

Government and Corporate Social Responsibility in Saving Livelihoods: Retrospective Lessons from Past COVID-19 Initiatives and Prospective Ways for Combating Future Pandemic

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MASA POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

POLICY BRIEF 28

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PREFACE

Institut Masa Depan Malaysia (MASA) is an independent think tank that brings together experts in government and academia to provide quality research, policy recommendations, and analysis on the full range of public policy issues guided by the shared prosperity values.

Since its inception, MASA has been actively involved in shaping national policies and frameworks. MASA Policy Development Programme (MPDP) was introduced as a pioneering initiative aimed at promoting policy research among researchers from public and private universities across the country, in alignment with the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, which are integrated with the 12th Malaysia Plan.

Through the MPDP 1.0 initiative, 30 Policy Briefs have been successfully produced, encompassing policy input and recommendations across sectors such as economics, social issues, education, and sustainable development.

MASA expresses its gratitude to Dr. Cheong Huey Fen and her team for the production of this policy brief. The commitment of the MPDP grant recipients, along with close cooperation with relevant stakeholders, is highly appreciated and is hoped to continue making a positive impact on national policy development.

Azril Mohd Amin

Chief Executive Officer

Institut Masa Depan Malaysia

ABOUT MASA

Institut Masa Depan Malaysia (MASA) is an independent think tank that brings together experts in government and academia to provide quality research, policy recommendations, and analysis on the full range of public policy issues guided by the shared prosperity values.

MASA was established in January 2019. The formation of the organisation was inspired and mandated by the Seventh Prime Minister, YABhg. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the Eighth Prime Minister, YB Tan Sri Dato' Haji Muhyiddin Bin Haji Md Yassin. It was founded out of a passion to forward the philosophy of shared prosperity in Malaysia and this region.

MASA also was commissioned by the government of Malaysia to author and develop the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 plan as the new socioeconomic plan for Malaysia.

Our Vision

To be a thought leader on policy ideas and analysis guided by shared prosperity values.

Our Mission

To create a world where no one is left behind by influencing policymakers to develop data-driven policies that ensure equitable wealth distribution and continuous improvement of people's well-being.

ABOUT MPDP

MASA Policy Development Programme (MPDP) is a pioneering effort in promoting policy research that has become part of MASA's flagship project, in line with the 12th Malaysia Plan which is aligned with the Shared Prosperity Vision and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The research grant, introduced for the first time in 2021, received an encouraging response public and private institutions of higher learning as well as non-governmental organizations.

MPDP researchers have produced studies across various strategic areas, including multidimensional poverty, education for the B40 group, sustainable urban planning for low-income communities, regional inclusivity in Sabah and Sarawak, social enterprise models for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), green economy potential and food security.

Other strategic areas of studies include empowerment of the ecotourism sector, climate change, health preparedness and crisis resilience, addressing learning loss, business acceleration, affordable housing and social protection.

All these are reflections of the initiatives and aspirations, inspired by the 8th Prime Minister and Chairman of MASA, Tan Sri Dato' Haji Muhyiddin bin Hj. Md. Yassin.

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NO	TITLE	PROJECT LEADER
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NO	TITLE	PROJECT LEADER
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21.	Ketahanan dan Kapasiti Adaptasi Sektor Ekopelancongan Terhadap Pandemik COVID-19: Kajian Kes Komuniti Setempat di Pulau Tioman	Dr. Siti Nor Liyana bt Harun
22.	Input Polisi Bagi Penyelesaian Kemiskinan Situasi Untuk Keperluan Pelan Pemulihan Negara (PPN)	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Wan Ahmad Amir Zal bin Wan Ismail
23.	Ruang Hijau Bandar Sebagai Indeks Untuk Dasar Kesihatan Mental Mampan Semasa Pandemik	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mohd Ramzi bin Mohd Hussain
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NO	TITLE	PROJECT LEADER
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28.	Government and Corporate Social Responsibilities for Malaysians' Livelihoods During COVID-19: A Retrospective and Prospective Reflective Analysis of Initiatives in 2020 and Beyond	Dr. Cheong Huey Fen
29.	Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): From STEM to Employability	Prof. Dr. Teoh Sian Hoon
30.	Big Data Analytics (BDA) Capability Model for SMEs: Post COVID-19	Dr. Mohammad Falahat

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BIOGRAPHY

CHEONG HUEY FEN

Cheong Huey Fen, a Senior Lecturer at Universiti Malaya, is an accomplished scholar with a Ph.D. in Linguistics from Lancaster University and a Master's degree with a perfect CGPA score of 4.0. She actively participates in professional societies and has contributed to research projects and impactful publications. As the co-editor of the 'COVID-19 in Malaysia' mini-series, she delves into cultural and gender-related topics. Her scholarly work reflects a global perspective and dedication to linguistic and cultural studies.

