



Inclusive Development Support Program for Preschool Children Utilizing IT tools in Sarawak, Malaysia

Final Report on the Pilot Project Dec 2025

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0. Executive Summary

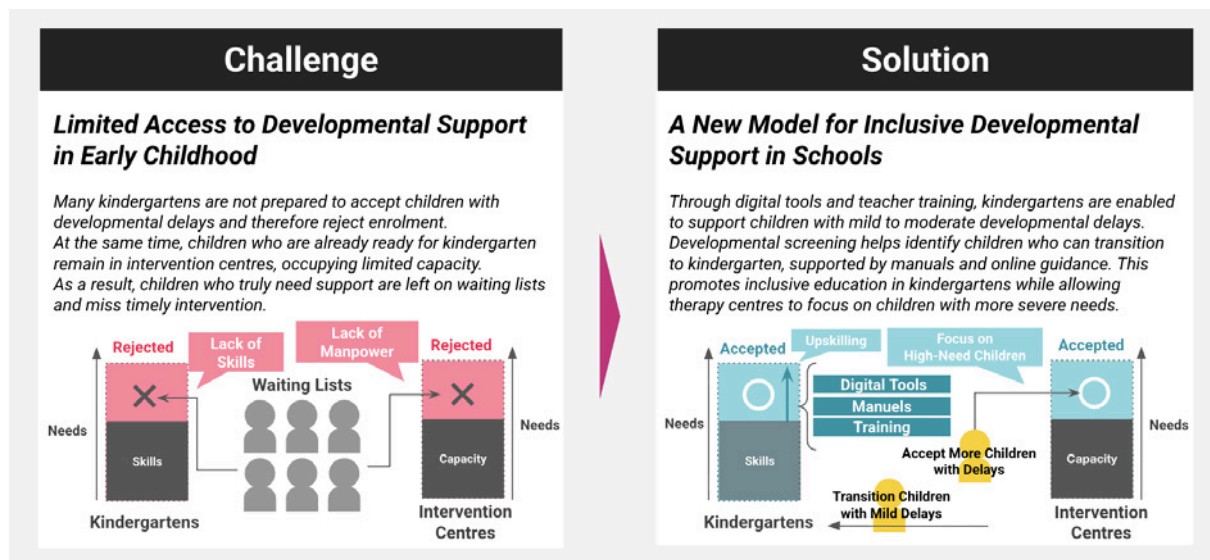
In this pilot, we verified the feasibility of a new inclusive development support model combining digital tools and teacher support by transitioning children with mild to moderate developmental support needs from therapy centers to kindergartens. As a result, we confirmed valid verification results for future grant-funded project development in terms of child transition, signs of developmental improvement, kindergarten willingness to accept, and the establishment of a collaboration system with local government and related organizations.

1. Background and Challenges

Early childhood (ages 0-6) is the most critical period for developmental support. Even when developmental delays are suspected, early detection and appropriate therapy or support can lead to significant improvement. Conversely, delays in detection and intervention can lead to a worsening of developmental delays in areas such as language, cognitive, and motor skills, resulting in long-term impacts on subsequent educational opportunities and social participation. In Southeast Asian countries, a regular developmental screening system is underdeveloped, and there is a shortage of personnel and specialists to conduct the screenings. Consequently, developmental delays often go undetected in early childhood, failing to connect children with appropriate support. Furthermore, specialists and facilities

that can provide therapy are limited, and it is common for families to be forced to wait for several months or more after diagnosis.

In Sarawak, Malaysia, it is estimated that there are approximately 100,000 children aged 3-5, with an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 (about 10-15%) potentially having developmental delays. However, due to the absence of a developmental screening system, many children are not connected to appropriate therapy. The number of specialists and therapy centers in the state is also limited, with the state government-run therapy center (OSEIC - One-Stop Early Intervention Centre) in the state capital, Kuching, having a waiting list of over 400 children. Moreover, for families residing in remote areas, transportation costs to attend sessions are a significant burden. Theoretically, children with mild to moderate developmental delays could be accepted into kindergartens if the appropriate support system is in place. However, the current reality is that many kindergartens lack sufficient knowledge or resources for developmental delays support, often refusing admission, which creates a large number of "waitlisted children" who cannot attend either a therapy center or a kindergarten.



