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# APUCEN BULLETIN

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Asia-Pacific University-Community  
Engagement Network



*Bridging Our Communities*

# TOGETHER

[www.apucen.usm.my](http://www.apucen.usm.my)





## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF APUCEN

Prof. Dr. Faisal Rafiq Mahamd Adikan  
Vice-Chancellor of  
Universiti Sains Malaysia

The year of 2019 has nearly come to end. This year has been a memorable journey for us in APUCEN. I am delighted to inform that APUCEN has progressively build its present beyond Asia Pacific with its 96 members from 20 countries. We preach the unity in diversity and celebrating differences towards the same goal. APUCEN has been moving actively and had conducted Community Engagement projects both national and international with its members, some of the projects in Cambodia, Indonesia, Phillipines, Nepal and the latest project is Enhancing the Livelihood of Bramahputra Coastal Community in Bangladesh. I would like to congratulate all the members that are leading and collaborating these CE projects. I believe through the combined efforts from all APUCEN members that come from different cultures and background, we are moving towards sustainable local solutions for global problems.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the former President of APUCEN, Prof. Datuk Dr. Asma Ismail for her amazing and great leadership in bringing APUCEN to global recognition and inculcating the concept of "GLOBAL UNIVERSITY" among all APUCEN members. APUCEN has made its presence felt beyond the Asia-Pacific region. Apart from that, APUCEN has committed in the 6<sup>th</sup>

University-Community Engagement Conference (UCEC) 2019, which will be held at Brunei Darussalam on 4-5 November 2019 with our partner which is also APUCEN member, Kolej Universiti Perguruan Ugama Seri Begawan. I truly appreciate the support of all members and participants attending the conference.

To date, APUCEN members have taken various institutions to implement community engagement projects, which had made major transformation in the society. Some of the impactful projects have been highlighted in this issue.

I am delighted to announce that the 4<sup>th</sup> APUCEN Summit will be held next year (2020). APUCEN Summit is a very crucial event for all APUCEN members as it is a platform for all the members to meet, greet and network with each. It is also a time to create new collaboration or partnership for projects apart from charting the future direction of APUCEN. I sincerely hope that all the members will attend this upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> APUCEN Summit 2020.

Last but not least, I would like to thank all the APUCEN members who have contributed articles for this bulletin. Let us move forward by celebrating our differences towards the same goal. ■



### Harpwell ASEAN Program in Women's Leadership Penang, July 05-16, 2020

The Harpswell ASEAN Program in Women's Leadership is an annual two-week program in women's leadership for young professional women, 25-30, from the ten countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), plus Nepal. The mission of the Program is to bring about positive social change in Southeast Asia through the action and equal participation of women. The program is based at the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in Penang, Malaysia, and is organized by the Harpswell Foundation (Harpwell) in partnership with the Center for Research on Women and Gender (KANITA) at USM. The mission of the Program is to bring about positive social change in Southeast Asia through the action and equal participation of women.

#### The Program

The Program consists of lectures, workshops and group activities. Training topics include Southeast Asian government and society; gender studies; women and public health; critical thinking and debate; leadership skills, civic engagement, and communications and technology. Trainers come from Harpswell, USM, the ASEAN nations and beyond. Participants are asked to give short talks about the economic and social situations of their home countries and to share experiences as professional women and aspiring leaders. The Program includes a strong alumnae initiative to help participants stay in touch, build professional networks, and aid each other in their efforts to bring about positive social change.

#### Who should apply?

Program participants will include two participants from each of the ten ASEAN countries plus Nepal. Participants will be selected on the basis of ambition and vision, leadership potential, and previous professional accomplishment. Participants must be age 25-30, and have strong English language skills (English being the common language for this international program). To maximize the community and bonding experience, the participants live and eat together as well as attend classes together. Participants live in the dormitories of USM. All expenses are paid.

#### How to apply?

If you believe you have the above qualifications, we encourage you to send your resume with a cover letter and photo no later than December 15, 2019 to [leilamohajer@usm.my](mailto:leilamohajer@usm.my). The cover letter must describe your skills, experience and notable achievements. You should also describe exactly how you think your skills, experience and interests are a good fit for the Program, and what you will contribute. After a careful screening process, if you are shortlisted, you will receive a set of application forms. We will then select the strongest applications to finalize the list of participants for 2020 program. For further information, please visit our website at <http://harpwell-asean-kanita.weebly.com>.



# 12th APUCEN@MALAYSIA MEETING

The 12th APUCEN@Malaysia was hosted by Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), Malaysia on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019, at Universiti Tun Abdul Rahman (UTAR), Kampar, Perak.

The APUCEN@Malaysia Chairperson, Prof. Dr. Ir. Abdul Rahman Mohamed chaired the meeting. Prof. Dr. Choong Chee Keong, the Vice President of Student Development and Alumni Relations gave his welcoming speech to all the delegates. UTAR has showcased their Community Engagement (CE) projects to all APUCEN Members.

The 12<sup>th</sup> APUCEN@Malaysia Meeting has focused a lot of discussion on CE in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). APUCEN@Malaysia members had been encourage to apply for the JCI Malaysia Sustainable Development Award (SDA) 2019. This award projected by JCI Malaysia to promote United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There are 17 categories of awards based on the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals. The award is open to all types of companies (Micro, Partnership, SMEs, MNCs, and GLCs) and organisation (NGOs, Clubs and Societies, Universities)

to nominate their SDG related projects that were done as a CSR initiative of the institutions main focus for the award.

APUCEN@Malaysia members were very excited about YSS-ASEAN Students Volunteer Mission to Sarawak presented by the newly appointed CEO of Yayasan Sukarelawan Siswa (YSS), Mr. Muhammad Aiman Bin Mohd Zin. APUCEN@Malaysia members are looking forward to more collaboration with the projects embarked by YSS-ASEAN Students Volunteer.

There are 29 members attended the meeting from 19 institutions. (Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Yayasan Sukarelawan Siswa, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Universiti Teknikal Melaka, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Universiti Teknologi Petronas, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, AIMST University, Toray Industries Malaysia, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Politeknik Seberang Perai, The University of Nottingham and Universiti Malaysia Terengganu).



# iEYDFC 2020

Empowering Youth for Drug-Free Community

February 17-21, 2020  
International Youth Centre, Bdr. Tun Razak, KL

## INTRODUCTION

The "Empowering Youth for Drug-Free Community" Project is a programme organized by Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) through the Asian Centre for Research on Drug Abuse (ACREDA) for international students in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific University-Community Engagement Network

## BENEFITS

### The project aims to :

- Strengthen the awareness, responsibility and care of society especially among the youth in providing any form of assistance in terms of emotional, psychological, spiritual and physical in understanding the process of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of drug abuse.
- This project will subsequently open opportunities for the participants to improve their knowledge, skills and give exposure in dealing with problems related to substance abuse.
- Participants will be appointed as an Ambassador of Drug-Free Youth for community

## WHO SHOULD ATTEND

Students leaders, associations, clubs, NGO's and individuals who are concerned with social and drug abuse issues.

## IMPORTANT DATES

DISCOUNT (5%) for Early Bird  
(Before Dec 20th, 2019)

& Group Registration  
JAN 17th, 2020 - Closing Date  
for Registration

FEB 17th, 2020 - Day 1 of Program  
FEB 21th, 2020 - Final Day of Program

## HIGHLIGHTS

**TALK**  
*Awareness session on drug prevention and treatment*

- All Out Against Drugs
- New Live : Healthy Life Style without Tobacco & Vape
- The Drug Abuse Awareness & Prevention among Youth

**WORKSHOPS & FORUMS**  
*Empower youth with skill & knowledge*

- Drug Invasion Towards Drug Free Community
- Combat—DAPS

**OUTREACH**  
*Community Service Programmes*

- First-hand experience to high risk areas
- Sharing session on primary programmes on treatment and rehabilitation
- Group session with Youth Community Leaders

## FEES & PAYMENT

RM500 (Malaysian)  
RM800 / USD 200 (International)

Payment can be made via online system at My Payment Portal:  
<http://mypayment1.usim.edu.my>  
Please follow the instructions provided in the manual to make payment.