LIM WENG MARC

Lim Weng Marc, a renowned academic, currently serves as the Acting Dean for the Faculty of Business, Design, and Arts at Swinburne University. With a Ph.D. in Business and Economics from Monash University, he holds a remarkable academic track record. Notably, he is recognized as the Youngest Professor in the Malaysia Book of Records and has received the Ten Outstanding Young Malaysians accolade. His contributions extend to non-governmental organizations, and he actively participates in education, quality assurance, and discussions with prestigious bodies like the United Nations and the World Economic Forum. Additionally, Lim is a recipient of several teaching awards and has published research in educational practice and quantitative teaching evaluations.

NABILA HUDA IBRAHIM

Nabila Huda Ibrahim is a dedicated Graduate Research Assistant pursuing her Ph.D. in Social and Behavioral Studies at Universiti Malaya. She holds a Master's and a Bachelor's degree in Administrative Science from the University Technology of MARA, Shah Alam. With research experience at Malaysia-Korea Research Center and University of Technology MARA, her work focuses on areas such as employee creativity, innovation, and leadership. Nabila has actively presented her research at conferences and contributed to various publications. Beyond her academic pursuits, she has engaged in extracurricular activities and committee roles, showcasing a well-rounded academic career

Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented disruptions in socioeconomic functioning. One of the most prominent impacts of this global pandemic is the deterioration of livelihoods (plural; different types/aspects of livelihood).

The Malaysian government and corporations have responded with a myriad of initiatives to alleviate the negative impact of the pandemic on Malaysians' livelihoods.

This policy brief derives from a research project, in which findings offer retrospective insights on the government and corporate initiatives in saving Malaysians' livelihoods during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the process of recovering from the pandemic.

The retrospective insights herein are essential to better prepare Malaysia for future nationwide crisis management (e.g. future pandemics), if any. The policy brief also aims to provide valuable inputs in shaping prospective ways forward for socioeconomic recovery, which includes preparing the nation for future pandemics, i.e. building a pandemic-ready nation.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is a unique event in recent history that has given rise to the quarantine economy, wherein governments worldwide had to restrict intra- and inter-national mobility to curb the spread of COVID-19 (Lim, 2021).

The situation in Malaysia was no different, with multiple movement control orders (MCOs) being implemented, such as MCO, conditional MCO (CMCO), recovery MCO (RMCO), enhanced MCO (EMCO), and targeted MCO (TMCO), which led to different levels of restricting human mobility and activities (see Lim, 2022). All these led to huge economic damage that affected the people's livelihoods (see Lim, Kaur, Cheong, 2022; Cheong & Cheong, 2022).

As announced by the Malaysian Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, 1,246 businesses closed down and 10,317 individuals went bankrupt during the MCO period between March 2020 and July 2021 (reported by The Star, September 27, 2021).

As defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, livelihood encapsulates '(the way someone earns) the money people need to pay for food, a place to live, clothing, etc.' (retrieved online on June 26, 2022).

Hence, 'livelihood' refers to one's ability to pay for the basic necessities to survive. Notwithstanding the COVID-19 preventive measures to save lives, the Malaysian government and corporations have also implemented various initiatives to save livelihoods (Ibrahim, 2022; Lim, 2022).

This policy brief pluralises the term, i.e. livelihoods, to mean different types/aspects of livelihood that have been addressed by those initiatives. The COVID-19 pandemic has reaffirmed that the task of saving the people’s livelihoods in times of adversities is a joint responsibility, rather than the sole responsibility of either party (Lim et al., 2022).

Specifically, a government is responsible for the welfare of its citizens, whereas corporations have a social/moral duty to contribute and give back to the society (more commonly known as corporate social responsibility/CSR).

This policy brief presents the collection of initiatives from the Malaysian government and corporations to save the different livelihoods of Malaysians since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia in 2020.

The methodology underpinning the research project informing this policy brief is disclosed in the next section, followed by the findings/results and discussion of those initiatives. The final few sections address the relevant policies with critiques, implications, and (future) recommendations.

Key Messages and Recommendations

Recommendation 1

- Explore the feasibility of expanding Public-Private Partnership (PPP) with better coordination to promote intra- and inter-collaborations on initiatives to support Malaysian livelihoods.

Recommendation 2

- Explore the feasibility of expanding Keluarga Malaysia (KM) to promote and reward a culture of ground-up action to generate rapid responses to emergency needs affecting Malaysian livelihoods.

Recommendation 3

- Explore the feasibility of empowering National Social Policy to empower and educate the society about crisis management (as survivors), rather than solely depending on help (as victims).