Several key stakeholders in developmental support exist in Sarawak. OSEIC (One-Stop Early Intervention Centre), a state government-run therapy center, is the core public institution responsible for therapy for children with developmental challenges. AKO, which federates private kindergartens in the state, and SeDidik, which oversees public kindergartens, serve as representative organizations for the kindergarten sector and act as the window for program introduction and on-site deployment. Furthermore, NECIC is a national organization composed of specialists in developmental support and early intervention, responsible for program design and expert advice. While these organizations each fulfill their respective roles, the lack of specialists and insufficient coordination between kindergartens and therapy centers mean that a seamless system—from early detection to daily support and specialized intervention—is not fully established. As a result, even children with mild to moderate delays who could be accepted by kindergartens are not adequately supported there, leading to a concentration of waitlisted children at therapy centers like OSEIC.

On the other hand, the Sarawak State Government is actively pursuing policies to promote inclusive early childhood education. The Sarawak Ministry of Women, Childhood and

Community Wellbeing Development builds upon the Malaysian Government's "Zero Reject Policy" and has promoted the acceptance of children suspected of developmental delays by adopting its own state-specific "Open Door Policy," which states that no child should be turned away. This policy aims to create an environment where all children have access to developmental support opportunities, demonstrating the strong will of the state government to transform the structure of waiting lists and acceptance limits. However, the current situation is that the specific mechanisms and human resources required to sustainably implement this policy at the grassroots level are not fully established, and an implementation model that connects daily developmental support in kindergartens with therapy from specialized institutions is lacking. Consequently, many children, despite being under the policy's ideal, are practically left in a "support vacuum," facing the risk of their developmental delays becoming more severe.

2. Project Overview

2.1 Objectives and Verification Focus

This research project was implemented in Sarawak as a pilot program, starting in April 2025, with support from The Nippon Foundation and with a view toward securing a grant for full implementation. The objective was to verify if a new inclusive developmental support model based in kindergartens could realistically function by optimizing human resources through the use of digital tools.

The main verification focuses were as follows:

- Is the transition from a therapy center to a kindergarten actually possible?
- Do kindergartens have a continuous need and willingness to accept children?
- Is the system, including teacher training and specialist collaboration, sustainable?

2.2 Implementation Structure

This pilot was implemented through a collaboration centered on TOY8, with the Sarawak State Government-run therapy center (OSEIC), the Association of Private Kindergartens (AKO), and the National Early Childhood Intervention Council (NECIC). The Nippon Foundation provided support for the project's verification and consideration for future grant-funded project development.

2.3 Implementation Details

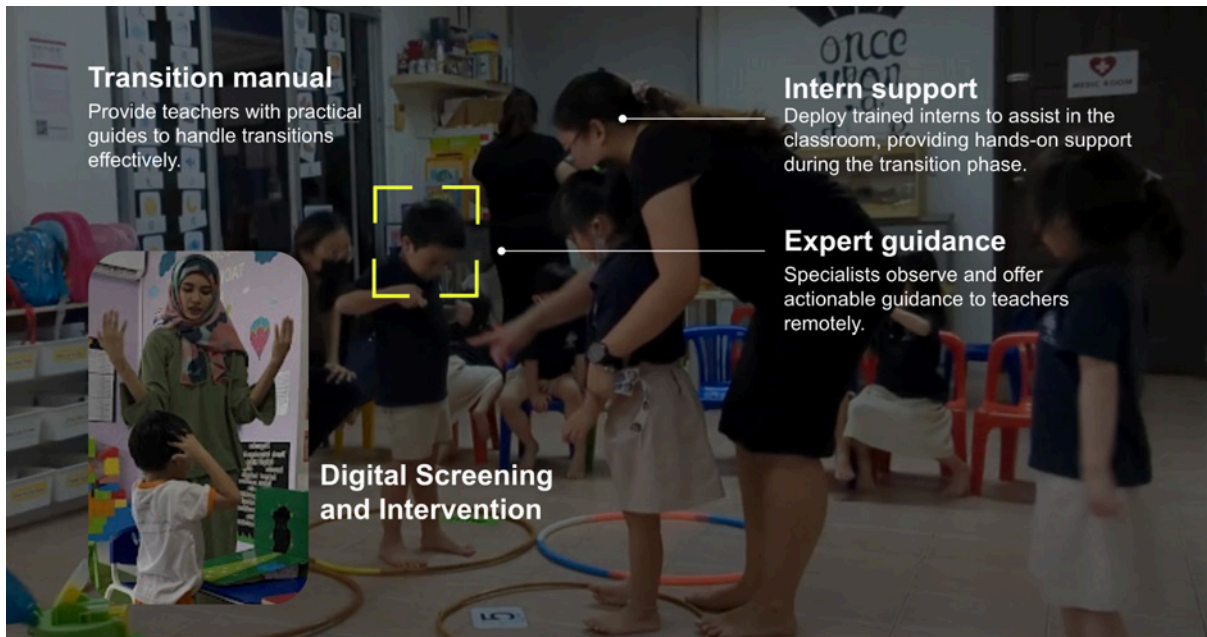
The implementation of this pilot project consisted of two main pillars:

1. "Transition Support" to assist the transfer of children from therapy centers to kindergartens.

2. "Teacher Empowerment" utilizing digital tools to enable kindergartens to provide developmental support.

By combining these two, the project aims to build a sustainable, kindergarten-based inclusive developmental support model that compensates for the structural problem of specialist shortages.

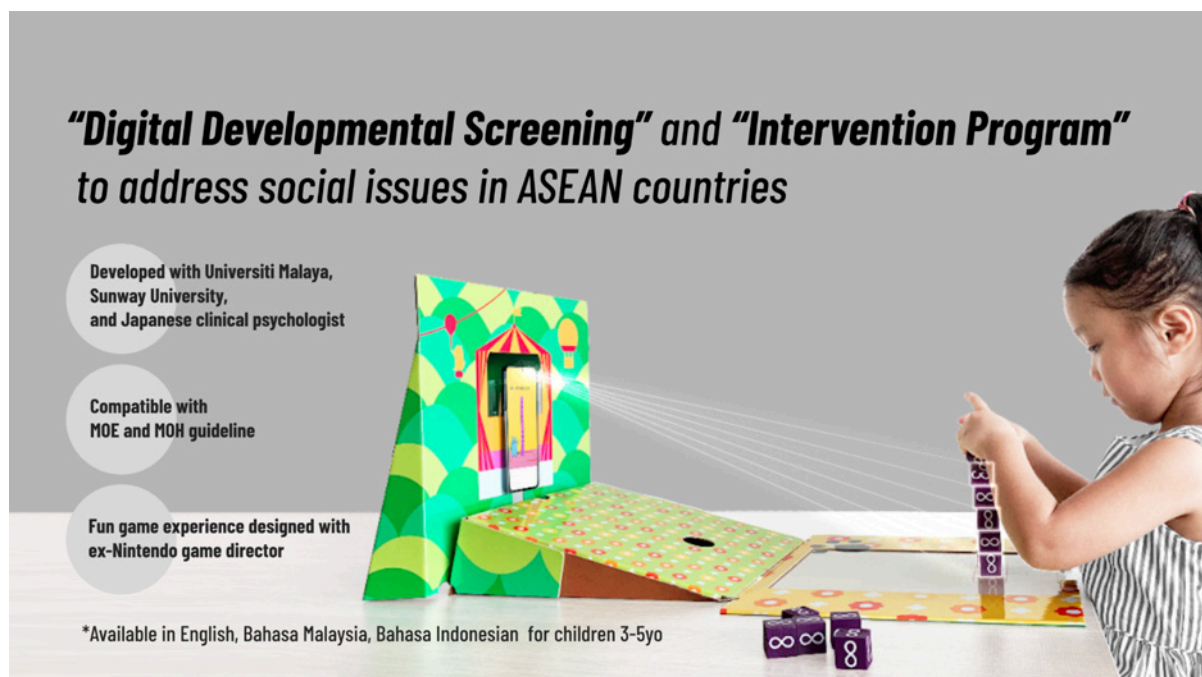
1. Transition Support (Assistance for Transition from Intervention Center to Mainstream School)



A system to support the smooth transition of children attending therapy centers to kindergartens. Through a pre-digital developmental screening, children deemed acceptable for kindergarten were identified, and the transition was executed after a trial period.

