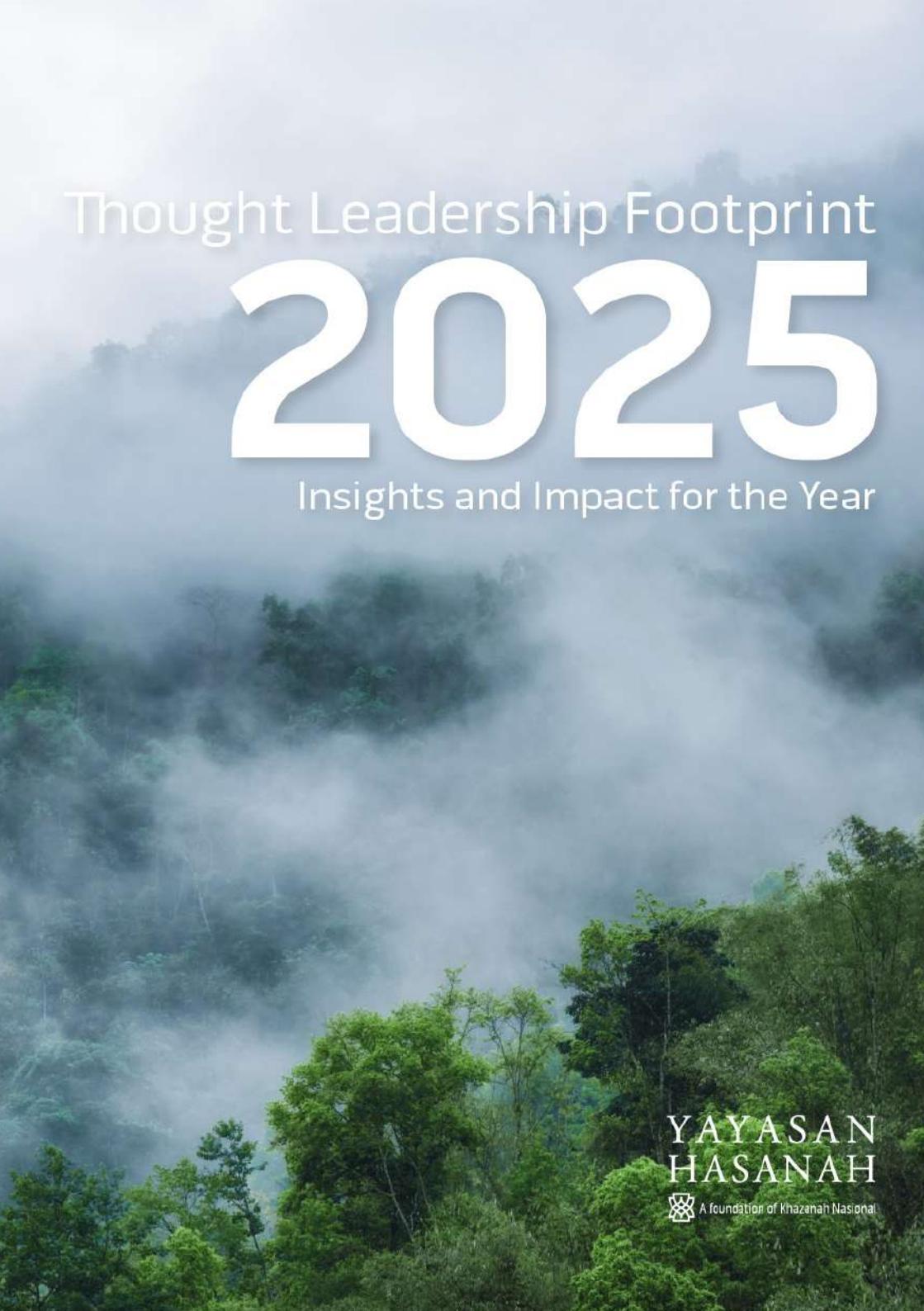


Thought Leadership Footprint

# 2025

Insights and Impact for the Year

A photograph of a dense forest on a hillside, with thick mist or fog rising from the base of the trees, creating a sense of depth and mystery.

