

Project IGNITE – Project for Happiness 2016

Written by Adeline Teh

Introduction

Project IGNITE was initiated by AIESEC in UKM with a mission to enhance the socioeconomics and uplift the living standard of particularly the few remaining underserved communities, Orang Asli (Aboriginal People) in Kampung Kachau Luar, Semenyih. Efforts to enhance their socioeconomics by promoting their eco-tourism (jungle trekking) and selling of their handicraft products had been introduced. Project IGNITE also strive to reduce the education gap between the urban and orang asli children in Malaysia.

Throughout the project, Project IGNITE had received funding in term of monetary support from corporation and foundation. Support in term of professional training and corporate visit are received from small and medium enterprises.

Within this 6 weeks (8th July – 22th August 2016), our project were categorized into 3 main volunteering programs : community development project at indigenous community village, education project for local indigenous children, as well as conducting workshops in secondary schools.

A total of 11 international volunteers were brought in to Malaysia under AIESEC's Global Volunteer Program to brainstorm for solutions to enhance the socioeconomics of the indigenous community. 5 local AIESEC members were involved in the program as well to assist the international volunteers to execute the projects. In total, we volunteered for 16 hours per week for three weeks consecutively in the village.

By collaborating with Fakulti Ekonomi dan Pengurusan(FEP) and Cesmed UKM, entrepreneurship training were given to 5 indigenous families by our international facilitators who had been trained in the efforts to give knowledge towards improving the skills of the Orang Asli community in enhancing their socio-economics. The training aims to give the Orang Asli villagers exposure regarding business opportunities that can be pursued by them. Through this training, we have managed to foster collaboration between FEP and Kampung Kachau Luar whereby one of FEP lecturer, Dr Doris agreed to extend her assistance to the villagers in near future.

Throughout our stay in the village, our international volunteers also identified the main social problem of the village which is the lack of hygiene awareness among the Orang Asli villagers. A discussion space is opened to spread awareness to the villagers in order to facilitate a change in their behavior towards a higher level of environmental and personal hygiene.

Project IGNITE also introduced new business opportunity that can be pursued by the Orang Asli villagers, which is promotion of eco-tourism(jungle trekking) and their handicraft products. All means of promotion via online platform(Facebook, video promotion) and physical promotion(banner, flyers and posters) to students were carried out by our volunteers to introduce jungle trekking program to the public. We started small by setting up booths in different faculties to promote the jungle trekking program and handicraft product to university students. A total of RM 1,000 were generated from our first initiative and selling of handicraft products. A total of 40 students from UKM joined our first jungle trekking program. We plan to continue collaborate with the orang asli community to help them to promote their jungle trekking program for the upcoming term.

Additionally, Project IGNITE team also helps to improve the condition of their 'dewan sebarang' and painted the hall. Dewan sebarang is the place where most activities will be carried out. It's the place where children will gather around . Some condition like the carpet used is already old and torn. In term of hygiene, it's unsafe to the children as it might contain bacteria and dirt. We help them to get new carpet so that a safe, fun and comfortable condition is prepared for the children. We also paint the dewan sebarang to brighten up the hall for visitors in near future. We plan to paint more villagers' houses in near future.

Throughout the project, we allocate 3pm- 5pm everytime we visit the village for education project for the indigenous children. The volunteers as the mentor conduct simple English modules to teach the children simple English conversation

through songs and fun activities. Stationeries were also distributed to the children to encourage the children to go to the nearby school. We hope to have a collaboration with Dyslexia Sarawak in designing the module and ensure the sustainability of this education project in near future.

Project IGNITE team also went to 3 high schools to conduct workshop to educate them about social enterprise as well as encourage them to think of solution for the orang asli villagers in Kampung Kachau Luar.

Challenges

One of the biggest challenge we faced is language barrier. As most of our volunteers are international students, English medium was used to conduct the training and education session. This is a big challenge for us, considering the known English words among the villagers are null and that's one of the challenge for the international students to deliver the contents. At least one local volunteer are needed every time to translate the contents to the villagers. The efficiency in delivering the session might not work out well. Therefore, we plan to include more local volunteers and the children that are fluent in both English and Malay languages to join us.

Besides, our team also face problem of the villagers' perception and mindset that don't wish to accept changes. It's hard for them to absorb and accept the fact that a behavior changes are needed in their community. The biggest challenge we have is to change their mindset towards development. They still prefer to live within their own community and in the primitive environment.

The third challenges we faced is it's hard for us to re-fuel the desire to attend school among the older children. There is a high number of absenteeism among the indigenous children as their parent's constant apathy towards education has hindered the children from continue schooling. From our education awareness program, we hope to rekindle their desire to attend school and create a second chance for those who dropped out from school to continue where they left.

Sustainability of the project

In term of sustainability, AIESEC in UKM plan to continue the project for more terms to come. We hope to popularize their jungle trekking program and attract more students to visit the village in coming 2 years. Additionally, Project IGNITE IS also expected to grow into long term social entrepreneurship project with a partnership secured between FEP UKM with the chief of the village where FEP will support the village to enhance their socioeconomics.

In the long term, we are expecting to see the program to inspire the indigenous children, the parents, the village community and the volunteers themselves about the necessity of education. We wish to see improvement in language proficiency with the students where they could master simple English communication. We also aim to collaborate with Dyslexia Sarawak in designing English modules which are suitable for the children as well as increase the frequency of the education program to twice a month instead of once a month. In 2017, Project IGNTTE wish to see more and more indigenous families to be impacted from the project.

Contribution to Happiness

Through Project IGNITE, the volunteers are encouraged to give back to the society. Youth can grow from an understanding of how they fit into society to how they can help to solve societal problems. This developmental process grows empathy and fosters youths' identities as world citizen, which is one of AIESEC value we wish to cultivate. To the orang asli community, we aim to challenge their mindset and encourage them to be aware of the need to change to achieve improvement and greater things in their life, be it uplift their living standards as well as for the children to receive better education.

Project IGNITE had really proved us that age is not a limit for us to give back to the society. We had gained a lot as well from the planning and feel contented for being able to give back to the society. Though tiring, the learning process and return are worthy from the smile we got back from the beneficiaries.

Personal testimony

Over the last 3 weeks, we did try our best to come out with new ideas to help the villagers. Some may critic it's too short to make an impact. But I genuinely believe that impact shouldn't be measured in terms of time. Some could make a real impact in 1 day. And some could make no contribution in a whole week. No matter what, I do believe even if we couldn't make a far-reaching impact on them, at least we made the path smoother for them or for the next group of people that help them.

-Tak Hei, Hong Kong

As the project director for the project, this project taught me nothing is impossible if we never gave up and continue to strive for it. My team and I broke through a lot of difficulties and challenges to work out this project. After my journey in the project, it really opened my mind to a community I never would know before. I learnt to be more appreciative and cherish what I have in life.

To make a change in a short period is not possible, however we didn't make the first step, nothing would ever be changed.

-Adeline

Photos



Education session delivered by our international facilitator with the help of local volunteer on the new mat.



We also brought the Orang Asli children to a nearby cyber hub to teach them basic English using electronic media.



Take a rest before we continue our jungle trekking program.



The international volunteers helped to paint the dewan sebaranguna to give it another new look.

You can watch our Jungle trekking promotional video on :

<https://vimeo.com/175254064?ref=fb-share&1>

Or follow our previous journey on :

Facebook : @ignite.ukm

Instagram : kachau_luar