For kindergartens, an acceptance manual was provided that outlined acceptance criteria, observation points, and considerations for class management, ensuring that teachers did not have to prepare from scratch. In addition, specialists provided remote supervision, offering continuous advice on class management and instructional methods. This approach successfully demonstrated the transition from therapy centers to kindergartens while reducing the psychological and practical burden on kindergarten teachers.

2. Teacher Empowerment through Digital Tools (Developmental Screening and Early Intervention Program)



An initiative to empower kindergarten teachers through digital tools, enabling them to provide developmental support even without specialists permanently on-site. Specifically, the digital developmental screening and digital intervention program developed by TOY8 were introduced to quantitatively grasp children's developmental status and implement interventions that could be conducted within daily childcare and educational activities. These tools were designed for use in environments without specialists, and teachers implemented the support based on training and manuals.

Furthermore, a system was established where trained interns were dispatched to kindergartens to assist with class management and the practice of developmental support. Specialists remotely monitored the practices of teachers and interns, providing feedback as needed. This mechanism aims to enhance teachers' understanding of and confidence in developmental support, allowing them to continuously support children with diverse needs within the classroom.

3. Implementation Plan and Timeline

This pilot consisted of the following three phases:

- **Preparation Phase (approx. 1 month)**
 - Selection of model schools, preparation for digital tool introduction, and planning of teacher training were carried out.
- **Implementation Phase (approx. 6 months)**

- Inclusive class operations began, and the digital developmental screening and digital intervention program were implemented. Progress checks and adjustments were made monthly, and a collaboration system involving teachers, specialists, and interns was established.
- **Evaluation Phase (approx. 1 month)**
 - Implementation results were analyzed, feedback was collected from children, parents, and teachers, and improvements and plans for the next phase were organized.

4. Verification Results and Outcomes

4.0 Verification Results Summary

This pilot successfully established a small-scale ecosystem across 3 model kindergartens in Sarawak and identified the necessary components for its realization.

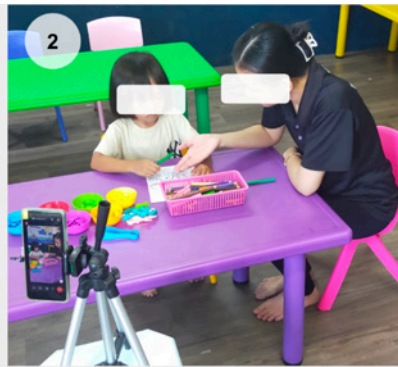
Scope of the Pilot Project	
Verification of feasibility at three model kindergartens in Sarawak and identification of key elements required to establish a small-scale ecosystem.	
Key Outcomes	
1. Was inclusive enrollment feasible? (Verification of practicality)	Results
a) By providing transition manuals, teacher training, and digital tools (developmental screening and intervention programs), the enrollment of three children was successfully demonstrated.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
b) By utilizing the digital intervention program, improvements in developmental delays were observed over a six-month period, even in kindergartens without on-site specialists.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
2. Is there sustained demand for inclusive enrollment? (Verification of demand)	Results
a) Through testimonials from parents who participated in the pilot, satisfaction with the transition program and intention to continue were confirmed.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
b) Among participating kindergarten teachers, the practicality of the support package—including training and tools—was validated, and continued participation intent was confirmed from all three teachers (3/3).	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
c) Through statements made by the Minister at the Sarawak State Assembly and the Letter of Intent (LOI), the government's commitment to continued engagement was confirmed.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
3. Can a scalable support structure be established? (Verification of sustainability)	Results
a) Toward statewide expansion, agreement was reached on future collaboration with local partners, including government-administered kindergartens, kindergarten associations, and therapy centers.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

4.1 Verification of Acceptance Feasibility

- a) **Transition Support:** By providing a manual, teacher training, and digital tools (developmental screening and intervention program), a total of 3 children were successfully transitioned from a therapy center to a kindergarten. The target children included those with Down Syndrome, ASD, and expressive language disorder, all of whom demonstrated the possibility of full-time kindergarten attendance after preliminary developmental screening and a trial period.