YAYASAN  
HASANAH



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#### Content credit

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Cover photo from Yayasan Hasanah.

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## Driving Impact: From the Managing Director's Desk



Yayasan Hasanah's work this year reflects our ongoing commitment to strengthening Malaysia's social impact ecosystem through trust-based philanthropy, meaningful partnerships, and a renewed focus on listening to the communities we serve. Across all thematic areas, we saw how grounded, context-sensitive approaches can unlock more responsive and sustainable solutions – especially when anchored by collaboration and shared purpose.

As social and economic challenges evolve, the need for catalytic action becomes ever more urgent. This year, our thought leadership initiatives have directly reached 2,981 individuals, with more who have been indirectly touched through our knowledge-building work. This reflects our continued investments into building capacities, enabling data-driven decision-making, and creating spaces for dialogue that bring together diverse actors from government, civil society, philanthropy, and the private sector. These collective efforts have deepened our ability to co-create interventions that are equitable, and community-led for the future.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to advancing systems change by empowering local actors, strengthening organisational resilience, and embracing innovation where it matters most. Our work continues to be guided by the belief that impactful philanthropy must listen with intention, collaborate with humility, and act with courage – ensuring that progress is both meaningful and enduring.

**Siti Kamariah Ahmad Subki**  
**Trustee and Managing Director**  
**Yayasan Hasanah**

## Executive Summary

Yayasan Hasanah's Knowledge Pillar aims to advance Malaysia's social sector through justice-driven thought leadership and evidence-based research and interventions. The knowledge we gain comes directly from the work our partners carry out on the ground, providing the evidence we need to support, advocate for, and influence policy and structural change - in line with our goal of being an impact-based foundation committed to long-term social change in Malaysia.

This Thought Leadership Footprint 2025 highlights key learnings from knowledge-sharing and thought leadership initiatives with the Knowledge Pillar this year, as we worked closely with Hasanah's Impact Areas – Community Development, Education, Environment, and Arts and Public Spaces – to unleash the transformational impact of knowledge. By generating and sharing the organisation's collective insights, we strengthen institutions, systems, and individual capacities, while also supporting the efforts of our grant partners.



In the pages that follow, we take you behind-the-scenes for a closer look at our key initiatives: [The Hasanah Forum](#), the organisation's biannual thought leadership philanthropy conference; [The Hasanah Academy](#), our capacity building digital learning portal; [ILMU Hasanah](#) and [Brown Bags](#), flagship knowledge-sharing sessions; and [Learning Visits](#), thematic project trips that deepen shared understanding.

## The Hasanah Forum



The Hasanah Forum is Yayasan Hasanah's flagship biannual social impact conference, bringing together leaders and practitioners from across the social impact ecosystem - policymakers, investors, social enterprises, civil society organisations, corporations, and academia. The forum fosters action-oriented conversations and cultivates thought leadership, driving tangible socio-economic impact while putting Asian voices at the forefront of global philanthropy.

THF25 builds on previous editions: THF2021 themed "*From Charity to Justice: Vision for an Equal and Just Malaysia*", and THF2023 themed "*Fostering Justice-Based Philanthropy: Shifting the Narrative to Action*", held in conjunction with the AVPN Global Conference 2023.

The Hasanah Forum 2025 took place in Kuala Lumpur on 14 & 15 August 2025, continuing the legacy of Malaysia's largest social impact conference. Themed "*Philanthropy that Listens: Bridging Intent with Intervention*", THF25 highlighted the urgent need for a more responsive, community-driven approach to giving. The forum challenged philanthropy actors to be bold - expanding freedoms and capabilities, adopting adaptive interventions, and placing community voices at the centre.

This year's programme was designed to foster meaningful dialogue and raise pertinent, and at times challenging, questions for the sector. The conference featured thought leadership addresses, core and special

panel sessions, and for the first time, Social Champions Spotlights. Each session was deliberately curated, with every speaker carefully selected for their expertise, depth of experience, and reputation as highly sought-after voices within their fields - ensuring diverse perspectives and rich, constructive discussion.



