



RSOG BYTES

A monthly digest of insights, thought leadership and knowledge from across the RSOG ecosystem

LEARNING ACROSS BORDERS: STRENGTHENING PUBLIC SERVICE LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE RSOG-BSG PARTNERSHIP



Signing and Exchange of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between RSOG and BSG

Professor Rebecca Kitteridge, Professor of Practice in Public Policy at BSG | Professor Ngaire Woods, Dean of BSG | Dr. Wafi Nazrin bin Dr. Abdul Hamid, Chief Executive Officer of RSOG | Tan Sri Dr. Shamsul Azri bin Abu Bakar, Chief Secretary to the Government of Malaysia

As governments navigate rapid technological change and increasingly complex policy challenges, leadership and continuous learning have become essential drivers of effective governance. These themes took centre stage during a Malaysian delegation's visit to the Blavatnik School of Government (BSG), University of Oxford, led by Tan Sri Dr. Shamsul Azri bin Abu Bakar, Chief Secretary to the Government of Malaysia on 21 September 2026.

Advancing Malaysia's Reform Journey

A key focus of the visit was Malaysia's Public Service Reform Agenda (ARPA). During the Private Roundtable session, the Chief Secretary shared the Government's efforts to build a more people-centred, efficient and trusted public service anchored on MADANI values.

Discussions highlighted encouraging progress in government efficiency and regulatory reforms, while also recognising ongoing challenges such as organisational silos, cross-agency coordination and sustaining motivation across the public service.

A Strategic Partnership for Public Sector Excellence

A key outcome of the visit was the exchange of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between RSOG and BSG, University of Oxford. More than a formal agreement, the partnership reflects a shared commitment to developing future-ready public sector leaders and supporting reform through evidence-based learning and international collaboration.



The MoU was signed by Dr. Wafi Nazrin bin Dr. Abdul Hamid, Chief Executive Officer of RSOG, and Professor Ngaire Woods, Dean of BSG. The signing ceremony was witnessed by Tan Sri Dr. Shamsul Azri bin Abu Bakar, Chief Secretary to the Government of Malaysia and Professor Rebecca Kitteridge, Professor of Practice in Public Policy at BSG and former Secretary of the Cabinet of New Zealand.

The partnership is built around four key areas of collaboration: leadership and capacity-building programmes, bespoke executive education initiatives, joint research and case study development, and knowledge exchange on government analytics, public service reform and global public sector surveys.

Taken together, these areas of collaboration provide a foundation for sustained engagement between RSOG and BSG, supporting leadership development, institutional learning and public sector excellence over the long term.

Leadership in an Era of Complexity

A recurring theme throughout the discussions was the growing importance of leadership in driving successful reform. Representatives from BSG shared insights from executive programmes designed for senior public sector leaders, covering areas such as organisational effectiveness, digital governance, systems leadership, crisis leadership and public interest decision-making. The exchange reinforced the view that sustainable reform depends not only on policies and systems, but also on leaders who can navigate complexity, foster collaboration, forge effective public-private partnerships and drive meaningful change.

The Role of Data and Digital Transformation

Discussions also explored how governments can harness data, digitalisation and artificial intelligence to enhance decision-making and service delivery. It was emphasised that technology alone is not enough; successful transformation depends on strong governance, high-quality data and organisational readiness.



From Partnership to Possibility

The RSOG-BSG partnership creates new opportunities for leadership development, knowledge exchange and collaborative research in support of Malaysia's public service reform agenda. More importantly, it reflects a shared commitment to strengthening institutions and developing leaders capable of navigating an increasingly complex policy landscape. As discussions continue on a range of potential joint initiatives, the partnership is laying the groundwork for deeper collaboration and practical impact. By connecting global insights with local priorities, the partnership aims to support a more responsive, innovative and future-ready public service.



PROTECTING LIVELIHOODS, STRENGTHENING FUTURES: RETHINKING SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR A CHANGING MALAYSIA

Most Malaysians do not think about social protection every day.

They think about whether their salary can keep pace with rising costs. They think about caring for ageing parents, raising children, buying a home and setting aside enough savings for retirement. They think about learning new skills to stay relevant at work or adapting to technologies that are transforming entire industries. Yet behind these concerns lies a common question: how prepared are we for the changes that life inevitably brings?

