



WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

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I. INTRODUCTION

13.01 During the Eighth Plan period, women continued to make tangible contributions towards the social and economic development of the nation. Women attained higher levels of education, increased their participation in the labour force and were involved in various business activities.

13.02 During the Ninth Plan period, efforts will be undertaken to provide an enabling environment to ensure more effective participation of women in national development. Women will be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to be more competitive and versatile to meet the challenges of a knowledge-based economy.

II. PROGRESS, 2001-2005

13.03 Women participated and made contributions in various fields of national development, through greater participation in the labour market as well as improved access to education. These were made possible through, among others, changes to the legal and institutional framework, including an amendment to the Federal Constitution, increased employability through higher educational attainment as well as the implementation of gender-sensitive policies and programmes.

Population, Labour Force and Employment

13.04 The size of the female population increased at an average rate of 2.5 per cent per annum and accounted for 48.7 per cent of the total population in 2005, as shown in *Table 13-1*. The proportion of the female population aged 65 years and above increased from 2.1 per cent in 2000 to 2.3 per cent in 2005, largely due to improvements in life expectancy.

TABLE 13-1

POPULATION STRUCTURE BY GENDER, 2000 AND 2005

	2000		2005	
	Number ('000)	%	Number ('000)	%
Population	23,495	100.0	26,748	100.0
Male	11,981	51.0	13,728	51.3
0 - 14 years	4,116	17.5	4,498	16.8
15 - 64 years	7,429	31.6	8,690	32.5
65 and above	436	1.9	540	2.0
Female	11,514	49.0	13,020	48.7
0 - 14 years	3,887	16.5	4,222	15.8
15 - 64 years	7,131	30.4	8,188	30.6
65 and above	496	2.1	610	2.3
Life Expectancy (years)				
Male		70.0		70.6
Female		75.1		76.4

Source: Economic Planning Unit

13.05 Women accounted for 48 per cent of the working age population of 15-64 years. During the Plan period, the female labour force participation rate increased from 44.7 per cent in 2000 to 45.7 per cent in 2005. The number of women employed during the Plan period increased from 3.3 million in 2000 to 3.9 million in 2005, as shown in *Table 13-2*. Its share to total employment increased from 35.6 per cent to 36.7 per cent during the same period. Women were mainly involved in the manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade as well as the agriculture sectors.

13.06 In terms of occupational structure, a higher percentage of women was employed in high-paying occupations, mainly due to improvements in their educational attainment. The proportion of women in the senior officials and managers category increased from 4.8 per cent in 2000 to 5.4 per cent in 2005, as shown in *Table 13-3*. In the professional category, women were mainly employed as doctors, dentists, lawyers and architects. A significant increase was also recorded in the services and sales workers category from 13.3 per cent in 2000 to 17.7 per cent in 2005 while the share of women in low-paying occupations declined, particularly in the plant and machine operators and assemblers category.

TABLE 13-2
**EMPLOYMENT BY GENDER AND SECTORS,
 2000 AND 2005**

Sector	Number ('000)				%			
	2000		2005		2000		2005	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Agriculture, Forestry, Livestock and Fishing	1,030.3	392.7	1,046.9	358.8	17.3	11.9	15.2	9.0
Mining and Quarrying	36.5	5.3	39.9	2.8	0.6	0.2	0.6	0.1
Manufacturing	1,460.0	1,105.8	1,865.8	1,266.3	24.5	33.5	27.0	31.7
Construction	704.3	47.9	703.5	56.1	11.8	1.5	10.2	1.4
Electricity, Gas and Water	66.8	8.2	81.5	11.5	1.1	0.2	1.2	0.3
Transport, Storage and Communications	402.8	58.8	536.3	94.9	6.7	1.8	7.8	2.4
Wholesale and Retail Trade, Hotels and Restaurants	954.7	628.2	1,176.6	750.6	16.0	19.0	17.0	18.7
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Business Services	296.4	203.8	421.4	310.9	5.0	6.1	6.1	7.8
Other Services	1,019.0	853.1	1,026.6	1,144.4	17.0	25.8	14.9	28.6
Total	5,970.8	3,303.8	6,898.5	3,996.3	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Economic Planning Unit

TABLE 13-3
**EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION AND GENDER,
 2000 AND 2005**
 (%)

