

AKTIVITI ACS

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April 2013

Minimum Wage Order

The National Minimum Wage Order came into effect on 1st January 2013. This is a good measure to ensure that all citizens of Malaysia enjoy decent income and quality of life despite rising costs of living.

Unfortunately, the government failed to take into consideration the impact and adverse effect on people with disabilities (PWDs), especially those who are intellectually challenged. This population has perpetually been marginalised in receiving equal opportunities in the areas of education, training and employment.

Many PWDs are handicapped further by the lack of accessible transportation, non-conductive work environments and supports. Moreover, many others who have diverse needs or health conditions are not able to cope with competitive jobs in the open market.

The government provides work incentive allowance to encourage PWDs to enter the workforce and at the same time gives incentives to employers who employ this population. But these measures are obviously not enough.

We fear that the recently enforced minimum wage order may force some employers to lay off workers with disabilities. Should this happen, it will be indeed very demoralising for PWDs and their families.

Together with 14 nationwide NGOs, we handed in a memorandum to the Minister of Human Resources for his kind attention and action at the end of January 2013.

Creating Employment Taskforce

It is undisputable that workers with disabilities who are able to cope in the labour market should be out there in open employment, enjoying the minimum wage and above.

Unfortunately, while there is no data to back this up, it would not be wrong to state that a large majority of people with disabilities (PWDs) of employable age, are not gainfully employed.

As such, sheltered workshops have been set up by NGOs to provide work opportunities, especially for those with intellectual disabilities. Today, NGOs nationwide have created a substantial workforce in the community, enabling PWDs to be an asset rather than a liability to society. Despite funding constraints and limited resources, many NGOs are doing their best to comply with the minimum wage order for staff members employed to work with the PWDs.

However, at this point of time, it is just not realistic to expect these NGOs to comply with the minimum wage requirement of RM900 to pay PWDs working in sheltered workshops.

Therefore it is our hope that the government will:

1. Consider an increase in the work incentive allowance so that PWDs can also cope with the rising costs of living.
2. Enforce the 1% employment policy of PWDs for both the public and private sectors so that PWDs can be securely employed.
3. Allow an exemption from this minimum wage order for all NGOs that employ PWDs in their organisations or sheltered workshops.

Besides stimulating the market economy, keeping PWDs in the workforce enables them to enjoy a meaningful role and lead a dignified life in society. This is not just a social responsibility but a social obligation of the nation.

We must remove society's hurdles
if we expect them to compete



Leisure Activities

Art Studio

We started a small art studio at the premise of Pemancar House under the guidance of artist Ms HooiKeng.

For three months, eight budding special artists came together to express their feelings, personality and interests on paper / canvas using various art medium.



Special artists at work

We hope to display their work at the upcoming Georgetown Festival 2013 in June. So, watch out!

Outward Bound, Lumut

Sixteen of the members from the Stepping Stone Centre joined hundreds of other people to participate in the 4-day Outward Bound Camp in Lumut, organised by Bethany Home last November.

They had a thrilling time jungle trekking at night, kayaking, boating, rock climbing and making new friends. What a sense of achievement to have “survived and conquered” all the activities!

Unfortunately, none of them lost any weight despite the strenuous workouts, as they were all very well-fed!



FS Graduation

Last November, we held a graduation hi-tea party at the Penang Golf Resort, Kepala Batas for 14 of our First Step children (from Seberang Jaya and Gelugor centres) who have since moved to kindergartens or other centres.

With the availability of more preschool services in town, we are now graduating the children younger. Children will now leave First Step Centre at the age of five years instead of six years. And this year-end, we will be graduating a few of them at four years old.

This is a good sign that parents nowadays have options of inclusive preschools services. Eventually, our First Step programme will focus on truly early intervention for newborn babies up to 4-year-old preschoolers.

Water Awareness

During the last December school holidays, with the help from a volunteer from IWA Penang, Ms Leanne Upton, we started the Water Awareness sessions for our FS Gelugor's babies and toddlers. Thanks to the loan of pool usage from the Penang Spastic Centre, we hope to make this into a monthly Saturday programme.