\* Fee inclusive of meals and accommodation  
\*\* Any enquiries regarding fees & payment, please contact



## iEYDFC 2020 PARTICIPATION FORM Personal Particulars

First Name	:	_____	Last Name	:	_____
Mailing Address	:	_____	Nationality	:	_____
Organization	:	_____	Contact No.	:	_____
Position	:	_____	Email	:	_____



SECRETARIAT CONTACTS:

Asian Centre for Research on Drug Abuse (ACREDA)  
Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Bandar Baru Nilai,  
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CAU

Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel

## KIEL UNIVERSITY CREATING THINKERS AND PROBLEM SPLVERS OF THE FUTURE

**K**iel University, founded in 1665, is located high in the North of Germany at the shores of the Baltic Sea. It has four priority research areas, which enable close interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary cooperation on common core topics. Most interesting for APUCEN members may be two of them:

**“Kiel Marine Science”**, which is devoted to excellent and responsible ocean research at the interface between humans and the ocean. It brings together a variety of research fields such as climate research, coastal research and botany but also law and economics. Researchers from these different fields look at both the risks the ocean poses to people as well as the opportunities it provides.

In the priority research area **“Societal, Environmental and Cultural Change”** (SECC), interdisciplinary research focusses on the interactions between society, culture and the environment on long timescales. What are the interactions between changes in society, climate change and changes in the diet of certain groups?

What held earlier societies together? How did our ancestors react to crises? How did they deal with social differences?

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## 11th APUCEN@MALAYSIA MEETING

**T**he 11th APUCEN@Malaysia meeting was held at the International Medical University (IMU), Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur. The meeting was attended by a total 28 members from 21 member institutions. (Universiti Sains Malaysia, International Medical University, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Universiti Utara Malaysia, DRB-Hicom University of Automotive Malaysia, International Islamic University Malaysia, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn, Universiti Malaya, AIMST University, Universiti Teknikal Melaka, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Universiti Teknologi Petronas, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Politeknik Seberang Perai, MMICare Association, The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus, and Yayasan Sukarelawan Siswa).

The meeting was chaired by the Chairperson of APUCEN@Malaysia, Prof. Dr. Ir. Abdul Rahman Mohamed who is also Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation of Universiti Sains Malaysia. Prof. Dr. Peter Pook, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) of International Medical University welcomed all the delegates and gave his welcoming speech. IMU has taken the opportunity to share with all members the CE activities conducted. All members are impressed

with the vast CE work on health education as well as the intense CE with indigenous communities.

One of the main topics discussed during the meeting was eWaste project. This project has captured the interest of most APUCEN @Malaysia members. IMU has committed to organize a half day workshop on the methodology of conducting this project as well as addressing the issues of collection from IMU's experience.

Apart from that, Bangladesh Agriculture University (BAU) has sent a pledge to APUCEN to seek support to revive the coastal community of Brahmaputra. Bangladesh Pledge : Reviving Brahmaputra Coastal Community where Bangladeshi villagers have lost their homes and lands due to massive erosion. They need support in terms of infrastructure, education and changing/upgrading lifestyle. BAU seeks the support from APUCEN members through the involvement of students and experts in healthcare and education, besides financial support to repair and upgrade existing schools. APUCEN Secretariat will organize a visit to Bangladesh to access the situation and plan a flagship program with all interested APUCEN members.



## MUSHROOM POISONING REVISIT FOR THE EMERGENCY DOCTORS

**Collaborators:** Emergency Department, Hospital Kuala Lumpur & Disease Control Division Ministry of Health

**Supported and sponsored by:** UMCares, UM  
**Target community:** Doctors and the public

The project entitled **“Mushroom poisoning as a differential diagnosis for acute gastroenteritis: knowledge transfer from lab to hospital”** aims to increase awareness on poisonous mushrooms especially to the doctors, emergency department staff, health officers, nurses and other health professionals. This is since mushroom poisoning incidence has been increasing year by year. In one of a workshop held in HKL, Dr. Tan Yee Shin (Institute of Biological Sciences, UM) from Mushroom Research Centre Malaysia gave a talk on the identification of fungi and recognition of both edible and poisonous mushrooms. Dr. Phan Chia Wei (Department of Pharmacy, UM), the project leader, introduced several Malaysian grown and non-Malaysian grown culinary and medicinal mushrooms. He also discussed about the clinical

toxicology, myths, dos and don'ts of mushroom foraging. The participants were given hands-on activity in which they had to identify edible/ medicinal and poisonous/nonpoisonous mushrooms; and grouped them based on their categories. This project also aims to produce the Malaysian first Mushroom Poisoning Policy and Guideline. The team also provides on-going mushroom identification for doctors who collected poisonous mushroom from the patients who suffered food poisoning. Several roadshow and exhibition were carried out to raise awareness of mushroom poisoning, not only to the doctors, but to the public. We also made several media appearances, including interviews in TV1 Selamat Pagi Malaysia, Astro Bernama, and Sinar Harian. The project was also selected as the best community project for medicine cluster by UMCares, UM.

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Within the SECC focus, the **Kiel School of Sustainability** offers a range of Master study programmes for postgraduates, each focusing on different aspects of sustainable development. These programmes comprise two years of full time study including three taught semesters and an individual research project of 6 months duration. The School offers more than 70 modules in English language.

For both undergraduate and postgraduate students the Kiel School of Sustainability offers the “Changemaker Curriculum” for Sustainable Development and Social Entrepreneurship. The curriculum teaches students of all Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes how to create own projects for sustainable development.

The concept of the Kiel School of Sustainability is to bring “thinkers” and “problem solvers” together. Our aim is to enable students to analyse issues of sustainable development under a multidisciplinary perspective and empower them to take action in order to create sustainable solutions. ■



## FEU Manila BRINGS HOPE TO PERSONS DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY

**In** most developing countries, penal institutions struggle to provide a rehabilitative support system for persons deprived of liberty (PDL). The Manila City Jail Female Dormitory (MCJFD) faces this kind of struggle. As of this writing, the facility has a total of 1,202 PDLs despite a maximum capacity of 173. The overcrowded prison reflects the country's unabated crime rate and the PDLs' urgent call for help.

Far Eastern University—a 91-year-old Philippine institution of higher learning—has responded to this call for help. Through its Community Extension Services (FEU-CES), Project HOPE (Harnessing Offenders' Personal Empowerment) was re-launched in 2017 in partnership with the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology's Manila City Jail Female Dormitory. "The collaboration that started in 1990 as a free legal assistance program has expanded to more holistic initiatives that aim to alleviate the plight and ameliorate the socio-economic status of the PDLs," said Dr. Luzelle Anne Ormita, FEU-CES director.

After a community needs assessment, FEU-CES tapped volunteers comprised of the faculty, administrators, students, staff, and alumni to implement psychological, livelihood, health, and literacy programs at the prison facility.

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(USIM), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Kyoto University of Foreign Studies (Japan), Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Universitas Andalas, Universitas Surabaya (Indonesia), Kolej Universiti Perguruan Ugama Seri Begawan (Brunei Darussalam) and San Pedro College (Philippines). Following that, Asma expressed her sincere thanks and congratulations to all the institutions and members involved in all these projects, serving either as leaders or partners in the projects.

