

# DESIGNING A HOLISTIC AND SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD BASED COORDINATED INTERVENTION STRATEGY TO ADDRESS ISSUES AND ASPIRATIONS OF HIGH RISK YOUTHS

*Wasitah Hj Mohd Yusof, Denison Jayasooria & Jasmine Adaickalam*

*The Institute of Youth Research (IYRES), Ministry of Youth and Sports (KBS), tasked Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and C CODES to undertake the Action Research in its pilot stage among the target group of high risk youths at their urban multi-ethnic and B40 neighbourhood levels. This was a follow-up study to two other prior projects that were also funded by IYRES. The two prior projects were:*

1. *“National Forum on Serious Crime, Gangs and Youth in Malaysia” was organised by IYRES in September 2013 at Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC), which was well participated.*
2. *IYRES again commissioned KITA-UKM another study entitled, “An Action Research on Serious Crime, gangsterism and youths in Malaysia” in January 2014 to be conducted in an Ethnographic study format among Young offenders between the ages 18-30 who were serving their prison sentence in Kajang.*

The September 2013 forum concurred and yielded the results that there were no real in-depth analysis had been done on the root causes and issues facing the youth population who were at risk to serious crime and gang activities. The forum called for a structured study to find out the root causes and the other contributing factors that drive young people to adopt a life of anti-social activities and crime.

Ultimately, an ethnographic study was conducted based on in-depth interviews of 32 young prisoners belonging to multi-ethnic communities at Kajang Prison between the ages 21 to 30 who had been sentenced by the courts for committing serious crimes. The research questions were guided by a fivefold analysis of root causes and fivefold intervention strategy.

The study findings are in the form of both qualitative and quantitative data. The findings revealed that the roots causes are multi dimensional with a strong emphasis on the dysfunctional family and parental issues such as the absence of the father figure in the life of the young offender. The study attributed the dysfunctionality of families to structural issues pertaining to fair wages/minimum wages, nature of urban work patters, neighbourhood environment including the urban physical space, lack of facilities and the absence of community spirit (social support and social control mechanism). The study also highlighted another major issue that is the lack of concerted intervention strategies or programmes at the various levels.

In this context the study proposed an array of intervention strategies among which the main one noting that the Ministry of Youth & Sports must recognise that there is an urgent need to establish a special unit to focus on this dimension of youth development with multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary intervention strategies including coordinating with other agencies as well as youths who are outside organised youth organisations and that too specifically in the neighbourhood context.

Therefore it was recognised that there is a need for IYRES to fund a pilot testing initiative, as an Action Research Project at the neighbourhood in cooperation with other agencies and civil society in order to work at the levels of intervention especially in level 3, 4 and 5 which has very little coordinated intervention at the present stage. So as a follow-up to the Prison Study, this action research was designed to be conducted at the Bottom 40% (B40) urban neighbourhoods.

### **The IRDA (Iskandar Regional Development Authority) Partnership**

The discussions with the potential stakeholders such as JBS, PDRM, JKM, LPPKN, AADK, JPNIN, Education Ministry and Department and IRDA, it was agreed that IRDA will be the chief stakeholder and other agencies will play the supporting role in terms of inter-agency cooperation and coordination was initiated, as IRDA has the perfect infra-structure needed for this kind of work. It was also decided that the project target locations will be chosen from Iskandar Development Region, which can have the other enabling programme support and a regular, systematic and also a holistic follow-up and handholding process for the target group. As such specific neighbourhoods from the districts of Kulai Jaya and Pasir Gudang were chosen for the study.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

At the global level two key academic writers highlight the issues of high risk young people. MacDonald (1997) in *Youth, the Underclass and Social Exclusion* provides a useful summary to different sets of publications based on specific analysis and interpretation on the root cause of the issues. One dimension of the analysis could be summed up from moral and value based dimension which is represented by the work of Charles Murray and the second is that of Frank Field which sees a structural dimension and that the underclass as victims of circumstances.

The first is the work of Charles Murray (1984) in his book, *Losing Ground*. Murray's main thesis is that social welfare programs, as they have historically been implemented in the United States, tend to increase poverty rather than eliminate it by creating incentives that reward short-sighted behaviour that is not conducive to escaping poverty in the long term.

Charles undertakes a similar exercise of British society in *The Emerging British Underclass* (1990) comes up with a similar finding—the rise of a British underclass, the growth of a culture of poverty, of what I call “the professional poor”: those who forgo livelihoods and openly feed at the public trough as a way of life.

The second more structural dimension is based on the work of Frank Field (1989) entitled *Losing Out*. In this book he develops the thesis that the causes of the development of this “underclass” are rising levels of unemployment, changes in government policy, which have widened the gap between the rich and the poor, and changes in the public attitude to poverty, with an increase in the tendency to blame the poor for their poverty.

In a similar way John Pierson (2002) in *Tackling Social Exclusion* highlights the vulnerable position of young people in the community. His approach is one of tackling social exclusion by promoting social inclusion through social work. His is a multi-dimensional understanding especially in the way he views

social exclusion – “is a process that deprives individuals and families, groups and neighbourhoods of the resources required for participation in the social, economic and political activities of society as a whole. This process is primarily a consequence of poverty and low income, but other factors such as discrimination, low educational attainment and depleted living environments also underpin it. Through this process people are cut off for a significant period in their lives from institutions and services, social networks and developmental opportunities that the great majority of a society enjoys” (pg 7). In this Iskandar project, a broader multi-dimensional approach was adopted rather than a singular causal approach.

The researchers of this project were involved in two previous studies on young people. They are, A micro demographic study conducted among young offenders and implications for inclusive & holistic development of youths in Malaysia. This project was undertaken by Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria and Puan Jasmine Adaickalam and funded by IYRES between February and July 2014. It was an in-depth study of 32 young prisoners in Kajang Prison of whom 18 were Malays, 9 Indians and 5 Chinese between the ages 21 to 30 years of age. Of the 32 prisoners, 17 were first time offenders and the remaining 15 were repeat offenders. All had committed a serious crime like murder, rape, robbery with a weapon and other serious crimes. Based on the in-depth interviews, it can be generally concluded that peer group seems to be the main influence. A general assessment states that insufficient income, poverty, peer group, dysfunctional relations with family members are some undergirding critical points which seemed to emerge out of this study.

In second study undertaken for EPU by the World Bank, Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria & Puan Jasmine Adaickalam undertook the focus group data gathering and analysis of high risk young people in five major cities/towns in Malaysia between September to October 2014. The larger study was entitled “Malaysia: Achieving a system of competitive cities” and part of this study was a component on “At risk youth in urban areas”. This study focused on at-risk youth in urban areas specifically because of the relationship between competitive cities and at-risk youth. This group is at a higher risk of social exclusion, as compared to other vulnerable groups (such as elderly and disabled). Youth at risk are defined as individuals between the ages of 15 and 29 who face environmental, social, and family conditions that hinder their personal development and their successful integration into society as productive citizens. This group has a greater propensity than their peers to engage in or be subject to risky behaviour, including school absenteeism, delinquency, violence, and substance use and abuse. Findings from the focus group discussions with at risk youth could be summarised under five themes:

Economic aspects: Youth employment: 45% had no work experience; Poverty and rising costs of living; low wages and difficult to find jobs; Work patters & dysfunctional families

Political aspects: Limited voice in decision making; Lack of involvement in local issues

Socio-cultural aspects: School absenteeism; School expulsion; Underperforming in school; Ethnic dimensions; Gender issues: safety concerns, fewer economic opportunities for girls

Spatial aspects: Limited public facilities and safety concerns; Limited public transport; Lack of sense of belonging

Crime and violence: Gangs, flight common among at risk youth; Prevalence of criminal activities; Anti-social behaviours

Both these studies illustrate the complex nature of high risk youth concerns in Malaysia highlighting not one but a multiplicity of factors and causes. Therefore the intervention strategies likewise require a multiple approach.

## Action Research Framework: Five Multi-Dimensional Potential Causes

In two earlier studies, the researchers explore a multi-dimensional approach to identifying the root causes. It was not based on a singular cause but multiplicity of causes and an inter play among a number of causes and factors.

