

Introduction

World Vision Malaysia (WVM) implements community development programmes in rural communities in Keningau and Nabawan, Sabah with the aim of improving the well-being of children. Interventions are focused on building awareness and the capacity of communities to improve children's well-being through activities such as establishing children's clubs to enhance children's learning, parenting workshops, partnering with parent teacher associations, child rights awareness workshops with parents, children and the community, and mothers' cooking groups to improve the nutritional status of malnourished children. Communities who are empowered can then tackle child well-being issues in the future. Each programme typically lasts 10-15 years before WVM transitions from the community. WVM has also worked with *orang asli* communities (Temiar) in Gua Musang, Kelantan in 2015 following the emergency response to the Malaysian monsoon floods in December 2014. WVM exited the area in early 2016.

WVM started working with communities in Mukim Tulid, Keningau district in 2012, followed by communities in Mukim Tatalaan, Nabawan district in 2016. Communities in Tulid are mostly Dusuns, while communities in Tatalaan are mainly Muruts. Nabawan district has the highest level of poverty in Sabah (70.8%), based on the image below:

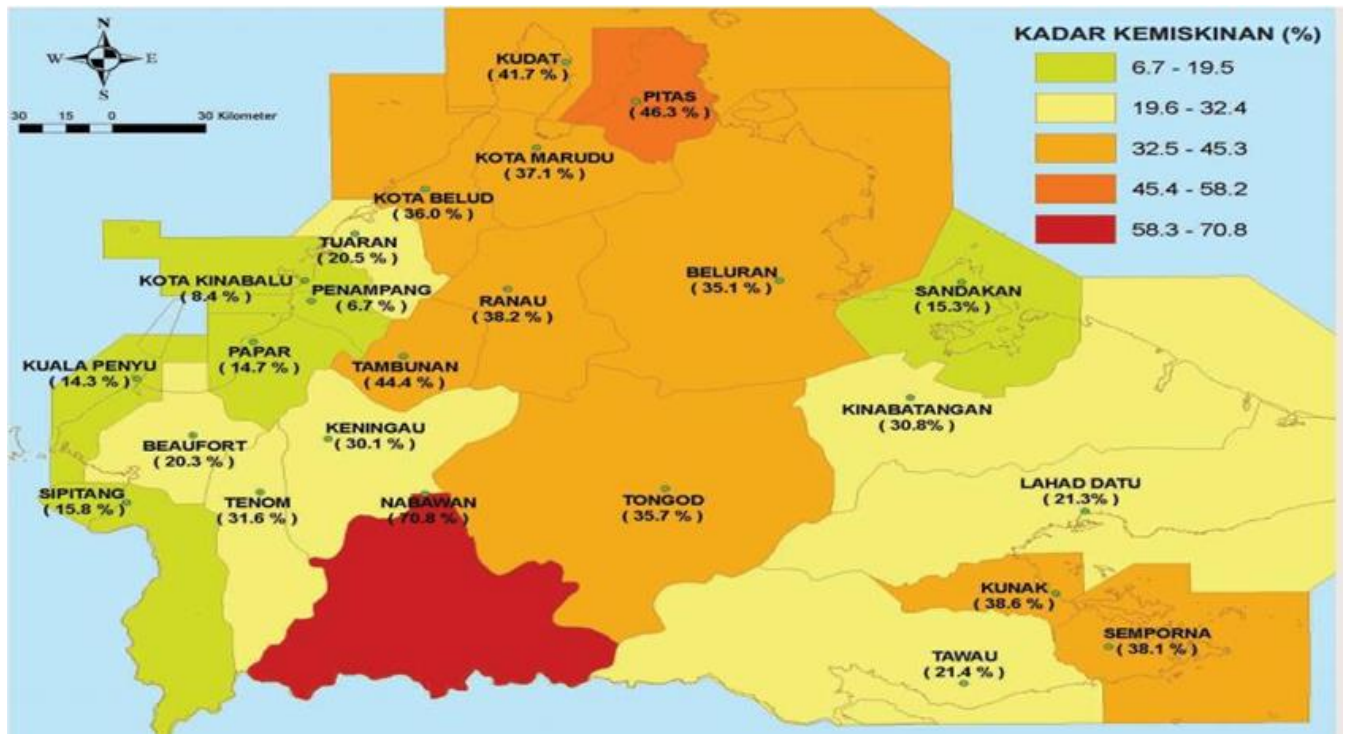


Image 1: Poverty Rate at district level in Sabah
Source: Sabah State Economic Planning Unit, 2004

Poverty in Sabah

The majority of the population in Sabah are indigenous communities who have been left behind from the nation's development. While rich in natural resources, Sabah is the state with the highest level of poverty (see images 2 and 3 below).