"This is the spirit of APUCEN in moving forward together through partnerships," she concluded. In conjunction with USM's 50th Anniversary and USM's commitment for a sustainable tomorrow, all APUCEN members were treated to a site visit to the Centre for Marine & Coastal Studies (CEMACS), the oldest marine centre in the nation, which has committed its research in-line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as applying research findings to community needs.

APUCEN Executive Director and also CEMACS Director, Prof. Dato' Dr. Aileen Tan Shau Hwai said, the Council members had the opportunity to understand how science can be translated to the community when they visited the community oyster-farming site at Sungai Merbok, Kedah. "They were able to witness how science can transform and make changes in the community's lives, and it is all about trust and trustworthiness between the university and the community," added Aileen Tan, a renowned marine biologist. ■





## APUCEN ADVOCATES IMPACTFUL AND SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT THROUGH UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

**T**he Regional Council of the Asia-Pacific University-Community Engagement Network (APUCEN) is committed towards creating a better future through global community engagement.

The President of APUCEN, who is also the Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Professor Datuk Dr. Asma Ismail said, today's challenges on disruptive changes can be solved through community engagement partnership between members from different countries. "I strongly believe that the combined strength of all APUCEN members will be able to create a future generation with inter-cultural competence and the mindset of moving towards impactful and sustainable global engagement to solve global issues.

Asma said, APUCEN believes strongly in "unity in diversity and celebrating our differences towards the same goal".

"Hence, through trust and trustworthiness, APUCEN is able to create inter-cultural competency and collaboration among members through community engagement without losing the national identity of each country involved," she added at the 14th Regional APUCEN Council meeting here, which was attended by 10 of its 14 Council members.

Asma, who chaired the meeting said, APUCEN will work closely with all member institutions, NGOs and corporate members, and it is all about "us" together in moving the Global Engagement Agenda, where each university having a unique strength would now come together as one entity. "It is all about inculcating values such as unity, global mindedness and global citizenship. Working together as one provides opportunity to marry science and arts, creating a global community engagement that is impactful and sustainable, addressing many of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"Through the combined efforts from different institutions and countries, APUCEN is moving towards sustainable solutions for global problems," Asma emphasised.

The other important matter raised was APUCEN's support for Experiential Learning and Volunteerism, where students will play a more significant role in making changes in selected communities through the guidance from their supervisors. The future is all about flexibility, adaptability and being agile in responding to changes.

The meeting was attended by representatives from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia



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The psychological services organized by a team from the Psychology Department has capacitated the PDLs to enhance their self-awareness and anger management through reflection workshops and art therapy. This program has helped manage their emotional pains and behavioral concerns such as irritability. In the process, they developed communication, listening, and empathy skills to lessen in-prison conflicts. The FEU Wellness and Recreation Program has complemented this service by offering in-door recreational games and Zumba sessions to help the PDLs cope with boredom and sadness.

Productivity while in prison is a crucial element of the support system. When financial assistance is scarce, PDLs rely on self-help at best. The livelihood program fills in this gap through two income-generating projects. First, PDLs learned how to crochet novelty items for sale at the FEU Bookstore. They were mentored by a social enterprise called Mayown, an institutional partner of the university. Second, the FEU Hotel and Restaurant Management (HRM) team of chefs and students taught them baking basics with the ultimate goal of putting up an in-house bakery. The PDLs currently supply

freshly baked bread to fellow inmates at lower cost. The Biology Department also introduced urban gardening to promote a self-sustaining food source.

To address health risks resulting from prison congestion, the FEU Medical Technology and Nursing teams regularly hold medical and laboratory services. The health program is made more comprehensive through seminars on lifestyle, sanitation, and communicable diseases.

Literacy programs on math, conversational English, short story writing, storytelling, and reading were also spearheaded by the Education, English, Filipino, and Math Departments to beef up the PDLs' skills.

PDLs who are due for release from jail are invited to attend discussions on good citizenship to help lessen chances of recidivism.

As a flagship program with contributions from different academic departments, FEU Project HOPE recognizes and upholds the PDLs' right to life and human dignity like a ray of light amid a dark and cramped prison cell. ■

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## SERVICE LEARNING AT HO CHI MINH UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND FINANCE (UEF)

Since established in 2018, Center of Service Learning of Economic and Finance of Ho Chi Minh City (CSL UEF) has been very active in practicing Service Learning (SL) through many projects.

More than 200 students joined the domestic projects that supported the visually impaired community, unprivileged children, and raised awareness among UEF students about service learning and community work.

For domestic projects, we would like to highlight the Hero Kids Project, which was initiated by a group of UEF students. They organized 8 movie sessions for 24 unprivileged children from the Binh Trieu center – a local charitable school in Ho Chi Minh. Throughout the movie afternoons, they discussed valuable life lessons with the children. The children were thrilled to watch movies and to share their future dreams, confidence, friendship, resilience, etc... in many creative ways: drawing, singing, physical activities, creative writing, etc.

The students organized and implemented the project themselves. CSL UEF supported them with reflection. They learned many lessons about event organizing, child psychology, interactive lesson planning, and empathy for children and the unprivileged.

In another project, the students raised funds and made the toys for 60 kindergarten children of one local non-profit organization.

We also utilized the student's academic skills in the fields of finance and economics in order to organize the financial management teaching for children in low-income families in two additional projects. For international activities, we had collaborated with the University of South Florida and California Polytechnic State University during this summer term. The American students and UEF students worked together to create the curriculums and teach English, life skills, and financial management to about 100 children in one orphanage and one school in HCMC.

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The other important matter raised was APUCEN's support for students' involvement in volunteerism and entrepreneurship, moving towards youth empowerment, where students will play a more significant role in making changes in communities. All member institutions are supportive in conducting workshops on social innovation and social entrepreneurship, and APUCEN will look into this programme in detail with its member institutions.

The Meeting was attended by representatives from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Kyoto University of Foreign Studies (KUFS), Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Chiangmai University (CMU), Universitas Andalas (UNAND), Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), Universitas Surabaya (UBAYA) and Kolej Universiti Perguruan Ugama Seri Begawan (KUPUSB). Asma also mentioned that APUCEN has been moving actively and had conducted community engagement projects both nationally and internationally with its members.

She expressed her sincere thanks and congratulations to all the institutions and members involved in all these projects, either by leading the projects or by partnering in the projects.

"This is the true spirit of APUCEN on moving forward together through partnerships. "APUCEN has now grown with 95 members from 20 countries, expanding beyond the Asia-Pacific region. This is a reflection that APUCEN has grown from strength to strength, partnering with open-minded institutions.

"APUCEN is encouraging corporate sectors as well as NGOs to be members, aiming to work together to conduct Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects," she said.

Asma added, on behalf of APUCEN, she would like to record her sincerest thanks to Universitas Andalas for hosting the meeting and sharing its students' community engagement project with the women community at Taruko Rodi, Koto Lua, Pauh-Padang, where the women folks were trained to be farmers and guided to optimise the usage of every space of land in the village for agriculture.

APUCEN Council members had the opportunity to visit the village and were very impressed with the success achieved by the community with the combined effort of the government, private sector, students and the academics. ■





## APUCEN MOVING TOWARDS GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT IN LINE WITH SDGS



**T**he Regional Council of the Asia-Pacific University-Community Engagement Network (APUCEN) has now achieved its global recognition and known as a Global University, which is no longer about one university but about the combined strength of all APUCEN members to successfully conduct impactful global engagement to solve global issues.

This statement was made by the President of APUCEN, who is also the Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Prof. Datuk Dr. Asma Ismail, at the 13<sup>th</sup> Regional APUCEN Council meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2018, which was attended by 9 of its 13 Council Members. "APUCEN believes that the partnership among all members will give a more significant impact on the implementation of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) globally through community engagement.

"The partnership between members from different countries will shed new light in solving today's challenges through innovative directions.