### THF25 Opening Plenaries: Thought Leadership Addresses

The Hasanah Forum 2025 opened with a warm Welcome Address by Tan Sri Md Nor Yusof, Chairman of Yayasan Hasanah, formally greeting all guests and sharing the mission for the conference, setting the tone for the third installation of The Hasanah Forum.

Anchoring the conference theme and contextualising it within the broader global sector, Rt. Hon. Helen Clark, Former Prime Minister of New Zealand and Former Administrator of the UN Development Programme delivered the Keynote Address, providing thought-provoking insight on the role of philanthropy in today's contexts – in fostering innovative solutions, offering catalytic support for transformational change, and serving as a connector. Calling for funding models that allocate resources based on listening to real needs, she set the stage for reflection and action.

The conference was formally inaugurated with an Opening Address by YB Senator Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan, Malaysia's Minister of Finance II, framing the strategic importance of the themes in the national agenda.





## Core Sessions

The first of three core sessions, *People and Institutions: Catalysing Systems Change through Bold Collaborations*, brought together distinguished leaders to discuss how strategic partnerships across philanthropy, government, civil society, and the private sector are essential for driving systemic change in today's complex global landscape. The panel explored ways to unlock structural solutions and amplify impact, emphasising the importance of listening to communities to understand their needs. By grounding interventions in lived realities, philanthropy can more effectively bridge the gap between policy and what people experience on the ground. Panellists included Datuk Johan Mahmood Merican, Secretary General of Treasury, Ministry of Finance; Dr. Ririn Salwa Purnamasari, Senior Economist at The World Bank; Ng Boon Heong, Executive Director and CEO of Temasek Foundation; and Suryani Senja Alias, Managing Director of CULT Gallery and Trustee of Yayasan Hasanah. The discussion was moderated by Melisa Melina Idris, Assistant Vice President and Senior Editor at Astro AWANI.

The second core session, *People and Society: Inspiring Trust in Participatory Development Approaches* featured panellists Anne B. Lasimbang, Founder and Executive Director of PACOS Trust; Antonio G. Lambino II, President of Ayala Foundation, Inc.; Dato' Hamdan Abdul Majeed, Managing Director of Think City; and Neelam Chhiber, Co-founder and Managing Trustee of Industree Foundation. The discussion stressed on the need to centre community ownership in driving social change, using participatory development approaches that listen to community voices and involve diverse stakeholders. By building trust through credible, fair, and transparent engagement; empowering community leaders; leveraging data effectively; and applying market-based solutions for scale, more sustainable and inclusive pathways for development can be achieved. The session was moderated by Jason Wee, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Architects of Diversity.

The third core session, *People and Leadership: Reimagining Unconventional Leadership* welcomed leaders representing international

development and social impact, sovereign wealth and investment management, public-sector governance, and private-sector corporate leadership: Asif Saleh, Executive Director of BRAC; Dato' Mohamed Nasri Sallehuddin, Executive Director of Khazanah Nasional Berhad and Board of Trustee at Yayasan Hasanah; Mohd Khalid Mohamed Latiff, Director General of Pantau Madani; and Nadiah Wan, Director of NineYards Ventures Sdn Bhd. The session touched on how the leader who leads out of the norm is one who has agility, who navigates both public and private sectors, and who maintains the ability to listen and have empathy. The session was moderated by Tehmina Kaoosji, Independent Broadcast Journalist, Partner and Communications Director at The Big Picture (TBP) Communications, and Gender Equity Activist.



### Special Sessions

The session, *Measuring What Matters: Valuing Evidence in Policymaking and Nation Building*, explored the role of impact measurement in shaping inclusive and effective public policy. Panellists Puan Nurul Izzah, Executive Chairperson of Polity; Lina Marliani, Executive Director of J-PAL Southeast Asia; and Aditi Malhotra, Chief Impact Officer of Yayasan Hasanah, reflected on the importance of drawing lessons from data; being open to experimentation; and bringing forth stories - even uncovering uncomfortable truths. The discussion highlighted strategies for measuring what matters, engaging diverse stakeholders, and translating local insights into policy-relevant evidence. The session was moderated by Dr. Melati Nungsari, Associate Professor of Economics and Deputy CEO at Asia School of Business.

