews with 45 girls in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Pahang. It identified pathways and drivers of adolescent pregnancy, the consequences on girls' education and employment and the challenges girls face in families and society. Advocacy efforts highlighted the need for comprehensive sexuality education and tailored approaches for interventions to inform policy and programming.

In June, the UNCT commemorated the 30th Anniversary of World Press Freedom Day through a forum attended by about 200 participants. The event featured a panel with the Minister of Communications, who emphasised the government's commitment to safeguarding freedom of the press, stressing that journalists must be able to report without any fear or bias. The event also featured four multi-stakeholder closed-door sessions where over 100 participants debated tackling disinformation and hate speech, media freedom and accountability for social media platforms.

In commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UNCT organised the Human Rights Day Forum, which brought together over 500 participants in person and an additional 300 online. The forum served as a crucial platform for Malaysia to engage in introspection regarding its human rights trajectory and to enhance discourse between diverse stakeholders as Malaysia prepared to enter its 4th Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycle in January 2024.



ACT NOW



Reaching 12 million people in Malaysia to Act Now on the SDGs



In 2023, the UNCT led the Act Now global campaign in the lead-up to the 78th UN General Assembly and the global SDG Summit. The UNCT collaborated with civil society organisations, youth groups and the private sector, utilising the Act Now app as a centrepiece. Utilising a three-pronged approach that included effective corporate partnerships, exhibitions at pre-SDG summit events and online messaging to key stakeholders and the general public, the campaign was estimated to have reached over 12 million people by the end of 2023.



Participants from the Sports for Enhancing Resilience and Amplifying Social Inclusion (SERASI) Youth Workshop ©UNDP in Malaysia, Singapore & Brunei Darussalam



800 participants attended the Human Rights Day Forum in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights



200 participants attended the forum to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of World Press Freedom Day officiated by Minister of Communications, YB Fahmi Fadzil



Understanding Pathways to Adolescent Pregnancy in Southeast Asia study ©UNFPA Malaysia

KEY RESULTS **5** PLANET

Building Sustainable Solutions



The Improving Connectivity in the Central Forest Spine Project has led to the gazetting of 32,783 hectares of state land with protection status in Johor, Pahang, and Perak. ©UNDP in Malaysia, Singapore & Brunei Darussalam



Advancing conservation efforts in Sarawak, protecting forests and the ozone layer

To protect and conserve Malaysia's largest state's rainforests, swamps, peatlands and mountains, the UNCT successfully developed and delivered the Sarawak Biodiversity Masterplan to the Sarawak state government. This comprehensive plan serves as a blueprint for the sustainable management of the state's rich biodiversity, which boasts a wide range of wildlife, such as the Bornean orangutan, the pygmy elephant, the proboscis monkey and various species of hornbills. To ensure that the Masterplan is implemented, the UNCT also provided early implementation support to Sarawak's Ministry of Urban Development and Natural Resources, setting the stage for effective conservation strategies.

The completion of the 10-year Improving Connectivity in the Central Forest Spine Project represents the culmination of hard work by the federal and state governments, with support from the UNCT, aimed at protecting the forests in Peninsular Malaysia. This initiative has led to a remarkable 26% expansion of the forest area in the Central Forest Spine, increasing from 5.3 to 6.71 million hectares. This resulted in the gazetting of 32,783 hectares of state land with protection status in Johor, Pahang and Perak, with additional hectares underway for enhanced protection.

The UNCT's support extends beyond physical conservation efforts to the establishment of critical tools for effective wildlife conservation. Developing a joint-agency integrated wildlife crime enforcement framework, biodiversity monitoring protocols and landscape management/financing plans has enabled

the government to manage forest landscapes better. The UNCT played a key role in fostering partnerships between community-based organisations and stakeholders, facilitating participation in the conservation sector.

In 2023, the UNCT's impact extended to environmental sustainability on a global scale. In collaboration with the refrigerant and foam manufacturing sector, a reduction of 186 Ozone Depleting Potential (ODP) tones was achieved, surpassing the initial target by 35%. Additionally, the UNCT provided technology conversion support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the foam and refrigeration sector.

The UNCT's commitment to environmental protection is further evident through its support to the National Ozone Unit and the Department of Environment through capacity building to address ozone-related issues, ensuring that Malaysia meets its obligations under the Montreal Protocol.