"I am confident that through the combined efforts from different institutions and countries, APUCEN is moving towards combined solutions for global problems," said Asma.

Asma, who chaired the meeting added, APUCEN will work closely with all member institutions, NGOs and corporate members, and it is all about "us" together moving the Global Engagement Agenda.

The President also said, "It is important to have proper documentation and all community engagement activities should be quantified and monitored in order to show "impact" to the communities that we reach out to."

"With proper documentation, success stories can be replicated and duplicated in other countries, according to the needs and culture of the country. "Furthermore, the progress of all community engagement projects should be monitored and properly documented towards achieving the SDGs in community-based and -engaged research," she added.

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Before the start of each of the projects, expert trainers from the fields were invited to share with the students the suitable skills and knowledge to prepare the students for their projects, in order to help them achieve their learning and serving objectives. Some of these topics include: facilitation skills, class management, emotional intelligence, working with children, teamwork, etc. The organic experiences in the service-learning projects are very important for the students to connect theory and practice—these projects help them to fully attain the learning objectives by applying their knowledge.

We assess our service with the community partners through their feedbacks. Most of them recognize our programs are well organized, interactive and with clear learning outcomes, and different from other charitable activities.

Through our programs this year, we did a need assessments of some community partners and have more ideas regarding public health, English teaching through storytelling, life values teaching projects, etc.

**The collaboration with universities and institutes from APUCEN in the upcoming academic year 2019-2020 is most welcome.**



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## NCHU's COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMER PROGRAM

**T**he National Chung Hsing University (NCHU), Taiwan in collaboration with Universiti Sains Malaysia through APUCEN, Centre of Marine and Coastal Studies (CEMACS) and Universal Peace Federation (UPF) had hosted seven students for a ten-days Community Engagement Summer Program in Penang and Kedah.

The program was held from 15-24 July 2019. The students had participated in various community service and engagement projects during their stay

in Malaysia. Their activities including painting a mural at SPASTIC centre and knowledge transfer between the kids and the students of NCHU in handcraft making. Apart from that, the students have been exposed to sign language class and interacting with the blind at the St. Nicholas Home, teaching and handling the autism kids at the Lions Autism Centre Penang. The activities emphasizes the concept of co-learning among the students and communities.

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The Humanitarian Program was held on 1-8 January 2019, attended by 17 students, two lecturers and two supervisors. In this program, several activities were conducted together with the residents from several villages in Lombok, including distribution of Basic Food Assistance (Sembako) to over 400 recipients, tazkirah activities, sports therapy, community service improvement and school cleaning, homes, boarding schools and mosques, agricultural activities with the villagers, slaughter of animals (chickens, goats and cattle) for the preparation and distribution of villagers' food and distribution of financial and clothing assistance. ■





# HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM

## AT LOMBOK, INDONESIA

**To** balance out the character and knowledge of the students, Kolej Universiti Perguruan Ugama Seri Begawan (KUPU SB) through Pusat Ilmu Teras Department, for the first time organized its own Humanitarian Program overseas, located in Lombok, Indonesia.

The Humanitarian Program is a practical component of social responsibility that requires student involvement in campus and community activities. This program provides opportunity for students to raise awareness and concern for the community, especially for Institutions of Higher Education (HEIs) on social responsibility to care for the less fortunate community.

The project is also under the Community Services Curriculum Program, which aims to produce students who are responsible for the community and the country. KUPUSB hopes that this program is able to unite and cultivate the younger generations to adapt to a God-blessed culture.

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For two days, the students were sent to one of the USM's Oyster Community Engagement Project in Sungai Petani to do volunteer work at the Oyster Farm supervised by the owner himself. The students were exposed to the activities done by the community to protect the mangrove areas for sustainable gains. After the volunteering work at the oyster farm, they have been sent to their foster family houses near the coastal area. In addition, the students have conducted tuition classes for the children of the coastal village.

The students were given opportunity to spend time with cancer children that have only 3 months to live. During their last day in Malaysia, they visited CEMACS for volunteering work. They were also exposed to aquaculture and how to translate science to community

Summer program like this is an opportunity for other APUCEN members to embark on to engage their students with other community projects conducted outside their home countries. This is a program about cultural exchange, local wisdom and knowledge, understanding global issues and coming together as "one" to create a better tomorrow for the younger generation. ■



# MFU FOR ALL

**W**ith the determination to fulfill HRH Princess Srinagarindra’s intention of developing people and promoting healthcare, Mae Fah Luang University (MFU), Chiang Rai, Thailand has committed itself to providing academic and healthcare services for the community by engaging students and staff in several CSR activities in order to improve the quality of life of the people not only in the nation, but also in nearby regions.

Since its establishment, MFU has annually held the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme for people in the local community and the year 2018 marked the first time of holding the CSR programme aboard. MFU in collaboration with Singha Cooperation initiated the “MFU for All” project to support the social needs in Kyaing Tong Township, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 29 - 31 January 2018.

In this project, 30 MFU Thai and international students and 10 Kyaing Tong University students held a series of games and English learning activities for Kyaing Tong high school students. All activities were

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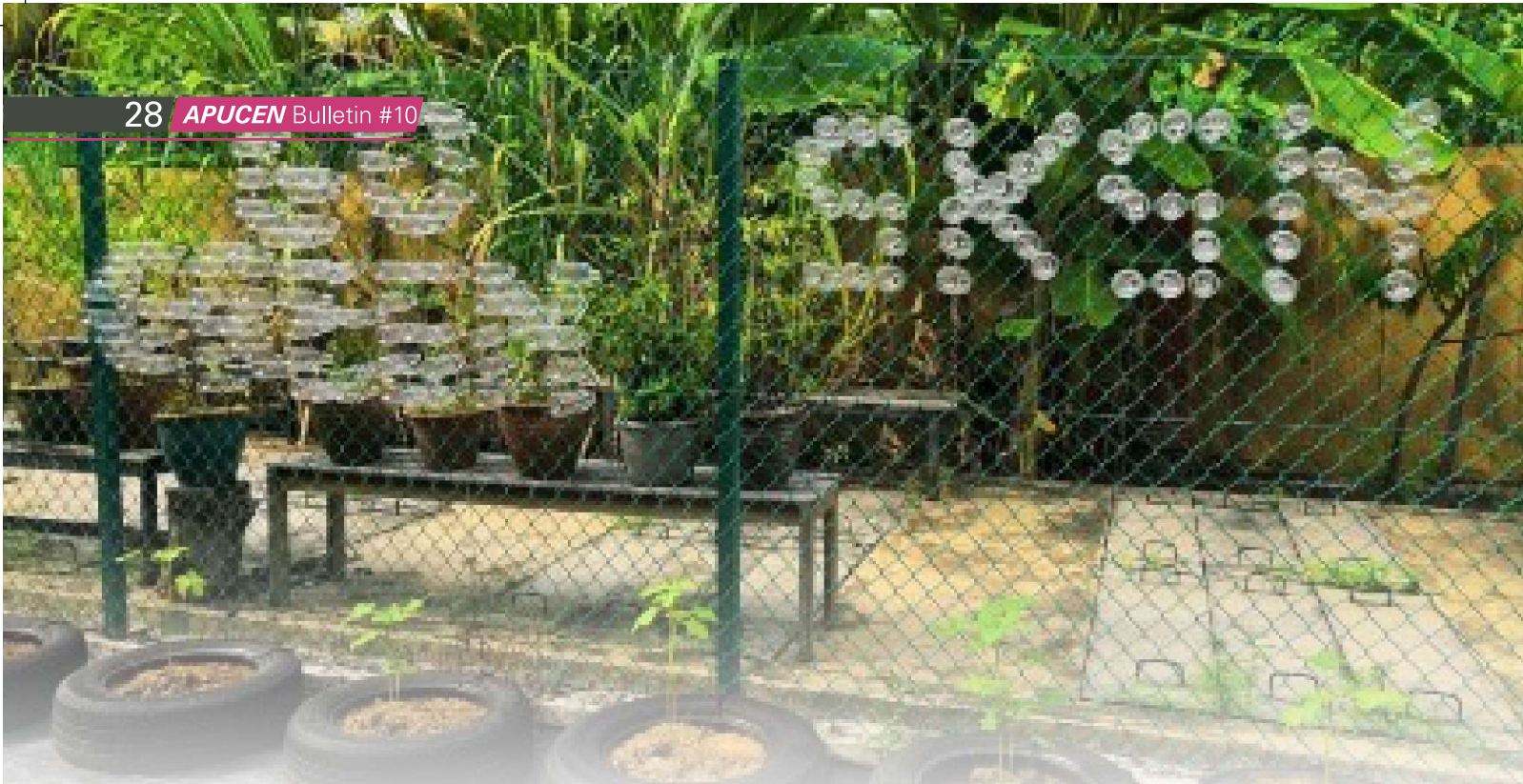
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The development of the Integrated Green Garden took about 2 weeks to finish. The Integrated Green Garden system was introduced by RCE Penang@USM used several sophisticated techniques which are rain-water harvesting system, ‘batas apungan’ technique and irrigation system. Interestingly, for the school project, the water from air conditioner was used to water the plant.