Methodology

The research project (that informs this policy brief) adopted a five-step sequential approach:



First, a media survey was carried out in the first week of March 2022 (March 1 – 8) to compile and analyse a list of government and corporate initiatives from 2020 and beyond, which were/are dedicated to saving livelihoods in Malaysia in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The media survey involved news media, online websites, and corporations' annual reports.

Second, the first focus group discussions (FGD 1) were conducted with four (4) homogeneous subgroups, which represent academic experts, corporations, government, and non-government organisations/NGOs.

Each subgroup consisted of three (3) representing members. The homogeneous focus groups aimed to obtain experts' opinions and advice based on their respective social backgrounds and roles. The discussion mainly revolved around: 1) the past, current, and future COVID-19 livelihood initiatives collected in the media survey; and 2) the research conduct of the upcoming (email) interviews and the second focus group.

Third, email interviews were conducted with government agencies and corporations to find out the implementations of their COVID-19 livelihood initiatives – i.e. their challenges, successes, failures, impacts, and sustainability – to save livelihoods in Malaysia during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as in the process of recovering from the pandemic.

Fourth, the second focus group discussions (FGD 2) were conducted with two heterogeneous subgroups. Each subgroup combines academic, corporate, government, and NGO representatives.

The heterogeneous focus groups aimed to gather experts' and practitioners' from different social backgrounds and roles to discuss and even debate the implementation of those initiatives.

While FGD 1 was based on the types of livelihood initiatives that were collected from the media survey, this focus group discussion (FGD 2) was based on the implementation of livelihood initiatives which were collected from the email interviews.

Fifth, the policy brief has been developed to present the findings as well as critiques and implications for policy making to address discrepancies in the current system as well as better prepare Malaysia for future crisis management, if any.

Result and Discussion

As of March 8, 2022, the media survey identified 73 government/government agencies (including 33 state-specified government/government agencies) and 24 corporations in Malaysia, which provided COVID-19 livelihood initiatives in 2020 and beyond (see Tables 1 and 2).

Note:

Please be informed that the corporations in our research were only limited to those listed in Bursa Malaysia, also known as Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange (KLSE). Other non-KLSE's companies like small media enterprises/SMEs were not included. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the presented government/government agencies and corporations as well as their initiatives in this policy brief are based on what have been discovered in the media survey until March 8, 2022 (to the best of our knowledge). We apologise for any discrepancies, if any.

Table 1

Corporations (under KLSE Only) That Provided COVID-19 Livelihood Initiatives

Corporations (under KLSE only) that provided COVID-19 livelihood initiatives

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Axiata Group Berhad • CIMB Group Holdings Berhad • Dialog Group Berhad • DiGi.Com Berhad • Hartalega Holdings Berhad • Hong Leong Bank Berhad • IHH Healthcare Berhad • IOI Corporation Berhad • Kuala Lumpur Kepong Berhad • Maxis Berhad • Malayan Banking Berhad • MISC Berhad | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr D.I.Y. Group (M) Berhad • Nestle (Malaysia) Berhad • Public Bank Berhad • Petronas Dagangan Berhad • Petronas Chemicals Group Berhad • Press Metal Aluminium Holdings Bhd • PPB Group Berhad • RHB Bank Berhad • Sime Darby Berhad • Tenaga Nasional Berhad • Telekom Malaysia Berhad • Top Glove Corporation Berhad |
|--|--|

Table 2

Government/government Agencies That Provided COVID-19 Livelihood Initiatives

Federal Government/Government Agencies	State Government/Government Agencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Finance • EPF/KWSP • Bank Simpanan Nasional • Bank Negara Malaysia/Central Bank of Malaysia • Inland Revenue Board (LHDN) • Securities Commission (SC) • Digital Nasional Berhad • Prime Minister's Department • SME Bank • National Disaster Management Agency (NADMA) • Iskandar Region Development Authority (IRDA) • Malaysian Islamic Economic Development Foundation (YaPEIM) • Legal Affairs Division (BHEUU) COVID-19 Mediation Centre (under BHEUU) • Ministry of Communication and Multimedia • Malaysian Digital Economy Corporation • Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johor state government • Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Johor (MAINJ) • Johor State Education, Infrastructure, Heritage and Culture Committee • Melaka state government • Majlis Agama Islam Melaka (MAIM) • Negeri Sembilan state government • Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Sembilan • Lembaga Pelancongan Negeri Sembilan (LPNS) • Selangor state government • Lembaga Zakat Selangor • Yayasan Hijrah Selangor • MBI Selangor • Permodalan Negeri Selangor Berhad • Jawatankuasa Tetap Kesihatan Awam, Perpaduan, Pembangunan Wanita dan Keluarga Selangor • Perak state government • Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Melayu Perak • Pulau Pinang state government

