



Hands-on experience in building a house

The Star kick-starts volunteer initiative with UPM undergraduates

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IT WAS a life-changing experience for 34 Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) students when they were given the opportunity to build a wooden house for a resident in an orang asli settlement in Bukit Jenuk, Dengkil, recently.

Under the supervision of volunteers from local NGO Insaf Technical Relief Malaysia (Insaf), the Faculty of Civil Engineering students had first-hand exposure in building and also in volunteer work through the Good Day Out project under Star Publications (M) Bhd's Do Good Volunteer initiative.

Insaf Malaysia founder and president Ishak Abdul Kadir said the undergraduates were given a 30-minute briefing on Insaf's 'Program Amal Tampal Rumah' before being divided into groups.

"The undergraduates were divided into four clusters — food, wash (water sanitation and hygiene), shelter and medical — and assigned various responsibilities.

"They then set up tents and built a kitchen," said Ishak when met at the site.

The following day, the students woke as early as 7am and starting building the house for 64-year-old Mantah Anak Ayap and his family.

"The students worked in their clusters and

rotated every two hours, enabling them to have good exposure to each cluster.

"Those in the medical cluster provided medical care, the food cluster provided food for those in need as well as the volunteers, those in the shelter cluster built the house while the wash cluster ensured the cleanliness of the area," Ishak said.

He explained that Insaf got the idea for the programme through a similar initiative in Jakarta where a group of university students were reconstructing homes for the residents there. In Jakarta, the programme is referred to as 'Pecah Rumah'.

"The four clusters were adopted from the United Nations Cluster System and our goal was to promote humanitarian values and provide disaster response," said Ishak, adding that this was the second time it worked with undergraduates to rebuild homes for the orang asli.

Insaf had previously worked with a group of Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) students to rebuild an orang asli house in Kampung Gumum, Pahang.

Ishak said the experience was an eye-opener for the undergraduate students who had not had any exposure to community or volunteer work.

"It is important for the next generation to know what volunteerism is all about. To reach out to those in need is something that we should cultivate among the young.

"For the volunteers, they not only go home with an additional skill, but also learn to

work as a family and be self-sufficient," he explained, urging more multinational organisations to come forward with funds to initiate such projects and sponsor students for a heart-warming experience.

Faiz Mohd Rasid, a second-year student from the Civil Engineering Faculty, said he was privileged to be selected for the programme.

"Although I have been to an orang asli settlement before, this is a life-changing experience for me as I am involved as a volunteer and it is really awesome to be able to give back to the community.

"Thanks to Insaf, I now know how to build a wooden house with my bare hands," said the 21-year-old, adding that despite the rainy weather and the lack of electricity and water supply in the area, they had managed to continue work on building the wooden house.

Faiz, who was the student head for the project, aspires to be involved in more volunteer programmes such as this and wants to encourage his fellow students to be volunteers. He thanked *The Star* for sponsoring him.

Siti Nur Farhanim, 22, from the same faculty echoed Faiz's views.

"When I arrived at the settlement, I did not expect it to be in such a state. The houses were mere shacks that the orang asli built with their own hands. There was no electricity or water supply in the area and they still live here, despite the conditions. I should be

Do Good Volunteer is an initiative by The Star and Leaderonomics to promote volunteerism and raise awareness on worthy causes.

To register as a volunteer, go to dogoodvolunteer.com

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

● **Katzen Cat Sanctuary Loving Cats (Katzen Cat Sanctuary)**
Katzen Cat Sanctuary, is an NGO that was started by two cat-loving sisters with a growing number of their own cats needing a new place to live in. This is an ongoing project where stray cats in our care are fed, cleaned, cuddled and loved and hopefully adopted. We need 4 volunteers to clean cages, sweep and mopping floors, feed & play with cats. For details, call Suraya Sabbaruddin at 017-8783040.

● **Homeless Hairwash (My Khatulistiwa Sdn Bhd)**
Most of our street friends are depressed and have resigned to the fact that they will forever be on the streets due to the stigma the society places on them. The reason behind the hairwash is not just for hygienic purposes, but to motivate and empower the street people to feel positive. If you want to empower our street friends, join us! We need volunteers to wash & cut hair of street people and trimming of nails. For details, call My Khatulistiwa at 019-3060852.

● **Community Sports - Football Program (Malaysian Care)**
Through our football community sports programme, we have enhanced the health and well-being, fostered self-esteem and provided opportunities for leadership and achievement to children/youth-at-risk. We're looking for passionate male individuals who don't mind spending some time over the weekend in the 'padang' (PPR Enggang, Puchong) to coach kids/youth in this well-loved game. If interested, call Keith

Gonsalvez at 03-90582102.

● **Year 2 Cycle 1: SMK Tengku Idris Shah (The RE:ED Project)**
It all began with a desire to make a change in the lives of the less fortunate. One of the prevailing issues evident in Malaysia is poverty-stricken communities and the children who come from these communities & due to their financial circumstances, many of these children have difficulty in keeping up with their peers. If you have a passion to teach kids, join us! For details, call Pow Yih Ling at 0125139887.

● **Foodbank/Hot meals For the Poor! (Grace Community Services)**
This soup kitchen project was started in Klang on March 9, 2013. Currently we are serving more than 200 families in different locations. We need people to be able to consistently serve poor families in different designated locations through our mobile soup kitchen every week. For details, call David Janssen Nathan at 0172021146.

● **Education of underprivileged children (GIFT Foundation)**
Passionate in teaching children? Come join us as we provide education to marginalised children of Malay Champa origin. At present, the children are receiving free education of two hours daily, from Monday to Friday. For details, call Dr Firdaus at 013-3977765.

■ For those who would like their volunteering opportunities to be featured here, kindly post it up at www.dogoodvolunteer.com and we might just pick yours!



- 1 Volunteers working hard to get the house ready.
- 2 UPM undergraduates putting up the walls for the wooden house for an orang asli family in Kampung Orang Asli, Bukit Jenuk, Dengkil.
- 3 The new wooden house built by UPM undergraduates under the supervision of Insaf Technical Relief in an orang asli settlement in Bukit Jenuk, Dengkil. This is the first Good Day Out project themed 'Program Amal Tampal Rumah' under The Star's Do Good Volunteer initiative.

- 4 Team work made the building of the house a success.
- 5 Mantah Anak Ayap, 64, and his family outside their new wooden house.
- 6 A UPM undergraduate being supervised by Insaf Malaysia's volunteer in the food cluster. This section ensures that food is provided for volunteers and residents of the orang asli settlement.
- 7 The volunteers' camp site.

— Photos by SHAARI CHE MAT