

Be the SPARK

Posted on 6 February 2018 - 10:31am

Last updated on 6 February 2018 - 10:42am

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With a renewed vision to bring greater change in the areas of environmental conservation and education, Heineken Malaysia introduced the new identity of its CSR arm – SPARK Foundation.

Formerly known as GAB Foundation, the rebranding is aimed at inspiring the younger generation to join the foundation's efforts in protecting the nation's water resources and educating the public for future benefit.

SPARK FOR CHANGE

SPARK Foundation chairman Tan Sri Saw Choo Boon highlighted the new focus of the foundation: developing strategic partnerships.

"We believe in the power of collaboration as effective change does not happen by itself. For us to make the changes, we will be working with the communities, especially the younger generation, through strategic partnerships for greater change."

In the last 10 years, the foundation spearheaded the EETP (English Enrichment Training Programme), which offers training to educators in seven states. It has seen improvement of between 40% and 50% of students in the areas of reading, listening and writing.

Another of its programmes, the W.A.T.E.R Project (Working Actively Through Education & Rehabilitation), helped improve water quality of the Sungai Way river, from Class IV /V to Class III. It also established River Care communities along five rivers in the country.

SPARK Foundation trustee and Heineken Malaysia corporate affairs and legal director Renuka Indrarajah said, "With our limited funding, we needed to do things differently. Hence, we worked to get the communities to take ownership of the rivers at the backyard. The hardest thing was to keep the river clean rather than cleaning it."

THE WAY FORWARD

Building on its past efforts, Saw said the foundation will continue its endeavour to improve river

quality.

"Rivers are our source of life and currently in Malaysia, more than 90% of our water supply comes from rivers; yet only 58% of them remain clean."

He shared the foundation's four core strategies and its way forward for the W.A.T.E.R project:

- ▶ Promote the use of water conservation technologies to reduce stress on our rivers, this includes water thimble technology and rainwater harvesting.
- ▶ Enhance improvement of waste water management on project sites through wetland planting.
- ▶ Partner with relevant government agencies for the River of Life Public Outreach Programme.
- ▶ Empower stakeholders on project sites, especially millennials, by equipping them with the power of knowledge.

FIRE UP AND REVOLUTIONISE

SPARK Foundation will partner with Global Environment Centre in seeing to the four tasks, beginning with Sungai Penchala.

"We will also be expanding our project to East Malaysia and will conduct rapid assessment for Sungai Selangor as our way forward plan," Saw added.

Having committed more than RM16 million over the last 10 years, Heineken Malaysia has awarded an additional RM1.5 million towards the programmes this year.

"We will be fostering strategic partnerships with universities and colleges as we believe the youth hold the power to spark significant change. Hopefully together, we can make SPARK Foundation's vision a reality," added Saw.

In line with the foundation's shift to inspiring the young, SPARK Foundation has teamed up with three "Spark agents of change" – radio host and content creator Ryan Matjeraie; indigenous artiste, musician and cultural activist, Alena Murang; and emcee Zher Peen – to inspire the youth to #betheSPARKnow.

Members of the public can sign up as volunteers or become a partner via the SPARK Foundation's website www.sparkfoundation.com.my.^[3]