

**Ideas into action: Teach For Malaysia Fellows design innovative initiatives to empower students and bridge education inequity**

KUALA LUMPUR - Teach For Malaysia Fellows and Alumni enter the Dragons' Den and present to a panel of judges their social innovation projects designed to bridge the gaps in equity for the Orang Asli children and community in Perak.

Teach For Malaysia's Dragons' Den is a platform for Fellows and Alumni to pitch their social initiatives to a panel of judges, affectionately referred to as Dragons. Joining us for this year's Dragons' Den are Marques Menon (Director of EmPOWER Programme, Heriot-Watt University Malaysia), Ir. Ong Tien Soon (Senior Strategic Resource Manager, Baker Hughes), Dr. Tooba Modassir (Chief HR Officer, Citi Malaysia), Sara Yasmine Mohamed (Head of Corporate Affairs, Citi Malaysia), Shawn Khong (Head of Citi Commercial, Citi Malaysia), Sheba Gumis (Partner, Corporate Skrine), Anaïs Deschamps (Head of Education Department, The Embassy of France), Eliana Tanbenghui (Programme Coordinator, Apa Kata Wanita Orang Asli) and Dr. Ho Sook Wah (Head of Orang Asli Education Department, Yayasan Gamuda).

This event is inspired by the reality show of the same name in the United Kingdom. With a similar concept, Dragons are there to offer feedback, funding or support-in-kind to invest in Fellow initiatives that they believe have the potential to create the most impact and are in line with their vision and social interests.

TFM Fellows have been working in high-need Orang Asli-majority schools since June 2022. According to the Ministry of Education, no dropout among Orang Asli students was detected at the primary school level in 2022. However, the dropout rate among Orang Asli students at the secondary school level was closer to 5%, far higher than the national average which was less than 1%.

TFM CEO Chan Soon Seng shares, "TFM Fellows have been working on the ground with indigenous communities in Perak for over a year. They have gained first-hand insights into the issues contributing to the education inequity faced by Orang Asli communities, such as low literacy and numeracy rate, lack of proper facilities in school and lack of exposure to the outside world. With this knowledge, they started social innovation projects that benefit the students and the local communities in their second year of the Fellowship and beyond."

After listening to the initiatives that aim to address these issues and more, Dr Tooba Modassir, Chief Human Resources Officer of Citi Malaysia expresses her admiration for the Fellows. "It's genuinely humbling to see the effort put in, the cause Fellows are working for, for the stake of the students. You are spending so much of your energy and your time on causes which are so phenomenal. Whatever comes your way, do not lose that energy and keep your head high because what you are influencing is really the future."

The Dragons provide invaluable feedback to the Fellows to further improve on their pitching skills and social innovations so the expected outcomes can become a true reality. Furthermore, some Dragons also express keen interest in collaborating with the Fellows by providing them with

expertise, time, resources or networking to empower the Fellows who in turn empower their students.

'Izzati and Aqilah, whose initiative is sOAra that aims to strengthen the students' Malay proficiency, share their reflection and hope. 'Izzati says, "Dragons' Den is such a good platform for us Fellows to share with the stakeholders about our school, our community, our students and what kind of problems that we face and what kind of solutions we can offer." Aqilah adds, "We hope this initiative will help embed confidence in our Temiar students so they can communicate with others, even strangers, in Malay. We wish it will create a ripple effect not only on their peers but the generations to come."

In the past, some of our Fellows' initiatives have grown into full-fledged social enterprises including ARUS Academy, which focuses on STEM and Maker education, Closing the Gap and Project ID which focus on student leadership, and Edvolution Enterprise which focuses on teacher, principal and district education officer training.

## Appendix



**2022 TFM Fellow Shawn Stanley pitched his initiative, Community Learning Hub.**



**2022 TFM Fellows Amirul Shamin and Tiara Jacquellina pitched their initiative, Corak-Corak Alam.**

#### **Note to editor**

Teach For Malaysia is an independent, not-for-profit organisation on a mission to give all children the opportunity to realise their potential through quality education. We partner with the Ministry of Education to reach high-need public schools. We are one of the 61 partners of the prestigious global education network Teach For All.

Since 2012, we have been building a transformational movement in the education system by placing the country's most promising graduates and young professionals as full-time teachers in some of Malaysia's most high-need schools to combat education inequity through our flagship leadership development programme called the Fellowship. In 2020, we expanded our work as the implementation partner of the 2-year nationwide Program Duta Guru (PDG), training and coaching in-service public school STEM teachers.

Teach For Malaysia is a 2022 Merdeka Award Recipient under the Education & Community Category. The Merdeka Award is Malaysia's premier award for excellence founded by PETRONAS, ExxonMobil and Shell in 2007.

Since our launch in 2012, we are a movement of 1481 TFM Fellows, Program Duta Guru teachers and Alumni have impacted 332,337 students in 946 schools nationwide.



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