It was recognised that young people do not grow up in isolation but are members of a family, community and nation. They have families and friends and these impact them. They might have opportunities to enhance their potential and capability through formal educational, skills or technical training. These impact them and how they emerge in society.

There are five dimensions identified based on previous researches. They are Family Factor, Personal Factor, Peer Group Factor, Neighbourhood Factor and National/Structural Factor. This fivefold understanding of root causes was applied and data was collected based on these dimensions to see the relevance and applicability.

## Action Research Framework: Five Levels of Intervention

Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria while he was with the Yayasan Strategik Sosial (1997-2008) wrote an article entitled “Levels of intervention in addressing crime & violence among Indian youths” which was published in his book Social Development & Indians in Malaysia, An Agenda for Social Inclusion (Yayasan Strategik Sosial, 2008). He wrote this based on the research, analysis and the intervention programs undertaken by YSS. In that he developed a five level intervention strategy. He noted that specific targeting was very important especially in reducing the level of involvement in anti-social activities.

The fivefold intervention strategy is a five level intervention stages which describes the youth at the level of involvement in anti-social behaviour. At each stage the youth issues differ and therefore the intervention needed is also different. In the work undertaken earlier by Dr Denison he concludes a majority of the social intervention programs are at the level of level 1 and level 2 which is more preventive in nature. However interventions in level 3 – 5 are specific in intervention among those who are in direct involvement in anti-social activities and therefore require a multiple intervention strategies. The five levels are:

- Level One** : Youths from high risk neighbourhoods
- Level Two** : Youths from high risk families or families with the elements of high risk behaviour
- Level Three** : Youths involved in high risk and anti-social activities but have not yet have problems with Law & Order
- Level Four** : Youths who are in prison or detention centres and fifthly
- Level Five** : Youths back in their neighbourhoods after serving their incarceration

In this Iskandar regional study which is on working with the urban, multi-ethnic high risk youths from B40 neighbourhoods, the researchers explored how far this five intervention levels are applicable.

## METHODOLOGY

The research team had used a fivefold methodology in this action research.

1. Questionnaire Survey among the youths (191)
2. Focus Group Discussions with the Target Group Youths (Taman Desa Mutiara, Felda Taib Andak, Taman Cendana (Pasir Gudang), PPR Temenggong (Kulai Jaya), Kampung Sayong Pinang, SMK Sultan Ismail, SMK STAR Putra)



3. Stakeholder Agency Consultation & Discussion (JBS, IRDA, AADK, PDRM, JKM, PPD etc.,)
4. Field Visits to B40 Neighbourhoods & Visiting Agency Programmes at local neighbourhoods (KRT Leaders from Taman Cendana, Felda Taib Andaik, PPR Temenggong, and Taman Desa Mutiara.
5. Special visits to Community Care House in FELDA Taib Andaik, Community Police Post (CPP), Pusat Aktiviti Kanak-kanak JKM etc.,)

### **Stakeholders' Consultations & Discussions**

The district level agencies and state level agencies such as JBS, JPNIN, AADK, PDRM, JKM and Education Department met at various time to give their input on high risk youths, in terms of data, ideas and the programmes organised by the different agencies. These consultations proved to be the meeting of minds and also sharing of the available resources and of the diverse experiences. This was a very helpful exercise as these platforms provided the stakeholders to appreciate one another's efforts, to identify the gaps and lacunae in the project delivery and also to arrive at new ideas in order to foster effective inter-agency coordination and cooperation towards a sustainable, regular and systematic programme delivery and implementation.

### **Focus Group Discussions**

Neighbourhood based and school based Focus Group Discussions were conducted among the target group youths to compile their impressions and viewpoints. In some areas depending on the availability of time, creative group work techniques such as pantomimes or acting or direct presentation methods were used to hear the voices of the youth themselves. But the target group age factor was maintained.

### **Questionnaire Analysis**

During the Focus Group sessions, a questionnaire was also used to get the basic information on the target group and also some of their views about their neighbourhood living. This information gathered has been analysed and are reproduced as tables and charts for reference. A total of 191 young people from the specified target group participated in this exercise.

### **Neighbourhood Visits**

During the neighbourhood visits the local KRT or Kampung leaders provided some basic information on the neighbourhood and also the target group in the context of the neighbourhood which was compared with the information provided by the young people, the researchers could get the distinct and unique flavour and also the differences in the reporting. Some areas the perceptions and opinions of these two groups were contradictory and in other areas they matched.

### **Special Visits**

Special visits to some special government linked initiatives were conducted to help gather information on the programmes and provisions available within the neighbourhood vicinity. Such visits and dialogues were conducted with the leadership of the initiatives. Input was gathered from the Community Police Post (CPP) that operates in Taman Desa Mutiara, the FELDA Office in FELDA Taib Andaik, the AADK operated Cure & Care Community Care House specially initiated for the follow-up of the drug addicts, the JKM Centre that operates in Taman Cendana, Pasir Gudang and also the EWRF Tuition Centre in Kulai Jaya.

## FINDINGS

### Findings from the semi-structured questionnaire

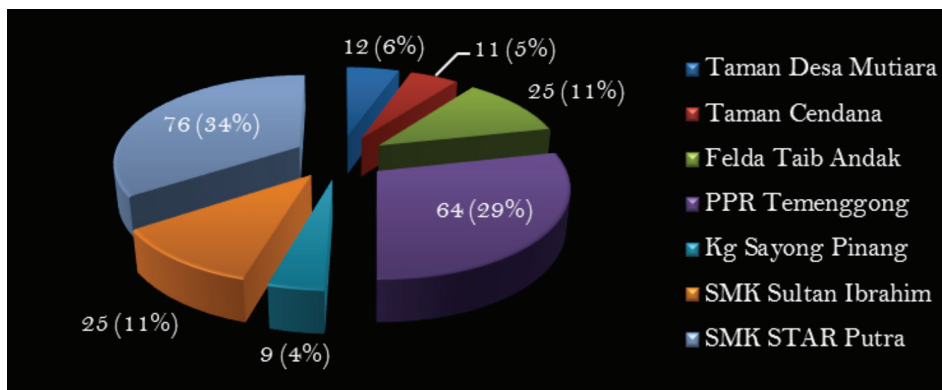
This part of the questionnaire provided the researchers with some background data on the respondents and also to keep on track of the project target group requirements. A total of 191 respondents between the ages 15-30 years of age and their particulars have been taken into account. Table 1 can give more details on the respondent's basic information at one glance.

Table 1

Gender		Race				Religious				
Female	Male	Malay	Indian	Chinese	OA	Islam	Hindu	Buddhist	Christian	OA
37	154	115	29	39	8	115	27	39	2	8
19.4%	80.6%	60.2%	15.2%	20.4%	4.2%	60.2%	14.1%	20.4%	1.0%	4.2%

(Analytical Tables by C CODES on Data from the questionnaire, 2015)

Diagram 1: Respondents' Breakdown with Neighbourhood Breakdown (n=222)

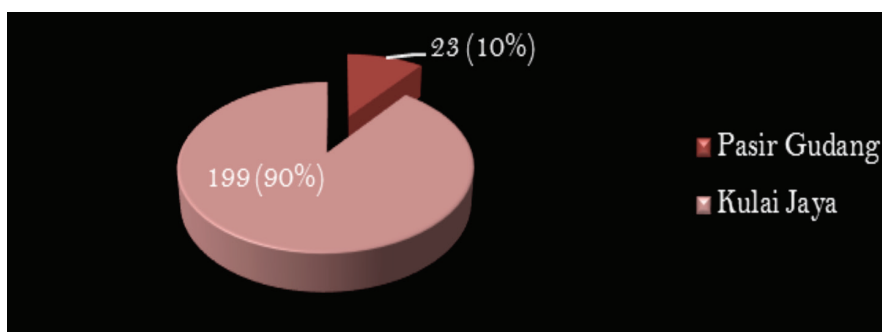


A total of 222 respondents filled the forms. Of which, 31 are from below 15 years age group. Though the respondents below 15 years of age are not from the specific target group set for the action research, the fact that they took part in this survey is worth looking at.