**Chart 2: Incidence of Poverty and Hardcore Poverty by State, Malaysia
2009 & 2012**

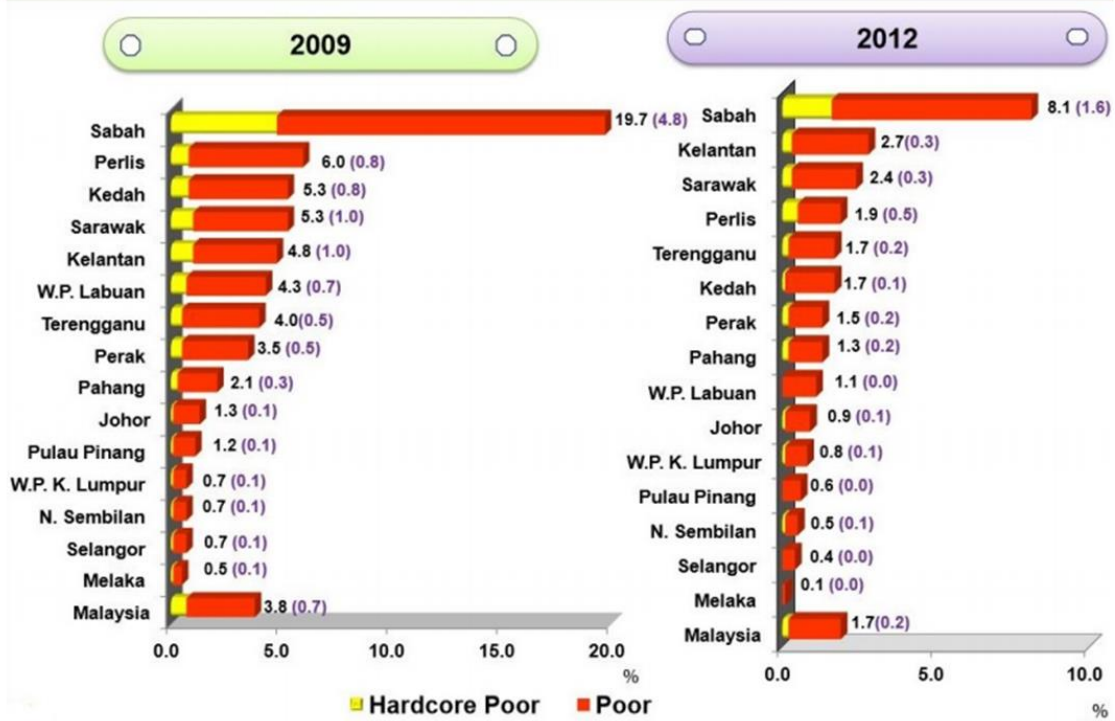
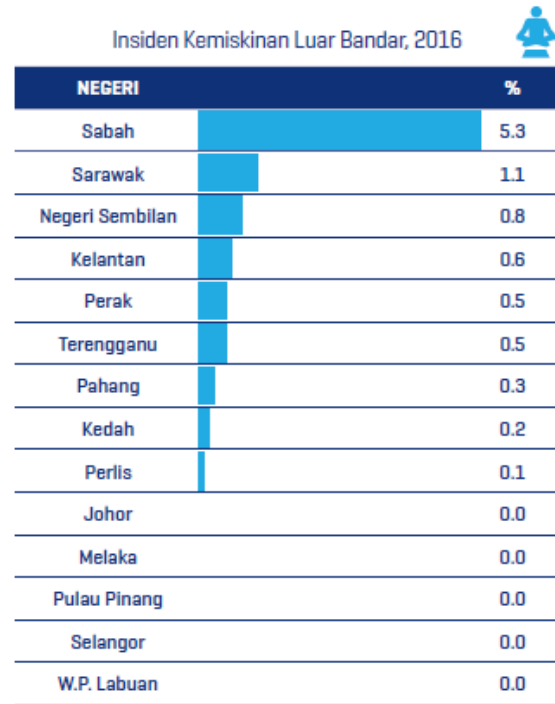
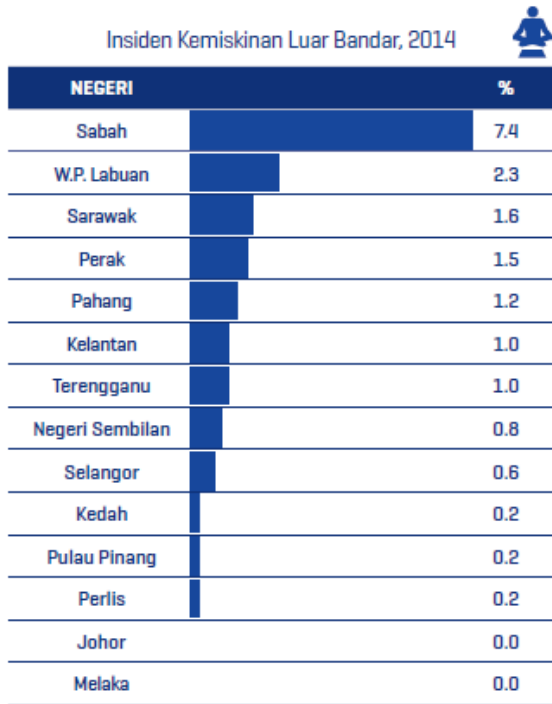


