

An Enriching Educational Experience Through Collaborative Community Project
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From June 10 to 14, 2024, undergraduates from the English for Global Communication (EGC) programme at the Faculty of Education, Language and Communication (FELC), UNIMAS, collaborated with students from Garden International School (GIS) Kuala Lumpur on a five-day community project at Sekolah Kebangsaan Sitang Petag in the Padawan district, Kuching, Sarawak. The project aimed to enhance the educational experience of the young school students and improve their learning environment. Additionally, it sought to enrich the learning experiences of both EGC undergraduates and GIS students by involving them in community-building projects.

The planning for the project began with establishing contact with Ms. Banessa Mikeng, a teacher at SK Sitang Petag. This was followed by a site visit on 29 April 2024, during which discussions were held with the headmaster and teachers. The project plan was developed based on the needs identified during this visit.



Site visit to SK Sitang Petag

Fourteen undergraduate volunteers from the EGC programme participated in this project, coordinated by project leader Prof. Dr. Souba Rethinasamy and assisted by Mr Damien Mikeng. Additionally, 30 student volunteers from GIS, along with their dedicated teachers Ms. Emma Woods, Mr. Philip Delmotte, and Ms. Lee, also joined. The primary beneficiaries were the students of SK Sitang Petag, ranging from Year 1 to Year 6, who engaged in and benefited from various interesting educational activities designed to enhance their learning experiences

The first meeting between the EGC and GIS students took place at the airport, where both groups were briefly introduced before traveling together by UNIMAS bus to Kolej Dahlia on campus. After giving the GIS students some time to settle in, everyone walked to the FELC building. The evening

continued with dinner, followed by an ice-breaking session. After dinner, participants were briefed on the programme's itinerary. They were then divided into six groups focused on arts, physical education, and science to ensure smooth facilitation at the school

On the second day, the participants traveled again by bus from UNIMAS to SK Sitang Patag. The day's activities were divided into three sessions. During the first session, groups A, B, and C conducted activities that focused on physical education, arts, and science for students in Year 1, 2, and 3, while groups D, E, and F painted the reading corners in the classrooms for those same year levels. After a break, the second session began with groups D, E, and F conducting physical education, arts, and science activities with students from Years 4, 5, and 6, while groups A, B, and C painted the classrooms for these years. The reading corner themes for the classroom paintings were oceans, jungle, and galaxy. After lunch, all groups resumed painting before returning to Kolej Dahlia at UNIMAS.





On the third day, participants again traveled by bus from UNIMAS to SK Sitang Petag. The day's activities were divided into two sessions. In the first session, groups A, B, and C conducted physical education, arts, and science activities with students from Years 1, 2, and 3, while groups D, E, and F painted the reading corners for those year levels. After a break, the second session began with groups D, E, and F engaging students from Years 4, 5, and 6 in the same activities, while groups A, B, and C painted classrooms for Years 4, 5, and 6. Additionally, some GIS and EGC undergraduates started assembling the bookshelves for the newly painted reading corners. After completing the day's activities at the school, the EGC and GIS volunteers visited the Borneo Cultural Museum in Kuching. From there, they walked to Plaza Merdeka Mall, where everyone had some free time. The day concluded with a walk to the Kuching Waterfront to enjoy the scenery before returning to UNIMAS.







On the fourth day, participants continued their activities with the students at SK Sitang Petag. The day was divided into two sessions. In the first session, groups A, B, and C conducted physical education, arts, and science activities for students in Years 1, 2, and 3, while groups D, E, and F painted the reading corners for those same year levels. After a break, the second session began with groups D, E, and F engaging with students from Years 4, 5, and 6, while groups A, B, and C completed the painting of reading corners for the Years 4, 5, and 6 classrooms. At the same time, some GIS and UNIMAS students completed the task of assembling the bookshelves and placed them in the respective classrooms.



The day concluded with a closing ceremony, where EGC undergraduate, Nurayn Nazzyhah served as the emcee. Speeches were given by Mr. Calvin Rentap anak Clifton Akoi who is the Senior Assistant of Curriculum of the school. Alongside, students representatives from GIS which were Kimberleigh Chew and Russell Oh Zhen Bo gave a speech too. Cheryl Chung Jia Ying and Puteri

Aisyah Umayrah binti Megat Mohd Rosdeen gave a speech as the representatives from EGC volunteers. Dr. Dilah Tuah, Dean of FELC gave a heartwarming speech expressing appreciation to the school. The participants took group photos and bid farewell.



After completing the project, the volunteers were treated to a trip to the Sarawak Cultural Village, where they explored various traditional houses, including Iban, Melanau, Malay, Chinese, Bidayuh, Orang Ulu, and Penan houses. The volunteers also had the opportunity to watch performances representing Malay, Iban, and Melanau cultures and even had the chance to join the performers on stage for a dance. The day ended with a return to UNIMAS Kolej Dahlia for dinner.



On the fifth day, the participants visited the Faculty of Resource Science and Technology (FRST) at UNIMAS. The group was divided into two: one group explored the FRST museum, delving into exhibits showcasing the rich diversity of resources and technologies. Simultaneously, the second group embarked on an insightful lab visit, gaining hands-on experience in scientific research and experimentation. Later in the day, the groups switched activities, allowing each participant to experience both the museum and the lab visit. This dual exposure provided a comprehensive understanding of FRST's academic and research offerings. After these enriching experiences, the EGC students accompanied the GIS students to the airport, where heartfelt farewells marked the conclusion of their collaborative and impactful volunteer project at SK Sitang Petag. The excerpts below are expression of gratitude from the participants.



"I found it really fun because we did a variety of activities. I met new people such as UNIMAS students. They are all very friendly and helped us out with our projects. I found it an enjoyable experience overall" - Colin Ling, 15

"My overall experience was very good because the students at the school were really nice and welcoming. The UNIMAS students were very helpful translators and facilitators during our whole project." - Russell Oh, 15

"The experience was very insightful and eye-opening. It was great to learn more about the Sarawak culture and help the students and learn about their life." Kimberleigh Chew, 15

"I enjoyed getting to know the students at the school and listening about their lifestyle and passion. It was also nice to see what a local school looks like." - Sonja Srinivasan, 15

"It is a good experience because our students get to experience working at a public school, teaching them and also building the connection together. They also got to experience the cultures in Sarawak." - Ms. Lee (GIS teacher)

"I had a very positive experience. We really enjoyed working with UNIMAS students. They were amazingly helpful and very lovely. I really think we made a positive impact for the school as well." - Ms. Emma Woods (GIS teacher)

Over five days, the volunteers not only improved the learning atmosphere for children in the primary school but also built strong relations with the school students, GIS students as well as among fellow EGC course mates. Reflecting on the community project at SK Sitang Petag, it stands as a testament to the power of communication, collaboration, and community engagement. The activities, ranging from painting to conducting educational workshops and games, highlight the value of contributing to the community while providing hands-on learning experiences beyond the classroom, which serves as a platform for a well-rounded approach to education and personal growth.