

CEO'S REVIEW

At Yayasan Sime Darby, we are cognisant of the fact that communities form the foundation for making a sustainable change in society and the environment. With the increase in the number of engagements and activities conducted with our project partners on the ground, I find that most striking to me is the strength of communities in making a positive and long-term impact.

This year, we were taken by surprise that the annual floods affecting Malaysia had extended way beyond the usual year-end period, which is another clear sign that the climate change catastrophe is already upon us. Although we saw warnings for early, heavy rainfall beginning in November 2022, we were shocked that devastating floods continued to affect several areas until March 2023; particularly in Johor, Kelantan, and Terengganu, that affected tens of thousands of people in each of these states.

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**Dr Hjh Yatela
Zainal Abidin**

With this unexpected adversity, our team bucked up once again and activated the YSD Huluran Kasih employee volunteer programme and worked closely with Sime Darby Plantation, Sime Darby Berhad and Sime Darby Property in assisting communities in need. Even though many were badly affected by the flood themselves, the selfless employee volunteers stood united in distributing critical food and hygiene items to aid in hard-to-reach places which were cut off due to the floods.

Utilising the YSD Disaster Relief Fund, more than 20 aid distribution engagements took place to assist individuals from the lower-income communities, as well as teachers and students in affected areas. Towards the tail end of the distribution period, we were amazed at the tenacity of Sime Darby Plantation volunteer employees, who were resolute in their aim to provide back-to-school and post-flood aid to communities in and around their township areas. It was indeed a challenging 2 weeks of back-to-back distribution with them. However, YSD believes that helping those in most need is always worth the effort and hardships, especially when we witness the happy faces when they receive the meaningful aid, despite the calamity that had befallen them.

This year, YSD employee volunteers visited the local community who were mainly B40s in Sitiawan, Manjung, Perak for a mangrove tree planting programme while building knowledge about why mangrove is critical to be conserved to fight the disastrous effects of climate change. Under YSD's partnership with Global Environment Centre (GEC) in the mangrove conservation project there, the communities were provided with the knowledge and means to plant and preserve the mangrove, while building a livelihood from the mangrove sustainably.

Sahabat Hutan Bakau Kuala Gula (SHBKG) and Sahabat Hutan Bakau Kampung Pasir Panjang Laut (SHBKPPL) are the two community-led mangrove conservationist groups, made up of passionate community members committed to improving the mangrove sites in their respective towns. With YSD's support, GEC's engagement with both SHBKG and SHBKPPL over the years have resulted in the local communities understanding the importance of the mangrove towards both their safety and livelihood. As a result of the determination and hard work of the community members, the highly eroded and degraded coastal areas in Manjung, Perak have seen much positive improvement. Hearing firsthand from the community members about how much they love their mangrove trees and witnessing for ourselves the amount of hard work put towards planting mangrove seedlings and maintaining the trees was truly awe-inspiring!

We are also keen on ramping up our support for Orang Asli communities across our pillars. In the Royal Belum State Park, our support for Persatuan Pelindung Harimau Malaysia (RIMAU) has allowed for the setting up of anti-poaching patrollers, namely Menraq – fully made up of Orang Asli individuals. Similarly, in Kenyir State Park, a patrolling team was set up by Nature Based Solutions with a few members from the local Orang Asli community.

With the support of the Orang Asli patrollers, their respective villages are also contributing towards anti-poaching efforts, being the eyes and ears on the ground, which is a clear achievement of communities coming together towards a common goal.

In expanding our support for the Orang Asli communities, we are working on increasing their basic access to education, which is in line with our Education pillar goal of Education for All. Our long-term partner, Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS), is currently in the second phase of YSD support to enable them to continue their important work in Orang Asli education. They are continuously engaging with the Ministry of Education and other important stakeholders, with important legwork towards achieving this goal with us.