The session, *Scaling Social Enterprise: Laying the Groundwork for Social Finance* brought together leaders from social enterprise (SE), finance, and policy to discuss how innovative funding models can enable SEs to grow impactfully. Panellists Prof. Emeritus Dato' Dr. Mohd Azmi Omar, President and CEO of INCEIF University; Sooinn Lee, Co-Founder and CEO of Enuma Inc.; and Yoshi Tabuchi, Co-founder of Zebras and Company Inc. and Community Activator at East Asia Cartier Women's Initiative, shared thoughts on how supporting SEs goes beyond funding. Teamwork and community engagement, good governance, advocacy, and collaboration are equally as important. The session was moderated by Maxime Cheng, Team Lead of Insights & Innovations at Roots of Impact.

The session, *From Roots to Resilience: Community-led Conservation Through Public-Private Partnerships* focused on how local communities can lead effective biodiversity and ecosystem conservation. Panellists Prof. Tan Sri Dr. Jemilah Mahmood, Founding Director of the Sunway Centre for Planetary Health, and Tan Sri Abdul Wahid Omar, Chairman of WWF Malaysia and MySDG Foundation, highlighted integrating indigenous knowledge with technical skills training to strengthen community stewardship and resilience. The discussion also underscored the importance of approaching indigenous communities with humility in

fostering sustainable, locally rooted conservation outcomes. The session was moderated by Ili Nadiah Dzulfakar, Programme Director at Klima Action Malaysia (KAMY).

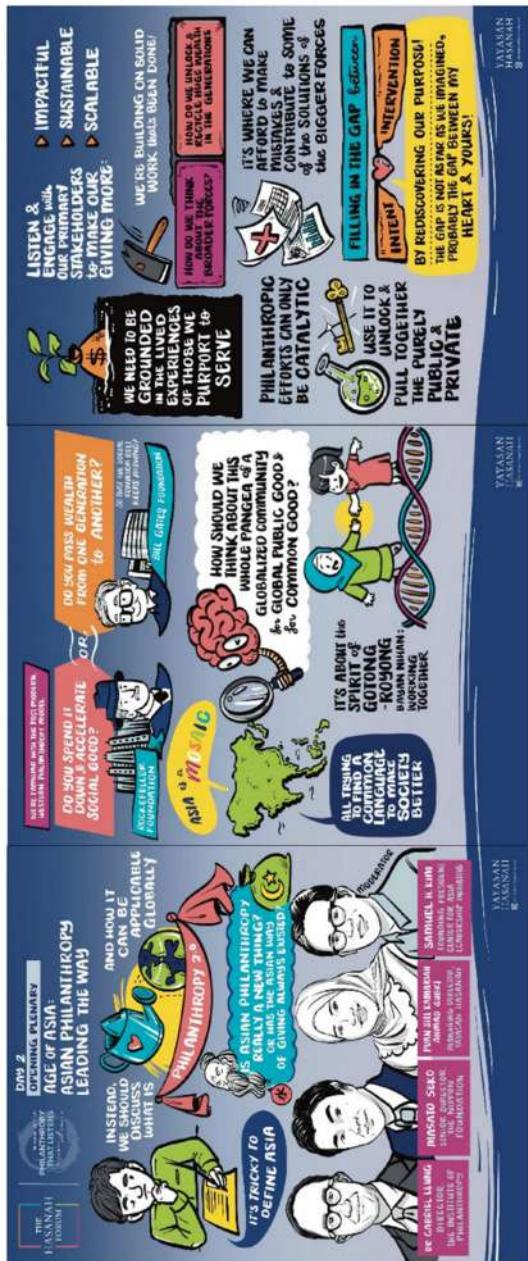


### Age of Asia: Asian Philanthropy Leading the Way

This session examined the unique strengths of Asian philanthropy and how regional traditions, cultural depth, and rising wealth can drive sustainable societal impact. Panellists Dr. Gabriel Leung, Director of the Institute of Philanthropy; Masato Seko, Senior Director at the Nippon Foundation; and Puan Siti Kamariah Ahmad Subki, Managing Director of Yayasan Hasanah, discussed approaches ranging from postmodern philanthropy models to unlocking generational wealth in Asia, and how the spirit of *gotong-royong* is at the heart of community-led initiatives.