Table 2 (continued)

Federal Government/Government Agencies	State Government/Government Agencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Entrepreneurship Development and Co-operatives (MEDAC) • TEKUN Nasional • SME Corporation Malaysia • Bank Kerjasama Rakyat Malaysia Berhad • Uda Holdings Berhad • National Entrepreneurship Institute (Institut Keusahawanan Negara, INSKEN) • Ministry of Higher Education • National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN) • Skim Simpanan Pendidikan Nasional (under PTPTN) • Ministry of Transportation • Prasarana Malaysia Berhad • Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development • Community Welfare Department (JKM) • Yayasan Kebajikan Negara 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kedah state government • Unit Pembangunan Usahawan Kedah • Perlis state government • Kelantan state government • Majlis Adat Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Kelantan • Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Negeri Kelantan • Kelantan State Unity, Culture, Heritage and Tourism committee • Terengganu state government • Yayasan Pembangunan Keluarga Terengganu • Yayasan Pembangunan Usahawan Terengganu • Pahang state government • Sabah state government • Sabah State Community Development and People's Well-being Ministry (KPMKR) • Sabah Commercial Vehicle Licensing Board (CVLB)

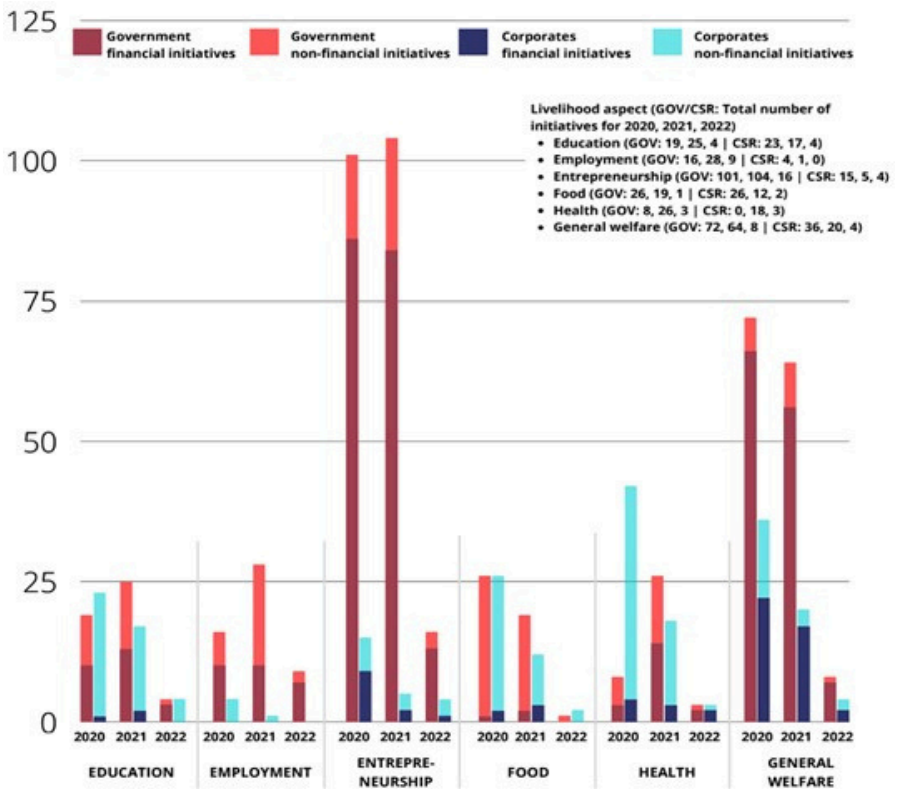
Table 2 (continued)

Federal Government/Government Agencies	State Government/Government Agencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Rural Development • Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) • Ministry of Health • Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources (KeTSA) • Ministry of Human Resources • Social Security Organisation (SOCSSO/PERKESO) • Human Resources Development Corporation (HRD Corp) • Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs • Companies Commission (SSM) • Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries • Ministry of Housing and Local Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarawak state government • Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Industrial Terminal and Entrepreneur Development Sarawak (MINTRED)

Figure 1 and Table 3 below summarise COVID-19 livelihood initiatives from the government and corporations, which were provided in financial and non-financial forms.

Figure 1

COVID-19 Livelihood Initiatives from Malaysian Government and Corporations



Note:

(1) The calculation of initiatives

Please be informed that the calculation of initiatives was based on the six (6) livelihood aspects and two (2) initiative forms (i.e. financial or non-financial forms), not only based on the number of initiative programmes.

Hence, if one (1) initiative programme addresses more than one (1) livelihood aspects and/or forms of initiatives, it will be counted as more than one (1) initiative. However, such a calculation does not consider the amount of aid provided (financial and non-financial) per initiative.