YSD has awarded 171 scholarships to persons with disabilities (PwD) to date. We are continually inspired by PwD whom we have supported over the years. We have been so blessed to have met with PwD in our programmes whose determination and motivation to push through their difficulties can surpass most other individuals. One of our scholars, Muhammad Firdaus Abu Hassan is totally blind and comes from an extremely poor family of 8 siblings, but is an exemplary YSD scholar despite his life challenges. He had completed his bachelor's degree and master's degree with flying colours from Universiti Malaya under our scholarship. And although he already had a job at the university as Assistant Registrar, he received a third YSD scholarship to further his studies to pursue a PhD in Disability Equality Training which is a great show of leadership and inspiration for PwD across the nation.

Another YSD scholar whom we are exceedingly proud of is Krithin Paul Pereira, who embodies the true spirit of resilience, perseverance, and unwavering optimism. Despite living with cerebral palsy, Krithin has already achieved so much at a young age, serving as an inspiration to us all. His passion for automobiles has led him to pursue his Diploma in Automotive Engineering at Young Aces Technical College, which YSD is honoured to provide him a scholarship for. Not only does Krithin overcome all limitations imposed by his condition, he is also an exemplary YSD scholar who deservedly received the YSD Inspirational Award during the recent YSD TVET Day Celebration. Krithin's journey is a powerful testament to the indomitable human spirit, reminding us that with determination, compassion, and support, every individual has the potential to create a profound and positive impact on society.

YSD also sponsors the IDEAS Autism Centre (IAC) to enable the underprivileged to have access to special education, so that these autistic children may be ready to enter mainstream school one day. Aside from this, YSD's support also facilitates IAC to provide advice, training, and education modules to other early intervention centres who need the technical expertise to start their operations and grow, for the benefit of all children living with autism in Malaysia.

Our determination to support PwD is a mainstay in our plans for YSD. This year, we hosted our very first celebration of International Day for Persons with Disabilities where we were honoured to host YBhg Datuk Dr Ras Adiba Mohd Radzi, who is a renowned advocate for PwDs in Malaysia, and an avid supporter of YSD's work with PwD. Our PwD scholars bedazzled the audience during the speaker panel session, where they inspired everyone with their talent and resilience.

Additionally, we are also hosting the YSD Arts Festival (YSDAF) 2023, Malaysia's largest free-for-all arts festival after a 5-year hiatus. YSD is working with the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (klpac) to ensure that inclusivity as well as sustainability are at the forefront of this highly anticipated arts festival. We target to touch almost 20,000 people with the power of the arts to encourage sustainable living, provide a platform for the marginalised to give to and take in the arts, provide knowledge on climate action, and highlight important causes to be supported. We wish to enable those who have never experienced the arts before to do so; irrespective of their backgrounds, age, and abilities.

YSD is also the longest supporter of Cancer Research Malaysia (CRM) critical work as they are the only organisation focusing on Asian cancer. And our funds had enabled CRM to set up and develop the Patient Navigation Programme (PNP) with the objective of saving the lives of B40 women with breast cancer, where timely diagnosis and treatment may be provided to these women to ensure seamless, coordinated care and services. More than 3,000 women have benefitted from the PNP in just four hospitals across the country, and we are keen to support CRM to bring this successful programme to even more needy women.

All of these positive impact in the lives of others and the inspirational success stories that come with them are only made possible because of the guidance of our Chairman and Council members; the generous donations of Sime Darby Plantation, Sime Darby Berhad and Sime Darby Property; our ever-determined project partners; and of course my hardworking team at YSD who continue to impress me year in year out. Thank you for coming together for the benefit of the communities who need it most.

All YSD's work is driven by communities. Communities who are marginalised and need that helping hand. Communities who initiate impactful conservation and welfare work, who have the expertise but not the funding. Communities who are unaware that their actions can impact others positively. Communities who need that boost so that they are able to bring themselves and their families out of poverty. Communities who need and benefit from our sponsorships.

Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much.
– Hellen Keller.



171

scholarships provided to students with disabilities

over

101,300

individuals aided by YSD Disaster Relief in FY23

62

Orang Asli empowered with sustainable employment opportunities

3,526

B40 women received help from the Patient Navigation Programme since 2012