The researchers are reminded of a finding from the Prison Study in 2014, which is most of the young offenders interviewed said that they started in their anti-social or criminal activities. This could be the confusion and new awareness experienced at the onset of the adolescence. This could be yet another indicator that more needs to be done for this new adolescents in order to prevent them entering into life of anti-social behaviour and criminal activities.

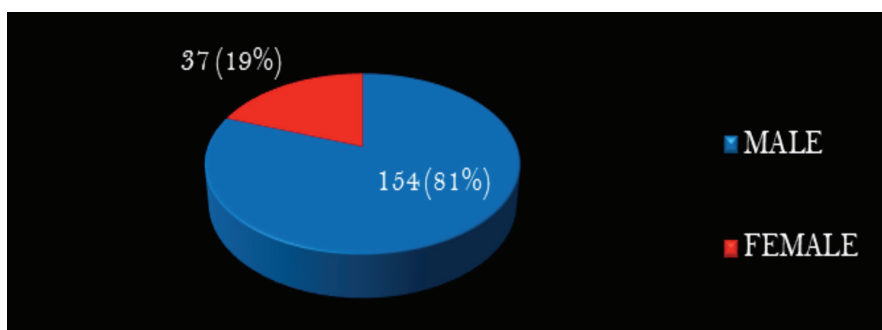
Other 191 respondents are between the ages 15-30. Respondent's participation at the neighbourhoods was not very encouraging. Except for PPR Temenggong, no other neighbourhood could bring in considerable number of participants. Here too, all the young people present were not from PPR Temenggong. Some of them were from the nearby neighbourhoods who came to play futsal there. The larger number of respondents amounting to 103 had come from SMK STAR Putra. They were identified as the research target group on the basis that they were academically weak low achievers.

**Diagram 2: Respondents as per their District Breakdown (n=222)**



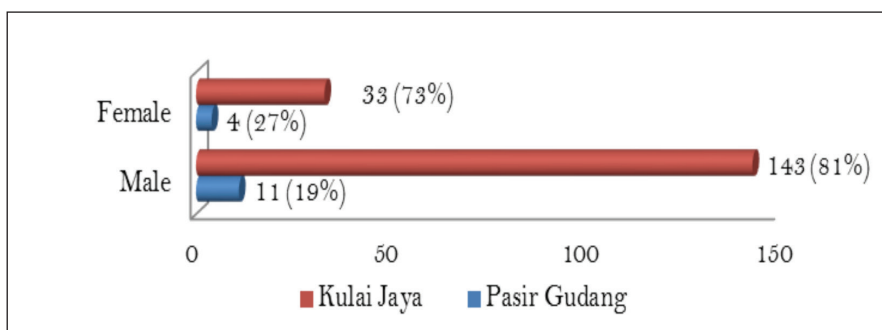
92% of the respondents are from Kulai Jaya. More neighbourhoods met are from the District of Kulai Jaya and also the two schools where the Focus Group Discussions conducted are also in the Kulai Jaya Administrative District.

**Diagram 3: Overall Gender Breakdown of the Respondents (n=191)**



Not many girl respondents participated in this action research exercise, especially at the neighbourhoods. One wonders as if the female young people are not high risk themselves or affected by high risk behaviour prevailing in the family and neighbourhoods, or if their issues are drastically and fundamentally are different.

**Diagram 4: District wise Gender Breakdown (Age 15 – 30 years)**



**Diagram 5: Neighbourhood wise Gender Breakdown (15 -30 years)**

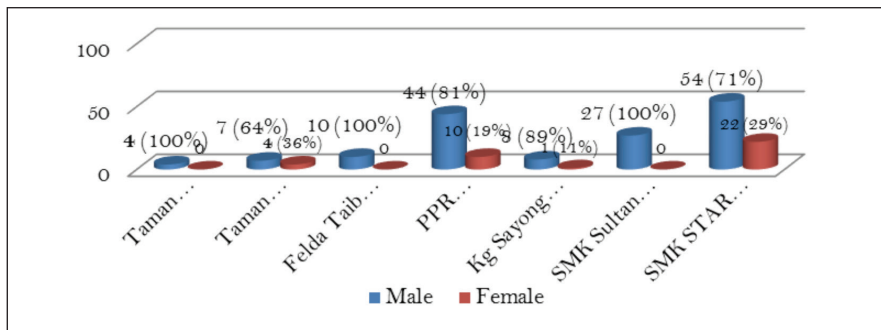
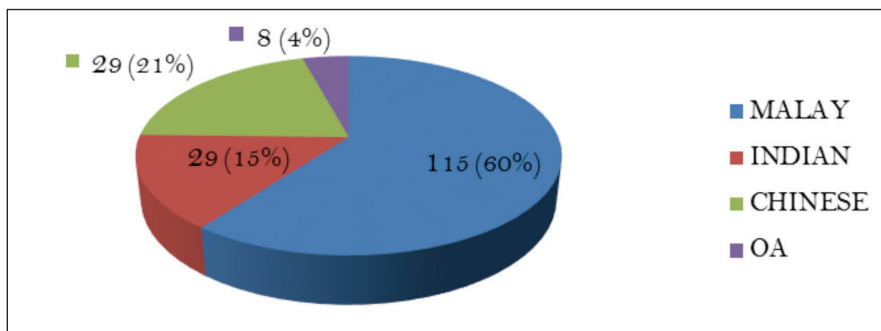


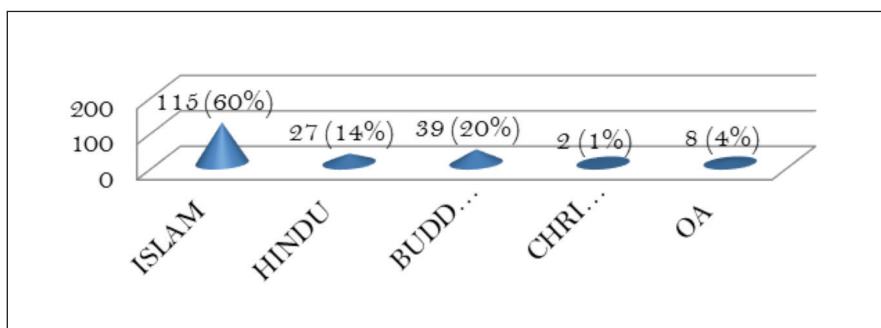
Table 1 and diagram 5 indicate the low participation of Female respondents. It is clearly seen that if not for the two Focus Group Discussions in Schools, the number of female respondents could be practically nil. The schools also provided a multi-ethnic target group.

**Diagram 6: Respondents' Ethnicity Breakdown (n=191)**



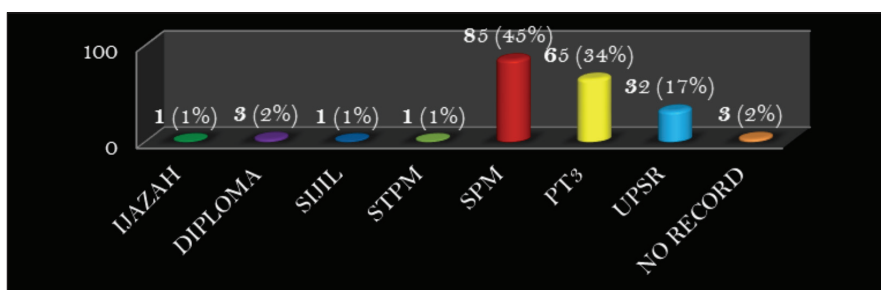
The capacity to get a multi ethnic group at the neighbourhood level either by the local leadership or even by the government agencies seem to be very weak. No other neighbourhood could bring participants from other ethnic groups except for the PPR Temenggong, Kulai Jaya that brought few Indians through special efforts.