Occupational Category	2000		2005	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Senior Officials and Managers	8.0	4.8	9.4	5.4
Professionals	5.1	7.2	5.5	7.5
Technicians and Associate Professionals	10.9	14.1	12.6	14.0
Clerical Workers	5.2	18.3	4.6	17.2
Services and Sales Workers	12.9	13.3	12.3	17.7
Skilled Agricultural and Fishery Workers	17.5	10.0	14.7	9.9
Craft and Related Trade Workers	11.5	4.4	15.2	5.0
Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	16.2	15.8	15.9	11.5
Elementary Occupations	12.7	12.1	9.8	11.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Economic Planning Unit

Educational Attainment

13.07 The social and economic advancement of women has been contributed largely by equal access to educational opportunities. Enrolment of females in primary and secondary schools reflected the gender ratio in the country, accounting for about half of the total enrolment in 2005. Female enrolment at the matriculation and form six levels accounted for 67 per cent while their enrolment in public universities continued to increase significantly from 61 per cent in 2000 to 63.4 per cent in 2005. However, at the post-graduate level, female students accounted for only 48.8 per cent and 35.7 per cent at the masters and doctorate levels, respectively. The availability of affordable and equal access to education opportunities through the years enabled the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of gender equality and the elimination of disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005.

Training

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13.08 As part of efforts to enable women to improve themselves and take advantage of opportunities in the job market, various skills and entrepreneur training programmes were implemented. About 3,000 women entrepreneurs benefited from courses implemented specifically for loan recipients under the *Yayasan Tekun Nasional* (YTN). Similar courses implemented under the *Majlis Amanah Rakyat* (MARA) Entrepreneur Programme provided training for about 8,000 women. In addition, training programmes were implemented to assist women entrepreneurs to upgrade their businesses to the level of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Under the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Development Programme, 154 training workshops were conducted benefiting 6,328 women that resulted in their involvement in agro-based food industries, achieving total sales amounting to RM94.1 million. Various efforts were also undertaken to equip women with skills and knowledge in information and communications technology (ICT) including through programmes such as *Internet Desa* and *e-Industri Desa*.

Financial Assistance

13.09 During the Plan period, various financial assistance schemes were implemented to facilitate more women to become entrepreneurs. Under the YTN scheme, about RM200 million was disbursed as loans to 46,000 women to assist in their entrepreneurial activities. The *Bank Simpanan Nasional* Micro-Credit Scheme provided loans amounting to RM446 million to about 49,000 women entrepreneurs. Through the Micro-Credit Scheme under *Bank Pertanian Malaysia*, a total of RM55.9 million was provided to about 5,600 women. Under the Special Assistance Scheme for Women Entrepreneurs, an allocation of RM18.5 million was provided to 185 women entrepreneurs to enable their

involvement in information technology-related services, designing and packaging, research and development as well as marketing. In addition, to encourage more women to venture into technology acquisition activities such as designing, patenting and drawing blueprints, a Technology Acquisition Fund for Women (TAF-W) was established with an allocation of RM25 million.

Health Status

13.10 Women continued to benefit from improvements in health care services. During the Plan period, female life expectancy improved from 75.1 years in 2000 to 76.4 years in 2005 compared with 70 years and 70.6 years, respectively, for males. Maternal mortality, an indicator of the health status of women, remained low at 0.3 per 1,000 live births.

13.11 The maternal and child health programme, aimed at reducing maternal and child mortality and morbidity, improving prenatal and antenatal health care as well as providing health and nutrition education, continued to be implemented. In addition, emphasis was given to ensuring access to safe delivery services. As a result, deliveries attended by trained personnel continued to increase from 99 per cent in 2000 to 99.5 per cent in 2005. Concerted efforts were also undertaken to widen the coverage of antenatal health care services resulting in 77 per cent of pregnant women having access to such services. These efforts contributed towards the lowering of maternal mortality rates similar to that in developed countries.

13.12 In view of the fact that women, especially young women, are in the high-risk category in terms of their vulnerability to the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), greater emphasis was given to increasing awareness as well as providing information and education. Despite the efforts, the proportion of women with HIV infection increased from 7.9 per cent in 2001 or 466 cases of a total of 5,938 cases to 11.6 per cent or 358 cases from 3,089 cases as of June 2005.

