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IDENTIFYING SOME KEY AREAS TO
ALLEVIATE POVERTY AMONG WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

This study considered alternatives to traditional poverty measures of which have so far not been applied in the Malaysian context, for Malaysian women in suffering poverty. The target sample of women in poverty are identified by the Ministry of Rural Development. 211 female respondents and 180 male respondents from an urban and a rural area were interviewed. Some key areas were identified. They include education, training, health, food security, nutrition, access to assets and credit, participation in household decision-making and support system.

It is found that poor women in the sample are mostly lowly educated, none of them managed to further their study until the tertiary level. A quarter of the women in poverty are illiterate. Hence, women in poverty involve those in informal sectors and lowly paid jobs. Fortunately, almost all the respondents do not face food shortage problem and they have three adequate meals per day. Health status of these women is considered moderate. There is indeed some links between poverty and chronic health problem. Women in poverty are, in general, rarely make decision independently. Joint decisions with family members are made on major issues. While the majority of the women have their family to rely on, however, institutional support hardly exist especially in the urban area. Women in poverty have low access to assets and credit facilities.

There is therefore a need for government to accommodate them as a direct beneficiaries in poverty alleviation programs, as they face different problems from men.

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