That question was at the heart of RSOG In Conversation Series: Protecting Livelihoods, Strengthening Futures, which brought together perspectives from Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr. Norma Mansor, Director of the Social Wellbeing Research Centre (SWRC), Universiti Malaya; Dr. Suraya Ismail, Director of Research at the Khazanah Research Institute (KRI); and Puan Balqais Yusoff, Head of the Policy & Strategy Department at the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), moderated by Dr. Wafi Nazrin bin Dr. Abdul Hamid, Chief Executive Officer of RSOG.



When Demography Changes, Everything Else Changes

Malaysia is entering a demographic transition that will reshape how society thinks about work, retirement, caregiving and economic security. As highlighted by Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr. Norma Mansor, longer lives and smaller families are changing relationships between generations and challenging assumptions that have underpinned social protection systems for decades.



As more Malaysians spend longer periods in retirement and fewer working adults support an ageing population, social protection can no longer be viewed solely as a safety net. It must become a framework that helps people remain secure, independent and economically active throughout life.

Why Livelihoods Matter

For Dr. Suraya Ismail, resilience begins with everyday realities faced by households. The ability to save, invest in children, plan for retirement or purchase insurance is often shaped by day-to-day financial pressures. Childcare, housing and other essential expenses compete directly with long-term financial goals.

Viewed this way, affordability is not separate from social protection. It is one of its foundations. Strong livelihoods give families the ability to plan ahead, build resilience and invest in future opportunities.

Five Trends Reshaping Social Protection

- Longer life expectancy and population ageing.
- Declining fertility rates and changing family structures.
- Rising living costs and affordability pressures.
- Growth of gig and non-traditional employment.
- Rapid advances in digitalisation and artificial intelligence.

Retirement Starts Earlier Than We Think

A key insight from Puan Balqais Yusoff was that retirement security is built long before retirement begins. Financial wellbeing in later life is shaped by decisions made throughout a person's working years, from savings habits and workforce participation to financial literacy and long-term planning.

As careers become more fluid and life expectancy continues to rise, retirement systems must evolve alongside changing employment patterns. Ageing should also be viewed not only as a challenge but as an opportunity to enable older Malaysians to continue contributing through work, mentoring and community engagement.

Adaptability Is Becoming a Form of Protection

The discussion also highlighted how artificial intelligence, automation and digitalisation are reshaping labour markets. Increasingly, social protection is not only about helping people recover from shocks but helping them adapt to change.

Skills development, lifelong learning and workforce resilience are becoming essential components of a modern social protection ecosystem. In a rapidly changing economy, adaptability is emerging as an important form of protection in its own right.

Looking Ahead

Whether it is saving for retirement, caring for ageing parents, raising children or adapting to a changing workplace, Malaysians are confronting a future that is becoming more complex and less predictable.

Taken together, demographic, economic and technological shifts point towards a broader shift in thinking. Social protection should not be viewed as a system that intervenes only when problems arise. It should be understood as part of a larger ecosystem that helps people prepare for change, build resilience and pursue opportunity with confidence.

As Malaysians navigate these changes, policymakers will need to consider retirement adequacy, support for families and caregivers, protection for informal and gig workers, workforce development and long-term fiscal sustainability. Discussions around taxation, public spending and social investments are increasingly part of the same conversation about resilience and inclusive growth.

The question is no longer whether social protection needs to evolve, but whether it can evolve quickly and sustainably enough to meet the realities of modern life.

Byte-Sized Takeaways

- **Building Resilience Before Crisis** - Social protection must help Malaysians prepare for change, not just recover from hardship.
- **Longer Lives, New Realities** - Longer life expectancy and changing family structures are reshaping retirement, caregiving and economic security.
- **Strong Livelihoods, Stronger Protection** - Adequate wages, affordable childcare and manageable living costs enable households to plan ahead and build long-term financial security.
- **Retirement Is a Lifelong Journey** - Financial wellbeing in later life is built through lifelong planning, consistent workforce participation and sustained savings behaviour.
- **Adaptability as a New Form of Protection** - As AI, digitalisation and new forms of work reshape the labour market, lifelong learning and workforce adaptability are becoming increasingly important.
- **Policy Choices Shape Future Resilience** - Strengthening social protection will require balancing social priorities, fiscal sustainability and long-term economic competitiveness.