Empowering Youth for Climate Action and Disaster Preparedness

Youth Environment Living Labs (YELL), a joint programme between UNDP and UNICEF, seed-funded six projects to support young people's participation in climate and environmental action. The programme provided work placements for 10 young people at network partner organisations. It offered advisory support to the Ministry of Youth and Sports for projects under the Social Entrepreneurship for Rural Youth 2024 program. YELL also built a strong network of partners, facilitated a dialogue between youth and the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Sustainability and organised a Pre-COP youth aspirations consultation with the European Union (EU). Following productive dialogues with the EU convened by the UN RCO, the EU agreed to invest EU500,000 in youth climate action from 2024 to 2025.

In parallel, the UNCT further emphasised climate education and disaster risk reduction (DRR) in schools. Through partnerships with the Ministry of Education, the UNCT builds the capacities of teachers, state education officers and students on DRR education. Such efforts benefited 200 students in various at-risk locations across Malaysia.

The MyUNICEF Impact Challenge yielded four innovative climate solutions, focusing on increasing climate literacy among children and disaster preparedness. The Air Quality Monitoring in Schools project, in collaboration with the Environment Protection Department Sabah and the Petaling Jaya City Council in Selangor, resulted in the installation of air quality monitoring devices in 10 child-centred locations, engaging 550 students through awareness programmes, posters, lesson plans and the development of the AQUAMS portal.

The Young Leaders' Programme (YLP) provided 45 participants aged 15-24 with in-depth briefings on child rights and essential training on proposal development, advocacy skills and evaluation methodologies. The participants were then given opportunities to propose initiatives for the national budget, influence the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights and offer advisory insights on UNICEF's wider programming and advocacy. YLP also successfully executed a six-month community project in Idaman, conducting peer-to-peer workshops in a low-income community. The initiative mobilised eight NGOs, reached 586 youths and fostered meaningful engagement and support for their causes.



Students of SK Kudasang participate in DRR education activities to gain basic knowledge and skills to better prepare for disasters. ©UNICEF Malaysia

Promoting Sustainable Urban Development, e-Mobility, and sustainable fishing gear management

In 2023, the sustainable city development project led by the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (MIGHT) and the UNCT reached its final stage. Among its achievements was a collaboration with stakeholders and sustainable energy system owners in Melaka to deliver a controlled system for greenhouse gas reduction. This project will allow stakeholders to monitor sustainable energy generation through the Virtual Based Energy Manager system within the Smart Grid Project in future years.

Simultaneously, capacity-building exercises throughout 2023 enhanced policymakers' knowledge of e-mobility, including via e-bus training, regional forums and workshops. A pilot project is being implemented in Kuching, Sarawak to scale-up solar-powered electric buses.

Fishing plays a vital role in supporting the livelihoods of many low-income coastal communities. However, a significant challenge arises when fishing gear reaches the end of its operational life, leading to its disposal as waste. The Combatting Ghost Gear in the East Asian Seas (COBSEA) project tackled this issue by preventing, recovering and enabling responsible management of abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear. A waste management infrastructure for end-of-life fishing gear was installed in Mersing port, allowing for cost-effective recycling. The project collaborated with local communities and launched the COBSEA Ghost Gear Toolbox to guide reef-safe recovery and management.



The ASEAN Cool (AC) initiative made substantial progress in promoting energy-efficient air conditioners in Singapore and Malaysia. Technical assistance on minimum energy performance standards (MEPS) and labels was provided, with both countries set to lead in implementing more energy-efficient Regional Phase II levels, particularly on data collection, support to government on stakeholder engagement and awareness-raising initiatives with local SME manufacturers, suppliers and consumer groups. The initiative supported data collection, stakeholder engagement and awareness campaigns aligned with the ASEAN Regional Policy Roadmap.

The Reducing Marine Litter by Addressing the Management of the Plastic Value Chain in Southeast Asia project launched a resource deck compiling knowledge products solutions towards addressing plastic pollution in the region. Technical knowledge sessions to build technical capacity and enable peer-to-peer learning were conducted ahead of the third session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for an International Legally Binding Instrument on Plastic Pollution.