**Diagram 7: Respondents' Religious Background**



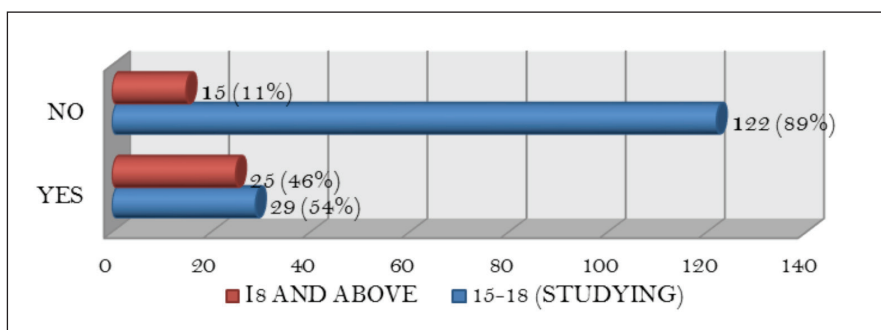
Though the number and ration of respondents falling into the different religious category may not be in appropriate proportion and ratio compared to that of the overall population of the neighbourhoods chosen for, or even the population demography of the districts from which they come from, the research team is happy that there are participants from all major ethnic groups and their views could be heard.

**Diagram 8: Respondents' Educational Breakdown (n=191)**



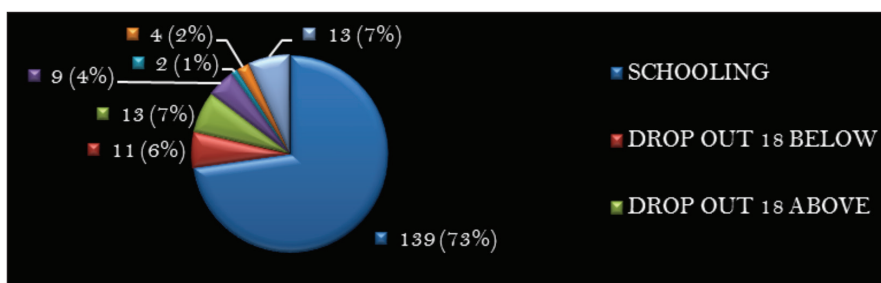
Among the 191 respondents, only 6 (5%) have qualifications above SPM. Three of them did not give their educational attainment status. This is a perturbing trend that is an indicator towards their future low job opportunities and thereby them falling deeper and deeper into the vicious cycle of poverty and also the loss of hope in improving their Quality of Life by raising their standard of living.

**Diagram 9: Respondents' Working Experience Breakdown**



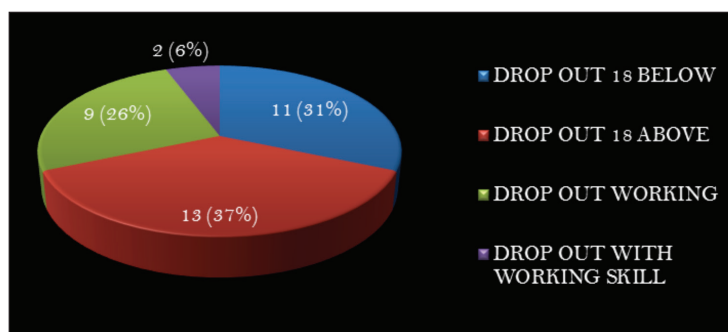
This Diagram 9 indicates clearly the low job opportunities for those above 18 years of age, especially from this specified target group. Only 46% of this above 18 years target group are working.

**Diagram 10: Educational Attainment & Working Experience (n=191)**



139 of them are studying, 28 of them are working either with or without skills. The rest 24 have dropped out and not working as well. Further details on the status of respondents who are school drop outs are captured in the following diagram.

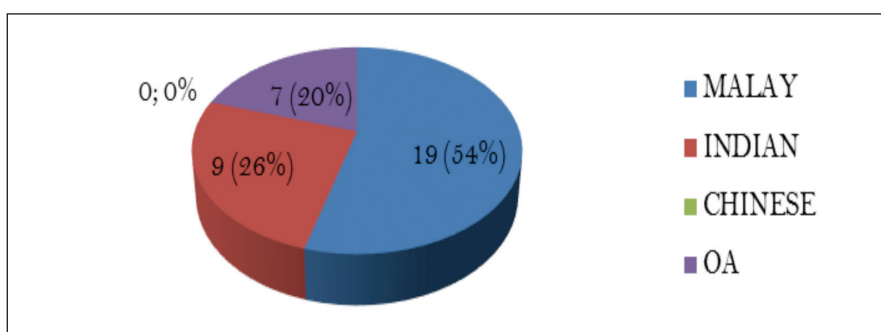
**Diagram 11: Breakdown Details of School Drop outs (n=35)**



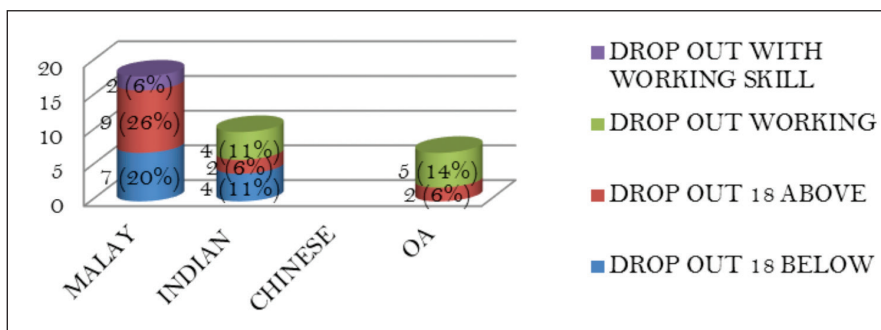
35 out of 191 respondents or 18.3% of the respondents have recorded that they have dropped out of school system before completing their SPM. Of this, 24 (68%) of them are not working. Only 11 (32%) of them who are 18 years and above are working.

2 (6%) of them above 18 years of age have dropped out of school system after UPSR, but have stated that they have learnt skills such as Car repairing skills. But both of them are working as lorry drivers for other companies.

