

**SUMMARY FINDINGS VIRTUAL MEETING:
CHALLENGES AND NEEDS OF THE REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS DURING MOVEMENT CONTROL ORDER (MCO) AMID COVID-19
PANDEMIC
ISSUES/CHALLENGES AND WAYS TO OVERCOME**

BIL	ISSUES/CHALLENGES	SUGGESTED WAYS TO OVERCOME
1.	<p>Covid-19 Screening Tests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The number of refugees and asylum seekers who came forward for the Covid-19 screening tests has increased, especially among those who have attended Tabligh program at Petaling Jaya. ii. However, there is persistent fear of getting arrest among refugees and asylum seekers due to their legal status and this hinders their visit to hospitals for screenings. iii. The community also worried that coming forward in this period will lead the authorities to conduct raids at their settlement and arrest them after the crisis is over. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Government has announced that that refugees and asylum seekers without legal document will not be arrested and call upon them to come forward for Covid-19 screening. This message should be communicated effectively to all refugees and asylum seekers for them to come forward without any fear. ii. Government aid and assistance such food supply and health screening for the community should be conducted via local NGOs because they know the exact location of these communities. This will also allay the fear of any crackdown after the crisis.
2.	<p>Access to Government’s Aid, Assistances and Food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Refugees and asylum seekers have no direct access to food supply and having hard time in receiving food related aid and assistances. They are facing more problems especially during this crisis in finding food supplies. There were NGOs who took initiatives to deliver food supplies to the community. However, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Government must announce that all parties who are providing aid and assistance to communities must work via Department of Social Welfare Malaysia (JKM). Therefore, Government shall register all NGOs who have been helping the refugees and asylum seekers without much bureaucracy and their services should be listed as essential services. This must be

	<p>some of them have been stopped by the authorities from delivering food supplies to the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. The NGOs have limited funds and have been operating within limited resources to provide aid. iii. As we know, refugees and asylum seekers do not enjoy right to work. Thus, many of them had to work at informal sector for daily wage for their income. The MCO which was implemented since 18 March 2020, has severely affected their income and hence their access to food is limited. There were no aid delivered to them. 	<p>communicated with all agencies for better coordination and delivery of aid.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. Government must allocate special funds and work together with the NGOs who have been helping the refugees and asylum seekers. The fund allocation for NGOs will ensure achieving government's pledge that <i>'No one will be left behind'</i>. This is extremely crucial because this community is already vulnerable and loss of income during MCO has amplified the problem.
<p>3.</p>	<p>Cleanliness and sanitization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Refugees and asylum seekers are living in a confined space. Their houses were built close to one another and it is crowded where more than one family (3-4 families) have been staying in a house. Living in a confined space will leave impact on cleanliness and it is problematic to maintain social distancing in this environment. ii. Refugees and asylum seekers who have been held at the detention centers are also facing the similar overcrowding and hygiene problem. If they are not provided with personal hygiene items and sanitizers, this may lead to risk of infectious diseases including Covid-19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Government, especially, Ministry of Health Malaysia (KKM), must work hand in hand with the NGOs to provide health related services for the refugees and asylum seekers. Their housing settlements especially the high-risk areas should be disinfected. ii. Government also must ensure that the community are provided with hygiene items such as face masks, soaps or sanitizers during this MCO period. iii. Ministry of Home Affairs on the other hand, shall ensure that all Immigration Detention Centres (IDCs) are supplied with hygiene items and sanitizers for the consumption of the detainees. Generally, the IDCs are

		<p>confronted with lack of hygiene and sanitization items for both detainees and staffs.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Difficulties in paying housing rents and utility bills</p> <p>i. As mentioned before, many of the refugees and asylum seekers worked at informal sectors for their income. During MCO they were unable to work, and they lost the income. Hence, they have been facing risk of forced eviction by landlords due to their inability to pay rental and utility bills.</p>	<p>i. Government must make initiative to set aside allocation for the refugee communities in order to assist them during MCO.</p> <p>ii. Government with cooperation with NGOs/ CSOs shall provide temporary shelter to those without permanent housing and those facing risk of forced eviction by landlords.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Detention of Refugees and Asylum Seekers and Overcrowding at the Immigration Detention Center</p> <p>i. It has been reported that that law enforcement agencies are still arresting refugees and asylum seekers during the MCO. The arrests were made as a result to the compliance of the MCO and due to their legal status. This series of arrest without any health screening would increase the number of detainees in detention centers and the risk of Covid-19 outbreaks in the detention centres.</p> <p>ii. The IDCs where refugees and asylum seeker are held are overcrowded and overpopulated. The current</p>	<p>i. Law enforcement agencies especially the Immigration and Police should have clear work coordination and directive during MCO period. The arrests of refugees and asylum seekers due to the lack of documentation should be deposed. A thorough health screening should be conducted if one is arrested due to other offenses. The detainee must be isolated from the rest until the result of health screening is obtained.</p> <p>ii. The Government should allow access to United Nations High Commission for Refugee (UNHCR) into IDCs for assessment process – to determine if the detainees are indeed persons of concerned and to release them if they are confirmed to be refugees or</p>