4 years old (boy) - ASD level 2
 Screening : 19 Apr
 Trial: 2 May
 Transition: 5 May - present



3 years old (boy) - Speech Delay
 Screening : 19 Apr
 Trial: 2 May
 Transition: 5 May - present

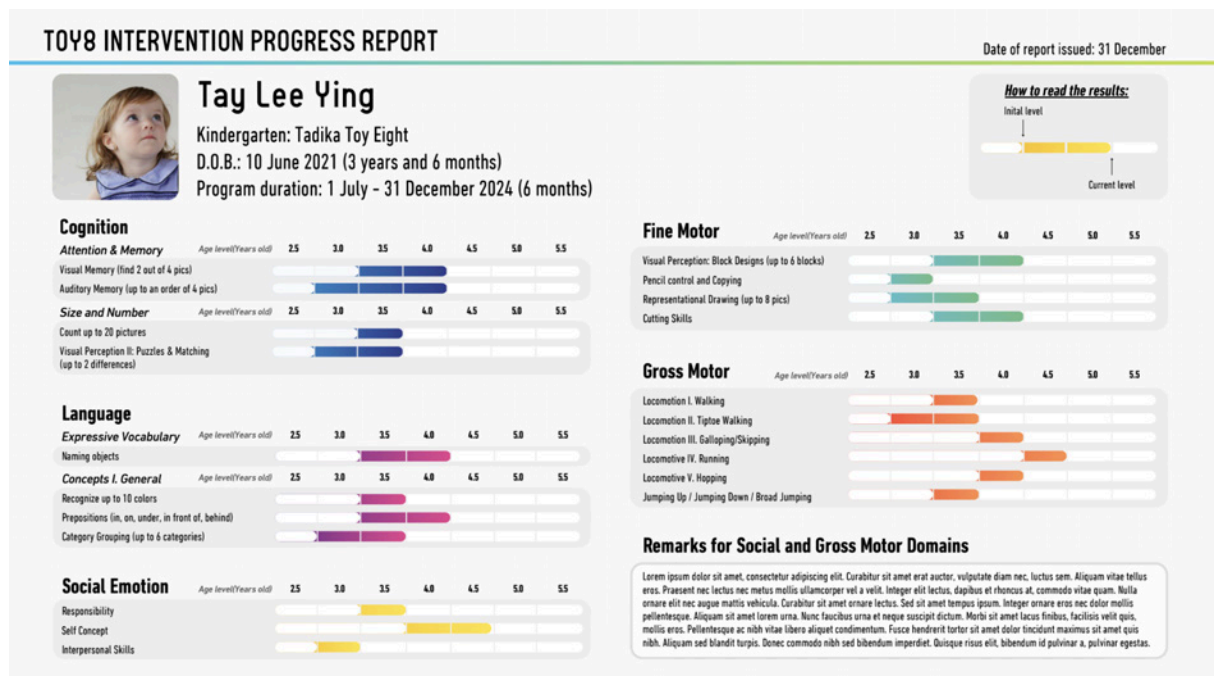


4 years old (girl) - Down Syndrome
 Screening : 5 May
 Trial: 15 May
 Transition: 26 May - present

► [Transition Manuel for Kindergarten Teachers](#)

b) **Intervention Program:** Regarding the digital intervention program, performance data on the daily activities of each of the 3 children participating in the pilot was continuously collected and analyzed. The results showed a gradual trend of improvement across individual developmental domains, observed in terms of behavioral stability, concentration on tasks, and task achievement rates. These improvements were confirmed not by one-off evaluations but by the accumulation of daily data, suggesting that the digital intervention program can function effectively even in a kindergarten environment where specialists are not permanently stationed.

(Sample) Child Developmental Progress Report



4.2 Verification of Sustained Demand

Satisfaction with the program and intent to continue in the future were confirmed from both the parents and kindergarten teachers who participated in the pilot project.

- a) **Parent Satisfaction:** Participating parents expressed high levels of satisfaction and gratitude that the Nippon Foundation-supported transition program enabled their children to attend kindergarten full-time and allowed them to observe their children's development on a daily basis. Feedback also indicated that the program supported parents in balancing childcare and employment, contributing to greater stability in family life.

One participating mother shared the following testimonial:

"My daughter has Down syndrome, and previously she was only able to receive support once a week. As a single mother, I was doing everything I could just to balance childcare and my part-time job. Through this program, my daughter is now able to attend a private kindergarten full-time. Being able to watch her grow happily every day, and being able to work full-time myself, has brought a sense of stability and joy to our family life."