**Diagram 12: Drop out as per Ethnicity Breakdown**

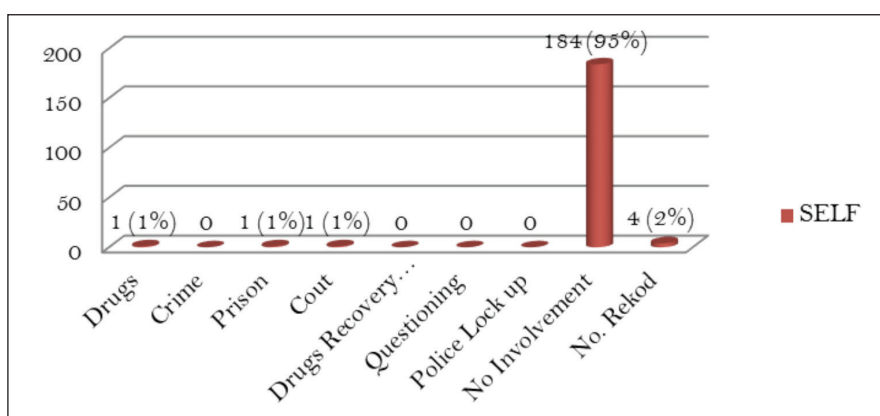


**Diagram 13: Current Work Status of School Drop Outs (n=35)**

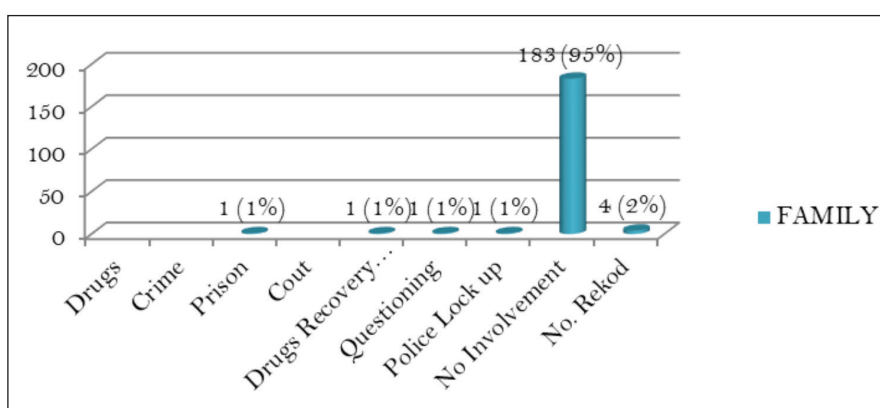




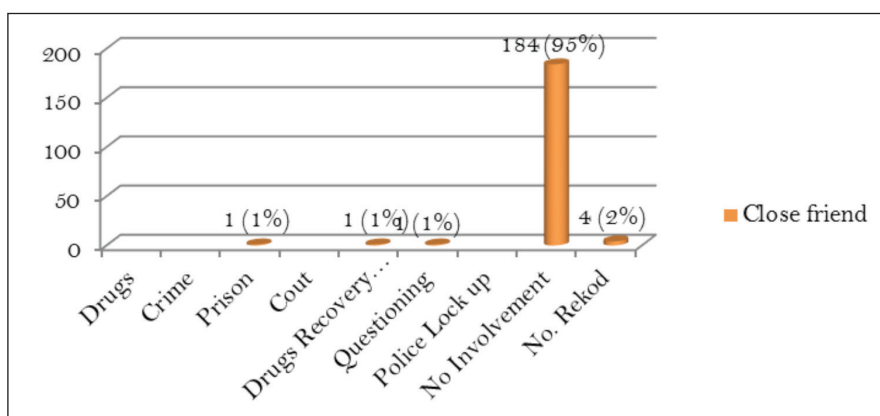
**Diagram 14: Adverse Experience With Law & Order (Self)**



**Diagram 15: Adverse Experience With Law & Order (Family)**

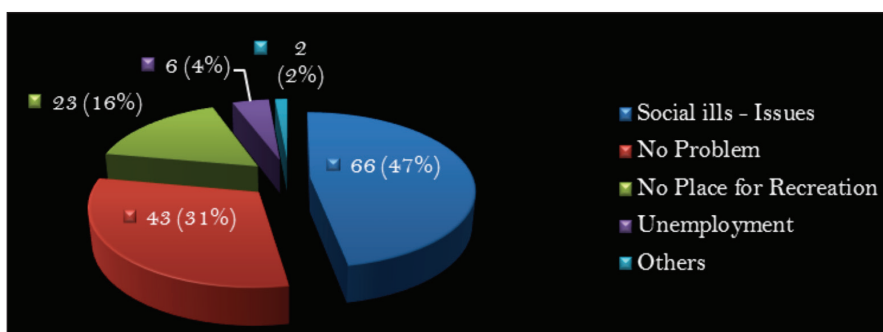


**Diagram 16: Adverse Experience With Law & Order (Friends)**



Diagrams 14-16 show us the answers received from the young people when asked about their or their family member's or their friends' involvement and experience with law and order. 95% denied any such involvement or experience.

**Diagram 17: Problems Faced by Youths (n=140)**



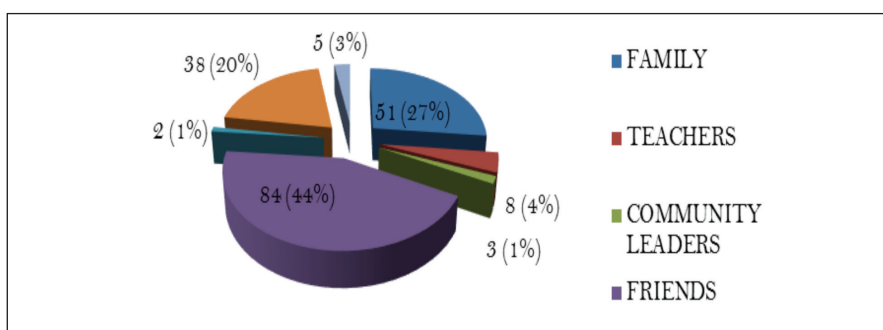
The young people were asked to give their multiple problems they encountered in their neighbourhoods. The main issues raised or not raised are captured in this diagram. Only 140 of the young people filled this segment of the questionnaire. Though the respondents recorded very low involvement of self, family and friends in anti-social activities, in this segment 66 (47%) have recorded that they face social ills and issues such as fights, drugs, alcoholism, theft, etc as problems faced.

**Table 2: Reasons Attested for Such Problems**

Issues	No. of Respondents	Percentage
No. Problems	42	32.6%
Bored in School	22	17.1%
Financial Issues	15	11.6%
Peer Influence	6	4.7%
Structural/ Low Opportunities/ information	14	10.9%
Social ills	12	9.3%
Low Police Presence	10	7.8%
Family	7	5.4%
Self	14	10.9%

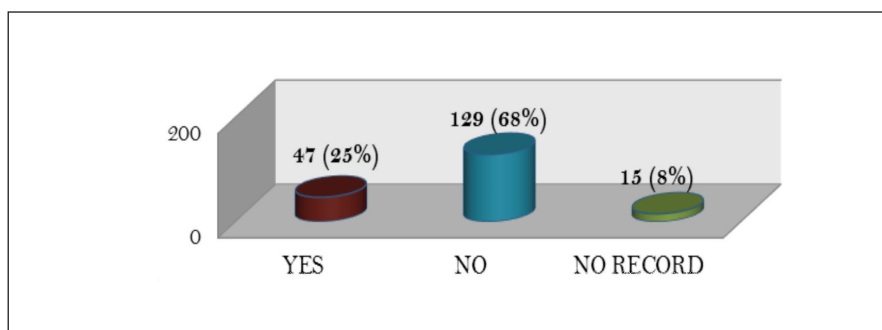
This segment had the multiple options for the young people to record. Here boredom in school or laziness to go to school or no interest in school (Bosan, Malas Belajar, Tak Minat or Tak Suka) have been some major reasons given. While family and friends factor have a low score, self attributes, financial issues and structural issues seem to have a higher score.

**Diagram 18: People Chosen For Advice During Time of Trouble**

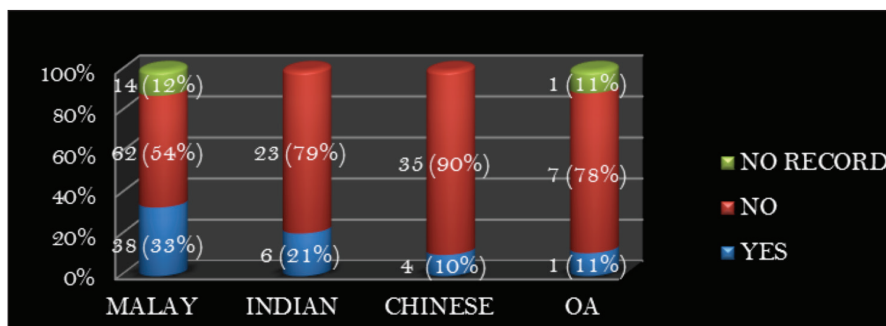


The prison study brought forth the findings that many of the young offenders were influenced by friends who are older than them. They listened to them and followed suit and in the end fallen into the rut of anti social and criminal activities. Also of the study emerged another fact that the young offenders did not have any positively impactful relationship with the community, societal, religious leaders, and their teachers or even with their own families. Here again in this study that the young people do not trust the society leaders or teachers or senior family members so much. They prefer more of their friends to seek advice. This can be a dangerous trend, which is reinstated again and again. The failure of the societal and environmental systems that are supposed to provide the informal social support and control seem to have failed.

**Diagram 19: Respondents Participation in Youth Programmes**



**Diagram 20: Participation in Youth Clubs with Intra-Ethnic breakdown (n=191)**



Diagrams 19-20 highlight the level of youth participation in organised social clubs and activities. Overall participation in these clubs and activities is low. Even then, there is an ethnicity related factor that while certain ethnic groups are a little more comfortable in participating in these organised activities, other ethnic members are not participating. This needs to be unpacked as well.