ARE WE IMPROVING THE PROCESS — OR SIMPLY WORKING HARDER?

Why Continuous Improvement Matters in Public Service

An organisation can have capable people, clear policies and established procedures, yet still experience delays, duplicated work and unnecessary complexity.

Why? Sometimes, the problem is not the people. It is the process.

Think of an approval that moves through multiple officers, waits for review, returns for amendment and requires the same information to be entered more than once. Everyone may be working hard — but could the process work better?

This is where Continuous Improvement comes in. Inspired by Kaizen, it encourages us to continuously ask: What creates value? What causes delay? What can we simplify?

Lean Six Sigma takes this further by providing structured, data-driven approaches to identify root causes, reduce waste and variation, and improve workflows.

And this is not merely theory. According to Malaysia's Ministry of Health (MOH), the Lean Healthcare journey began at Hospital Sultan Ismail, Johor Bahru, in 2013, initially focusing on patient flow and waiting times. Lean Healthcare examines the patient journey end-to-end — identifying unnecessary waiting, duplication, movement, handovers and other activities that do not add value to patient care.

In its oncology clinic pilot, Lean process improvements contributed to a 75% reduction in waiting time from first consultation to treatment. The approach subsequently expanded to other MOH hospitals and health facilities.

The learning continues. In August 2026, Hospital Slim River conducted a Lean Healthcare benchmarking visit to Hospital Tengku Ampuan Rahimah (HTAR) to learn from its practices and experience.

The lesson is powerful: better outcomes do not always require more resources. Sometimes, they require us to see the work differently.

Source & further reading: Ministry of Health Malaysia, Quality Improvement & Learning Hub — MOH Lean Healthcare Overview | MOH Workbook on Lean Healthcare Training

And the same thinking can be applied beyond healthcare — from processing an application and approving procurement to responding to stakeholders and delivering services to citizens.



Lean Healthcare in Practice - Adapted from Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (MOH), Lean Healthcare (2019). Visual redesigned for RSOG Bytes.

Why Lean Six Sigma — and Why RSOG?

Hi, my name is Ashani, and I recently joined the Razak School of Government (RSOG), bringing with me more than 20 years of experience in the telecommunications industry, spanning business management, transformation, governance, organisational performance and process improvement.

I am also a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt — an advanced practitioner qualification that has shaped the way I approach problems throughout my career. Lean Six Sigma has taught me not to immediately jump to solutions, but to understand the problem, listen to the people closest to the process, examine the data and identify the root causes before asking:

“How can we do this better?”

After spending much of my career in the corporate sector, joining RSOG represents a new chapter for me — an opportunity to bring what I have learned and contribute towards strengthening the public sector.

I certainly do not come to RSOG believing that I have all the answers. Government has its own complexities and realities, and there is much that I hope to learn. What I bring is my experience in transformation, structured problem-solving and Continuous Improvement — and a genuine interest in turning everyday organisational challenges into opportunities for measurable improvement.

What Can RSOG Bring to Your Organisation?

At RSOG, our aspiration is to go beyond simply teaching Lean Six Sigma as a tool. We are exploring how Lean Six Sigma and Continuous Improvement can become practical organisational capabilities for both public and private sector institutions.

This could begin with Lean Six Sigma awareness and capability-building programmes, and progress into process diagnostics, process mapping, Kaizen workshops and facilitated improvement projects addressing actual organisational challenges.

Imagine bringing a real problem into the room — a lengthy approval process, recurring backlog, duplicated work, service complaints or unnecessary cost — and having your people learn how to systematically Define, Measure, Analyse, Improve and Control (DMAIC) the process.

For government institutions, this could mean shorter turnaround times, simpler procedures, improved citizen experience and better utilisation of public resources.

For private organisations, the same principles can support productivity, cost optimisation, quality, customer experience and operational excellence.

Ultimately, our aspiration is not simply to teach Lean Six Sigma.

It is to help organisations develop people who can see problems differently, solve them systematically and continuously improve the way work gets done.

What if your people could see improvement opportunities everywhere they look?