From the project, RCE Penang was able to provide awareness to teachers and students that they could do something to save the water by using their own creativity and ideas. The project has also instill the leadership quality in teachers and students by providing guidance on how to maintain the garden. The vegetables from the garden will be sold to the canteen to cook for the students. By doing this, the entrepreneurship skills had been inculcated to teachers and students.

RCE Penang hopes that this project will be able to be implemented in the school throughout the country especially in Penang. ■





# EMPOWERING TEACHERS AND STUDENTS LEADERSHIP IN SDG 6 VIA INTERGRATED GREEN GARDEN

**W**ater plays an important role as it is a basic requirement to sustain life. Water is used for personal needs, irrigation in agriculture, and also in industry to produce various products. Water not only affect organisms directly, but also affect the economy and the environment globally. According to United Nations World Water Assessment Program (WWAP, 2015), safe and clean water is an important element in sustainable development as it contributes to the reduction of poverty, the growth of economy, environmental sustainability and to improve the overall aspect of an individual such as health aspect and food supply.

based at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) has embarked on a collaboration with the UNESCO IHP Malaysia to conduct a project on Empowering Teachers and Students Leadership in SDG 6 via Integrated Green Garden.

The project in general aimed at strengthening the leadership qualities in teachers and students in water education especially on water saving, water reuse, water recycle in order to ensure water is sufficient for future generation. In this project, teachers were exposed to hands-on and minds-on activities in providing experiences about the sustainability of water use.

Realising the need to provide greater exposure on the concept of water education to the masses, the Regional Centre of Expertise Penang (RCE Penang)

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arranged in order to help high school students extend practice outside their lessons and learn skills including problem solving, decision making, conflict management and physical skills by playing the games.

In addition, MFU lecturers from the School of Health Science held an education seminar on "Environmental and Health issues among Mekong Sub-region countries" to share and exchange knowledge with lecturers and students at Kyaing Tong University (KTU). The seminar also served as a venue for strengthening the academic network between the two universities. As personal hygiene and hygienic living conditions are important to prevent illnesses and sustain good health, the School of Health Science had provided hygiene education for Kyaing Tong people at the Senior Centre of Kyaing Tong.

All students and lecturers participating in this project greatly appreciated the opportunity to improve people's quality of life in local communities in terms of education and healthcare. By actively helping others, both MFU and KTU students could enhance their personal and social skills with international friends which later enabled them to communicate effectively with people from other countries, understand multicultural perspectives, and then be ready to work in any workplace around the globe. The enthusiastic engagement of participants in all activities also enhanced cultural exchange and mutual understanding which helped to connect and establish friendships among all of them.





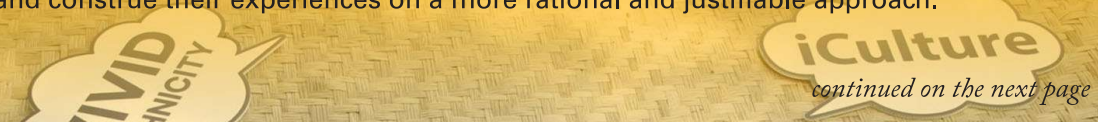
Mahidol University  
*Wisdom of the Land*

# ENHANCING SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT BY USING MUSEUM AS A TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING DEVICE

**M**useum is one of a key device for lifelong learning. Mahidol University has launched a Museum out-reach program for promoting "Transformative Learning Through Design Thinking" for 500 students from 10 primary schools located nearby Mahidol University.

This project studies an adoption of the academic proficiency in museum studies of Mahidol University's Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia in the approach to build cooperation among educational institutes, namely schools and museums, while also developing a new platform for the students' transformative learning by design thinking. The students participating in this project are encouraged to use their skills of rational and creative thinking to complete their assigned works.

"Transformative learning" is a conceptual framework of education focusing on changes in the way learners think and construe their experiences on a more rational and justifiable approach.



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Children are the group most vulnerable to post traumatic disorder. Thus the medical lecturers from USIM designed and provided trauma healing activities for the children. This included having colouring activities, by using popular cartoons from Malaysia, Upin and Ipin. More than 100 students participated in the colouring activities. They were also taught on dental hygiene. Materials for colouring activity, toothbrushes and toothpastes were donated by charitable associations from Malaysia as well as from the staff of USIM.

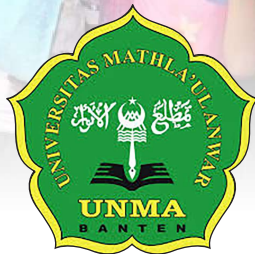
According to Prof. Dato' Dr. Musa Ahmad, USIM Vice-Chancellor, as a strategic partner with UNMA, this humanitarian mission is seen as a close partnership between the two countries. As a start, USIM will assist in terms of providing clean water for the villagers involved, and thereafter will create more synergized cooperation in education. This opportunity given to USIM is expected to benefit the community not only in Malaysia but also globally.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rafidah Hanim Mokhtar, as the Director of PLiMJJI, expressed her gratitude for being able to successfully manage and conduct the first USIM volunteer program abroad. "I am also happy that the Banten tsunami disaster relief mission has become a cornerstone towards the formation of the International Community Engagement Networking consisting of administrative staff, lecturers and students with expertise, highly skilled, comprehensive and capable of integrating the knowledge of naqli and aqli with excellence", added Dr. Rafidah. As a preliminary measure, USIM had sent representatives on February 27<sup>th</sup> before the actual team was dispatched, to observe the current situation and the much needed aid of the communities. USIM also launched the Banten Tsunami Relief Fund during the USIM Staff Annual Assembly, and the USIM Cultural Center also held a Dakwah Street program with UNMA to raise funds for this purpose.

"Hopefully this relief mission will help to display the close collaboration between the communities here and USIM, and, hopefully it will not stop here,

but will expand more cooperations in other areas. This assistance is hoped to be utilized, well maintained and used to perform various activities (Ibadah) to Allah.", said Prof. Dr. Abdul Ghani Abdullah, Rector of UNMA.





# USIM POST DISASTER RELIEF MISSION IN BANTEN

## UNIVERSITY NETWORKS IN POST DISASTER REHABILITATION

**C**ommunity engagement should not strictly mean engagement involving the community surrounding a particular university. Within the atmosphere of academia, at times, our engagement may be extended to our fellow neighbouring universities, in times of disaster, where they too need help to get back on their feet.