### The Gargantuan Issue of School Drop Outs

On a tighter search, it is found out that 35 of the 191 respondents (18.3%) are school drop outs. Of which only 11 (31.4%) are gainfully employed and the balance 24 (68.6%) of them are neither working nor studying. This is a serious issue as the respondents have also mentioned about low job opportunities linking to the Singapore Syndrome. This unique issue seems to be special to the State of Johor.

22 (17.1%) of the young respondents when they gave the reasons for their problems have recorded that they are bored with the school system and they do not have the interest to go to schools. A few of them during the qualitative part of the survey said that the school system do not listen to their problems, there is favouritism in the treatment and also a desire that more can go to the school counsellors for advice and assistance.

## **In School, Yet Not in School**

Even though some have in the school system for 10 years, they are not able to read or write or even understand Bahasa Malaysia. They relied on their friends to fill even the forms. In the two schools visited, the researchers were given the opportunity to discuss issues with the academically weak students. The young people categorically stated that they are bored with their school system. They are forced to come to school in order to get their SPM certificate. Their body language was clear evidence to this boredom. They were keeping their faces on the table and were not interested in the proceedings of even the focus group discussion. In one school, even with the presence of the guru discipline and guru counsellor, they were picking a quarrel with one another and were walking around.

### **Answering the Research Framework No 1 – The 5 Levels of Intervention**

Journeying through the data given above, the answer should be a resounding ‘yes’. Most of the young respondents are in either one of the stages one/ two/three or 5. Though through this research exercise, we did not meet anyone currently in detention centre due to the research scope, one of the respondents had mentioned about his experience in being to detention centre. Some of the respondents moved away from the place of Focus Group Discussion, when they saw the Police presence.

### **Answering Research Framework 2 – The 5 Root Causes or Contributing Factors**

Looking at Table 3, the answer to this question also is ‘Yes’, though it can be in varying degrees. The influence of the peers, family institution, and the psychosocial make-up of the young person seems to be further compounded with the absence or low presence and positive influence of social actors such as teachers, agency youth officers, religious leaders, neighbourhood leaders and civil society leaders and also structural issues such as lack of recreational facilities at the neighbourhoods, lack of study space for the young people who are studying and also low job and alternate educational opportunities have made this more compounded with lack of information. The low participation of young people in neighbourhood based focus group exercise is a classic example for the disconnection present in the community and how they relate to the local leaders.

44% of the youth said that they go to their friends for advice and listening ear as against the 27% that goes to their family and 10% to the other social actors such as teachers, community leaders, religious leaders and others. 68% of them did not take part in any youth activities and programmes provided by Government agencies or Civil Society Organisations. Only a few young people from other ethnic groups, except for Malay, do not give importance or have the confidence in becoming a youth club member. There is a dangerous trend of disconnection and apathy between different ethnic groups living in the same neighbourhood.

Other Quality of Life (QoL) issues that came out strongly through this exercise are the structural issues such as low opportunities, spatial issues, inter-ethnic apathy, low information and there by the resulting financial difficulties.

### **The Presence of High Risk Attributes but the Resulting Denial**

There is a lot of denial when it comes to recording about their/friends/family involvement in anti-social activities. 96% respondents said there was no involvement of them, or their family members or friends in anti-social and undesirable activities or had problem with law and order issues. However, later on 66 (47%) of them had said that they faced social ills and issues and another 12 (9.3%) said the reasons or contributing factors for their problems is social ills. Thus, it is concurred that the prevalence of social ills and issues in these B40 neighbourhoods are very high and thus they fall into the category of high risk neighbourhoods. Secondly, that a number of the young respondents fall into the second intervention

category of youth from high risk families and also on to the third intervention stage of youths with anti-social behaviour.

### **Defining the Profile of a High Risk Youths**

Through this exercise and also the target group definitions and understanding by the diverse stakeholders, we can arrive at the profile of a high risk youth, however at time they can be considered as At Risk youth Category. Some attributes are those with low opportunities to job and employment sector, coming from high risk neighbourhoods or family members with anti-social or criminal behaviour, youths with low bargaining power, low educational achievers and school dropouts, young people with low/no self esteem, low/no skills, involved in anti-social/criminal activities and under the influence of substance abuse.

### **Data from the Focus Group Discussions**

Under the banner of this action research, 8 Focus Group Discussions were conducted to gather the views of the young people on the topic at hand. This was done in a creative manner. Sometimes the young people used the medium of miming, at times they used small group discussions and at times they presented their views in a mahjong paper presentation. Following are some of the recurrent major themes emerged through this exercise of Focus Group Discussions.

#### **Structural Issues**

Lack of designated study areas in the neighbourhood or their houses and lack of recreational spaces and fields in their local neighbourhoods and even if it is present, the rental is steep for the young people to pay. Sometimes, these spaces were rented out to outsiders to make money. Maintenance of these spaces are also not properly looked.

#### **Issues Related to Schooling & The Educational System**

Lack of transportation and irregular bus services are said to be a major issue for youths attending educational institution. The unacceptable method of disciplining the youths in school without a proper understanding of the issues faced by the student was raised as a 'no, no' by some of the young people. In this light, it was mentioned that they would have preferred their school Counsellors to be more amiable than now, so that these young people can share their problems with them and get appropriate advice.

#### **Neighbourhood issues**

The interaction between youths belonging to different ethnic groups seemed to be very low. Hence there seems to be a lot of blame shifting and counter blame shifting. Fighting among the young people is highly prevalent. Substance abuse is mentioned to be one of the rampant issue. Few had mentioned about the theft, and the noise pollution as well. But no one is trained to be a youth worker cum conflict mediator. Some of them did not even know of their neighbourhood leaders.

#### **Family & Low Income**

Low income seemed to be a tormenting issue. Hence, the family is not in any position to purchase services such as tuition, rental for play ground or music classes and other such opportunities that can be purchased. Due to the high prerogative attached to moneymaking, the parents do not spend enough time with their young people and do not have time to listen to them. Thus the importance that had to be attached to the education and social life of the children has taken a back step. Singapore work pattern and Singapore Syndrome in employment is another issue, which is blamed.

## **Lack of Information on Educational & Job Opportunities**

When the different and diverse available opportunities in alternate education and other such opportunities to raise their standard of living, the youths were unaware of such opportunities and also did not have the process know-how to avail such opportunities. Some youths had the negative perception that they will not be able to avail such opportunities due to various reasons. Though they live within the IRDA Region, the youths do not seem to have knowledge of the job opportunities available within the IRDA Region. They just know of Lego Land.

They were also not aware of the many innovative initiatives by the various agencies and ministries. Some even though they were aware of such programmes, they felt that they will not be accepted in that particular programme. This is an issue pertaining to their perception. Nonetheless, this needs to be gently corrected.

## **Other Issues Raised**

The young people felt that those in the position should assist them more. Instead of hearing and listening to the voices of the youth, there is a top down handling of issues that is not appreciated or respected by the youths. They felt that they are voiceless.

There seems to be a love-hate relationship with the police. Some mentioned their averseness and apathy towards the Police Force, though there is a programme called Rakan Kop. But a little while later, they also blamed the insufficient 'rondaan' of the Police in their neighbourhood in preventing the criminal and anti-social activities.

## **Data from Stakeholder Consultations**

To date eight Stakeholder Consultations have been conducted. Different agency representatives have been consistently participating in these consultations and have given their data and views. Police Di Raja Malaysia (PDRM), Jabatan Belia dan Sukan (JBS), District level and state level education department, Agensi Anti Dadah Kebangsaan (AADK), Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (JKM), JPNIN, IRDA are some such agencies. These 8 consultations include the two syndications organised by IRDA & IYRES with the Police and also the Education Department and two schools.

Five Police Districts namely Johor Bahru Utara, Johor Bahru Selatan, Seri Alam, Nusa Jaya and Kulai Jaya had submitted their data on Police arrests took place during the period of January 2015 – June 2015. When the data on serious crime was analysed, it was found out that 66.0% of the total police arrests with regards to serious crime, involving young people within the ages of 15-30 years have been recorded in these the districts of JB Selatan (44.3%) and Kulai Jaya (21.7%). Other three districts account for 44% of the serious crime arrests.