Image 2: Incidence of Poverty and Hardcore Poverty by State, Malaysia 2009 & 2012
Source: Department of Statistics Malaysia



Sumber : Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia

Image 3: Incidence of Poverty by State, Malaysia 2014 & 2016
Source: Department of Statistics Malaysia

Major challenges

Economic Planning Unit and Department of Statistics data about poverty rate in Sabah were denied by the State Chief Minister. Allocated budget for rural development has not been utilized for its purpose due to rampant corruption. This has caused major setbacks in developing smaller towns and rural areas.

Gaps in basic infrastructure (particularly tarred roads) affect the lives of rural communities in Sabah. In Tatalaan, Nabawan District, it takes 3 hours or more to travel on 60km of gravel road to get to town, with transport fees ranging from RM20-RM35 for each person each way. During the raining season, travel time doubles. Communities often work together ('gotong-royong') to repair broken bridges and help to lift vehicles that are stuck in deep mud. See some pictures of the road condition below:





Lack of tarred roads is also said to be one of the main challenge for the government to provide basic amenities such as electricity, clean water and others for communities in rural areas who do not live in densely packed areas. Communities in Tatalaan still do not have electricity, tarred roads, government water pipes and telephone network coverage. Transportation facilities are also severely lacking. Many families rely on villagers and teachers who have their own vehicles if they need to be in town.

Transport costs from villages to towns range from RM20-35 per person. To access hospital services, families need to fork out a substantial sum from their income for transport.

Due to poor telephone coverage, rural communities are not able to access information and the benefits of digital technology.

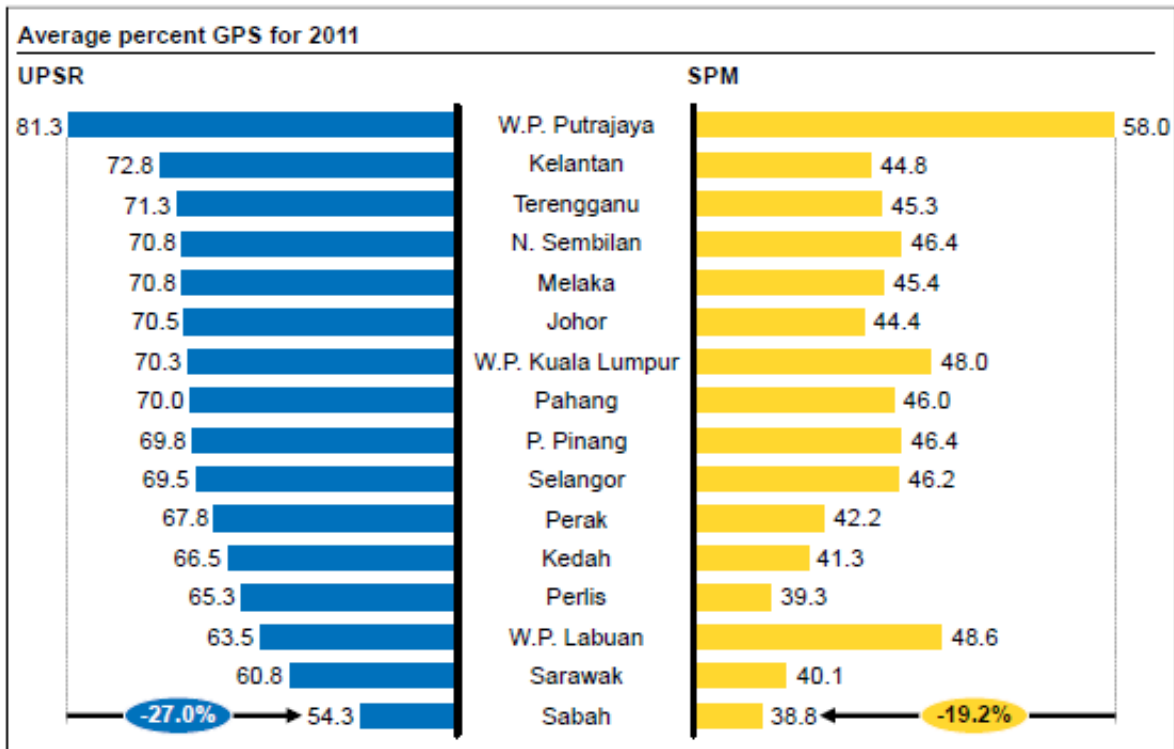
Villagers in Tatalaan are engaged in subsistence farming. Some who have completed basic education migrate to cities (Kota Kinabalu, KL) for work. Others migrate to Keningau, KK and KL for short term or odd jobs as they lack the basic requirement to compete with others who have academic qualification. Men are able to migrate to nearby villages to work as labourers in oil palm plantations managed by SLDB (Sabah Land Development Board), while some women migrate to cities for employment.

