

HEALTH FINANCING SCHEMES IN MALAYSIA: THE NEED FOR THE POOR
AND THE UNEMPLOYED

By

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ABSTRACT

Since independence year in 1957, health sector development programmes have concentrated on improving the health of all Malaysians. The government, which is responsible for providing health care as stipulated in the Federal Constitution, has to ensure a more equitable distribution of services, and improve access to health care. One of the ways to promote good health care is by establishing health financing scheme to every Malaysian. There exist many schemes in Malaysia for workers in public sector and private sector. There is an urgent need to establish similar health financing scheme to the poor and the unemployed. This is to ensure no one will be ostracized in order to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. It is to be noted that the United Kingdom and Singapore have their own health financing schemes that cover all their citizens regardless of their status of life. The main objective of this research is to study the possibility of providing a health financing scheme to the poor and the unemployed in Malaysia by comparing the schemes with the United Kingdom and Singapore. Malaysia should develop its own scheme for the poor and the unemployed and thus uphold its concept of caring society as proposed under the 8th Malaysia Plan.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Development for health services in Malaysia is mainly under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. Malaysia generally has a two-tier healthcare system, consisting of both a government-run universal healthcare system and a co-existing private healthcare system. Malaysia has been continuously vigilant about its healthcare system. The presence of so many clinics, polyclinics, hospitals and medical centres, is enough to attest to the fact that Malaysia is serious about providing quality healthcare, not only to its citizens, but also to expatriates, tourists, migrant workers and visitors. Currently, Malaysia has 144 public hospitals and 122 private hospitals.¹ Malaysia is fortunate to have a very comprehensive range of healthcare services. The Malaysian government is very committed to its principles of universal access to high-quality healthcare, which the local Ministry of Health offers through a network of nationwide clinics and hospitals.

The former Prime Minister of Malaysia, YAB Dato' Seri Abdullah Bin Haji Ahmad Badawi had emphasized in his speech regarding the Ninth Malaysia Plan that the government's main aim is to improve healthcare services. He stated:

"Facilities for health care will be improved to provide for an active and alert society. Current facilities will be upgraded whilst new facilities will be built to provide a comprehensive package of services. This includes building 8 new hospitals, replacing 14 old hospitals and building specialist centres. Mobile clinics will be increased to improve healthcare services in rural areas. Primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare services will be integrated through an efficient and effective

¹ List of hospitals in Malaysia, available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_hospitals_in_Malaysia, accessed on 13 February 2011.