The TEEBAgriFood initiative, backed by the Malaysian government and the UNCT, explores the economic advantages of implementing Malaysian Good Agricultural Practices (myGAP) in the vegetable production sector. ©UNEP/Anna Hellge



2.2

Initiatives in Singapore and Brunei Darussalam



The Merlion in Singapore (top) and the The Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien (SOAS) Bridge in Brunei Darussalam

The UN RCO coordinated the UN's engagement with Singapore and Brunei Darussalam, which is included in the mandate of several UN entities, particularly through activities linked to SDG follow-up and review.

Singapore

Between June and September 2023, the UN facilitated the liaison and reporting process for Singapore's national and regional contributions to the Samoa Pathway. This involved coordinating with relevant stakeholders and ensuring the inclusion of Singapore's inputs in the Asia Pacific report.

The UN supported the development of a Country Acceleration Case Study for Singapore and later a webinar on country approaches under SDG 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation. This included liaising and helping to finalise the case study outlining the city-state's exemplary performance on water management. Subsequently, there was a follow-up with the UN Water team to deliver a synthesis report.

Brunei Darussalam

The UN continued to engage with Brunei Darussalam on the development of their second Voluntary National Review (VNR), which was presented at the 2023 High-level Political Forum at UN HQ in New York. Brunei Darussalam's VNR adopted a whole-of-society, whole-of-government approach and reported on the country's efforts in strengthening SDG delivery systems and key capacities, in alignment with the Brunei Vision 2035, and provided a comprehensive report on the progress and achievements for each of the 17 SDGs. The UN was critical in supporting multi-stakeholder engagement, notably by facilitating the government's interactions with young people during the SDG Youth Forum convened in Bandar Seri Begawan in May 2023.

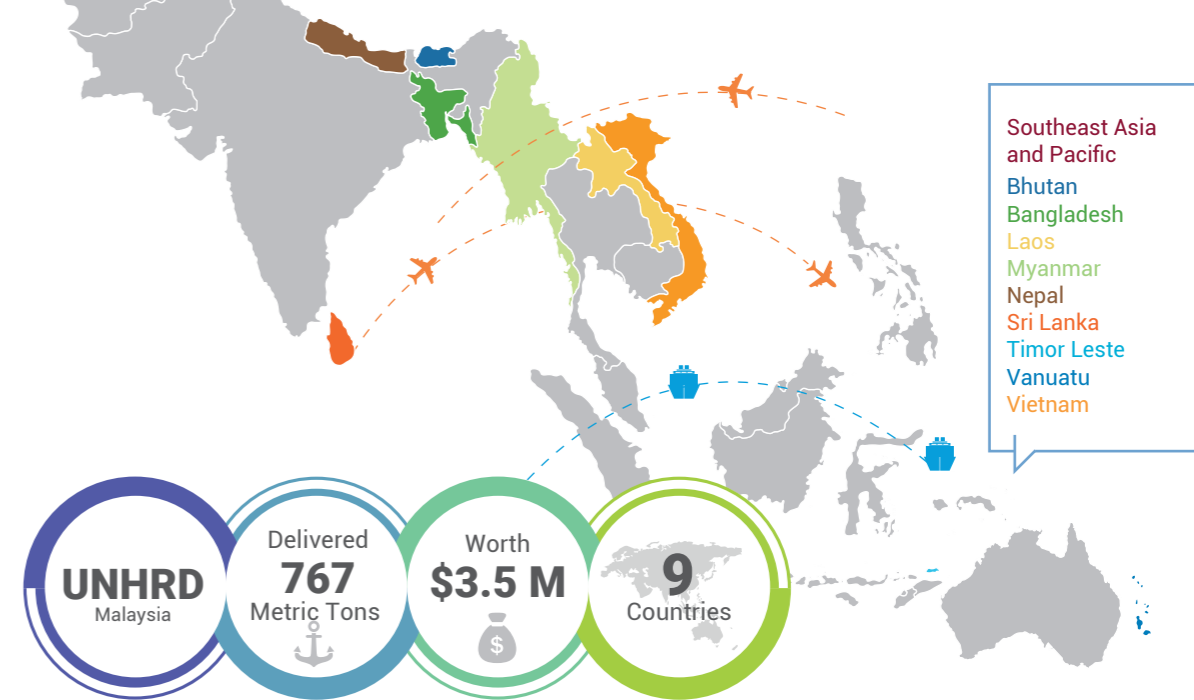


Chapter 3

Providing operational support and facilitating aid delivery globally

In addition to implementing programmes through UNCT entities, Malaysia is also home to regional and global facilities - one of five UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) global hubs and shared service centres for UNDP and WHO. More than half of the UN system's employees in Malaysia are employed by these centres, which provide services locally, regionally and internationally.