The conversation emphasised how listening and engaging with stakeholders makes giving more impactful, sustainable, and scalable; and building upon good work that has been done. The session was moderated by Samuel H. Kim, Founding President of the Center for Asia Leadership Initiative.



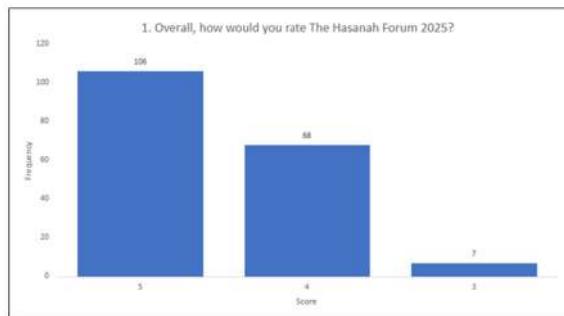


## Feedback from THF25 Participants

Participants shared their feedback on the conference, reflecting overall satisfaction with the theme, and content relevance and flow of the sessions, and the speaker lineup.

### Overall Feedback

The speakers at THF25 were a cornerstone of its success. Their expertise, diversity, and ability to inspire made the sessions engaging, relevant, and impactful. The Forum also served as a stage for voices that matter, especially those involved in grassroots and community work. Sessions promoted people-centric storytelling, avoiding jargon, and stayed true to the focus on compassion and impact.

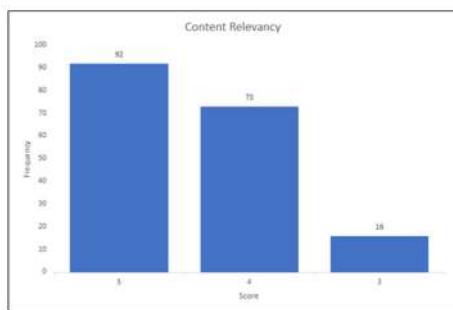


***“It was truly remarkable. The entirety of the content and its contextual framework presented a distinct experience in contrast to other forums and conferences previously attended.”***

***“The theme and the content design in a flow which participants can relate well and understand.”***

### Content Relevance

Many participants found the Forum content directly relevant to their field (NGOs, education, social impact, PwD support, environment, fundraising, policy). They highlighted applicable insights, frameworks, and best practices that align with their professional goals.



Participants reported feeling inspired, motivated, and re-energized by the speakers, panels, and shared success stories. The sessions helped reaffirm purpose and sparked new ideas for impact. Majority of participants shared their key takeaways and reflections gained from the Forum in their feedback.

*"I am presently at the forefront of the social finance initiatives and activities within the bank. This forum has significantly heightened my awareness of the various platforms present within the ecosystem. Therefore, I eagerly anticipate engaging in a significant exchange with any prospective participants."*