(2) Less livelihood initiatives in education and health aspects

As the project focuses on livelihood (see the definition of 'livelihood' in the Introduction section), not all COVID-19 initiatives related to education and health will be considered. Only limited to those addressing and helping one's livelihood.

Table 3

Government's (G) and Corporations' (C) Different Forms of Initiatives in Saving Livelihoods in Malaysia Due to COVID-19

Livelihood	Financial Initiatives
Education (Immediate, Recovery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loan, Tax (G) • Financial aid (G,C)
Employment (Immediate, Recovery)	<p><u>For employer</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wage subsidy, Hiring incentive, Training incentive / subsidy, Tax deduction / exemption, Job seeker incentive, EPF contribution (G) <p><u>For employee</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowance, Salary increase, Transportation incentive, EPF reduction (G) <p><u>For job seeker</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job search allowance, Incentive (G)
Entrepreneurship (Immediate, Recovery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business registration and license, Permit, Rental, Tax, Utility (G) • Digital support, Financial aid, Loan (G,C)
Food (Survival)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial aid (G,C)
Health (Survival)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax (G) • Financial aid (G,C) • Vaccination support (C)
General welfare (Immediate, Recovery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPF, Transportation (G) • Digital support, Financial aid, Financing facility, Home ownership assistance, Loan, Rental, Tax, Utility (G,C) • Financing facility (C)

Table 3 (continued)

Livelihood	Non-Financial Initiatives
Education (Immediate, Recovery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food supply, Informational support, Transportation (G) • Digital support, Medical supplies, Programs, School equipment (G,C) • Learning materials, Medical equipment (C)
Employment (Immediate, Recovery)	<p><u>For employers and job seekers (job portal upgrade).</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital support (G) <p><u>For job seekers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training, Job opportunity, Apprenticeship programme (G,C) • Internship programme (C)
Entrepreneurship (Immediate, Recovery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appliances, Food supply, Policy, Skill development (G) • Digital support, Informational support, Promotion (G,C) • Medical supplies (C)
Food (Survival)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food supply (G,C)
Health (Survival)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outbreak management (G) • Medical supplies, Psychological support, Transportation, Vaccination support (G,C) • Blood donation, Food supply, Medical equipment, Quarantine facility (C)
General welfare (Immediate, Recovery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appliances, Shelter (G) • Digital support, Essential items, Informational support (G,C) • Facility, Programs, Transportation (C)

Key findings from the media survey (in consultation with media reports and participants of Focus Group 1):

(1) COVID-19 livelihood initiatives from the government and corporations address six (6) aspects: education, employment, entrepreneurship, food, health, and general welfare.

(2) In addressing those aspects, government and corporate initiatives seemed to overlap with one another, with a mere few initiatives conducted through collaborations (between the government and corporations), while mostly in silos (by either one of them).

(3) Government initiatives are mostly in financial forms, whereas corporate initiatives are mostly non-financial. For corporations, this may be due to greater complexity in accountability, business ethics, and corporate governance associated with financial initiatives. Nevertheless, the government promoted the use of e-wallets when providing financial aid to avoid physical contact, e.g. the eBelia programme (as reported in The Sun, June 17, 2021).

(4) Government and corporate livelihood initiatives seem to have evolved based on the current needs. Nevertheless, in general, the government initiatives concentrated more on entrepreneurship and employment, whereas corporate initiatives focused on food, health, education, and general welfare.

(5) In terms of the forms of initiatives, many Malaysians expressed a preference for cash transfers over item donations such as food baskets (e.g. reasons include perishability, incompatible dietary, lack of nutrition, etc.) (as reported in Utusan Malaysia and Malaysia Gazette in July 2021).

(6) Due to digitalisation and digital acceleration in many aspects of life after COVID-19, both government and corporations have prioritised digital support as the key non-financial initiative across different aspects of livelihood, except food and health that cannot be digitalised.

Table 4 below summarises the email interview responses from the government and corporations, who reflected on their COVID-19 livelihood initiatives.

Table 4

Government and Corporate Reflection on Initiatives to Save Livelihoods in Malaysia due to COVID-19 in 2020 and Beyond

Initiative contributor → Point of reflection ↓	Government	Corporation
Reflection of livelihood initiatives (Implementation and successfulness of livelihood initiatives)		
Difficulty level	<p>Most initiatives were found to be manageable.</p> <p>Reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experienced in conducting such initiatives. • Initiatives are one-off. • Reliable workforce and system. <p>Few challenges were encountered.</p> <p>Reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of digitalisation in many government agencies. • Lack of access to reliable database in many government agencies • Lack of coordination for collaborative initiatives across government agencies. • Lack of manpower in some government agencies. • Resistance towards transitioning to online services in some government agencies. 	<p>Most initiatives were found to be manageable.</p> <p>Reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enough manpower, resources, and great morale among employees. • Great on-ground support and support from other organisations (for collaborative initiatives). • Straightforward process. <p>Few challenges were encountered.</p> <p>Reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 SOPs impediment. • Supplier chain issues for some corporations.