These voices demonstrate that the program contributes not only to the child's development but also to improving the overall quality of life for families.

Furthermore, a survey conducted among participating parents (5-point scale, n=3) quantitatively confirmed very high satisfaction with the program. All 10 items, including "reduction of anxiety when going to school," "improvement in instruction understanding and communication," "happiness and confidence in school life," "reduction of family economic burden," and "increase in time available for the parent's work or housework," scored an average of 4.3 points or higher. Among these, 8 items received the highest score of 5 points from all respondents, resulting in an overall average of 4.9/5—an extremely high result. Notably, in the comprehensive evaluation item, "This program is helping my child and family," all respondents scored 5 points (100%), demonstrating that the transition program and the support model utilizing digital tools hold clear value for parents.

Regarding the digital tools, some parents initially felt uneasy, questioning, "Can a mechanical evaluation truly grasp my child's condition accurately?" and "Is the data handled safely?" However, with thorough explanation and consent processes beforehand, seeing their child engage in the activities in a playful manner, and receiving results clearly fed back with specialist comments, the anxiety gradually dissolved. Positive feedback was received, such as, "I felt relieved that I could objectively know my child's condition even without a specialist constantly present," and "It was helpful for how to interact with my child at home." Traditionally, therapy centers often have waiting periods of several months, during which support is limited to about once a week. In contrast, this transition program enabled the move to

full-time kindergarten attendance in a relatively short period, following developmental screening and a trial. Parents who participated commented, "I used to only receive support once a week, but now my child can learn at kindergarten every day," and "Not having a long wait and being able to receive support in a daily setting has brought great relief." This demonstrated the value of the program in terms of the practical shortening of wait times and the expansion of support opportunities.

- b) **Kindergarten Satisfaction:** Interviews with kindergarten teachers who participated in the pilot confirmed that having the necessary preparations pre-organized in the form of manuals and tools significantly reduced the burden of accepting children compared to usual practice. The practicality of the support package, including training and digital tools, was highly rated, and all three participating teachers (3/3) expressed a clear intention to continue providing transition support in the future.

One participating teacher shared the following testimonial:

"When accepting children who require special support, teachers usually have to prepare everything from scratch, which often requires nearly twice the workload compared to supporting typically developing children. In this transition program, however, the necessary preparations were already in place, allowing us to accept the child with almost half the usual effort. The transition process itself was very smooth, and with the tools and regular support provided, we were able to work as a team while learning, and effectively manage children with diverse needs within the classroom."

These results indicate that both parents and the educational field demonstrate sustained demand and a strong willingness to continue implementing the program.

- c) **State Government Commitment:** Based on the interim results of the pilot project, clear interest and sufficient commitment at the Sarawak State Government level have been confirmed. In the Sarawak State Assembly on May 27, 2025, Minister Fatimah of the Ministry of Women, Childhood and Community Wellbeing Development officially highlighted this project in the State Assembly—a formal cabinet gathering—positioning it as a "key initiative for the development of inclusive developmental support." This demonstrates that the pilot aligns with the state's policy agenda and indicates the government's strong interest and continued commitment. Furthermore, a letter of appreciation (letter) expressing gratitude for the project and the intention for its future continuation has been sent to The Nippon Foundation in the name of the Minister of the Ministry, officially confirming the state government's commitment in a formal document. Additionally, official media releases and major media outlets from the state government reported that the project is being implemented in cooperation with TOY8, is supported by The Nippon Foundation and the Japanese Government, and that the digital developmental screening and intervention program are facilitating the smooth transition to regular kindergartens, with 3 children having successfully transitioned to date.

[▶State Assembly Footage \(SARAWAK 2025\)](#)

▶[Reference Web Article \(Sarawak showcases inclusive early childhood initiatives at ARNEC 2025\)](#)

▶[Scene-1 of the Minister's project report and presentation of a letter of appreciation at a local TV press conference1](#)

▶[Scene-2 of the Minister's project report and presentation of a letter of appreciation at a local TV press conference](#)

Through these official communications, Minister Fatimah has expressed an intention to expand the initiative across the entire state from the next fiscal year onward, and concrete discussions toward this realization are currently underway. Furthermore, the acquisition of an LOI (Letter of Intent) with the state government, which will formalize future collaboration and expansion plans, is also scheduled. Based on these points, we evaluate that this pilot project has been formally positioned at the policy consideration stage by the state government, and conditions for state-wide deployment starting next year are being put in place.