**Table 3: Data on Arrests related to Serious Crime committed by 15-30 years old in the Districts of Johor Bahru Selatan and Kulai Jaya**

Type of Crime	JB Selatan					Kulai Jaya					Total				
	M	C	I	L	T	M	C	I	L	T	M	C	I	L	T
Bunuh	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	8	0	9	1	0	8	0	9
											11.1%	0.0%	88.9%	0.0%	100%
Rogol	14	1	4	0	19	17	2	0	0	19	31	3	4	0	38
											81.6%	7.9%	10.5%	0.0%	100%
Samun B'Kawan bersenjata api	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	4	5	15	5	1	4	5	15
											33.3%	6.7%	26.7%	33.3%	100%
Samun B'Kawan Tanpa bersenjata api	30	5	20	0	55	0	0	0	0	0	30	5	20	0	55
											54.5%	9.1%	36.4%	0.0%	100%
Samun Bersenjata api	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
											0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0%
Samun Tanpa Bersenjata api	6	0	1	0	7	2	0	1	0	3	8	0	2	0	10
											80.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	100%
Mendatangkan Cedera	8	9	2	12	31	1	0	8	0	9	9	9	10	12	40
											22.5%	22.5%	25.0%	30.0%	100%
Total	58	15	27	12	112	26	3	21	5	55	84	18	48	17	167
	51.8%	13.4%	24.1%	10.7%	100%	47.3%	5.5%	38.2%	9.1%	100%	50.3%	10.8%	28.7%	10.2%	100%

Source: PDRM Johor, Table rearranged by C CODES, (Jan-Jun 2015)

The original data source, which are from the 5 IPDs in Johor namely, Seri Aman, Johor Utara, Johor Selatan, Nusa Jaya and Kulai Jaya, found out that 66.0% of all police arrests in these five districts are from the Districts of Kulai Jaya and Johor Selatan. Also it is noted that certain typology of crime has ethnicity linkages.

This finding has been originally noted from the Prison Study as well. While the Indians seem to be involved in violent crimes such as murder and robbing in gangs, Malays seem to have a high percentage of involvement in crimes related to sexuality. Thus a serious awareness and preventive programmes need to be designed and implemented for the specific target groups. Also more studies need to be done in order to unpack the motivating factors.

**Table 4: Data on Arrests related to Property Crime committed by 15-30 years old in the Districts of Johor Bahru Selatan and Kulai Jaya**

Type of Crime	JB Selatan					Kulai Jaya					Total				
	M	C	I	L	T	M	C	I	L	T	M	C	I	L	T
Curi	46	4	10	5	65	26	8	5	5	44	72	12	15	10	109
											66.1%	11.0%	13.8%	9.2%	100%
Curi M/Van, Lori Jentera Berat	2	0	3	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	5
											40.0%	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	100%
Curi Motokar	20	7	1	0	28	12	0	6	0	18	32	7	7	0	46
											69.6%	15.2%	15.2%	0.0%	100%
Curi Motosikal	47	3	10	0	60	59	0	0	2	61	106	3	10	2	121
											87.6%	2.5%	8.3%	1.7%	100%
Ragut	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
											0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0%
Pecah Rumah dan Curi	31	4	17	3	55	2	0	9	5	16	33	4	26	8	71
											46.5%	5.6%	36.6%	11.3%	100%
Jumlah PC	146	18	41	8	213	99	8	20	12	139	245	26	61	20	352
Total SC	58	15	27	12	112	26	3	21	5	55	84	18	48	17	167
Overall Total	204	33	68	20	325	125	11	41	17	194	329	44	109	37	519

Source: PDRM Johor, Table rearranged by C CODES, (Jan-Jun 2015)

While analysing the data on property crime given by the five police districts, it was found out that 68.5% of the total police arrests with regards to property crime, involving young people within the ages of 15-30 years have been recorded in the districts of JB Selatan (41.4%) and Kulai Jaya (27.1%). Other three districts account for 31.5% of the property crime arrests. This table also sheds light on the type of crime each ethnic group is involved.

**Table 5: Crime & Inter Ethnic Status**

Type of Crime	Malays			Chinese			Indians			Lain-Lain			Total		
Breakdown	No	Intra	Inter	No	Intra	Inter	No	Intra	Inter	No	Intra	Inter	No	Intra	Inter
Serious Crime	113	25.5%	44.7%	29	34.9%	11.5%	91	48.1%	36.0%	20	41.7%	7.9%	253	33.2%	33.2%
Property Crime	330	74.5%	64.7%	54	65.1%	10.6%	98	51.9%	19.2%	28	58.3%	5.5%	510	66.8%	66.8%
Total	443	100%	58.1%	83	100%	10.9%	189	100%	24.8%	48	100%	6.3%	763	100%	100%

*Source: PDRM Johor, Table rearranged by C CODES, (Jan-Jun 2015)*

When comparing Table No 7, 8 and 9, one can clearly see that the young people's involvement in property crime seems to be far more than the serious crime. Here again we note a linkage to the type of crime. This particular age group young people are more involved in the theft of motor cycles. One ponders if it is linked to their need.

Though there are many different innovative programmes being designed organised and implemented at the individual agency level, even the research team and other agency representatives are not aware of the programmes as well as the scope of the programmes. There is no real inter/Intra Agency coordination or cooperation. As one of the stakeholder representative explained, the high risk youths, their families and their neighbourhoods need the Multi-Vitamin Concept to address the issues in all entirety. This where the inter agency cooperation is critically needed. Most, if not all these activities and programmes are generic in nature. There are not many B40 related or high risk youth related programmes. Neither the B40 youths have been consulted for their preference in programme designing.

The programmes also are mainly disjointed and ad hoc in nature and do not employ regular and systematic approach. More Outcome oriented programme evaluation on a longitudinal basis as against the output oriented evaluations and KPIs need to be revisited.

Awareness on available programme provisions on the part of this B40, high risk youth community seems to be lacking. There are no real targeted programmes for the B40 high risk youths at the neighbourhood level. All programmes such as Rakan Muda, Uniform bodies and Crime Prevention Clubs operate at the school level, whereas many of the target group members are school drop outs.

Even if the original intention of the programmes and activities conducted at the neighbourhood level is to cater for a multi-ethnic clientele, ultimately it ends up catering to mono-ethnic groups. This has created a tense and unhappy environment at the multi-ethnic B40 neighbourhoods.

### **The Calibre of the Youth Worker**

The government personnel deployed to do youth work at the community level or even agency level are not trained in related field. Many of these youth related officers are Diploma holders but not in the related field of youth work or social work or community work or community mediation, poverty work, urban organising and other such streams. Even the Jiran Muda leaders appointed by the local Kawasan Rukun Tetangga, under JPNIN do not seemed to be active at the neighbourhood levels. This can be corrected by giving them a greater responsibility. This is a real disadvantage in organising the high risk youths from the B40 neighbourhoods.

## Education System – Formal and Informal

While the adolescents seemed to be in a hurry to escape the education system prematurely, for various reasons such as the misbehaviour of the student, the parental neglect in addressing the issue, the legalistic view of the system itself ejects the students with behavioural issues. Sacking young adolescents from the education system easily for various matters seemed to be quite rampant. This is one key issue to be noted. Lest that these sacked or dropped out individual can become the dregs of the society and can be instrumental in the destroying of the social fabric, culture and neighbourhood harmony and cohesion.

There are provisions such as Asrama located in the SMK STAR Putra, in the context of a school hostel mainly to accommodate and cater to needy students from disadvantaged communities, such as OA community. But utilisation of these provisions by the target group is not very impressive.

Except for Giat Mara, all other skills training institutes, including IKBN caters to moderate SPM result holders. More needs to be creatively done for low achievers and school dropouts. The Singapore Syndrome seems to be a pull down factor that affects the livelihood and income levels of the high risk youths who have not done well in their studies. Although they are in the school system, there is no motivation to do exceptionally well, but to finish the SPM level even with poor or mediocre results. This is yet another pull down factor.