Following the earthquake that hit the Sunda Strait on 22 December 2018 with a magnitude of 5 Richter Scale which caused fatalities and damage in several areas involved, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) dispatched a team for Banten tsunami relief mission with the objective to build clean water supplies in six villages for the use of the communities as well as conducted trauma healing program for the school children in the affected area.

The delegation was led by Prof. Dato' Dr. Musa Ahmad, the Vice-Chancellor along with 14 other members comprising university management officers, medical doctors from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, expert lecturers in

faith and belief (aqidah) from the Faculty of Quran and Sunnah Studies and USIM specialised volunteer teams from non-academic staff members, The Smart Team, USIM. This humanitarian project was a collaborative effort by the Centre for Community Engagement and Industrial Networking (PLiMJ), USIM with Mathla'ul Anwar University (UNMA) and Mathla'ul Anwar Care. USIM has a long-standing networking with UNMA in various academic and teaching programmes, thus it felt the need to assist UNMA and other universities affected by natural disasters to speed the rehabilitation process.

The assistance provided by USIM included to mobilize clean water sources where tanks were provided to the villages. Water was pumped from underground well, and USIM's team had also conducted pH testing as well as basic chemistry analysis to ensure that the water was safe for consumption. The tanks were placed at the community centres like surau, schools or community hall.

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“Design thinking” refers to logical and constructive settlement of problems. In this context, that means to allow the students to learn from the actual experience, identify unwanted problems or circumstances that already happen, investigate for their causes, and utilise their creative ideas in the contemplation and proposal.

- The pedagogical practice includes 6 steps.
1. Understanding real world problem :
  2. Posing a problem
  3. Brainstorming to find a proper solution
  4. Making a prototype
  5. Testing prototype
  6. Critical reflection

At the end of the project, students should be able to create more than 15 prototypes to solve problems in their own communities. The Results are shown on the aspect of social impact as the participants develop a self actualisation realising that they can transform their knowledge into practice and help to make social changes critically and creatively. ■





## REACH THE DREAM FOR BECOMING A TOURISM VILLAGE A CASE STUDY OF A START-UP TOURISM VILLAGE IN INDONESIA

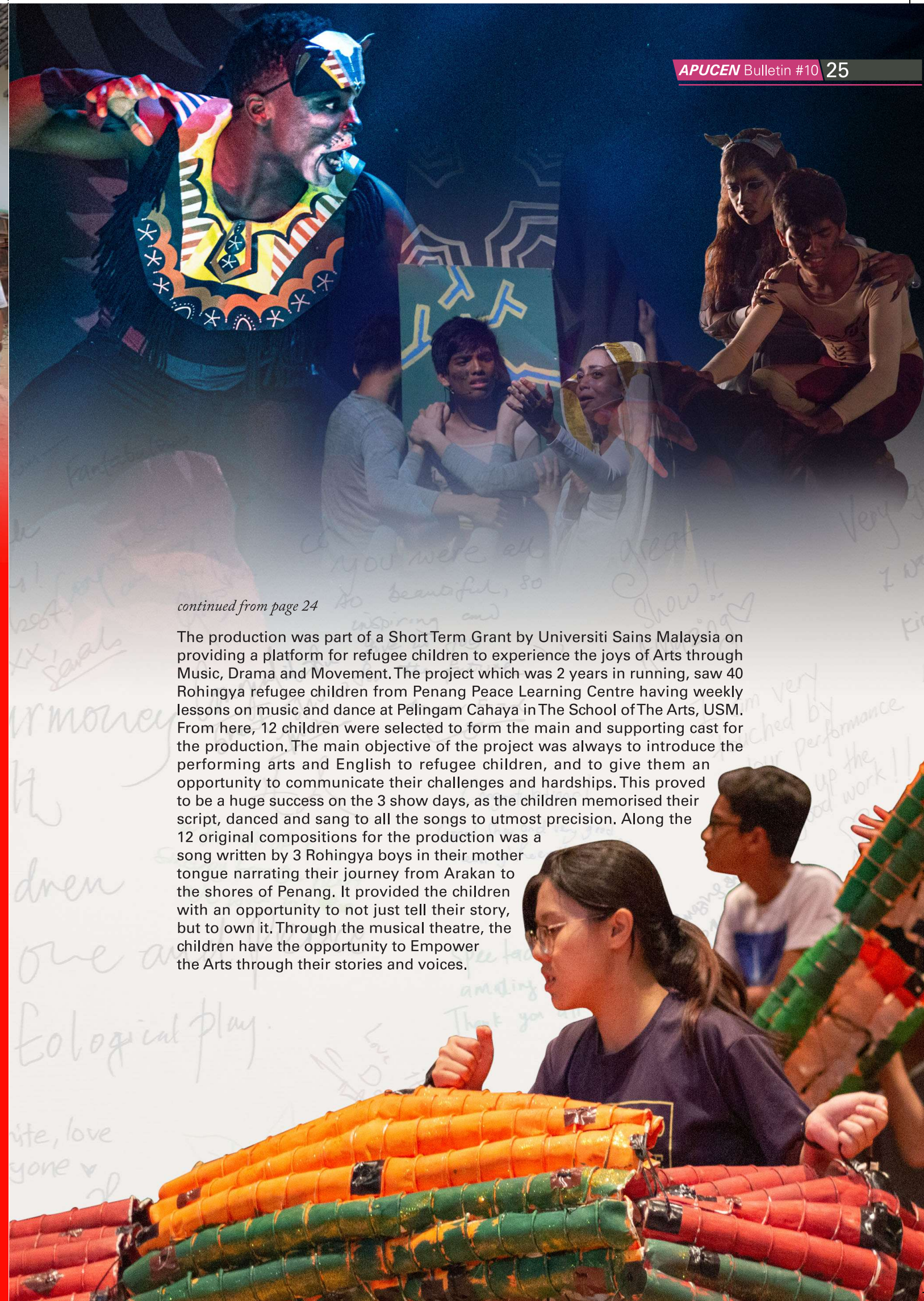


**O**ne of the ultimate challenges in empowering a potential tourism-rural community in Indonesia is how to instill a 'spirit' of active participation and caring. The opportunity for a potential tourism-village in Indonesia in term of natural and cultural heritage is somehow very promising, yet the spirit to develop and to manage professionally need to be polished. Some promising natural and cultural heritage are charming landscapes, fertile equatorial areas, diversity of natural and biological resources, cultural and ethnic diversity, ancient heritage sites, various types of culinary, and hospitality of residents in villages of Indonesia. These great potentials are currently supported by Indonesian government

policy in deploying a significant amount of budget to local governments in developing their own villages independently.

Some villages in Indonesia have showed a successful stage in becoming tourism villages. A significant numbers of tourists come to visit the villages and in turn boosting the economy of the villages as well as the welfare of the villagers. Examples of successful stories of tourism villages are Taman Sari Village located in Banyuwangi Regency East Java Province, and Ponggok Village in Klaten regency of Central Java Province, and Pujon Kidul Village that located in Malang regency East Java Province.

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The production was part of a Short Term Grant by Universiti Sains Malaysia on providing a platform for refugee children to experience the joys of Arts through Music, Drama and Movement. The project which was 2 years in running, saw 40 Rohingya refugee children from Penang Peace Learning Centre having weekly lessons on music and dance at Pelingam Cahaya in The School of The Arts, USM. From here, 12 children were selected to form the main and supporting cast for the production. The main objective of the project was always to introduce the performing arts and English to refugee children, and to give them an opportunity to communicate their challenges and hardships. This proved to be a huge success on the 3 show days, as the children memorised their script, danced and sang to all the songs to utmost precision. Along the 12 original compositions for the production was a song written by 3 Rohingya boys in their mother tongue narrating their journey from Arakan to the shores of Penang. It provided the children with an opportunity to not just tell their story, but to own it. Through the musical theatre, the children have the opportunity to Empower the Arts through their stories and voices.





