

Report to the UN CRC Reviewers of Malaysia in January 2026

From SWAM (Social Workers Alliance Malaysia)

Focus

This brief submission focuses on the proposed Professional Social Work Bill (*Rang Undang-undang Profesion Kerja Sosial*) and how developments during 2025 relate to the reviewers' wish to see a strengthening of the social services workforce, especially in relation to Child Protection Teams as expressed in LOI point 6(a).

Key Events:

1. The announcement that the long-awaited Professional Social Workers Bill was to be presented to Parliament during 2025 was initially welcomed. However, after an outline of its contents was presented at a briefing in April, followed by a townhall on 11th July, there was great concern in various quarters over a number of aspects, including:
 - (i) the exclusion of the crucial public sector social service workforce, which is the only group with mandatory powers in the field of child abuse and the major source of social workers in the country; and
 - (ii) the unclear structure for the governance of professional registration and accreditation, compared to earlier versions of the bill which had been subject to extensive consultation and had wide-spread support within the profession.

SWAM, a coalition of agencies and individuals active in the field of social services, was formed during 2025 to enable wider consideration of this crucial legislation, ensuring it provides ethical, high-quality services for vulnerable communities, particularly children, women, and marginalised groups across all sectors.

2. On 6 November 2025, when answering a Parliamentary Question, the Minister of Women, Family and Community Development confirmed that the Government would review the Bill in response to concerns raised regarding (amongst others) the exclusion of the public sector, including by the Parliamentary Select

Committee on Women, Children and Community Development. Consequently, further consultations at state level are being planned before the legislation is tabled.¹

SWAM's Request to CRC:

3. SWAM, while encouraged by the Government's decision to reconsider the legislation, notes this is not the same as an assurance that the essential public sector will be fully included from the outset under the revised Bill. The original call for legislating the profession was to ensure that new appointments to government social work posts would be qualified, and that provision would be made to help those already in service meet this standard during a suitable transition period. (Note: in 2022, there were 3,790 officers in the Welfare Department (JKM) with only 878 officers holding recognized qualifications,² while the country has 11 universities and colleges offering degrees/diplomas in Social Work).
4. We therefore request the CRC committee members to enquire from the Government what challenges they see in incorporating the public sector into the revised Bill, and how they intend to address these challenges.
5. We further request the Government to clarify any concerns regarding the establishment of a single, independent Social Work Profession Council with clear mandates and balanced representation, as well as judicial review mechanisms, which is considered best practice for overseeing professional standards across all sectors.
6. It is also vital to know the Government's anticipated new timeline for enacting the legislation and whether this includes meaningfully consulting and sharing a copy of the Bill with key stakeholders, including CSOs, prior to it being tabled in Parliament.

Strengthening the Social Services Workforce:

7. Recognition of this need is an important step forward and brings together all those working to protect children and help them reach their potential. Given government social workers' key (and largely exclusive) role in child protection, including the effective implementation of the recently amended Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017 (Act 792), it is essential that government-appointed social workers are fully included from the outset in the Act. Their exclusion would mean that the very officers who are

¹ Based on the Minister's response in the Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives) during Minister's Question Time, 6 November 2025, DR6.11.2025, pp. 8-11 (<https://parlimen.gov.my/hansard-dewan-rakyat.html?uweb=dr&>).

² Based on the response by the Minister of Women, Family and Community Development to a Parliamentary Question on 29 October 2024, DR29.10.2024, pp. 16-18 (<https://parlimen.gov.my/hansard-dewan-rakyat.html?uweb=dr&arkib=yes>).

vested with mandatory legal powers will not be held accountable to the same professional standards as those without, which is counter-intuitive.

8. While it is noted that JKM has implemented a case management system and developed structured supervision in 105 district welfare offices,³ this can only be enhanced by the Bill ensuring all new recruits have the relevant professional qualifications and existing staff have opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge. Delays will only worsen the current low ratio of qualified staff, making the few qualified supervisors' tasks more demanding and strengthening professional competencies within the organisation harder to achieve. Inclusion however, will raise the professional status of social workers within the crucial public sector, giving the workforce more credibility with other professions they engage with, including medics, lawyers, and judges, to the benefit of their clients. SWAM looks forward to the day when all 160 districts in Malaysia have welfare offices staffed and managed by professionally qualified social workers.

Thank you for considering the above points.



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³ See footnote 1 above, p. 10 (<https://parlimen.gov.my/hansard-dewan-rakyat.html?uweb=dr&>).