

# MRSM Kepala Batas Koperasi

## COOP CARD\*

**Location:** Kepala Batas, Penang

**Year of foundation:** 2007

**N° of members:** 889

**Sector:** School cooperative

**Key themes:** Youth's education and training, community development, decent work



**MALAYSIA**

## CONTEXT

Malaysia has a strong cooperative movement. It counts 6 million cooperative members out of a population of 32 million (19%). Its 14,000 cooperatives contribute largely to the country's development. Among the country's most interesting and visionary cooperative experiences, Malaysia includes school cooperatives. This is an innovative model which has been developed in the country's education sector since 1968. Today, almost 2,400 school cooperatives are established in secondary schools nationwide, and students, teachers and school staff can participate in them. They provide services to schools, such as laundrettes, cafeterias, bookstores, and stationary shops. Thanks to these activities, cooperatives contribute to the training of new entrepreneurs and future employees who are trustworthy and accountable. Actually, the real added value is to do so by adhering to the cooperative principles. Furthermore, successful school cooperatives can help to improve the infrastructure of schools, support students in purchasing books and pay for their school fees.

School cooperatives are strongly encouraged by schools themselves and are highly supported by the government, the apex cooperative organisation, ANGKASA, and local communities. In particular, ANGKASA plays a crucial role in supporting school cooperatives by providing training sessions on cooperative management.

\*Information collected during a fieldwork carried out in April 2019.

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## COOP STORY

MRSM Kepala Batas Kooperasi is a school cooperative established within a school of excellence, to which only the best students, in terms of academic merits, can access.

School cooperatives are a key instrument for the proper functioning of the school, and MRSM Kepala Batas Kooperasi is not an exception. It provides important services to the school, such as cafeterias, laundry facilities and also a nursery for the children of teachers and staff. The cooperative has also purchased a van that is rented out to the school. The income generated from these services is entirely reinvested in activities for the students. This is an important aspect as it guarantees a certain autonomy to the students, who thus should not be reliant on government and school funds.

MRSM Kepala Batas Kooperasi is also highly concerned about the sustainability and development of the local community and so food products sold in the cafeteria and small shops come from local producers.

In addition to the important economic effects, participation also strengthens the skills of students. The active participation in the cooperative is empowering for students: cooperative members acquire greater technical and managerial skills, learn how to manage time more effectively and can improve their communication skills. The cooperative provides students, who are in the midst of their cognitive and personal development, with the adequate tools to be active agents in decision-making processes.

Collaboration among students, as well as between students and professors, contributes to building a sense of community and mutuality, which are fundamental aspects for human development.

This cooperative story highlights the importance of integrating social dimensions: education, mutualism, local communities, and economic sustainability; demonstrating how fundamental it is to learn cooperative principles from the very beginning of schooling.

## HOW HAS THE COOPERATIVE CHANGED MEMBERS' LIVES?

- **Access to services and reinvestment:** The cooperative provides high-quality services in the school at affordable prices. Interestingly, profits generated through these services are then reinvested in activities for the students.
- **Support to local development:** Food sold at the cafeteria and at the shop comes from local producers. In addition, people working at the cooperative come from the same community in which the school operates.
- **Education and empowerment:** By actively participating in the cooperative, students develop hard and soft skills. In particular, they learn how to manage their time, how to do accounting and how to communicate with customers. More importantly, they learn to have a say in decision-making; to increase their self-confidence; and to work together and create a sense of community.
- **Strengthening students-teachers relationships:** By working together in the cooperative, teachers and students have also the opportunity to develop cooperative relations outside the classroom, which is also beneficial to building a healthy environment within the school.

## SELECTED QUOTE

“When we are in the cooperative, we are really taking care of each other. So basically, the cooperative is where we start to learn about helping each other and enjoy the life with the community”

Nurin Aina Binti Mohd Asri, cooperative member and student



## KEY LEARNING POINTS

- School cooperatives are an innovative model capable of integrating the provision of services to schools with the construction of mutualism and a sense of community, while promoting local and sustainable development.
- Participation in a cooperative from an early age provides useful tools for individual empowerment, as well offering opportunities for personal and professional growth.
- The existence of an enabling environment is fundamental for the development of a good cooperative movement. Malaysia promotes cooperatives through public policies and considers school coops as a key institution to provide services to schools and allow students to develop skills.

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