



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Top 100 youths converge in Bangkok as change-makers in ASEAN region

- *The regional workshop of eMpowering Youths Across ASEAN empowers 100 ASEAN youths to successfully implement their community projects in Cambodia, Indonesia and Malaysia*

THAILAND, 22 January 2019 - The Maybank Foundation and ASEAN Foundation today launched the regional capacity building and orientation workshop of the eMpowering Youths Across ASEAN in Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, targeted at 100 chosen young changemakers from the region who have gone through a rigorous selection process.

The regional workshop was opened with a launch ceremony that saw Prof. Suthiphand Chirathivat, the Executive Director of ASEAN Studies Centre of Chulalongkorn University and Lee Yoong Yoong, the Director of Community Affairs of the ASEAN Secretariat delivering their remarks, followed by a keynote speech from H.E. Vijavat Isarabhakdi, the Advisor to the Foreign Minister of Thailand. Nora Abdul Manaf, Maybank's Group Chief Human Capital Officer also presented her welcome remarks, emphasising the importance of the programme.

"We believe that the youth of today are the future of tomorrow. Hence, our focus is on sustainable programmes that provide long term community and economic benefits which will contribute to the progress of communities where we operate, especially ASEAN. It is indeed challenging - however our intention is to provide everyone with a fair chance to thrive in their respective fields in hopes of them giving back to society," said Nora.

The regional workshop serves as an important milestone for the eMpowering Youths Across ASEAN due to its role in equipping all participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully implement their projects in selected community areas in Cambodia, Indonesia and Malaysia for two weeks. In the course of the 5-day workshop, the participants, now divided into 10 groups according to country placement and selection of themes, will be trained to develop project plans covering a broad range of developmental issues that will help them to implement their community projects.

Also attending were representatives of 10 civil society organisations (CSOs) from Cambodia, Indonesia and Malaysia, who will work closely with the participants throughout the 2-week project implementation. The role of the CSOs will be crucial not only in providing insights on social, economic and political situations in project areas to the participants but also in ensuring that the work of participants can be sustained by handing over the management of the projects to the CSOs.

During the session on introduction to the ASEAN Foundation, Elaine Tan, the Executive Director of ASEAN Foundation emphasised how the workshop is very much aligned with the spirit of Thailand's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2019. "This regional workshop serves as a strategic platform to welcome Thailand's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2019.

The way this workshop embraces many ASEAN stakeholders, such as ASEAN Secretariat, young changemakers, CSOs and government representatives, to ensure continuous impact is in perfect harmony with the tagline of Thailand's Chairmanship, which is 'Advancing Partnership for Sustainability'," said Elaine.

The eMpowering Youths Across ASEAN is a partnership programme between Maybank Foundation and ASEAN Foundation that consists of mentoring, regional leadership training, and overseas local community projects. The community projects will be incubated to be scaled up in the coming years as social enterprises across the region to become the foremost initiative in Southeast Asia for catalysing youth participation and impact on their communities. The programme is initiated with the realisation that the future of ASEAN is in the hands of youths, and their energy and creativity can be channeled into challenging and meaningful activities to strengthen community bonds, encourage volunteerism and philanthropy, and generate innovative solutions to socio-economic challenges.

This programme is a continuation from the Singapore-led pilot programme of Maybank Foundation and Maybank Singapore in 2016, which involved over 200 students from top universities in Singapore. The programme has now been scaled up to the regional level to reach out to more youth in the ASEAN region to make a bigger impact on its communities. Among others, this initiative will play a significant role in helping to achieve the objectives as laid out in the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025 as well as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

One of the 100 changemakers, Joshua Dale Santos from Thailand, testified that he sees the programme as a perfect avenue to engage with future leaders of ASEAN. "As the programme involves youths from various backgrounds, I believe it will help facilitate more cross-cultural dialogues which is useful in facilitating better understanding of each other's differences and enhancing appreciation to ASEAN's diversity," Joshua said.

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