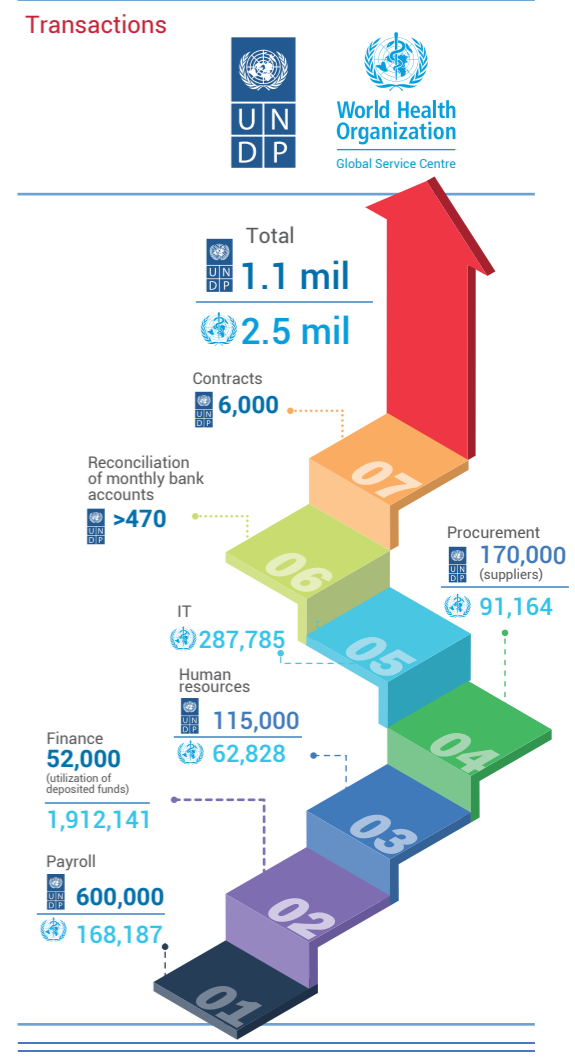
UN global and regional support facilities:



UNHRD Malaysia played a crucial role in emergency operations across the region, facilitating the timely deployment of military flights during the Cyclone Mocha response in Myanmar and supporting earthquake relief in Nepal through charter flights. The depot in Kuala Lumpur collaborated with the National Disaster Management Agency Malaysia (NADMA) to enhance frontline disaster response agencies' capacity, promote South-South Cooperation and empower local emergency response agencies by repurposing and reusing relief items. Furthermore, UNHRD contributed to regional efforts by supporting the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) training programme, resulting in 114 certified specialists ready to assist ASEAN member states in responding to disasters.

The **WHO Global Service Centre (GSC)** offers essential support services to WHO headquarters, regional and country offices and other UN entities, including UNAIDS, UNITAID and UNICC, and it serves over 150 country offices. Established in Cyberjaya in 2008, the WHO GSC has played a crucial role in advancing WHO's global strategy, aiding in the efficient and cost-effective delivery of its mandate and programme implementations. Notably, the partnership between WHO GSC and the government of Malaysia has been renewed by signing a new 15-year host country agreement on January 31, 2023.