I would love to share my experience — and equally, I would love to hear yours. Have a process worth improving, or perhaps an improvement story we can learn from?

Let's start a conversation:
ashani@rsog.com.my



Noor Ashani Mohd Ghani
*Strategic Partnership,
Razak School of Government
(RSOG)*



1. Minggu Pandu Citra (2–3 September 2026): RSOG supported INTAN in the delivery of Minggu Pandu Citra (MPC 2026) at INTAN Bukit Kiara, bringing together leaders from the public and private sectors. The two-day conference focused on cultivating executive coaching culture, strategic leadership, and sustainable organisational growth, while fostering greater collaboration and knowledge across sectors.



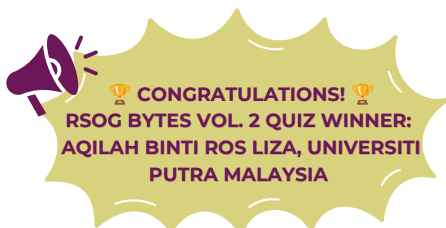
2. RSOG Customised Programme 'Negaraku Malaysia' (15 September 2026): RSOG, in collaboration with Group Strategic Relations & Communications, PETRONAS, delivered a customised learning programme for 35 PETRONAS executives at PETRONAS KLCC. Led by YBhg. Dato' Professor Dr. Hj Johan Shamsuddin bin Dato' Hj Sabaruddin, the programme enhanced participants' understanding of Malaysia's system of government, democratic principles, public service and the judiciary.



3. RSOG In Conversation Series: Protecting Livelihoods, Strengthening Futures (18 September 2026): RSOG hosted a strategic dialogue at INTAN Bukit Kiara, moderated by RSOG CEO, Dr. Wafi Nazrin bin Dr. Abdul Hamid. Featuring experts from Universiti Malaya's Social Wellbeing Research Centre (SWRC), Khazanah Research Institute (KRI), and Employees Provident Fund (EPF), the session explored strategies to strengthen Malaysia's social protection system and enhance retirement readiness.



4. RSOG-BSG, University of Oxford MoU Exchange (21 September 2026): RSOG and the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford formalised a strategic partnership through the MoU exchange signed by the CEO of RSOG and Dean of BSG. The partnership will advance leadership development, research and knowledge exchange in support of public sector innovation, governance excellence and ongoing public service reform.



5. RSOG Customised Programme 'Kursus Protokol, Etiket Sosial dan Pengurusan Majlis' (22 – 23 September 2026): RSOG conducted a tailored workshop for Angkatan Koperasi Kebangsaan Malaysia Berhad (ANGKASA) in Petaling Jaya. Facilitated by senior INTAN training consultants, the programme enhanced participants' skills in official protocol, event management, and social etiquette.



6. RSOG Customised Programme 'Becoming a Strategic Leader' (22 – 23 September 2026): RSOG delivered a tailored two-day leadership development programme for middle management officers (Grades E5 – E6) of the Sustainable Energy Development Authority (SEDA) Malaysia in Putrajaya. Through interactive sessions on strategic thinking, innovation, emotional intelligence, and leadership communication, participants strengthened key competencies for leading effectively in a dynamic and evolving environment.



7. RSOG collaborated with Telekom Malaysia (TM), INTAN, the Public Service Department (JPA), and Multimedia University (MMU) (26 – 27 September 2026) to deliver the AI Leadership Programme at Cyberjaya. The programme equipped 60 senior public sector leaders, including Deputy Secretaries-General (TKSU), with practical insights into AI governance, responsible adoption and technology integration to support public sector reform efforts.

OUR UPCOMING PROGRAMMES

- **RSOG OPEN PROGRAMME - KURSUS PROTOKOL, ETIKET SOSIAL DAN PENGURUSAN MAJLIS (7 – 8 OCTOBER 2026)**
- **RSOG CUSTOMISED PROGRAMME - THE ART OF LEADERSHIP (20 OCTOBER 2026)**
- **RSOG CUSTOMISED PROGRAMME - DIPLOMACY IN LEADERSHIP (28 OCTOBER 2026)**

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW RSOG?

Scan the QR code, answer 5 quick multiple-choice questions, and redeem an exclusive Mystery Gift!*

*While stocks last.

