

Sabah villagers increase household income via entrepreneurship programme

KUALALUMPUR: In addressing the issue of poverty, Yayasan PETRONAS with its partners have rolled out an entrepreneurship programme, Sentuhan Harapan - Planting Tomorrow. It is aimed at harnessing the skills and improving the financial strength and livelihood of those in the B40* community bracket.

More than 460 low income families in Sabah and Terengganu have participated in the Sentuhan Harapan - Planting Tomorrow programme since it started in 2017 and the results have been promising with some gaining a three-fold increase in their household income.

Yayasan PETRONAS Acting Chief Executive Officer, Puan Lita Osman said, "The Planting Tomorrow programme is in support of the government's efforts to alleviate poverty in the country. It has delivered positive impact - increasing the household income of the poor and improving the local economy in several states."

The programme includes six months training on financial management, product marketing, motivation and personal grooming. Additionally, participants also received monthly food aid worth RM80 for a year through a partnership with non-profit organisation, Yayasan MyKasih, via its cashless payment system. Yayasan PETRONAS provided other amenities including a water gravity-feed supply, homestay development, agriculture equipment and seeds in order to help these communities cultivate a sustainable income.

In Sabah, for example, villagers

who used to spend four hours on foot to fetch water are now able to translate this time to growing their crops and other productive enterprise activities, thanks to the water gravity-feed supply.

Lita explained, social progress is inclusive and we encouraged that more Malaysians will have a better quality of life through these programmes. Yayasan PETRONAS intends to scale out the programme across a few states in Malaysia targeting 600 B40 communities this year, based on the success and impact of the Planting Tomorrow programme.

Testimonials: Planting Tomorrow Programme Participants

Haslinda Abdullah, 38, started a snacks business about two years ago in Kuala Nerus, Terengganu. "As soon as I returned from one of the programme sessions, my daughter and I decided to rebrand our products from kerepek Megi to keropok Megi Linda Homemade, we applied what we learned from the programme to improve our product packaging to suit consumer preferences."

Haslinda also exercised intensive promotion on social media, installed banners and distributed business cards to the surrounding areas. As a result, demand for her products has increased. She now uses up to six kilogram of ingredients a day, up from one kilogram previously, whilst generating RM790 a month from just RM100-RM200 a month previously.

Wan Maznah Othman, 58, is proud

to have surpassed her business targets. The single mother of four children, who runs a small kuih business said, "When I started the programme, I was only targeting to earn around RM1,000 a month. Alhamdulillah, after six-months, I have achieved RM1,500!" Wan Maznah's business now includes frozen products in addition to the kuih-muih she sells at Kuala Nerus, Terengganu.

Justa Dahlan, 32, from Pitas, Sabah said, "With the help of PETRONAS, we finally had water flowing into the village through the gravity-feed system. Before, we had to walk to the river, fill up our bottles and buckets and carry them back, three times a day," Justa related.

Her sister Ritah added that Planting Tomorrow opened her eyes to the benefits of working together. Previously, we used to work on our individual land. Now, we help each other, and reap more profit. We also work faster together. They are now financially comfortable with RM1,500 - RM3,300 a month, compared with their previous earnings of RM150-RM500 as three-fold increase.

Haina Sapah, 33, a home operator in Kg Imbak, Sabah said, "Setting up the homestay was challenging initially. I had to come up with funds, to add to the provisions by PETRONAS to equip my house with the required facilities. But I enjoy doing homestay. It helps supplement our main income from the oil palm plots. As long as Imbak Canyon is here, I think our homestay will thrive." Haina has three children and is one of 22 registered operators for the homestays in Kampung Imbak, which are known as homestay "Poomponan" or "place of gathering". - Bernama