And then during the March 2013 holidays, the FS Seberang Jaya Centre got their share of hydrotherapy and water fun under the guidance of physical therapist Ms Yuna Tamura. Thanks to 3PK and JICA-JOCV for sharing their expertise and to the Taman Alma Special School for the loan of their pool. Despite the hot sun, everybody enjoyed the sessions.



New Products

The Stepping Stone Work Centre is proud to announce two new products, namely

- a) Artisans bread
 - wholemeal apricot & cranberry loaf, cinnamon bun, wholemeal raisin loaf and mixed fruit buns can be ordered from our bakery. Please call 04-8665349.
- b) Eco-Liquid Soap
 - this handmade eco-friendly liquid cleaner is manufactured under close supervision by Indochine Natural.



Additionally, as we have been getting numerous requests from public wanting to learn some of our cottage industries, we have decided to come up with a series of Skills Workshop Packages.

These packages will enable people to sign up for 'Special Hands' classes on soap and paper making, weaving, batik painting and batik printing, pottery etc...

Please log into our website to get more details.

Motherhood



We had shared with you that in November 2011, one of our members at the ACS Stepping Stone Centre got married and moved to a northern state of Perlis to start her new life.

We are happy to share the wonderful news that Diana is now a mother of a beautiful and healthy baby girl, born in March this year.



Syabas! What a fulfilling life indeed!!

Adorable Nurliyana at 2-weeks old.

Visitors

We continue to host busloads of visitors, ranging from kindergarten children to engineers from the Asia Pacific region.

These events give us an opportunity to create awareness and educate the public on the capabilities of persons with special needs. It is also one small way to prevent the widening of a gap between the world of the abled and the disabled, ~~but~~ and a huge step towards inclusion.



2 of the 70 engineers from GE Oil & Gas Asia Pacific hard at work

We are proud that the members at the Stepping Stone Centre are playing such a vital role in public education.

Volunteers' Appreciation

In our busyness, we failed to thank all our faithful volunteers for playing such a vital part to keep our work going. As such, we put aside an evening together for a simple makan treat at the end of February this year. The garden party, held at the compound of our First Step Centre saw a turnout of over 100 people.

We also bid farewell to two faithful Japanese volunteers, Ms Akemi Utsumi and Ms Kinuyo Tanaka, both of whom we have known since the birth of ACS in 1997.

Recruitment of Manpower



Please contact us if you can spare sometime on a regular basis to help out with product making, toy library sessions, respite care sessions, swimming, working with preschoolers, working with young adults etc..

We also welcome artists who would like to 'hangout' in our art studio, job coaches who can help with open employment of people with disabilities, seamstresses who can sew products, energetic youths to start social club activities and even volunteers who can help us with promotion and delivery of our bakery items!

Terima Kasih

The sponsorship from Dow last year enabled us to expand our workspace at the Stepping Stone Centre. We now have a dedicated room for soap making as well as a huge open space as our pottery studio.

Hard Rock Hotel Penang organised the Rock to Rock Run 2012 in October and raised RM40,000 for us to renovate our wet kitchen area.



Dato Gillian receiving mock cheque from
HRH GM Mr John Primmer

Annual donations received faithfully from Kuok Foundation, Tun Sardon Foundation, Penang Tuft Club, Sakurakai, Dari Penang Group, ACE Japan and of course many individuals gave us the confidence to do some salary adjustments for our staff team. This is one way to show our appreciation for our staff members who have also been faithfully serving the community.

Thank you all for your support and partnership!

Warm Regards,

Khor Ai-Na
CEO

Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

RESPONSE SLIP

- o I would like to be a volunteer.
- o I would like to make a general donation of RM _____ towards the activities and running expenses of ACS.
- o I would like to donate via credit card auto billing transaction. Please send me details.

Postal Order/Cheque No: _____ Date: _____

(Please make all cheques payable to Asia Community Service or direct bank transfer to Maybank Account No 507040213362; CIMB Account No 07390000784053 or log into www.cimbclicks.com.my. All cash donations are tax-exempted).

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel No: _____ (H) _____ (O)



A Non-Profit Organisation Providing Services to People with Special Needs, in particular
reference to those with Disabilities

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