



PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE • 15 OCTOBER 2020

Mobilise for Sabah, Now

The Malaysian Health Coalition (MHC) is deeply concerned by the worsening Covid-19 situation in Sabah. While we laud increased Ministry of Health (MOH) mobilisation to the state with Malaysia's [highest poverty rates](#) and [some of the poorest health outcomes](#), we can and must do more.

We urge all leaders, decisionmakers and Malaysians to:

1. Provide overwhelming assistance

Many organisations, including MHC members, are sending assistance in the form of human capital, medical equipment and financial aid to Sabah. Reports from Sabah indicate a worsening situation that sometimes contradict official reassurances (as reported on [12 October 2020](#) and [14 October 2020](#)). The situation has been exacerbated by the rapid outbreak and infections among healthcare workers there. There have also been [reports](#) of an imminent shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and food insecurity in the rural areas. While much has been done, more must be done in resource mobilization and transparency. We must acknowledge the reports from Sabah, and provide surge healthcare support using a precautionary and public health principle.

2. Stay focused on Sabah

Sabah only has 12% of Malaysia's population, but is already seeing 35% of Malaysia's total Covid-19 cases and 27% of Malaysia's total deaths from Covid-19 ([as of 15 October 2020](#)). Not only are the cases the highest in Sabah, they are coming in a much shorter time period (measured in weeks) compared to other states (measured in months). In addition, more patients in Sabah appear to have worse disease ([as reported on 14 October 2020](#)). These numbers must serve as a harsh wake-up call for everyone to devote more attention and resources to Malaysia's poorest state. We have a collective responsibility to help our fellow Malaysians.

3. Act now, and also in the long-term

We must act now to save lives and stop the spread in Sabah. However, we must not forget Sabah even after this danger period is over. Prior to the pandemic, Sabah has significantly fewer health professionals and health facilities compared to other states ([Health Indicators 2019](#)). Sabah has one of the highest maternal mortality and childhood undernutrition rates in the country while also maintaining relatively poor health literacy ([National Health and Morbidity Survey 2019](#)). There is also a relatively high population of undocumented migrants and stateless persons in the state. These systemic factors affect the health of all Sabah residents. Therefore, our short-term response must also feature long-term health systems strengthening for all Sabah residents.

The sustained death rate in Sabah is our collective failure. Immediate action must be taken to contain the outbreak and equip Sabah's health system with sufficient resources to save lives.

BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA.

Malaysian Health Coalition

Full Signature List on myhealthcoalition.org.

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