4.3 Verification of Sustainability of Support System Expansion

Against the structural challenge in Sarawak where a collaborative support mechanism or ecosystem involving kindergartens, therapy centers, and specialist organizations was not fully established, this pilot attempted to build a practical cross-institutional collaboration model. Specifically, TOY8 acted as the hub, collaborating with the state government-run therapy center OSEIC, the Association of Private Kindergartens AKO, and the specialist organization NECIC, to construct a practical collaboration mechanism connecting therapy centers, kindergartens, and specialists.

Children on the waiting list for therapy at OSEIC were evaluated with advice from NECIC, and cases suitable for kindergarten acceptance were selected. Subsequently, a receiving kindergarten was assigned in collaboration with AKO, and the transition from the therapy center to the kindergarten was successfully executed. In conjunction with this, TOY8's digital tools, teacher training, manual provision, and online follow-up established a system where mild to moderate developmental support could be provided in the kindergarten setting.

To facilitate this collaboration, TOY8 functioned as the core of project management, designing and promoting collaboration across multiple institutions, rather than merely providing tools. The following measures were taken:

- **Development and implementation of the Transition Manual:** The flow for evaluation, decision-making, preparation, and follow-up necessary for the transition from a therapy center to a kindergarten was organized and documented as a "Transition Manual" that all related organizations could commonly refer to. This established a reproducible transition process that did not depend on individual personnel.
- **Translation of expert knowledge and design of on-site implementation:** Expert evaluations and advice from NECIC and others were organized into a format that kindergarten teachers could understand and implement, and were integrated into digital tools and simple guides. This transformed professional expertise into a

functional support process on the ground. Additionally, support was provided to clearly explain evaluation results and support policies to parents, fostering a common understanding between the home and the school.

- **Clear definition of roles and decision-making processes:** Regular information sharing and case reviews were held among OSEIC, NECIC, and the kindergartens, and it was clarified who would decide what and at what stage. This built a collaborative system that was not dependent on on-site confusion or individual discretion.
- **Accompaniment support to minimize transition anxiety:** Acceptance preparation by the kindergarten, specialist follow-up, and explanation/consultation for parents were designed and coordinated integrally, establishing an accompaniment process to proceed with the transition while minimizing anxiety for the child, family, and staff.

As a result, an agreement has been reached between the Kindergarten Association, public therapy centers, and specialist teams regarding future roles and the direction of collaboration, with a view toward full implementation next year and expansion across the entire state. Specifically, a policy was confirmed for collaborative efforts involving TOY8 and related organizations on kindergarten assignment and teacher training deployment utilizing the public and private kindergarten network, the gradual expansion of trainer personnel, and the dispatch of specialists for transition support from OSEIC to kindergartens.

Based on the above, this pilot project is evaluated as having high sustainability and execution possibility for future grant-funded project development, as it demonstrated the ability to integrate fragmented support resources and build a state-wide reproducible collaboration model at a practical level.



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5. Improvements and Future Plans

While the effectiveness and feasibility of the inclusive developmental support model were confirmed through this pilot project, several areas for improvement and conditions for necessary development were revealed for future state-wide implementation and expansion. This chapter organizes the future challenges, corresponding countermeasures, and mid- to long-term deployment plans based on the lessons learned from the pilot.

5.1 Securing Manpower and Motivation on the School Side

The pilot successfully achieved acceptance while significantly reducing the burden on teachers through the manual, tools, and specialist support. However, if the number of target kindergartens increases in the implementation phase, the variation in human resources and motivation among kindergartens could affect the speed and quality of adoption.

The following measures will be considered for the next fiscal year:

- **Designing an "Inclusive Certified Kindergarten" system:** Certifying kindergartens that meet certain standards and progressively increasing their visibility within the state to boost their willingness to participate.
- **Designing non-monetary incentives:** Collaborating with the state government and the Kindergarten Association to establish mechanisms that lead to social recognition, such as public promotion of certified kindergartens, priority training opportunities, and positioning as model schools.