Table 4 (continued)

Initiative contributor → Point of reflection ↓	Government	Corporation
Targeted outcome	Overall, both government and corporations achieved most of their targeted impacts and outcomes.	
Satisfaction	<p>Satisfied: Managed to help Malaysian livelihoods with minimal complaints. However, digitalisation is a pertinent issue across many government agencies.</p> <p>Neutral: Some of the unachieved outcomes were due to issues from external parties, not the agency's.</p>	<p>Extremely satisfied and satisfied. Even though some organisations could not document their achievements in detail, overall, they could see the positive outcome based on the beneficiaries' and communities' response.</p>
R.O.A.R (Resilience, Opportunities/Optimism, Adaptability/Agility, and Recovery) of livelihood initiatives		
Resilience	<p>Several challenges that could affect resilience were raised, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of a holistic plan that caters to ad hoc situations. • Another pandemic shock and/or natural disasters. • Disengagement between internal and external stakeholders. • Ensuring the planned initiatives do not contradict current acts/policies. • Inefficient transition towards digitalisation. • Insufficient funds and resources. • Lack of access to reliable databases. • Lack of manpower. • Political and economic instability. 	<p>There needs to be a way to verify the beneficiaries as some are dishonest about their conditions.</p> <p>To develop relevant and successful programmes for the targeted communities, full support from every party involved is required.</p> <p>Pursuing a cost-sharing strategy by collaborating with other organisations on programmes can improve budget resilience.</p>

Table 4 (continued)

Initiative contributor → Point of reflection ↓	Government	Corporation
<p>Opportunity/ Optimism</p>	<p>Government agencies are optimistic in developing and implementing initiatives to protect the livelihoods of the people for various encouraging reasons, with enthusiasm to maintain these initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement and pride of having the responsibility as government agencies. • Initiatives related to training and lifelong learning are market needs. • Majority of initiatives really helped the people, hence they should be continued. • Recovery phase not as restrictive as early COVID-19 days. • Taxes operate as usual despite the pandemic/natural disasters, so initiatives related to taxes need to be sustained. <p>Challenges as opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inefficient digitalisation as motivation to strive for a better transition to digital technology. • The pandemic motivates the need of a nation that does not depend on subsidies • Health issues (physical and mental) during the pandemic motivates the strive for a nation with a healthier lifestyle. 	<p>Corporations are highly encouraged and optimistic for the continuation of existing initiatives or pursuit of new initiatives due to the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affected communities need help and it is the social/moral duty of corporations to provide assistance and support. • In line with organizational aspiration to give back and engage in CSR. • Strong support from senior management. <p>Challenges as opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges are taken positively as corporations believe that challenges enable them to continuously learn and improve their programme's approach and method to achieve their goals.

Table 4 (continued)

Initiative contributor → Point of reflection ↓	Government	Corporation
Agility/ Adaptability	<p>Government agencies concurred that agility/adaptability can be improved with the following suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An agile workforce (workers should be more flexible in changing roles, which solves the issue of lack of manpower). • Greater collaboration with corporations (private sectors/industries). • More rigorous transition towards digitalisation of government services. 	<p>Corporations concurred that agility/adaptability can be improved with the following suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgeting and planning of initiatives within the organization's financial capability. • Prioritising target beneficiaries, locations, and activities.
Recovery	<p>The government agencies' roles in recovery differ according to their respective visions and missions. Their focused livelihood aspects range from employment and education to general welfare and entrepreneurship.</p> <p>Nevertheless, one government agency may focus on more than one aspect of livelihood</p>	<p>Most organisations agree that employability would be the main aspect of livelihood they are addressing. They do this by providing people with job opportunities or equipping people with skill and knowledge to generate income.</p>

Key findings from the email interviews (in consultation with participants of Focus Group 2):

(1) Government agencies and corporations have positively embraced their social/moral duties to support the livelihoods of Malaysians in times of adversities, despite the various challenges they faced in implementing their noble initiatives. They also demonstrated a positive mindset in seeing challenges as opportunities for learning and improvement.

(2) Multiple success stories are evident on the impact of livelihood initiatives rolled out by government agencies and corporations.