13.13 The increasing incidence of cancer among women, especially breast and cervical cancers, had serious implications on them as well as their families. Data from the National Cancer Registry indicated that the incidence of breast cancer increased from 52.8 per 100,000 population in 2002 to 56.8 per 100,000 population in 2005. As cancer can be treated if detected early, efforts were undertaken to provide women with information and knowledge on cancer and its treatment as well as encourage regular health screening.

13.14 Recognising the importance of promotive and preventive health towards ensuring women are healthy and remain healthy, greater emphasis was given to the implementation of health education and awareness programmes. In this

regard, the *Nur Sejahtera* programme was introduced in 2004 to educate women on the importance of regular medical examinations as well as leading healthy lifestyles. In addition, Health Line was introduced in 2005 to provide comprehensive and integrated online information on non-communicable diseases such as cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular illnesses, thus empowering communities, especially women, on the importance of health and the early detection of diseases.

Poverty Among Women

13.15 Various economic, social and training programmes were implemented by the Government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to reduce the incidence of poverty among women, including single mothers and female-headed households. Through these programmes, the incidence of poverty among female-headed households declined from 12.5 per cent in 2002 to 11.5 per cent in 2004. Through the *Skim Pinjaman Ikhtiar*, implemented by the *Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia* (AIM), about 67,000 women from the low-income group were involved in micro-credit enterprises. Women in the rural areas were also provided with opportunities to establish workshops and trading stall premises to facilitate their involvement in small businesses. In addition, training in ICT was conducted to enable these women to increase their productivity and efficiency. The *Skim Khas Ibu Tunggal* was established by AIM in 2001 to enable single mothers to undertake income-generating activities by providing easy access to financial assistance. About 2,800 single mothers benefited from this scheme.

Supportive Legislation

13.16 During the Plan period, existing legislation were reviewed and new ones enacted to protect the rights and dignity of women. In 2001, Article 8(2) of the Federal Constitution was amended to include 'gender' as one of the prohibitive grounds for discrimination. Consequently, a number of laws were amended. With effect from 2002, widows of civil servants were allowed to continue receiving pensions after remarriage while a similar amendment was made to the Social Security Act 1969 in 2003. The Land Act (Group Settlement Areas) 1960 was amended in 2002 to allow wives of land settlers equal ownership of land provided to their husbands under land development schemes. The Immigration Rules were also amended to allow foreign men married to Malaysian women to renew their social visit passes annually, compared with the original renewal period that varied between one to six months, depending on the country of origin. A similar provision was also provided to foreign wives separated or divorced from their Malaysian husbands.

13.17 Women as homemakers perform one of the most vital roles in society. In recognition of this role and to provide these women with financial security in their old age, the Employers Provident Fund (EPF) allowed husbands to

contribute to accounts under their wives' names through the self-employed contribution scheme.

13.18 Various efforts were undertaken to ensure uniformity among states in the judgement of cases pertaining to Islamic Family Law. During the Plan period, 11 states and Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, Labuan and Putrajaya accepted the uniform model. In addition, for efficient and effective implementation and monitoring of laws and judgements relating to family issues such as divorces and alimony, a specific division for the coordination and enforcement of laws was established at the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia.

Violence against Women

13.19 During the Plan period, efforts were undertaken to stem the increasing number of cases of violence against women. In addition to reviewing existing and introducing new legislation, preventive and rehabilitative programmes were implemented. A total of 43 programmes was implemented, benefiting about 45,000 participants. A national campaign on Women against Violence (WAVE) was launched in 2002 to raise awareness on violence. Subsequently, voluntary organisations for WAVE were established in all states. Members of these organisations were provided training and information on the identification of violence and treatment of victims. About 300 volunteers were trained and stationed in community service centres, hospitals and shelter homes.

National Machinery for the Advancement of Women

13.20 The Government, the private sector and NGOs, worked together to improve the status of women as well as ensure greater collaboration and coordination in the implementation of activities for women and their families. During the Plan period, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development was established to address in a concerted manner issues relating to women. In this regard, the National Advisory Council on Women was restructured and membership increased to provide better representation for the exchange of ideas and information on issues relating to women. In addition, councils for women and family development were established at the state level as well as in each parliamentary constituency to provide the link with the grassroots.

