

RESCUING CHILDREN FROM POVERTY

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IN Malaysia, about 200,000 children live under the absolute poverty line and around two million are categorised as poor under the poverty line.

Sabah has the highest absolute poverty at 26 per cent, followed by Kelantan and Terengganu.

Seven per cent of children living in Kuala Lumpur's low-cost flats live in absolute poverty.

The most palpable effect of child poverty is malnourishment.

There is evidence that poor families force their children to get married early, depriving them of their childhood with adult responsibilities.

Young brides become victims of physical and sexual violence. There have been reports that child marriages don't last long, often leading to separation and divorce.

There must be a major step to tackle poverty among children.

Stakeholders can facilitate the policy and take part or pursue pro-

grammes to eradicate poverty.

To that end, our social welfare system must be strengthened, including expanding the service sector workforce.

One of the main causes of poverty is inequality. We should restructure resources to bridge the inequality gap.

Education and poverty are connected. Poor children miss out on an education when they have to work to support their families.

Without a source of financial sta-

bility, the young and poor generation continues to exist. It is a travesty because the key to eradicate poverty is through education.

Malaysia is a country with a large Muslim population and each year, the annual reports of zakat institutions highlight the significant increase in zakat collection.

Yet, how far has zakat collection solved the problem of poverty?

It is worth saying again that there must be a mechanism and strategy to

channel zakat wisely.

Even for needy non-Muslims, the money can be directed to them in the form of alms.

Poverty is not only about being hungry and homeless. It is more than that. Overcoming it will ensure people's dignity and access to a better life.

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