

Headline	Centre to help transgenders in dire straits		
MediaTitle	Malay Mail		
Date	24 Dec 2014	Color	Full Color
Section	News	Circulation	35,000
Page No	10	Readership	105,000
Language	English	ArticleSize	511 cm <sup>2</sup>
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 5,839
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 17,516



# Centre to help transgenders 'in dire straits'

**KUALA LUMPUR** — A non-governmental organisation assisting transgenders is planning to raise US\$35,000 (RM122,000) to sustain its centre in Chow Kit temporarily after authorities abruptly cut its funding for 2015.

SEED, which runs the Pusat Bantuan Khidmat Sosial (PBKS) that provides services for transwomen, sex workers and people with HIV, also called on Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Rohani Abdul Karim to visit the centre, as she has not done so, before deciding to stop funding of the centre, unlike her predecessors Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil and Datuk Dr Ng Yen Yen.

"We're in dire straits," *Malay Mail Online* quoted SEED exco member Lalita Abdullah as saying.

She said SEED had set up a crowdfunding page at [www.indiegogo.com/projects/help-save-the-pbks-drop-in-centre-in-chow-kit](http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/help-save-the-pbks-drop-in-centre-in-chow-kit).

Lalita said the RM700,000 which the ministry had been giving to the centre annually since 2007 excluded the rental of the centre's three-floor building that had been handled directly by the ministry.

"We can't afford this building. We'll relocate somewhere around Chow Kit," she said.

Lalita said the fundraising target was meant to sustain the centre for six months while SEED looked for a permanent source of funds.

She said the ministry had told the Malaysian AIDS Council, which channelled the funds to the centre from the government this year, the decision to stop funding the centre was made because the ministry felt it no longer fell under the ministry's "core business".

"What is your core business? Are we not the community?" Lalita asked.

She said the centre assisted transgender people, sex workers, people with HIV and the homeless by providing them vocational skills training, job placements and helping them to get medical aid and identification papers, besides providing them a place to rest, eat and shower.

Lalita said the centre also employed 17 staff who used to be sex workers and drug users.

"Their home is in danger of being taken away from them," she said.

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Lalita says the centre will have to relocate 'somewhere around Chow Kit'. — Picture by Choo Choy May