13.21 To further strengthen the national machinery and improve its effectiveness, the Cabinet Committee on Gender Equality was established in 2004 to provide policy direction and monitor activities pertaining to women and family development. Gender focal points were appointed in all ministries and agencies to ensure integration of the gender perspective in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes and the removal of any form of discrimination against women. In addition, a pilot project to incorporate the gender perspective in the

national budget process was implemented in five ministries. To ensure the systematic collection and compilation of gender-disaggregated data to facilitate analysis, a gender disaggregated information system was also established. Recognising the important role of women in national development, the Government agreed to implement the quota of at least 30 per cent of decision-making positions in the public sector to be held by women. In line with this, the private sector and NGOs were also encouraged to increase the participation of women in managerial and key positions.

13.22 Taking cognisance of the important role of NGOs in complementing Government efforts for the benefit of women and their families, capacity-building courses were implemented to improve the leadership, administrative, planning and financial management skills among members of NGOs. In addition, a total of RM56.7 million was disbursed to about 550 NGOs and councils for women and family development at the state level to implement activities and programmes for women and their families.

Participation at the International Level

13.23 During the Plan period, the Government continued to demonstrate its commitment to uphold the rights and dignity of women at the international level. Malaysia actively participated in various meetings and initiatives at the regional and international levels. These included the APEC Women Ministers Meeting, the ASEAN Committee on Women and the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations. Through bilateral arrangements, Malaysia continued to raise gender issues and share experiences in advancing the status of women.

13.24 As chair of the Non-aligned Movement (NAM), Malaysia initiated the inclusion of issues confronting women as part of the agenda of NAM. In this regard, Malaysia hosted the first Ministerial Meeting of NAM on the Advancement of Women in 2005. The Meeting endorsed the Putrajaya Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Advancement of Women in Member Countries of NAM. Among the outcomes of this Meeting was the establishment of the NAM Centre for Gender Development in Kuala Lumpur.

III. PROSPECTS, 2006-2010

13.25 During the Ninth Plan period, in line with the principles of *Islam Hadhari*, efforts will continue to be undertaken to address issues confronting women to enable them to realise their potential and participate more effectively as partners in development. Towards this end, legal and institutional constraints that inhibit the greater participation of women in the economy will be reviewed to promote their active involvement as well as contribute to their further advancement. Emphasis will be given to empowering women by providing greater access to

education and skills upgrading programmes as well as involving them in policy-making. These initiatives will be guided by commitments made during the Fourth World Conference for Women in Beijing in 1995 and the Ministerial Meeting of NAM on the Advancement of Women held in Putrajaya in 2005. The strategic thrusts for the further advancement of women during the Plan period will be as follows:

- ❑ *promoting greater female participation in the labour force;*
- ❑ *increasing education and training opportunities;*
- ❑ *enhancing participation in business and entrepreneurial activities;*
- ❑ *reviewing laws and regulations to promote the status of women;*
- ❑ *improving further the health status and well-being of women;*
- ❑ *reducing violence against women;*
- ❑ *reducing incidence of poverty and improving quality of life;*
- ❑ *strengthening national machinery and institutional capacity; and*
- ❑ *advancing issues pertaining to women at the international level.*

Promoting Greater Female Participation in the Labour Force

13.26 The Government will continue to encourage greater female participation in the labour force and contribute towards socio-economic development of the country. As the greater involvement of women in the labour market will require creating a better balance between unpaid work and paid labour, effective labour market policies must encompass more than job creation. Towards this end, measures will be undertaken to ensure the provision of necessary support facilities to enable women to enter the labour market. These include the introduction of family-friendly workplace practices and the provision of appropriate training programmes. Community childcare and nursery centres will be established in selected housing areas to ensure the availability of affordable quality care. In addition, the re-entry of women into the labour market will be facilitated with the provision of retraining opportunities.

13.27 The private sector, being the largest employer, will be encouraged to facilitate greater female participation in the labour market through the provision of more conducive working arrangements that take into account the multiple roles and responsibilities of women. These include new and flexible working arrangements such as teleworking, part-time work and job-sharing. In addition, efforts will be undertaken to implement the concept of home office to encourage women to embark on small businesses.

13.28 As household and caring work remains predominantly with women, many of whom subordinate formal employment to family responsibilities, an increasing number of women are involved in the informal sector with flexible working arrangements. Hence, measures will be undertaken so that women in the informal sector have better access to adequate social protection in facing lifecycle events such as sickness, invalidity and old age as well as employment risks.

