ProtoPolicyAsia: empowering local communities and Government in Malaysia in addressing social issues in ageing and disabilities

Malaysia will be classified as an ageing nation (15.3% of its total population will be over 60 years old) by 2030 and is currently placed 4th in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in terms of age-related issues. Malaysia has national policies to meet the needs of older people, but there are some barriers between policy and practice. As a result, making improvements to these policies has been slow in the past due to limited resources, and with little or no input from older people themselves.

Also, there is limited involvement in the development of disability-related programmes in Malaysia, thus ignoring the growing needs of disabled people. It is clear that with the increasing challenges faced by these groups, there is a growing need to create an inclusive approach to policy-making to ensure that Malaysian older persons and persons with disabilities are able to maintain active, productive and independent living. Inclusivity is one of the key strategic thrusts in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan, in which ProtoPolicyAsia proposed work would aim to achieve by working together with communities and government agencies.

With this in mind, ProtoPolicyAsia main aim is to increase local community participation in the Malaysian national policy-making process to work together with relevant government agencies on social issues that relate to older persons and persons with disabilities. This is in line with the Malaysian government's goal to promote community-based care and address the gap between policy and practice for these vulnerable groups.

The project involves the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development Malaysia, Petrosains - The Science Discovery Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Lancaster University, Sunway University in Malaysia and United Nations University - International Institute for Global Health in Malaysia.

Specifically, the project aims to (1) Support Malaysian government agencies to develop community-based engagement methods, using speculative design as a way to dealing with problems and creating solutions; (2) empower local communities by developing skills and knowledge for them to come together to support community-based care and ageing- in-place; (3) assess the impact of the change to ensure that the plans and programmes meet people's needs and are long- lasting in to the future, and (4) develop sustainable partnerships between key groups (government agencies, Non- Government Organisations, community-based groups) to carry on tackling the social issues faced by older persons and persons with disabilities.

All activities focus on UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals 16 (Inclusive Societies) and 3 (Health & Wellbeing) and will help support Malaysia in its drive to become an advanced economy and inclusive nation.

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