

Migrant workers in Sabah, East Malaysia: The importance of legislation and policy to uphold equity on sexual and reproductive health and rights

Abstract

Sabah, located in Southeast Asia, hosts the highest number of non-Malaysian citizens (27.7%), predominantly the Indonesian and Filipino migrants in comparison to other states in Malaysia. Sabah has inadequate data on migrants' sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHRs). Various migrant-related policies and laws are present, but they do not offer full protection and rights to legal migrants in terms of their SRHRs. The aim of the laws and policies appears to be controlling the migrants from having any negative impact on the locals, rather than protecting migrants' health and rights. This affected their rights to marriage, having children, increase their vulnerabilities to labour trafficking and sexual abuse and access to health-care services. Female migrant workers and undocumented migrants form the most vulnerable subgroups of migrants. This narrative review highlights the status of SRHRs of migrants in Sabah and the migrant-related Malaysian laws and policies affecting their SRHRs.