Increasing Education and Training Opportunities

13.29 Recognising the human resource requirement of a knowledge-based economy and the need to move into high value added activities, more educational and training opportunities will be provided to assist women in meeting these demands. Training and retraining opportunities will be provided to enable more women to acquire new and advanced skills that are relevant to industry needs, particularly in view of the rapid changes in technology. In this regard, the private sector will also be encouraged to provide skills training and retraining opportunities for women, including in new technologies.

13.30 More female students will be encouraged to enter into fields of study such as science and engineering. Towards this end, career guidance programmes will be implemented at the primary level to instil greater awareness among female students and parents regarding opportunities in professional and technical fields. Counselling and information on prospects in non-academic fields will also be provided to female students to encourage them to pursue vocational and technical subjects. In addition, increased training opportunities will be provided in community colleges and skills training institutions for female students who dropped out of formal schooling. To ensure that women, especially those in the rural areas, continue to have access to ICT, formal and non-formal training programmes in computer literacy and applications will be conducted.

Enhancing Participation in Business and Entrepreneurial Activities

13.31 Efforts to enhance the participation of women in business and entrepreneurial activities will continue to be undertaken through improved consolidation and integration of financial assistance and training programmes. Information on the availability of these programmes will be widely disseminated. A special window will be created in existing financial programmes to enable more women to obtain loans. The implementation of the home office concept will further facilitate the involvement of women in business activities. More opportunities will be provided for women to be involved in agro-based industries and businesses. Recognising that biotechnology is a new source of growth, efforts will be undertaken to encourage women entrepreneurs to leverage on

its potential, especially in agriculture and health care biotechnology. Women entrepreneurs will also be encouraged to network with other successful organisations, both locally and abroad.

Reviewing Laws and Regulations to Promote the Status of Women

13.32 Existing laws and regulations that discriminate or inhibit the well-being and participation of women in development efforts will be reviewed. Recognising the importance of ensuring the well-being and safety of women at the workplace, the Employment Act 1955, the Industrial Relations Act 1957 and the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994, will be amended to include provisions that prohibit all forms of sexual harassment. Measures will continue to be undertaken to improve enforcement and speedy implementation of court decisions, including *syariah* court decisions, to ensure the protection and welfare of women. In addition, the private sector will be encouraged to review their collective agreements to ensure that there is no gender discrimination.

Improving Further the Health Status and Well-Being of Women

13.33 During the Plan period, efforts to promote the health of women and their families will be continued. To ensure that women remain healthy, emphasis will be given to the implementation of wellness programmes, increasing health awareness, promoting prevention, screening and early intervention for specific diseases such as cancer, especially among women in the low-income group and remote areas. Policies and strategies will be formulated to integrate reproductive health components into the primary health care system. Mobile clinics will also be provided under the *Nur Sejahtera* Programme to increase accessibility to health care services.

13.34 Realising the vulnerability of women, especially young women, to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, concerted efforts will be undertaken to increase awareness and educate women on these diseases. The programme on the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV as well as the provision of care and support for those infected, including counselling, will be continued. Education on sexuality, living skills and behaviour change programmes will be intensified. To ensure consistency and quality in implementing these programmes, the guidelines on education on sexuality, jointly formulated with NGOs, will be implemented. In addition, adolescent reproductive health programmes will be implemented by the Government and NGOs with the aim of instilling positive values and responsible behaviour as well as promoting healthy lifestyles.

13.35 Measures will continue to be undertaken to provide comprehensive and integrated health care for women and children. Towards this end, a special

hospital for women and children will be established in Kuala Lumpur. This facility will serve as the national referral centre for the health and well-being of women and children as well as undertake research on illnesses confronting them.

Reducing Violence against Women

13.36 Concerted efforts will be undertaken to increase awareness that ensuring the safety and well-being of women and families is the responsibility of all. Awareness and training programmes relating to understanding gender roles and expectations, preventing abuse and violence, resolving conflicts and maintaining family harmony will continue to be implemented by the Government and NGOs. Implementation of WAVE campaigns will be intensified with greater community participation and involvement. Shelter facilities for victims of violence will be established at the existing *Rumah Nur* in five states, namely Kelantan, Melaka, Pahang, Sabah and Selangor. The facility in Selangor will also be utilised to provide protection for foreign women who are victims of human trafficking.