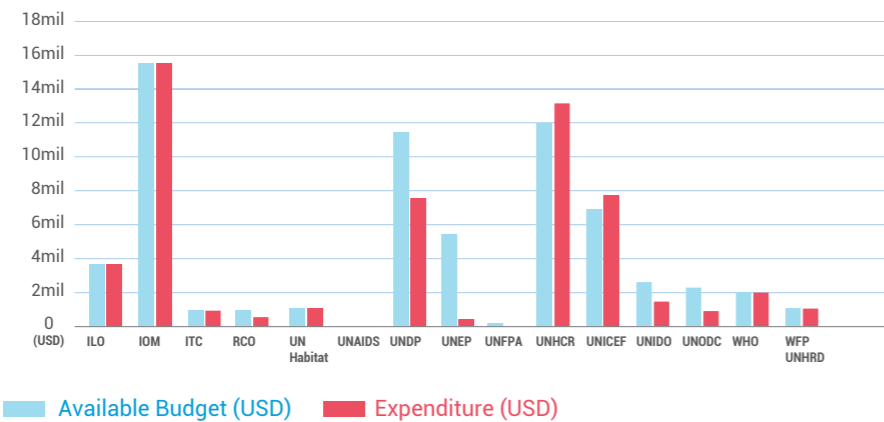
The **UNDP Global Shared Service Centre (GSSC)** is pivotal in providing comprehensive support to UNDP country offices and other UN entities, such as WHO, WFP, UNV, UNU, UNFPA and UN Women. The UNDP-GSSC provides a wide range of finance and HR services globally. It extends its support to emergency duty stations worldwide by prioritising their requests via stringent Service Level Agreements (SLAs). This ensures efficient and timely assistance to critical operations in challenging environments.



Mobilizing resources for Malaysia

In 2023, the UNCT delivered a total of USD56.06 million to support Malaysia's sustainable development. The UNCT's available budget for delivery was USD66.51 million. The delivered amount accounted for 84% of overall UNCT budgeted resources. This compares to a delivery of USD49.8 million and a budget of USD60.8 million in 2022, and delivery rate of 82.1%.

2023 Available Budget and Expenditure by UN Entity



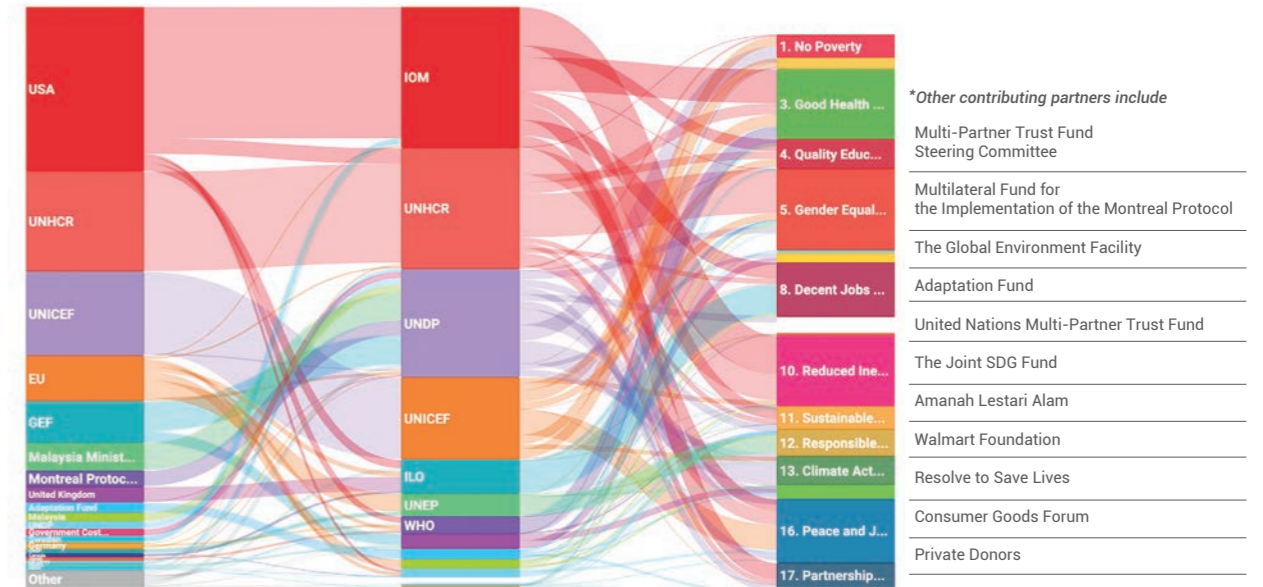
List of UN entity financial figures:

UN Entity	Available budget (USD)	Expenditure (USD)	Required (USD)
ILO	3,645,004	3,645,004	2,970,862
IOM	15,292,094	15,292,094	17,268,396
ITC	950,000	950,000	950,000
RCO	1,100,000	1,100,000	1,000,000
UN-HABITAT	1,059,023	1,032,395	1,059,023
UNAIDS	94,726	94,726	94,729
UNDP	11,588,775	7,694,548	8,575,159
UNEP	5,358,145	396,100	5,124,642
UNFPA	126,440	80,040	106,440
UNHCR	12,103,924	13,057,517	13,731,328
UNICEF	6,948,683	7,550,326	6,668,073
UNIDO	2,636,540	1,467,073	2,636,540
UNODC	2,558,591	750,000	2,573,591
WHO	2,052,700	2,052,700	2,052,700
WFP-UNHRD	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
Total	66,514,645	56,062,523	65,911,483

4.2

Top Contributing Partners

The achievements of 2023 by the UNCT would not have been possible without the invaluable support of our donors and partners. The UNCT extends sincere gratitude to all contributing partners, with the top few listed below. For more information, please visit malaysia.un.org.

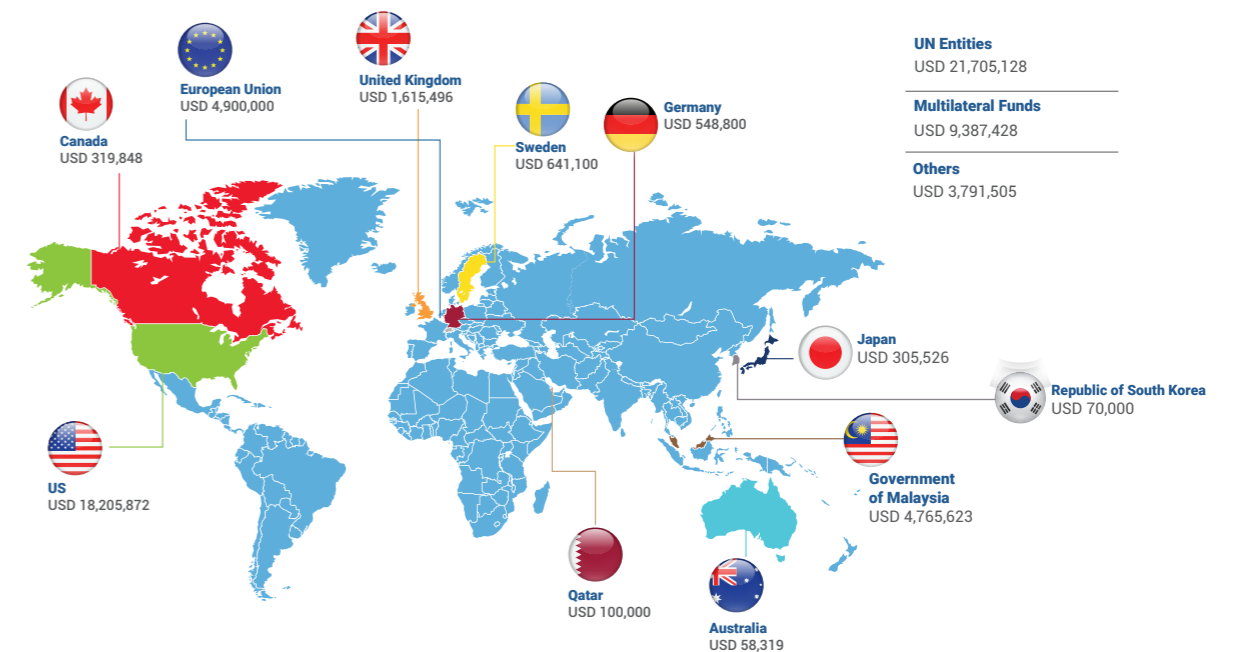


*Other contributing partners include

- Multi-Partner Trust Fund Steering Committee
- Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol
- The Global Environment Facility
- Adaptation Fund
- United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund
- The Joint SDG Fund
- Amanah Lestari Alam
- Walmart Foundation
- Resolve to Save Lives
- Consumer Goods Forum
- Private Donors

This chart displays the top 20 contributors in the left side. It excludes some contributing partners and agencies due to data visualization limitations. For more details, please download the UN team's joint workplan from <https://uninfo.org/data-explorer/cooperation-framework>

Bilateral Donors



UN Entities
USD 21,705,128

Multilateral Funds
USD 9,387,428

Others
USD 3,791,505

4.3

Implementing Partners

The UNCT expresses its deepest gratitude for the opportunity to collaborate with a diverse array of implementing partners in 2023. The list below shows our partners, encompassing government ministries, state governments, civil society and non-profit organisations.