# JUNGLE BOOK THE MUSICAL: A ROHINGYA JOURNEY

**On** the 5-7 September 2019, School of the Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia proudly presented **JUNGLE BOOK THE MUSICAL!** A musical theatre production for and by the Rohingya refugee children of Peace Learning Centre, Penang. This theatrical production, which is an adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, was a fundraising event by USM's School of the Arts for the refugee children at Peace Learning Centre. It was performed by the Rohingya children themselves, alongside supporting actors and live musicians. In this production, the Children Empowered the Arts and took ownership and control of the process as actors, performers and audience, while they projected their voices, experiences, hopes and fears into the script and lyrical narratives of the production. **JUNGLE BOOK THE MUSICAL** is the story of one child's quest of courage and hope in search of his identity and the ultimate desire to belong in a jungle of perpetual adventures and adversities much like the reality of the Rohingya children. The event was a sell out on all three days with the children receiving rave reviews for their performance and their ability to perform entirely in English after only learning the language for slightly over one year.

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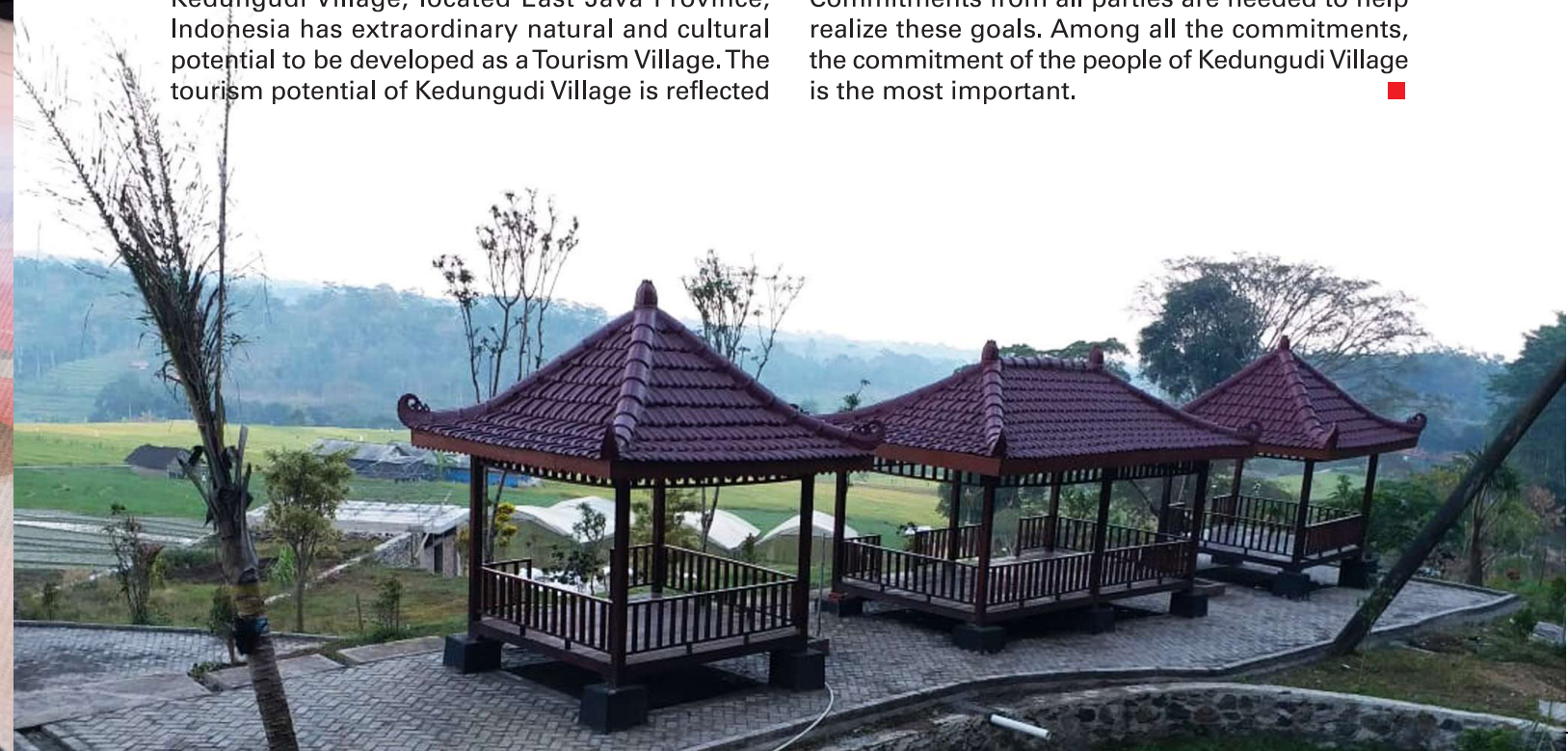
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The tourism villages above were started and managed by the village community themselves. They identify, initiate, take action, and manage all the potential they have in the village to be used as much as possible to become an interesting attraction for tourists to visit. The key to the success of the tourism village above is community empowerment. We must be able to imagine how much the change in mindset and habits of the people in the tourist village must change from the mindset as a farmer and land processor into a business, serving, and creative mindset in order to become a tourist village. This is compounded by the problem of low levels of community education in villages and the high level of community interest in urbanizing urban areas. One can imagine how difficult it is to change and start a potential village to become a successful tourist village. It takes a lot of hard work from the parties involved in starting a tourist village. One key factor for the success of a village to become a tourist village is the empowerment of community. University of Surabaya had successfully transform Kedungudi Village, Trawas District, Mojokerto Regency into a tourist village.

Kedungudi Village, located East Java Province, Indonesia has extraordinary natural and cultural potential to be developed as a Tourism Village. The tourism potential of Kedungudi Village is reflected

in at least four interesting sites, namely the beautiful scenery with rice fields at the foot of Mount Penanggungan and some historical relics of Hindu temples, climbing routes to the summit of Mount Penanggungan and the tomb of Mbah Suronggolo. Community empowerment from the University of Surabaya for the development of tourism villages is carried out using participatory and facilitative methods, because the type of tourism developed is Community Based Tourism (CBT). Village community participation is explored through focus group discussions, workshops, action plans and comparative studies. The main objective of community empowerment is to increase public awareness about the village's great potential for tourism by identifying culinary potential, beautiful scenic spots, and traditional cultural attractions. Community empowerment activities were carried out by University of Surabaya focused on the organization of young people (Youth Organization) and women's organizations (PKK) in Kedungudi Village

The effort to realize the dream of becoming a successful tourism village in Kedungudi Village requires hard work and long implementation time. Commitments from all parties are needed to help realize these goals. Among all the commitments, the commitment of the people of Kedungudi Village is the most important. ■





## BOOSTING SUSTAINABLE COFFEE TOURISM AT KOPIKAN NEW VILLAGE

**A**imed at promoting sustainable rural development through preserving the values and belief, creating employment opportunities and increasing the earnings of local residents, UTAR Department of Soft Skills Competency (DSSC) in collaboration with the SJK (C) New Kopisan Board of Management successfully organised a fun-filled carnival titled "Extracoffeenery Carnival 2018" at SJK (C) New Kopisan from 24 to 25 November 2018 as a part of an initiative in transforming Kopisan new village into a tourist village.

