

FEMALE Team Leaves Green Footprints At Raja Musa Forest Reserve | #FEMALECHALLENGE

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This year for Earth Day and in conjunction with our #FemaleGoesGreen Challenge of the month, we wanted to give back to Mother Nature by planting trees. Thanks to our friends at Global Environment Centre, last month we were able to do so. Every month GEC organises a tree planting programme at North Selangor Peat Swamp Forest and we thought what better way to leave our mark than by contributing to Malaysia's greenery.



The aim of the volunteering activity is to promote the importance of Peat Swamp Forests. It's a crucial step to take as not only are we helping to conserve the variety of species in the area but we're also lending our hands to restore the forest to its former glory.

And so there we were 7 AM on a Saturday, excited and hopeful about our little trip to the Raja Musa Forest Reserve which was an hour's drive from our office. Upon arriving, we had to go for a 1.5 KM walk from the entrance to the main site which gave us a little warm up before we started the day.



We were then briefed by forest rangers about the current condition of the forest which has been improving since its biggest fire incident in 2014. The North Selangor Peat Swamp Forest has had its fair share of forest fires due to prolonged dry spells, open burning of agricultural waste, poor drainage, and deforestation just to name a few.

Luckily with everyone's effort from the Selangor State Forestry Dept, GEC, corporate funder HSBC Bank Malaysia Berhad, and the countless volunteers over the years, 90 percent of the forest is now under control in case forest fires occur (hopefully never).

Before we proceeded with the main activity, we were told there would be four steps to the planting process which required strings, a shovel, sticks, and the saplings.



We were given 20 saplings of *Tenggek Burung* or its scientific name *Melicope lunu-ankenda*. The saplings are from the local grounds at the Forest Reserve and because of that, they have a much higher life expectancy to thrive in the area.

Due to the on and off downpour in March, the planting ground was pretty much swampy. We didn't think much of it until we reached our designated planting lane. When they say it was swampy, they weren't kidding!



In the scorching hot weather, we put on our brave faces and went right in, being careful as to not take the wrong step in muddy water. Unfortunately, it went the other way round cos we got stuck in the mud, sunk thigh deep and also lost a boot in the process (R.I.P boot). The whole ordeal was hilarious!



All geared up with our shovel and strings, the swampy ground made it difficult for us to dig the potting hole as you can imagine the soil is very wet and there was a lot of water covering the surface. That being said we managed to put some work into it and saw 20 beautiful baby trees in their new home.



The two-hour session, not only gave us a sense of satisfaction, but it also made us realise just how precious trees are and how much effort is needed to plant them. Trees take years to grow and are vital to our ecosystem; they're our very own natural air purifiers, life-giving and also home to the surrounding wildlife. To think wrongdoers start open burning and cut them down in minutes for development and modern infrastructure is truly senseless and heartbreaking.

We should all be proactive and take serious steps to save our trees. No matter how big or small the initiative, it's never too late for us to join hands in preserving mother nature. We will reap what we sow.