(3) Notwithstanding the positive development and implementation of livelihood initiatives, continuing and scaling the success of existing and future initiatives will depend on several key enabling factors, including:

- Coordinated intra- and inter- public and private collaborations (i.e., avoid redundancies, leverage strengths and resources, and ensure inclusive coverage through collaborations within and between government agencies and corporations – e.g., government standard operating procedures/SOPs can be better coordinated among government agencies to avoid confusion, government agencies can collaborate with NGOs to mobilize initiatives on the ground, and

- *Tolong-menolong* can be scaled to encourage supporting small businesses by purchasing food and non-food stock from them in helping end beneficiaries) (impact: resilience, recovery).
- Culture shaping and reinforcement (e.g., encouraging beneficiaries to be committed to initiatives meant to support their livelihoods, reaffirming positive reinforcement of good initiatives by beneficiaries and senior management, promoting Kita Jaga Kita culture) (impact: resilience, opportunity/optimism, recovery).
- Curation of empowering solutions (i.e., mitigate reliance on handouts and promote proactive self-sustaining capabilities and supports) (impact: resilience, recovery).
- End-to-end digitalisation (i.e. digitalisation across the board, ensuring that no entity gets left behind in digital transformation, and enabling government agencies and corporations to better prioritize and more accurately target deserving beneficiaries) (impact: resilience, agility/adaptability, recovery).
- Scenario planning (e.g. prioritising target beneficiaries, locations, and activities based on needs, mindful budgeting and planning of government and corporate social responsibility initiatives) (impact: opportunity/optimism, agility/adaptability, recovery).

- Versatile workforce (i.e. the ability to work under pressure, work harder, take on new tasks and operate outside of comfort zones) (impact: resilience, agility/adaptability, recovery).

(4) Future policies can adopt a framework-based and systems approach to ensure all possible aspects that need to be considered are well identified, synthesized, and actioned. The R.O.A.R. (Resilience, Opportunities/Optimism, Adaptability/Agility, and Recovery) model is exemplary, but alternative models should also be explored.

(5) Stronger governance and accountability should be enacted, monitored, and reported, so that misappropriation/leakages and redundancies, if any, can be identified, remedied, and mitigated in the future.

Critique of Current Policy Practice and Its Implication

(A) Positive Critique

(1) Government's willingness to spend

Government's willingness to spend billions (>RM500 billion) as an economic stimulus to support the livelihood of Malaysians during and in the process of recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic is highly commendable, most of which were allocated during the era of the 8th Prime Minister of Malaysia YAB Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin (e.g., PRIHATIN, PRIHATIN SME+, PENJANA, KITA PRIHATIN, PERMAI, PEMERKASA) and continued to be implemented and strengthened by the 9th Prime Minister of Malaysia YAB Dato' Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob as a result of a smooth transition of power despite political unrest.

(2) Corporations' readiness

Corporations' readiness to engage in corporate social responsibility/CSR to give back and support the livelihoods of Malaysians in various ways that responsively evolved according to the needs of the people despite their own financial challenges during and in the process of recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic is highly commendable.

(3) Government-corporate partnerships

Government-corporate partnerships (also private-public partnerships), though a mere few cases, are highly commendable (e.g. Jaringan Prihatin by the government and 12 telcos and service providers, and the Ministry of Finance-Axiata Group's microfinancing for SMEs).

(4) Adaptability

Adaptability and agility of both the government and corporations are highly commendable, as they initiated, modified/adapted, reduced, and even, ended initiatives based on the people's current needs. For example, the government emphasised employment and entrepreneurship in the first two years with lockdowns (2020 and 2021) and decreased in 2022. As for corporations, their initiatives focused more on health to save lives first during the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, but gradually shifted to other aspects later to save livelihoods which have been impacted by COVID-19.

(B) Negative Critique

(1) Possible imbalance, negligence, and inequality in addressing ALL in need

The government and corporate initiatives often focus on the needs of B40, with the needs of M40 as well as the potential to support and leverage off T20 being overlooked. Besides different socioeconomic statuses, the government and corporations need to consider the needs of the people from various aspects (e.g. different regions, races, sexes, age groups, etc). People from Klang Valley (urban areas surrounding federal territories, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya) may have a greater advantage, as most government agencies and corporations are based there and their initiatives are often not regional-specific (i.e. open to everyone), except those from the state government.

(2) Government-corporate partnerships (also private-public partnerships) are not omnipresent

Majority of initiatives rolled out in silos, which may result in duplication of similar efforts or redundancy to certain communities while missing other needs and communities. Similarly, the corporate-corporate partnerships or teamwork are not omnipresent. Nevertheless, the GLC/GLIC Disaster Response Network (GDRN) is a good start, starting from the Government-Linked Companies (GLC) and Government-Linked Investment Companies (GLIC).