Involvement of families in addressing the issues such as dropping out of school, drug addiction and other high risk youth related issues seem to be low or nil. The B40 neighbourhoods in general seem not to have provisions to moot a holistic development of the youths. This is where the cooperation of the different agencies operating as one solidarity group is very important.

The Police presence in dealing with high risk youths seems to be high. But unfortunately that is not matched by the soft touch needed from the other agencies and social actors.

The special visits made to the Community Police Post in Taman Desa Mutiara, Community Care House, an initiative by AADK in Felda Taib Andak, Pusat Activity JKM in Taman Cendana, which operates as a referral centre, the Felda Office in Felda Taib Andak have the right framework and scope for future agency cooperation. This opportunities need to be studied further.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Young people dropping out of school and thereby suffering with low job opportunities is an issue that needs an urgent and sensitive attention. What can the agencies and social actors to reduce drop out incidences and get them interested to stay on in the school system during their school going years and what other supporting initiatives needed?

A considerable number of respondents had said in their questionnaire that during times of confusion or difficulty, they approach their friends or no one else. This could make them end up in dire straits or worse situation. How can we design a programme called Peer Group Counselling and Peer Group self Support Groups operating at the neighbourhood levels?

Though there are many young people related activities and clubs organised by the various stakeholders, many of these high risk young people who reside in Bottom 40 neighbourhoods have an apathy and averseness towards this programme. This could due to wrong perceptions or the programmes and activities are not designed with a specific target group, their issues and aspirations in mind. How can we correct this and design specific programmes appealing to these high risk youths from the B40 neighbourhoods?

Stakeholders Consultations have highlighted the many different programmes that have been implemented for the young people belonging to all ethnic groups. Though the intended purpose and focus of the programmes is to reach out to young people from multi-ethnic group, the programmes invariably end up catering exclusively to a mono-ethnic group or with a very few participants from other ethnic groups. How do we correct this situation and make those appealing and encouraging to young people belonging to multi-ethnic group to participate in these programmes?

Many programmes and activities have been organised and implemented in isolation and silos by the agencies and even social actors such as the non-governmental or civil society organisations. How can this be rectified with inter stakeholder and inter agency cooperation and coordination in order to be more effective, productive and also be economical?

There are many agency provisions such as Community Police Posts, Community Care House, Pusat Aktiviti JKM, and the Asrama for marginalised and disadvantaged communities such as Orang Aslis. They do have the appropriate framework. Even then the utilisation of these provisions has either not been very impressive or they have become exclusive for a specific ethnic target group. How can this be remedied to cater to all ethnic groups? Also how can the scope of these provisions can be diversified and coordinated to benefit all in the neighbourhood?

Effective handling of young people with high risk behaviour needs action from a multi-disciplinary team. There seems to be a dearth in this area, especially with agency staff not trained in appropriate field. How can this be corrected? What kind of trainings for personnel needed? Who will be tasked to fulfil this training of youth workers mandate?

Education Ministry should think of retaining young people within the school system, during their school going age, instead of prematurely ejecting them out of the education system by criminalising them. So there need to be a revisit in the educational policy of sacking students.

A serious, in-depth study needs to be done among the early school drop outs and also a series of focus group discussions with the educational policy makers and educationists to identify ways to prevent early ejection of students from school system for whatever reason it may be, and to retain them in the system throughout their school going years

Ministry of Education needs to go on a revisit on the Educational Blue Print, in the light of issues raised in this action research to enhance the quality of formal, informal and lifelong education to specifically prevent the youths from falling into the educational gaps. Keeping in view of these challenging students, some incentives need to be worked out for students with good behaviour and also those with improved behaviour including a transformational incentive.

Youth and Sports Ministry should create innovative skills training institutes that will accept early school dropouts and also the youths who have had problem with the law, instead of rejecting them from the current IKBN opportunities. Youth and Sports Ministry also should invest in community based high risk youth targeting and youth programmes such as youth mentoring. Here the youth leaders can be trained to be youth mentors at the neighbourhood level and also youth self support groups at the neighbourhood level. Disconnect between the high risk youths and the youth programmes implemented by this ministry should urgently address this issue.

Ministry of Youth and Sports with the assistance of need to create a policy that a major portion of the Community Social Responsibility (CSR) funds to be allocated and kept aside specifically for the future transformational programmes to be conducted for the benefit of high risk youth community at the B40 neighbourhoods. Keeping in view of the multi-disciplinary action needed to address the issues pertaining to high risk youths, the youth ministry should play the role of advocating and facilitating inter

agency coordination and cooperation to deal with youth related issues effectively from the structural point of view. A district level youth transformational centre managed by youth workers, which also doubles up as youth tele-centre can be established.

Capacity building Trainings for the youth workers and other agency workers working amidst the high risk youths at B40 neighbourhoods to be organised. Regular and gradually progressing In Service trainings also can be conducted. To be futuristic in outcome oriented goal setting, an innovative Road Map or Blue Print is urgently needed to address the issues and concerns of the high risk youths in order to create a SMART youth community. A Jawatan Kuasa Belia Risiko Tinggi needs to be instituted to manage the youth community in general and more specifically and importantly, youths with challenging, anti-social and criminal behaviour. A pilot project with research element to work with high risk youths can be organised in one or two of the B40 urban multi-ethnic neighbourhoods in IRDA governed Iskandar region. The Research Team can work on the framework for such a project and also on the specific training modules in the area of inter-agency coordination and cooperation in order to extend the qualitative outcomes. Later this model can be replicated in other urban B40 neighbourhoods nationwide.

JPNIN needs to relook at the way KRTs are structured in order to accept youths within the local decision making and also to make this structure a multi-ethnic composition. The Jiran Muda leaders can be equipped with mediation skills and also multi-ethnic coordinating skills. They need to be information savvy to help introduce various opportunities available for youth community.

## CONCLUSION

There are many neighbourhoods, especially the B40 neighbourhoods that are teeming with the high risk young people. There is an urgent need to address the issues and aspirations of these young people who can be moulded as productive citizens of Malaysia or else they can also become counterproductive to the neighbourhood living and also the development of the nation. In order to address the issues of these young people, the stakeholders should:

1. design programmes that can be appealing to them and are socially inclusive
2. go to the basics of reengineering communities by ushering in the informal social support and control system, which needs the seeds of community cohesion.
3. enlarge the outreach by innovatively coordinating and cooperating in the youth focused agency programmes
4. invest in regular, systematic and neighbourhood based non-threatening programmes Instead of a having centralised ad hoc programmes, to include the multi-ethnic youth groups and also high risk youth groups.
5. walk, work and win with youths.

## REFERENCES

- Charles Murray. 1984. *Losing ground: American social policy, 1950-1980*. Basic Books: USA.
- Charles Murray. 1990. *The emerging British underclass*. Institute of Economic Affairs: UK.
- Denison Jayasooria & Jasmine Adaickalam. 2014a. Unpublished paper entitled: A micro demographic study conducted among young offenders and implications for inclusive & holistic development of youths in Malaysia, (undertaken between February and July 2014 & funded by IYRES).
- Denison Jayasooria & Jasmine Adaickalam. 2014b. Unpublished paper entitled: At risk youth in urban areas. A study undertaken for EPU through the World Bank, between September 2014 to October 2014. It was one component of a larger study entitled: Malaysia: Achieving a system of competitive cities.
- Denison Jayasooria. 2008. Levels of intervention in addressing crime & violence among Indian youths. In Denison Jayasooria. "Social development & Indians in Malaysia: An agenda for social inclusion. YSS:KL, 354-362.
- Frank Field. 1989. *Losing out: The emergence of Britain's underclass*. Blackwell. Oxford.
- John Pierson. 2002. *Tackling social exclusion*. Routledge: London.
- Robert MacDonald. 1997. *Youth: The underclass and social exclusion*. Routledge: London.