Other issues:

Education

In comparison with other states, Sabah has the lowest performance for UPSR and SPM as reflected in the graph below:

Comparison of performance across states for UPSR and SPM 2011



Source: Examination Syndicate
Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025

Children have poor educational performance.

Many children do not attend preschools because there are limited preschools in rural areas, distance, and lack of awareness of parents on the importance of education.

Most children in Tatalaan first enter school when they are 7 years old. Children with special needs do not have access to suitable education. Lack of trained teachers and suitable school facilities. Children living in villages that are far from a primary school do not attend school regularly due to weather conditions. During harvest season, children do not attend school to help their parents.

Teachers are frequently absent from schools in rural areas, while principals are often required to attend meetings at the state and national level. There is lack of monitoring by the Ministry of Education due to budget constraints.

High drop outs occur in secondary school which are located further away from villages, due to insufficient accommodation in hostels, challenges in transitioning to new environment, distance of schools from their homes, and the cost of education. While the government has allocated scholarships and made available student loans for indigenous communities, parents are not able to afford the costs of living for their children in pursuing secondary school and tertiary education which are located far from their homes.

Health

Children are malnourished and stunted. They consume junk food which is readily available. Unbalanced diet and lack of a diverse diet causes malnutrition, which affects the physical and mental development of children. While fruits and vegetables are available, children lack protein.

Childhood illnesses and injury among children are common due to lack of access to consistent supply of clean water and poor hygienic practices. The community rely on rivers and gravity fed water systems. Many villages were provided with H2Go filter from the government. Though some common areas and homes have latrines, open defecation is still a common practice. Handwashing is not commonly practiced among adults and children. Factors contributing to infection, disease, and injury cross over to issues of child protection in the community. Children are often found playing in unsafe areas without the supervision of parents or caregivers. Children are also frequently barefooted while playing outside of their homes. These factors increase a child's vulnerability and susceptibility to infections, diseases, and injury.

For major illnesses and delivery of babies, villagers need to go to hospitals in towns which requires a large portion of household income for transportation, food and accommodation. The nearest health facility for communities in Tatalaan is in Sook and Nabawan town which takes more than 2 hours of travel. Many families do not own vehicles and are dependent on hiring transport from other community members and teachers. Mobile clinics travel to Tatalaan area every 3 months, also depends on weather and road conditions.

There was one case of maternal and infant mortality, and another case of infant mortality because the pregnant mothers were not brought to the hospital in time due to vehicle problems and poor road condition.

Parents, caregivers not able to provide well for children

Families have inconsistent and insufficient household income to provide well for household needs. Economic activity in Tatalaan is hindered because of accessibility issues. Farmers could try to sell their agricultural produce at the market in Sook or Nabawan towns, but this is not cost or time effective given the high transport cost and the duration of travel. Some villagers work as labourers in nearby oil palm plantations. Access to work opportunity in town is limited by poor road conditions, lack of transportation and adaptation to urban life.

Impact of environmental issues and climate change

With climate change, unpredictable rains brought flash floods, soil erosion and landslides which caused damage to homes and crops. Several villages have been affected by landslides while many villages have experienced flood. During a prolonged drought in 2016, rivers dried up and farmers were unable to collect their harvest. Having being dependent on home grown food and cash crop, unpredictable weather change increases the vulnerability of families to provide for their own consumption and leads to higher spending for food.

Communities in Tatalaan rely on gravity water which is sometimes insufficient. During dry season, they rely on river water which has been polluted by farming and other large scale development in neighbouring areas.

- Role of infrastructure and development projects; management of public finances; multinational/domestic corporations

Infrastructure and development projects should be inclusive and participatory. Communities should give free and prior informed consent.

Critical to have good governance in the management of public finances. Funds allocated for public goods such as basic infrastructure, education and health facilities need to be utilized for their purpose.

Improved coordination between stakeholders in addressing poverty is needed. For example, the protection of forest reserves is within the purview of the forestry department while land development approvals are granted by the state authority.

- Places and people to visit
 - Orang Asli communities in Gua Musang, Kelantan
 - Indigenous communities in rural Sabah (eg Tatalaan, Nabawan).

Organisations in Sabah:

- PACOS Trust
- Good Shepherd Services
- SAWO

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