(3) Possible mismatches between the initiatives and the people's needs

The people appear to exhibit a preference for cash over perishable food. This indicates a need to periodically check in on people's needs from people's voices on the ground and shape initiatives meant to improve their livelihoods accordingly.

(4) Outdated and scattered database. The government agencies' databases seem to be outdated and scattered.

Most were collected in silos due to data protection policy/PDPA. This slowed down the process of giving aids among the helping parties (e.g. the government, corporations/CSR, and NGOs), as they needed to identify the beneficiaries, i.e. the people in need of the aid.

(5) No centralised database and system

This resulted in the lack of coordination among the stakeholders. There is no centralised database and system among the helping parties (e.g. government, corporations, and NGOs), which affected their effectiveness in delivering aids. Without good coordination, this may also result in aids being delivered repeatedly to certain regions and groups of people only, while other regions and groups of people get neglected.

(6) Bureaucracy

The involvement of too many parties in the bureaucracy and tender systems costs more time, money, and manpower, which can be better utilised to help more people. This issue usually applies to the government agencies. The bureaucracy system requires different stages (and parties) to give instructions (top down) and to get approval (down top), in order to realise an initiative. The tender system will incur a higher cost than the supplier price, as the stakeholders not only pay for the aids, but also the service of the contractors.

Summary of Policy Implications

Five overarching policy implications are apparent based on the media survey, email interviews, focus group discussions, and policy critiques of government and corporate responsibility initiatives dedicated to saving Malaysian livelihoods:

(1) There is potential to expand the scope of existing policy mechanisms such as Public-Private Partnership (PPP) and Keluarga Malaysia (KM).

(2) There is potential to further empower and scale the function of existing policy mechanisms such as MyDIGITAL and National Social Policy.

(3) There is potential to reimagine and reshape existing policy mechanisms such as Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA), National Recovery Council (MPN), and National Education Blueprint (NEB).

(4) There is potential to reintroduce with a renewed focus defuncted policy mechanisms such as Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU).

(5) There is potential to introduce new policy mechanisms such as Social Security System (SSS) and Internet Access for All Policy.

Policy Recommendations

Ten policy recommendations are offered based on the overarching policy implications emerging from the media survey, email interviews, focus group discussions, and policy critiques of government and corporate responsibility initiatives dedicated to saving Malaysian livelihoods:

- (1) Explore the feasibility of expanding Public-Private Partnership (PPP) with better coordination to promote intra- and inter-collaborations on initiatives to support Malaysian livelihoods. The GLC/GLIC Disaster Response Network (GDRN) (Yayasan Hasanah & Yayasan TM) is an exemplary model of government-CSR partnership and collaboration.
- (2) Explore the feasibility of expanding Keluarga Malaysia (KM) to promote and reward a culture of ground-up action to generate rapid responses to emergency needs affecting Malaysian livelihoods.
- (3) Explore the feasibility of empowering National Social Policy to empower and educate the society about crisis management (as survivors), rather than solely depending on help (as victims).
- (4) Explore the feasibility of establishing a Social Security System (SSS) that scaffolds deserving communities from welfare payments and training to employment or entrepreneurship. Awards and recognitions can be provided to government agencies and corporations that proactively develop initiatives to seek out and reintegrate deserving communities back into the workforce.

(5) Explore the feasibility of empowering and ramping up MyDIGITAL in accelerating Malaysia's digital transformation, so that work to improve Malaysian livelihoods is more effective and scalable. A particular focus will be to get all government agencies, corporations, and Malaysians on board to empower a one-stop big data centre that can be leveraged for better targeting and follow up of beneficiaries. Nevertheless, this needs to align with the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA).

(6) Explore the feasibility of revisiting and revising the existing Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) to allow a secure sharing of certain parts of databases (of beneficiaries/people in need) among trusted parties in government agencies, non-government agencies/NGOs, and corporations that provide livelihood assistance.

(7) Explore the feasibility of establishing an Internet Access for All Policy for a more inclusive measure that provides everyone access to the livelihood initiatives, which implementations are increasingly digitalised.

(8) Explore the feasibility of extending the role of the National Recovery Council (MPN) from government advisory to a national think tank that delivers best practice guidance and training for scenario planning to government agencies and corporations. The purpose is to improve Malaysia's preparedness, agility, and resilience against unforeseen externalities such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

(9) Explore the feasibility of reinstating the Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU) with a renewed focus on external engagement (e.g., big data analytics periodic reporting of people's needs and state of livelihood) and impact measurement (e.g., impact of livelihood initiatives and Public-Private Partnership/PPP).

(10) Explore the feasibility of reshaping the Malaysian National Education Blueprint (NEB) to embed versatility as a core focus in order to produce a versatile talent pool to overcome ad-hoc and periodic manpower shortages.

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