	<p>high density would increase the risk of Covid-19 outbreaks and spread of other infectious diseases.</p>	<p>asylum seekers. This would alleviate the overcrowding problem at the IDCs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. The government should consider releasing prisoners and detainees in prisons and other detention facilities. Priority can be given to those arrested or sentenced for minor offences, those with chronic illness and mental problem. iv. The Government must ensure that refugees and asylum seekers detained by authorities have access legal aid and assistance. v. The Government should implement Alternative to Immigration Detention (ATD) especially to children and unaccompanied minors . Additionally, guardian accompanying children and pregnant woman should be released to families or communities willing to adopt them.
<p>6.</p>	<p>The Lack of Multilingual Information on Covid-19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Refugees and asylum seekers who consist of different nationalities and speak in various languages. They might experience difficulties in understanding information related to Covid-19 in Malay or English. This would lead them to confusion on how to address the spreading of disease and outbreak among them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Government in cooperation with stakeholders including NGOs, societies and communities should raise awareness on how to address the outbreaks of Covid-19 in various languages to refugees and asylum seekers. Agencies like IOM, UNHCR and other NGOs have prepared information in various languages and the Government may collaborate with them in circulating the materials.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. Distribution of brochures or pamphlets in various languages to the community of refugees and asylum seekers is important especially for those living in rural regions and lack access to means of communication. iii. Authorities issuing orders or those in-charge in the investigation of cases related to refugees and asylum seekers should employ an interpreter or find alternatives to ensure that information or directives given to refugees and asylum seekers are well understood.
7.	Domestic and Sexual Violence to Women and Mental Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Domestic and sexual violence grows rapidly during MCO period. ii. Mental health issue increases tremendously since communities must contain themselves in a confined and small house. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Services to address domestic and sexual violence to women must be categorized as essential services.
8.	Boat Arrival through Waters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. In 2020, three boats carrying the Rohingyas arrived in Malaysian waters. Refugees and others who arrived through Malaysian waters could possibly spread Covic-19 if left without proper screening. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Government with cooperation of NGO for humanitarian aids to Rohingyas are aiding those arrived in Malaysian waters. It is hoped that the cooperation between Government and NGO could be extended to early health screening to record health background of the refugees and their condition

		<p>during arrival. NGOs have deep understanding on the language, culture and background of refugees and it will facilitate early screenings.</p> <p>ii. On the other hand, the Government must allow the United Nations High Commission for Refugee (UNHCR) to process the documentation for the newly arrived groups. Those who are recognized as refugees must be released to their community without undergoing detention in the Immigration Detention Center. In the meantime, they can be sheltered in quarantine centers or shelter houses according to what has been agreed with NGOs.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) – Fair and Equal Treatment</p> <p>i. According to a recent announcement made by the Prime Minister on the Economic Stimulus Package, it says that no one will be left behind. However, refugees and asylum seekers do not receive any assistance from the Government. It leaves them to live in poverty and stress.</p>	<p>i. The Government should pay attention to refugees and asylum seekers who have also been affected during the MCO period.</p> <p>ii. The Government needs to have a policy framework; a strategic program to help refugees and asylum seekers to at least have access to necessities especially food and shelter.</p> <p>iii. The Government should work with bodies related to refugees and asylum seekers to identify and find solutions to the existing gaps.</p> <p>iv. The Government should strive to make the supply of raw food available in the market or in retail outlets. Bodies that provide welfare services in times of crisis</p>

should be able to provide a consistent and substantial supply of raw food to those in need.