These measures aim to create an environment where participation is voluntary, viewed not merely as an increased burden but as a "chosen kindergarten" and a "valuable initiative."

5.2 Reducing Training and Coordination Load

In the pilot, face-to-face teacher training was effective, but for state-wide expansion, the burden associated with travel and scheduling will be a major constraint.

In the future, the plan is to:

- Develop online courses and video materials.
- Confirm understanding through online assessments.
- Establish a digital certification mechanism for graduates.

These components will be combined to redesign a training model that is not dependent on time or location. This will build an environment where more teachers can continuously acquire skills, enabling rapid human resource development across the entire state.

5.3 Elevating the Status and Improving the Treatment of Inclusive Developmental Support Personnel

Building a mechanism where teachers and kindergartens involved in inclusive developmental support are properly evaluated as professionals is a crucial element directly linked to the sustainability of the system.

From the next fiscal year onward, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and relevant social welfare departments, the plan is to:

- Clearly position inclusive developmental support as a national/state priority area.
- Examine qualification systems and career paths for teachers involved in developmental support.
- Discuss the possibility of policy support and improved treatment for certified kindergartens and certified teachers.

This aims to create an environment where human resources continue to grow within the system.

5.4 Social Recognition and Value Enlightenment

For the system to spread, it is indispensable that parents and the community recognize "Inclusive Certified Kindergartens" as a mark of trust.

To achieve this, the plan is to:

- Conduct awareness campaigns and information sessions for parents.
- Publicly release the list of certified kindergartens.
- Continuously disseminate success stories.

This will broadly communicate the significance and value of the system. This is intended to create a positive cycle where healthy competition among kindergartens motivates each to voluntarily pursue quality improvement and certification.

5.5 Infrastructure Development for National Expansion

Based on the pilot, the following conditions are also important, in addition to the above, for achieving exponential expansion:

- **Establishment of Data Management and Quality Assurance Systems:** Standardizing evaluation criteria, data management rules, and establishing a regular review system to ensure the consistency and reliability of developmental data.
- **Addressing the Digital Divide and Access Gaps:** Considering flexible adoption models, such as offline support and simple device operation, so the tools can be utilized even in remote areas or kindergartens with limited equipment.

- **Ensuring Financial Sustainability:** Exploring diversified funding sources, including state budget integration and collaboration with other foundations/corporations, in addition to grant funding.
- **Institutionalization of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** Clarifying outcome indicators and incorporating a mechanism to continuously measure and improve progress and impact across the entire state.

5.6 Mid- to Long-Term Expansion Scenario

The trainers nurtured during Gate 1 (3 years) of the grant project will become the core human resource foundation for future expansion. From the 4th year onward, these trainers will be responsible for nurturing successors in each state, building a system to provide training to a greater number of teachers and kindergartens. Assuming each trainer can support 15 to 20 kindergartens annually, expansion to a scale of 1,000 kindergartens is well within sight within a few years. Furthermore, if some certified kindergartens begin to function as next-generation training centers, an ecosystem where human resources and kindergartens autonomously grow within the region will be formed, enabling even more accelerated expansion.

Appendix

About TOY EIGHT

TOY EIGHT is a Japanese social enterprise working to advance child development support and inclusive education, with a primary focus on Southeast Asia.

By leveraging digital developmental screening and intervention programs, TOY EIGHT promotes early detection and early intervention, while enabling continuous developmental support even in settings where access to specialists and resources is limited.

Based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, TOY EIGHT collaborates with experts across the education, healthcare, and academic sectors to develop digital tools, training programs, and operational models that can be effectively implemented in kindergartens and early intervention settings. Through initiatives such as TOY8 PLAYGROUND, the organization translates evidence-based, play-centered developmental support into real-world practice.

Through its work, TOY EIGHT seeks to reduce disparities in access to developmental support, inform evidence-based policy through applied research, and contribute to systemic, sustainable social impact—toward creating a world where every child can unleash their talents.



A photograph of children playing with colorful blocks in a classroom. The image is slightly blurred, focusing on the children's faces. A young girl in the center is smiling broadly, wearing a light-colored shirt. To her right, another girl wearing a light purple hijab is also smiling. In the foreground, there are several colorful blocks (yellow, red, blue, green) scattered on a table. The background shows a classroom setting with a green chalkboard and some papers on the wall.

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