

# Six steps to high quality social work

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— Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil  
Women, Family and Community  
Development Minister

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KUALA LUMPUR: There is light at the end of the tunnel for social workers in this country.

The cabinet, on April 23, approved several measures to streamline and make the profession more inclusive.

Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil said the measures would ensure that social workers were competent and professional and gave quality services.

She said the six measures included:

- establishing national social work competency standards;
- Ministry of Higher Education introducing a degree course in social work education in the curriculum of higher learning institutions;
- enacting the Social Workers Act;
- establishing the Social Work Council to regulate social work practitioners and educators;
- Public Service Commission and the Public Service Department to recruit qualified social workers into the public sector; and,
- upgrading the Social Institute of Malaysia and other accredited institutions to offer social work courses at the certificate and diploma levels.

Shahrizat said there was a need for

professional social workers due to the increasing number of social problems and their complexity.

“With these measures, the core group (seeking social and welfare services) will be able to get quality services.”

Shahrizat said the rationale for such a move was supported by the increasing risk of harm towards clients if social workers did not have the appropriate qualifications to respond to their needs.

She also said international consultants were roped in to review the profession, adding that the measures were a culmination of seven years of combined efforts by the ministry and other social welfare bodies.

## Paving way for skilled welfare workers

KUALA LUMPUR: The move to recognise social workers as professionals is a groundbreaking step in the provision of high-quality welfare services in Southeast Asia.

The United Nations International Children's Fund social policy specialist Maya Faisal said Malaysia could be a leading force in tackling social issues in the region.

While there had been efforts to regulate social work in Vietnam and Singapore, no other country beside Malaysia was taking such extensive measures in this area, she said.

The government has approved the enactment of a Social Workers Act and five other measures to provide quality social welfare services and the workers to be more competent and professional in their approach.

Maya said the standards were based on international best practices to ensure the highest quality and most comprehensive services.

Malaysian Association of Social Workers vice-president Amy Bala said the measures were timely given the increasing complexity of social problems in the country.

“We cannot afford to deal with these problems without the right knowledge and skills as it can cause more harm than good in the long run.”

“The role of the social worker is to empower the vulnerable and we cannot do that without trained and qualified workers.”

The MASW will also consider sending current social workers for training to comply with the new regulations.

“We value the contributions of our current workers and we want to ensure that they receive the best training possible,” Amy said.

Deputy director-general (planning) of Department of Social Welfare, Lai Poh Guan, said the new measures were a good move and would enable professionally qualified people to provide proper advice to those in need.

She said qualified and skilled professionals from local universities in the future would be able to better deal with complex social problems.

The Welfare Department would not longer be burdened to provide training, she added.