- Centre for Independent Journalism
- Coaches Across Continents
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Social Welfare
- Department of Statistics Malaysia
- Department of Veterinary Services
- Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
- Environmental Justice Foundation
- Forestry Department of Peninsular Malaysia
- Guetanyoe Foundation
- Hospital Universiti Putra Malaysia
- Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia
- HOST International
- Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
- International Detention Coalition
- International Islamic University Malaysia
- Islamic Medical Association of Malaysia
- Make It Right Movement
- Malaysia SDG Foundation
- Malaysia Securities Commission
- Malaysia Trade Union Congress
- Malaysia UN Global Compact
- Malaysian Agricultural Research
- Malaysian Research Institute on Ageing
- Malaysian Social Research Institute
- Médecins Sans Frontières
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food Securities Malaysia
- Ministry of Communications and Digital Malaysia
- Ministry of Economy Malaysia
- Ministry of Education Malaysia
- Ministry of Finance Malaysia
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore
- Ministry of Health Malaysia
- Ministry of Home Affairs Malaysia

- Ministry of Human Resources Malaysia
- Ministry of Plantation and Commodities Malaysia
- Ministry of Science and Technology Malaysia
- Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development Malaysia
- National Council of Women's Organizations
- National Disaster Management Agency
- National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN)
- Office of the Children's Commissioner
- Pertubuhan Kebajikan Cahaya Surya Bakti Malaysia
- Prime Minister's Department
- Reef Check Malaysia
- Responsible Business Alliance
- Royal Malaysian Police
- Sarawak state government
- Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-terrorism
- Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management Secretariat
- Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
- Universiti Malaya
- Universiti Malaysia Sabah
- Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
- Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
- Universiti Tekonologi Mara
- Women's Aid Organization

4.4

Aligning Resources to the SDGs

The UNCT seeks to ensure that all programmes contribute to the SDGs. The tree map below illustrates the allocation of resources in alignment with the SDGs for 2023.



These figures exclude an additional \$4.3m of programmes available resources that are currently not yet attributed to a particular SDG on UNINFO.

4.5

Advancing SDG Progress and Reaching the Furthest Behind through the Malaysia-UN SDG Trust Fund



In 2021, in concert with the Government of Malaysia, the UNCT established the Malaysia-UN SDG Trust Fund to support SDG achievement for groups and communities at risk of being left behind and often beyond regular public provision. The first competitive calls for proposals and first awards were made in 2023 for CSO and UN entity-led projects. Administered by a team hosted by the RCO, the Fund offers a new funding channel.

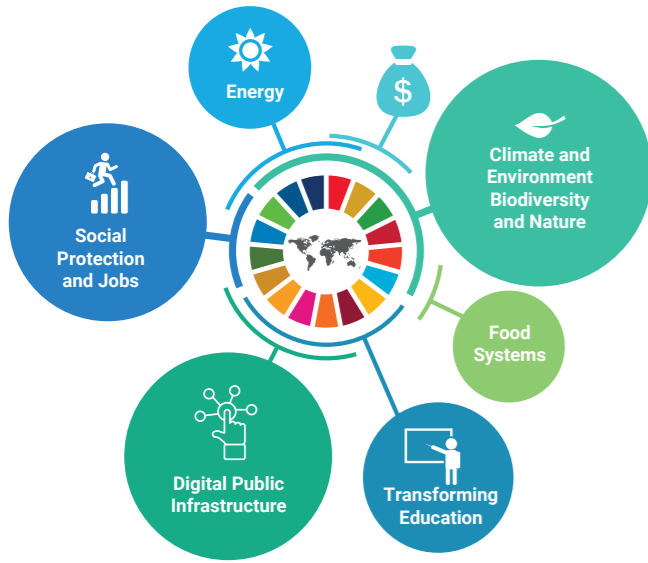
Three joint programmes led by six UN entities were successful. They focus on improving health services for refugees, wastewater, nutrient management, sanitation services in Sabah, and access for people with disabilities to the labour market. Implementation will begin in 2024 and run to 2025. These three joint programmes and 11 CSO-led projects were selected from among 233 bids. A total of USD 3.6 million is expected to be disbursed for their implementation.



