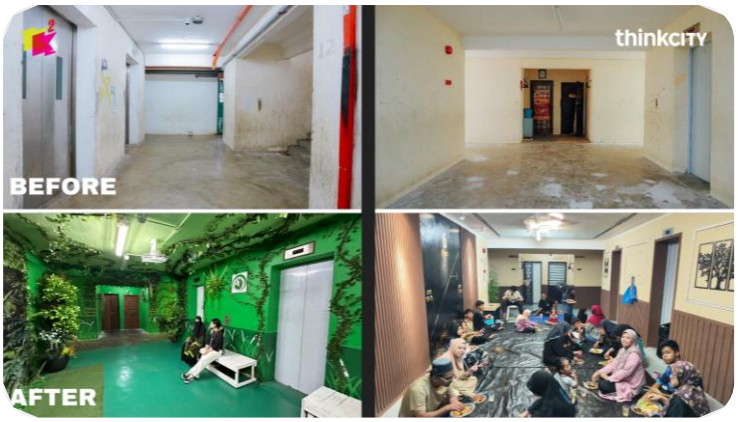
# *Public Housing is About People, Not Buildings: Malaysia's K2K Experience*

**Submitted By:** Think City




## Organization Profile

**Organization Name:** Think City

**Organization Type:** Private sector

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## Practice Details

**Country(ies):** Malaysia

**City(ies):** Kuala Lumpur

**Start Year:** 2023 **Ongoing:** Yes **End Year:** N/A

**Main Adequate Housing Components:**




**Housing Thematic Areas:**

Social Housing

Housing Rights & Social Inclusion

Housing Policy, Legislation & Governance

**Relevant SDGs:**



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## Problem & Context

Malaysia's public housing programme has been a success in providing shelter for the urban poor. However, decades of focus on physical infrastructure while neglecting social development and community life have created a liveability crisis, trapping residents in cycles of poverty and deprivation.

The consequences are stark:

- Persistent poverty – overcrowding, with 48% of households having over five members in undersized units.
- Fractured social life – 46.7% of residents have never used public facilities and youth see no future.
- Declining well-being – violent crime is seven times the national average, suicide rates three times higher, and 75% report chronic stress.

The core policy failure was prioritising buildings over communities, resulting in physical decay and the breakdown of the very social structures that make a house a home.

## Solution Developed

The "Kita-untuk-Kita" (K2K) programme was designed to fix the liveability crisis in Malaysia's public housing by empowering residents to lead the renewal of their own communities. It directly engaged over 50,000 residents across 10 high-density housing complexes.

Our objectives were to reverse decay by:

1. Building Social Infrastructure: Establishing community forums (FORKOM) in each complex to unify residents and enable collective action on shared issues.
2. Activating Physical Spaces: Transforming neglected areas like 218 lift lobbies into clean, safe hubs for community life.
3. Empowering People: Training and supporting residents to run their own initiatives, from youth sports leagues engaging 1,825 participants to community-led tuition that produced top-scoring students.

What made K2K unique and effective was its innovative model:

It replaced traditional top-down aid with a community-led framework. This approach combined deep diagnostic data from thousands of household surveys with catalytic seed funding for local projects. This proved that the most powerful resource for transforming public housing is the community itself.

## Implementation

Key Actions and 4-Stage Process

- Stage 1: Diagnose & Engage – 2,884 household surveys, spatial audits and cultural mapping exercises identified local priorities.
- Stage 2: Mobilise & Structure – Formation of 10 Forum Komuniti (FORKOMs) united residents into formal platforms for collective action.
- Stage 3: Act & Empower – Supported 39 community grants and FORKOM initiatives across 10 estates, transforming 218 lift lobbies, running major cleanliness campaigns, and organising youth sports involving 1,825 participants.
- Stage 4: Sustain & Scale – Created enduring social assets such as K2K Juara (sports), Duta KELIP (family support), and FORKOM to sustain impact.

Key Actors

Residents and community leaders; Think City (programme design and implementation); Ministries of Finance and KPKT (funding and policy); State Governments and local councils (delivery partners); NGOs and corporate collaborators.