13.37 The private sector will also be encouraged to participate in efforts to eliminate violence against women. The Government, in collaboration with NGOs, will ensure the availability of support mechanisms for victims of violence, including gazetted more shelter homes and providing volunteers with adequate training as well as placing them in strategic locations such as hospitals and police stations. Gender sensitization courses will continue to be implemented for agencies involved in the handling and management of domestic violence cases. In this regard, standard operating procedures will be developed for the use of relevant agencies and NGOs to ensure greater coordination and effectiveness in the handling of such cases.

Reducing Incidence of Poverty and Improving Quality of Life

13.38 Efforts will be undertaken to further reduce the incidence of poverty among women, particularly in the rural areas including in Sabah and Sarawak. To address urban poverty, a programme for poor women in urban areas will be developed. Special emphasis will be given to single mothers through the formulation of a strategic action plan which will outline education and training programmes as well as measures to facilitate their involvement in income generating activities. Among others, the *Inkubator Kemahiran Ibu Tunggal* (I-KIT) programme, to provide skills enhancement for single mothers, will be introduced. I-KIT will focus on seven areas, namely tailoring, handicraft, tourism, beauty therapy, business, entrepreneurship and childcare. The *Program Anak Angkat* will be implemented through smart partnership with the private sector. Under this programme, private companies will be encouraged to provide financial support for the education of children of single mothers. The Government will complement these efforts by providing incentives in the form of tax rebates to these companies.

Strengthening National Machinery and Institutional Capacity

13.39 During the Plan period, the national machinery and institutional capacity for the advancement of women will be further strengthened. Efforts will also be undertaken to meet the 30 per cent quota for women in decision-making positions in the public sector. Towards this end, greater opportunities will be provided to women to assume positions in the premier category of the public service. In addition, emphasis will be given to the appointment of more women councillors in the various local authorities.

13.40 Training will be provided to increase the effectiveness of gender focal points in public agencies to ensure the inclusion of the gender perspective in policies, strategies and programmes of these agencies. Gender sensitive budget analysis and sensitization programmes will continue to be implemented for policy makers and planners. Greater efforts will also be undertaken to ensure the systematic collection and compilation of gender disaggregated data to facilitate effective analysis, monitoring, impact assessment and policy formulation. In addition, the implementation of gender sensitive budgets will be expanded in stages to other ministries.

13.41 Given the social and physical differences between men and women and consistent with the people-centred development thrust, greater emphasis will be given to gender mainstreaming. Towards this end, the mainstreaming strategy will ensure gender considerations are routinely included in the formulation of major sectoral policies, strategies and programmes. In addition, a gender-related development index will be developed to provide an indication of gender equality in the country.

13.42 Councils for women and family development at the state and parliamentary constituency levels will continue to strengthen linkages with the grassroots. In this regard, training will be provided to members of these councils to enhance their effectiveness in programme formulation and implementation as well as resolving issues confronting women at the grassroots.

13.43 NGOs will be further encouraged to complement Government efforts in the advancement of women, especially at the grassroot level. Towards this end, NGOs will be provided with financial support to implement programmes that directly benefit women and improve their quality of life. In addition, training will be provided to NGOs to ensure professionalism in handling issues relating to women.

Advancing Issues Pertaining to Women at the International Level

13.44 The Government, together with the private sector and NGOs, will continue to participate actively in international fora on the advancement of women. In

doing so, Malaysia will be able to share its experiences in specific areas such as poverty eradication, educational attainment and health improvements and promote a more holistic approach to development.

13.45 The NAM Centre for Gender and Development in Malaysia will enable concerted efforts to be undertaken at the international level to promote the advancement and empowerment of women through a lifelong learning approach. In this regard, the Centre will undertake various programmes, including capacity building, exchange of ideas and information and research, as well as work closely with international organisations and institutions.

IV. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

13.46 During the Ninth Plan period, programmes for the further advancement of women will continue to be implemented by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development as the lead agency. These efforts will be complemented by other key ministries such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Human Resource and Ministry of International Trade and Industry as well as the private sector and NGOs.

V. CONCLUSION

13.47 During the Eighth Plan period, women continued to advance in various fields of development, largely due to their access to education and training, health care as well as improved employment opportunities. During the Ninth Plan period, efforts will be undertaken to further improve the status of women to enable them to reach their full potential and contribute towards the social and economic development of the country. Towards this end, gender mainstreaming will be given emphasis and gender considerations included in the formulation of policies and programmes. Emphasis will also be given towards equipping women with the requisite skills and knowledge as well as creating an enabling and supportive environment for their further advancement.