

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

QFFD Humanitarian Clinic - Healthcare for Refugees in Malaysia

AMPANG, SELANGOR, 19 Dec 2019...In an effort to implement Universal Health Coverage as recommended by the World Health Organisation, Qatar Charity (QC) and Yayasan Kebajikan Negara (YKN) launches its first clinic in Malaysia to cater to the healthcare needs of refugees in Malaysia. The opening ceremony of the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) Humanitarian Clinic was officiated by Dato' Dr Ahmad Faizal Mohd Perdaus, President of MERCY Malaysia; Datin Paduka Che Asmah Ibrahim, CEO of Yayasan Kebajikan Negara; and Mr. Karam Zeinhom Aly, Country Director of Qatar Charity in Malaysia.

The three-year project, which is fully funded by QFFD, will be rolled out in collaboration with three leading medical relief NGOs - Malaysian Medical Relief Society (MERCY Malaysia), Islamic Medical Association of Malaysia (IMARET) and Malaysian Relief Agency (MRA), with support from the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

A first of its kind, the clinic will offer Primary Healthcare Services, which includes outpatient treatment, vaccinations and health education programmes in order to effectively address the comprehensive health needs of refugees. This will enable them to be transferred to their third country for resettlement or to return to their own country after the conflict. The project also aims to reduce the healthcare burden of the Malaysian healthcare system in the long run.

Malaysia is host to many refugees and migrants from all over the world such as Myanmar, Syria, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Somalia, and more. There are over 180,000 refugees and asylum seekers registered with UNHCR in Kuala Lumpur, with many more unregistered.

As Malaysia does not ratify the 1951 United Nations Convention related to the Status of Refugees, the country does not recognise refugee status. In the absence of a national legislative and administrative framework, refugees are considered undocumented (or illegal immigrants), under the 1959/1963 Immigration Act. However, under Directive 23 issued by the National Security Council, the Person of Concern is protected against arrest.

"With this clinic, we hope to prevent disease complications and over-crowding at government hospitals. In the medium and long term, we aim to effectively address potential public health problems such as disease outbreaks. We thank QFFD and QC for their invaluable support in this initiative," says Datin Paduka Che Asmah, who also lauds MERCY Malaysia for their relentless efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the nation.

In his welcome address, Dato' Dr Ahmad Faizal explains that the project is a tripartite initiative between the government, local NGO partners and international agency. "It is a collaborative effort across several levels, including the potential beneficiaries themselves," he says, adding that Ampang was chosen as the location of the first clinic upon consultations and discussions with refugee communities.

In the next three years, another four clinics offering Primary Healthcare Services will be opened, while four mobile clinics will be operated in areas with high refugee and migrant populations across Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Kedah, Johor, Kelantan and Terengganu. The entire project is estimated to benefit an estimated 120,000 refugees in the country.

The project will complement and reinforce UNHCR services by bringing healthcare to refugees who are unable to seek medical care due to various reasons, including lack of transportation, poverty, being bedridden and poor knowledge.

“Bringing the clinic to refugees is one of Malaysia’s international burden-sharing initiatives to provide humanitarian assistance to the Rohingyas and other refugees. We hope that this project will not only fulfil the healthcare needs of refugees, but also addresses other problems they face in the country,” concludes Datin Paduka Che Asmah.

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