UNCT Priorities in 2024



**Six Transitions:
Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs**



The UNCT's work in the coming year will continue to be guided by the four strategic results areas – People, Planet, Prosperity and Peace – of the CF 2021-2025. In 2024, as Malaysia moves nearer to 2030, the imperative to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), mandated by the Political Declaration of the September 2023 SDG Summit, will drive the UNCT's agenda. The approach will be shaped by six pivotal transitions recognised for their potential to catalyse and amplify impacts across the SDGs. These include (1) food systems, (2) energy access and affordability, (3) digital connectivity, (4) education, (5) jobs and social protection and (6) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

These key transitions can potentially deliver catalytic and multiplier effects across the SDGs. At the country level, efforts will be needed to craft an integrated approach and investment pathway that speaks to the national contexts and responds to the imbalanced and incomplete post-COVID-19 recovery, the emergence of geopolitical tensions and the ever-present threats posed by climate change and biodiversity loss.

Within Malaysia, the UNCT will seek to facilitate such a response, noting that 2024 marks the penultimate year of the current Cooperation Framework and the beginning of preparations for the next CF cycle. By design, this is aligned with the national development planning regime and the drafting of the 13th Malaysia Plan. The year 2024 will also mark Malaysia's entry into its fourth Universal Periodic Review on human rights (UPR) and the Malaysian Government's Review by the CEDAW Committee. Additionally significant will be

Malaysia's positioning in advance of assuming the chair of ASEAN in 2025 and its preparatory efforts for the Summit of the Future in September 2024.

In addition to these collective efforts, UN entities operating in Malaysia have identified their programmatic and advocacy priorities for 2024 as follows:

- **Healthcare strengthening:** The UNCT will support the Government in improving the quality and efficiency of public healthcare provision through a human-centred approach, including better management of health risks and chronic conditions. Inequalities surrounding sexual and reproductive health and rights will be a specific focus, alongside efforts to support preparedness and response capacities to health crises.

- **Leaving no one behind:** UNCT will continue to address the barriers and challenges faced by migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, especially regarding access to basic services. This would include advocacy on policy options for legal recognition and supporting the establishment of core healthcare and educational facilities. A specific area of attention will be the large undocumented population in Sabah, where the UNCT will work with the state authorities to enable the take-up of tailored and phased solutions. As part of regional pronging, the UNCT will support improved labour migration practice, particularly to reduce vulnerabilities faced by women.

- **Well-being of children:** This is a high priority across Malaysia, but there will be some particular focus on children living in Sabah and Sarawak. Efforts will include addressing child labour, improving social protection, reducing urban child poverty, enhancing access to education and training for children living in plantations, and broader advocacy for child rights.

- **Environmental stewardship:** UNCT's priorities span climate change mitigation, adaptation efforts and tackling biodiversity loss. Specific interventions include hosting environmental assemblies and intergovernmental negotiations on plastic pollution, implementing projects addressing waste trafficking and promoting the circular economy, supporting the Climate Bill and revision of Malaysia's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in carbon emissions, and climate finance and green transition economic measures.

- **Peaceful society and social cohesion:** The UNCT will redouble its existing workstreams on supporting the fight against corruption and institutional strengthening, peace building among communities and supporting the realisation of human rights.

Acronyms

12MP	Twelfth Malaysia Plan
CF SMP	Central Forest Spine Master Plan
DELIMa	Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia
DFA	Development Finance Assessment
IMM	Impact Measurement and Management
INFF	Integrated National Financing Framework
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ITC	International Trade Centre
KM ²	Square kilometres
MOE	Ministry of Education
NPOP	National Policy on Older Person
NQP	National Quality Policy
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PEKERTI	Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy and Action Plan
STEM	Science, Technological, Engineering, and Mathematics
UN	United Nations
UN RCO	Office of the UN Resident Coordinator
CF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN-Habitat	UN Human Settlements Programme
UNCDF	UN Capital Development Fund
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNIDO	UN Industrial Development Organisation
UNODC	UN Office for Drugs and Crime
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WAO	Women's Aid Organisation
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

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