



**MyKasih**™

## An algorithm of compassion

MyKasih Foundation has transformed Malaysian families and communities using home-grown technology. On its 10th anniversary, there is cause for celebration and so much more to do.

# The sweeping change we need

**A** LITTLE intervention is all it takes. The children on MyKasih Foundation's Love My School bursary are living proof that a little help goes a long way towards making life-changing transformations to their lives and to their future.

Nearly 10,000 Malaysian children in 104 schools nationwide are currently receiving education bursaries through MyKasih with support from donors and partners who believe that the best social change is engineered through education, which is by far the best ticket out of poverty. In 2019, the RM12 million bursary rollout went to 9,200 primary school students and 800 secondary school students.

Schools on the programme are reporting increased attendance — up from 60% to 90% in some cases — which alone is viewed as a game changer. The assurance of a school canteen meal (especially when there is no food at home) is nourishment for the body and the soul. The dignity that comes with new uniforms and shoes (not shabby hand-me-downs), and one's own sports gear, books and stationery (not pencil stubs) can only be measured in behaviour. Teachers are saying that there is improved personal grooming, overall conduct, discipline and self-esteem, and a general happiness about attending school. Participation in extra-curricular activities has gone up; children who are now playing a sport demonstrate the biggest overall change. The SK Bukit Lanjan (Asli) Damansara Perdana reported "sport" as its bursary success story of 2019 because children moved from zero to representing their school at state-level competitions.

MyKasih's Love My School programme runs parallel to its flagship Love My Neighbourhood initiative. By 2012, the food aid programme was well underway and some 92,000 families had already received the help they needed. It put food on the table, alleviating hunger for many families and, certainly, it gave parents a 12-month break to find long-lasting sources of income. But social work-



Get that ball! The Lanjan Tigers go airborne at the first-ever All Asli Rugby Championship in September 2019



At SK Sungai Rual, Jeli, a teacher introduces the internet to a Jahai primary school pupil



Semaq Beri boys enjoying the first MyKasih meal at SK Kuala Tahan, Taman Negara



"We witnessed the transformation of the lives of the region's Orang Asli community and enabled them to be an integral part of ECECER's socioeconomic development programme."  
Datuk Seri Jebasingam Isace John,  
former CEO of the ECEDEC

18 ECECER schools in 2018, MyKasih spent RM500,000 on a 21st century refurbishment of these schools — brand new computer labs, robotics equipment and internet access — to bring these children up to speed with their peers.

In the same geographical region, three more Orang Asli schools and 13 other schools are fully on MyKasih's bursary programme with other partners. (There are 98 Orang Asli schools in the peninsula, 43 of them in these three states.)

The Sarawak government has since 2018 brought the bursary programme to 16 rural schools and holds a dedicated golf fundraiser — the Sarawak Charity Golf in aid of the Sarawak Rural Kids Education Fund — to sustain it.

In 2020, the school bursary budget is expected to rise to RM15 million as more schools come on board. New growth areas include the northern part of the peninsula where the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCRER) is already working to transform communities.

In a separate effort, children from families who were at some point on the MyKasih food aid programme are helped to find scholarships to further their education through collaboration with universities and other educational institutions. ■



Pupils at SK Sungai Bumbun, Pulau Carey, now approach exams with confidence

ers were reporting another kind of poverty — the failure to go to school.

There are many reasons why Malaysian children drop out of school or have very poor attendance but almost all of them are rooted in poverty. Their families simply do not have enough money for all the school necessities — uniforms, shoes, books, stationery, sports gear, food and transport. For some families, the distance to school is daunting and the idea of their small children in a hostel, frightening.

As in many other countries, most children in poverty will be poor all their lives but give them an education and they are likely to make a socioeconomic difference to themselves and their societies. This was MyKasih founder and chairman Tan Sri Dr Ngau Boon Keat's own experience. Staying in school and getting an education was his exit from poverty and entry into a profession, building a

business and creating wealth.

Donors are keen on the school bursary programme and on-the-ground partners have made a success of it. Government agencies have been especially proactive in seizing the opportunity presented by the technology on smartcards for schoolchildren.

For the East Coast Economic Region Development Council (ECECER), the partnership has resulted in the entire enrolment of 18 Orang Asli primary schools in Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang being put on the bursary programme, making school a viable proposition for families and children.

ECECER, together with local universities, engineers supplementary training, tuition and bootcamp-style learning during and after school hours in Maths, Science, English and Bahasa Malaysia. In addition to the RM2.5 million spent on bursaries for all 3,500 Orang Asli pupils in the



**"MyKasih advocates education for children and youth from economically challenged backgrounds. We shall continue with our engagement initiatives at various educational levels and hope that these efforts will give the younger generation a brighter future."  
Siti Khairon, MyKasih trustee**

## FROM THE STUDENTS...

***"I see improvements for myself and my seven friends from my Temiar Orang Asli community. We have so much more self-confidence since joining and we are so happy to be studying here."***

*Jefdie anak Jamal, a first-year student at Guwas Kopasion College (GKC), a community learning centre in Penampang, Sabah, which provides education for marginalised out-of-school youths towards entrepreneurship development.*

***"Teaching is my passion. I love working with young people and want them to be better prepared for the world. MyKasih led me here and I want to give back."***

*Seremban-born Ben Guan Teck Loong, BM and Moral Studies teacher at Chung Hua High School, Negeri Sembilan; a Yayasan Cemerlang scholar, graduated with Bachelor of Arts (Leadership, Hons) degree from Unirazak*

***"I've exceeded my own expectations. All I wanted in life was to help my single mum and my sickly brother. Now it's different."***

*Nur Hidayah Muhammad, documentation executive, Bank Rakyat, Perak; the Yayasan Cemerlang scholar from Kuala Kurau, Perak, has a Bachelor of Business Administration (Islamic Banking & Finance, Hons) degree from Unirazak.*

***"Thank you, MyKasih for pushing me on this journey. It was tough but so worthwhile. I want to use my degree to help others."***

*Yvonne Ong Yee Mun, audit semi-senior, YY & Co; hailing from Sabak Bernam, Selangor, the Yayasan Cemerlang scholar has a Bachelor of Accounting (Hons, CPA) degree from Unirazak*