Timeline

- Months 1–6: Research, trust-building, and baseline diagnosis.
- Months 7–18: Implementation through FORKOMs, grants, and scaled initiatives, culminating in a Prime Ministerial visit that spurred national interest.

Resources

Funded by the Ministry of Finance (RM26 million), including RM1 million in direct community grants with 10% community co-funding. Supported by a network of 120+ partners in sports, education, and placemaking.

## Enablers & Obstacles

Enablers:

Success was driven by specialised tools for community entry and trust-building, including participatory diagnostics that gave residents voice. Conflict resolution mechanisms and confidence-building through small, quick-win community initiatives were vital, turning skepticism into ownership.

Obstacles & Solutions:

We overcame low social cohesion and elite capture in CBOs by creating neutral FORKOM platforms to ensure inclusive representation. Mistrust between residents and officials was addressed through transparent, data-backed dialogues. Latent conflicts were mediated via

structured forums. To combat low self-belief, we demonstrated change was possible through co-creating lift lobbies and other visible transformations, building momentum from small successes. Inadequate maintenance funding was highlighted to authorities using community-collected data to advocate for systemic budget reforms.

## Results & Impact

The K2K programme delivered transformative, community-led change and sparked a national movement, directly engaging over 12,000 residents through 731 empowerment activities and 39 hyper-local projects.

1. Direct, Quantifiable Results:

K2K achieved both scale and depth—activating 218 lift lobbies through co-creation, forming 10 Forum Komuniti (FORKOMs) uniting 32 community groups, and engaging 1,825 youth in structured sports. A small RM17K tuition grant produced top national-grade students, demonstrating that community capacity can transcend poverty-linked barriers.

2. Profound Impact on the Marginalised:

K2K empowered vulnerable groups: 11 women trained as family support ambassadors now serve 4,000 households. For youth, 20 were trained as sports coaches, over 400 participated in structured sports, 350 in self-development and education programmes, and 160 children completed STEM training—creating tangible pathways out of poverty.

3. Broader, System-Level Impact:

K2K demonstrated that social infrastructure is as critical as physical. It influenced national policy, catalysing a RM1.2 million government investment from the Prime Minister for urgent repairs, and established a scalable blueprint to revitalise public housing. Kuala Lumpur City Hall has since agreed to pilot a co-management model—the Top-down and Bottom-up Convergence Programme.

## Replication & Scale Up

The K2K practice is being formally replicated. A structured scaling programme is being co-designed with DBKL (Kuala Lumpur City Hall) to expand the model to more public housing complexes across the city.

Key enablers:

- Proven methodology – validated through a 10-site pilot.
- Strong institutional partnership – integration with DBKL systems.
- Political and community will – driving momentum for expansion.

This practice can be scaled nationally through a multi-level strategy:

- Institutional: Local governments to align top-down resources with bottom-up action.
- Funding: Blend public investment with corporate CSR for community activities.
- Capacity: Train officials in community engagement.
- Legal: Strengthen FORKOM as an official platform.
- Digital: Create tools for participation and transparent grants.

## Policy Uptake

This housing practice has informed or been partially integrated into policy discussions, strategies, or pilot-level policy instruments.

The K2K practice is influencing national policy:

- Direct Funding: PM approved RM1.2 million for a FORKOM-led project, showing trust in community proposals.
- Institutional Scaling: Budget 2026 allocates USD 1.3 million to formalise the model via DBKL.
- Integration: GDRN is aligning K2K with PPR support by GLCs.
- Planning: Inputs inform RMK13, prioritising improved PPR management structures.

## Lessons & Takeaways

Key improvements would focus on sustainability and impact:

- Earlier Economic Focus: Partner with livelihood specialists from the start to create jobs for youth and after-school leavers.
- Refined Grant System: Implement two rounds of small grants, first for quick wins, then for sustainable projects, to build capacity effectively.
- Digital Enablement: Develop a community platform for transparent issue reporting and grant management to boost accountability and participation.
- This approach would have strengthened economic outcomes and community self-sufficiency faster.