Many young people are fleeing the village due to the shortage of job and business opportunities. Majority of the residents in the village are elderly and thus the village becomes unproductive and lifeless. Therefore, aimed at encouraging young people to come back and stay in their hometown as well as tapping on the tourism resources that

lies in the village, UTAR DSSC jointly with the SJK (C) New Kopisan organised the engaging carnival. The carnival aims to upgrade the village as a tourist spot with their distinct culture and the plantation of coffee in the village.

Held for two days, the carnival was filled with a myriad of activities, namely karaoke competition, fun fair and food fair, coffee workshop, and arts and cultural performance. The carnival attracted more than 500 visitors throughout. The coffee workshop aimed to increase the public's exposure towards coffee and coffee planting and to educate children about the process of making coffee. The singing competition aimed to promote an active lifestyle, discover singing talents and foster harmony among the community members. The carnival went on with an arts and cultural performance. Around 200 people made up the audience of the performance night. ■



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"May this 'Peace Road Charity Run Penang 2019' be the beginning to celebrate the power of global solidarity for building a peaceful and sustainable world. Kudos for your giving and serving spirits to the community," he said in his speech during the event in USM today.

This is the second consecutive year that this 120-nation participating event has been held in USM, and what makes it more meaningful is the celebration of USM 50th anniversary this year. This campus has always been a perfect spot for such gatherings for many years.

Besides, event highlights included lucky draw session in which the prizes up for grabs were contributed from various sponsors, with the value that worth more than ten thousand. And on top of that, zumba and fitness session was also led by event partner, Light It Up Gold to raise awareness on childhood cancer, which was initiated by Mrs. Global United Lifetime Queen (U.S.A).

Also present were USM Sport and Recreation Centre director Prof. Madya Dr. Ahmad Munir Che Muhamed, patron Dato' Shahul Hamid Bin Abdul Kadir, PAAA president Dato' Syed Mohamad Aidid Bin Syed Murtaza, UPF Malaysia director Mr. Lai Peng Keong, USM APUCEN assistant registrar Ms. Syazira Othman, PKAPP founder and president Mr. Alagesan Ayaru, advisor Mr. Nick Ng Shu Lin and organising committee chairman Ms. Tan Yee Wen.



**PEACE ROAD 2019**  
One Nation One Heart!

**APUCEN**  
Asia-Pacific University-Community Engagement Network



**P**ENANG: "AMAZING turn up, yet peaceful." This would be the best statement to describe the third occasion of Peace Road Charity Run Penang, organised on 13<sup>th</sup> of October, which ended successfully.

Some 4000 participants from all walks of life could be seen clad in purple, taking part in the run today. They took advantage of their rest day by joining the 'Peace Road Charity Run Penang 2019' at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

To celebrate peace and charity through sports, the 7km and 3.5km fun run that started at 7.30am was also held to collect funds for some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that dedicate to provide support and improve the lives of the underprivileged.

The run is an annual project of Universal Peace Federation (UPF), which collaborates with Asia-Pacific University-Community Engagement Network (APUCEN) and Charity Foundation Association Of Penang (PKAPP).

Penang Youth and Sports Committee chairman YB Soon Lip Chee, who officiated and flagged off the run, said the event was a noble act by the organising committee for creating awareness for peace. He also expressed hopes that such event should be carried out in yearly basis to encourage more people to take part.

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## EXPERIENCING **KAMPUNG LIFE IN NEW VILLAGES**

**T**he seventh Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) New Village Collaborative Project with National University of Singapore (NUS) successfully ended with a closing ceremony held on 24 December 2018, at Kampar Campus.

Co-organised by Department of Soft Skills Competency (DSSC), the week-long project, held from 17 to 23 December 2018 was a civic engagement programme that encourages the practice of one's soft skills, life skills and academic learning, which is aimed to help participants acquire new necessary skills, be a more involved global citizen in the society, learning more about the new villages, and helping to identify and address communal needs. The participants visited Chui Chak Village and Kuala Bikam Village. The New Village Collaborative Project is also an opportune platform for participants to develop international outlooks, enhance competencies of their soft skills and life skills, be prepared as a

global citizen with tenacity to face challenges in a diversified cultural society, and establishing network and friendship.

UTAR New Village Collaborative Project collaborates with local foundations, companies, and foreign partnering universities to participate in the village community project. The activities involve social study, research, cultural exchange, sport-friendly matches and beautification projects for schools and homes. Collaboration with NUS was formed in 2012 and saw the first group of NUS University Scholar Program (USP) students visited five new villages in Perak. The objective was to study the social and economic development in the new villages; collect information about the histories (narratives) and cultures of the new villages; and to identify and map the community assets of the new villages as well as to generate possible social entrepreneurship and community development ideas for the new villages.



# THE BRACE PROJECT

## APUCEN SITE VISIT TO THE BRAHMAPUTRA COASTAL VILLAGE, MYMENSIGN, BANGLADESH

**O**ur destination Mymensingh, a city located on the banks of the meandering Brahmaputra to the north of Bangladesh's capital and sole megacity, Dhaka, was a three and half hour journey by car through a rustic landscape of paddy fields interspersed by fish ponds, ramshackle hamlets, and dilapidated hovels - a monochromatic sight occasionally broken by rows of textile plants emerging wraithlike out of the swirling smog and dust. The nerve centre of an essentially agrarian and fishing economy, Mymensingh's population of 5 million were primarily housed in slums where sanitation and waste disposal facilities were scarce. And that insight itself served as a premonition as to what awaited us at the Brahmaputra Coastal Village community.

### Purpose of visit

The main objective of this community site visit was to determine the kind of impactful and sustainable projects that could be implemented for the benefit of the Brahmaputra Coastal community.

### The Engagement Process

It was a profoundly eye-opening experience for our team as many of us are generally insulated from the problems and hardships experienced by the poor and the marginalised. The rural squalor, the untreated effusion of both animal and human waste, the lack of access to water and proper sanitation, the absence of proper waste disposal facilities, the derelict makeshift huts that its denizens called homes collectively left an indelible montage of human suffering on our psyche.

There, we had an informal dialogue session with the local inhabitants in which we sought to elucidate the problems faced by the community. Over 15 families came out to share their plight. Essentially, their problems revolved around the effects of continuous sand dredging and over fishing on their livelihood which led to a loss of income. These twin problems were further compounded by the use of obsolete fishing equipment that resulted in a meagre catch thus rendering fishing an unviable source of income.

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### How APUCEN Can Play an Empowering Role

APUCEN can alleviate the problems besetting the Brahmaputra Coastal Village Community by developing a strategic engagement plan that will equip local leaders with the means and resources they need to build the requisite economic capacity for their community. In this regard, it is incumbent upon APUCEN to adopt a rights-based approach in designing the strategic engagement plan whilst familiarising itself with the dynamics impoverishment and marginalisation in the target community.

This Community Visit program is the first step of that process in that it has facilitated community engagement, the setting of common goals and directions within a facilitated structured framework, designed to enable access to resources that will assist them to be self sufficient. In short, APUCEN has conceptualised a poverty eradication project that purports to increase incomes in a sustainable and viable manner.

Since fishing is no longer a viable and sustainable form of livelihood, it is recommended that a three-pronged approach targetting the female cohort of

the Brahmaputra Coastal Village Community be adopted.

This approach should focus upon

- retooling capacity building training to women in the community in textile and agrobased processing skills.
- community joint ventures centred on textile manufacture sub-contracting and the looming industry
- value-added initiatives that seek to downstream existing agricultural and fishing produce into marketable products.

Overall, the Brahmaputra Coastal Village Community visit was an enriching and insightful experience into unpredictability and variation of existence that poverty blighted societies are often subjected to. It is hoped that APUCEN's Brahmaputra Community Empowerment project, codenamed BRACE, will be a success that will not only ensure the economic upliftment of the hitherto deprived Brahmaputrans but will also ensure their access to improved standards of living. ■

