

FOCUS AREA 2: DIGITAL INCLUSION

Title, Category, Gap and Target Group

DI-1: Impact of Internet Access and Accessibility Initiatives in facilitating Students' M40 and B40 groups' needs during COVID-19 prevention measure period

The research falls within the Guided Research Category addressing the gap area of **Impact Assessment and Evaluation** and to target primary, secondary, tertiary students, and general users from the M40 and B40 groups.

Research Problem/Context

Internet usage in Malaysia has surged in the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic prompting people to turn to the internet for their educational, work, information seeking, entertainment, retail and communication requirements. According to a joint report from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) published in 2020, two thirds of the world's school-age children, corresponding to 1.3 billion children between the age of 3 to 17 do not have internet connection in their homes. This lack of internet connectivity amongst children globally has had a follow-on impact on hampering students' participation in home-based teaching and learning especially during the COVID-19 pandemic where virtual learning has become the default learning mode necessitated by physical closure of schools.

In meeting this increased usage and higher reliance on the internet for study, work and social purposes, major Malaysian telecommunications providers have announced various initiatives including free data, free online tuition classes (*Tuisyen Rakyat, Jom Tuisyen, E-Kelas* and *i-LEARN Ace*) and bill rebates to all internet subscribers. Additionally, special subscription data packages have been offered to students at secondary schools and Institutions of Higher Learning. These offerings differ slightly based on the terms and conditions of the respective providers.

Further, users comprising the B40 (Bottom 40), M40 (Middle 40) and students are offered data and device subsidies as well as free Wi-Fi access at selected Projek Perumahan Rakyat (PPR) residences and extended operating hours at selected Pusat Komuniti (PIK) to encourage the use and access of internet.

Research Aims

This Call for Proposal is desirous of eliciting research proposals providing an understanding of the extent, usage pattern and impact of free internet access on the identified groups, namely students, M40, and B40 and identification of strengths, weaknesses and potential improvements in its coverage and efficacy.

Research Objectives

Researchers are invited to submit proposals guided by the following overarching research objectives (ROs):

- a. RO 1 – Modes of access, level of take up of services and contributing factors and impediments vis-à-vis the different user groups
- b. RO 2 – Impact of offerings in facilitating a shift to new norms namely communications for work, study, information access and social cohesion
- c. RO 3 – Recommendations for improved targeting of offerings, data allocation, access, type and duration to facilitate usage patterns and requirement during the new norm.

Title, Category, Gap and Target Group

DI-2: An Impact Study of Klik Dengan Bijak (KDB) Programme

The research falls within the Guided Research Category addressing the gap area of **Programme Evaluation, Assessment and Impact** and targets participants who have attended KDB training sessions.

Research Problem/Context

The Internet has become an important medium for education, communication, information sharing, and personal growth of every individual including target groups such as adolescents etc. But along with its many positive uses and benefits, the ubiquity of internet connectivity has also seen risk-taking behaviours especially adolescents.

In order to promote positive usage and curtail undesirable online behaviours MCMC continues to run the *Klik Dengan Bijak* (Click Wisely) initiative aimed at educating and raising public awareness about Internet safety and security.

MCMC launched the KDB initiative in 2012 as a response to the need to raise awareness among Internet users in Malaysia and to curb online abuse. The initiative seeks to create awareness, promote, and educate the public on the positive and ethical use of the Internet while stressing on the importance of self-regulation. The programming of the initiative is based on Rukun Negara with the main thrust being safe, secure and responsible.

KDB implementation includes development of online safety modules, training of trainers with state offices and *Pusat Internet Komuniti* (PIKs) as well as public talks, contests, and offline and online promotions. From 2012 until 2020, KDB has achieved more than 6 million in audience reach, 85,000 followers on social media platforms, and trained 1,730 PIK staff at 873 PIKs. KDB covers topics such as Introduction to telecommunications technologies; user rights and the laws on online offences; cyber bully; online sexual grooming; digital parenting; parental control tools; oversharing; scam; false information; computer security; cyber terrorism; and self-regulation.

Research Aims

Research findings are aimed at providing an understanding of the vital role of awareness and educating the public such as parents and young children.

In relation to this educational and outreach role MCMC is desirous of research to provide insights and recommendations on how to improve the KDB program and ensure a higher level of effectiveness amongst the public in the future.

Research Objectives

Researchers are invited to submit proposals guided by the following overarching research objectives (ROs):

- a. RO 1 - Evaluate the effectiveness of the KDB programme.
- b. RO 2 - Conduct comparative studies (benchmark, best practices and metrics and indicators for digital literacies) and models in other countries.
- c. RO 3 - Examine whether the programme has brought about a positive change in the population's attitudes and has contributed to safe, secure and responsible use of the internet.
- d. RO 4 - Assess and provide recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of the KDB programme.