

NEWS

Growing up, Ngau Boon Keat knew intimately the meaning of the word hunger.

Everyday, the young Ngau would have to scrounge for his food along with his brother in the streets of Kuala Lumpur.

"I learned what hunger and desperation was at a very young age. "We didn't know when our next meal was going to be, and we were constantly looking out for things to eat," he said.

Ngau, now 63, had spent his childhood in Temerloh, Pahang before moving to the city with his family.

"We had to make do with eating rice with wild vegetables or edible plants that we can bring back home."

However, there's only so much a young boy can forage for on the streets — Ngau often survived on the kindness of his neighbours, who would spare him and his brother food from their own home.

Although it was not much, Ngau said they learned to appreciate what they had been given.

Ngau has come a long way from his humble beginnings, and is currently the executive chairman of Dialog Group Bhd.

The friendly and easy-going Ngau surmounted many odds and managed to graduate with honours from the University of Canterbury in New Zealand with a degree in mechanical engineering.

He was one of the founders of Petronas Group along with Hasanuddin Abdul Hamid, Datuk Khalid Ngah, Datuk Yaacob Ismail, Datuk Mohamad Idris Mansor, Tony Lim Soo Chong and Datuk Ismail Hashim.

Despite having made his mark, Ngau has not forgotten his roots and the adversities that he had faced.

Now, he is giving back to "neighbours" nationwide.

Ngau is the founder and chairman of MyKasih Foundation, a non-profitable charity organisation that provides food and aid to impoverished families.

"The idea first came about due to the economy and rising food prices. I thought it was time to start something that could help people cope with the changes," he said.

Ngau and his wife both agreed to the idea and MyKasih was born.

"We chose MyKasih because it is a combination of the MyKad, which we use in our programme, as well as the word love, which is what we feel for the community," he said.

Initially Ngau funded the project from his own company, Dialog, and started with RM1 million in funds.

"Now, we have close to RM12 million in donations, which was

MODEL
MALAYSIAN

Giving love via the MyKad

HELPING OUT A young boy who was living through hunger was given food by his neighbours. Now, he is giving it all back and more, writes Aisyah Sulaiman



Ngau Boon Keat, is the founder of a non-profitable charity organisation that provides food and aid to impoverished families.



MyKasih does not just give out aid, it also has an education scheme that provides training for families as well as give tuition to children to help them academically.

contributed by more than 30 corporate donors and individuals.

"The motto for MyKasih is Love My Neighbourhood. That is what we want to cultivate for society," he said.

MyKasih was launched in 2008 and started with only 25 families in its pilot project.

The number has now grown to 10,000 families and is still going strong, said Ngau.

"What sets MyKasih apart from other charity organisations is the way the food is distributed to the families.

"We use MyKad like an ordinary bank debit card. There is no cash involved," said Ngau.

The family picks out the groceries that they want from designated participating outlets, which includes Giant hypermarket all the way to their local sundry shop, he said.

"The items are selected items that have been listed, and with a swipe of the MyKad, the transaction is complete.

"We give them the freedom, the right to choose according to their needs instead of handing it to them directly," he said.

According to Ngau, the card contains RM40 credit, which will be replenished every two weeks up to a year.

"Each family would get RM80 or more monthly, depending on the donors' wishes," he said.

The donors are made up of individuals and corporations who select the particular community or families which they would like to support.

They are then able to track their donations through the MyKasih portal.

Ngau said the donors also have a right to choose to extend the programme after the one-year period is over.

"Every transaction made is tracked through the system which enables us to analyse the consumption patterns and continue to improve on our programme.

"We have roped in partners from universities and colleges to help with the research and provide us with volunteers," he said.

Ngau said MyKasih does not just give out aid, it also has an education scheme that provides training for the families as well as giving tuition to the children to help them academically.

"We give out training on financial literacy and skills training for women to equip them with knowledge on how to manage their finances and help them to acquire entrepreneurial skills.

"They are also given medical assistance by doctors enlisted with the help of non-governmental organisations," he said.

Ngau said he hoped that more Malaysians will understand the true value of loving their neighbours and take responsibility to help one another.

Do you know of ordinary Malaysians who go out of their way to help make our world a better place? Let us know at nsunt@nst.com.my