## Sessions and Speakers



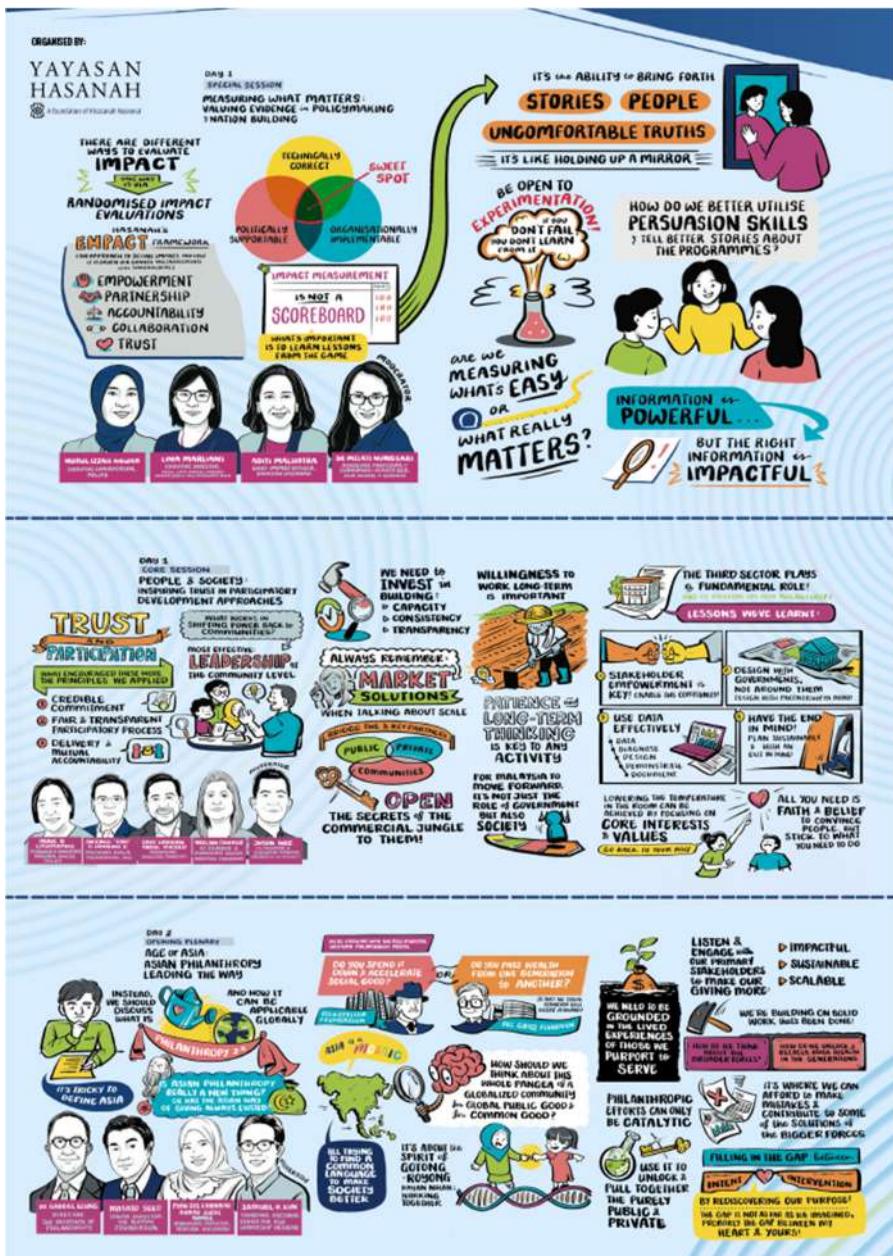
When asked which sessions or speakers participants found most valuable, 'Inspiring' and 'inspirational' were the most frequently used term, indicating that the speakers and content were highly motivating and left a strong emotional impression on attendees. The feedback highlights a strong preference for speakers who shared "real stories" and "authentic experiences" over theoretical or technical content. This personal approach was a key factor in why sessions resonated with the audience.

*"Actually difficult to choose just 2 as all had their own appeal, well curated. The topics were relatable to our cause and speakers inspiring with lessons to be learnt from their respective expertise, experiences and journeys leading to achievements for both the funder and those being funded."*

*"I found the session Measuring What Matters valuable as it provided practical frameworks for evaluating impact in meaningful ways. The session Age of Asia: Asian Philanthropy Leading the Way was insightful in showing how regional collaboration and innovative approaches can shape the future of philanthropy."*



THF25 full-page spread feature in The Edge publication



## *THF25 full-page spread feature in The Edge publication*

In total, The Hasanah Forum 2025 was attended by 1070 participants in-person, and 1172 participants who joined sessions from the online live streaming platform.



**Scan the QR code for  
session sketchnotes  
and more on THF25 web**



**Scan the QR code  
to watch THF25  
session recordings**



## Capacity Building with The Hasanah Academy

# THE HASANAH ACADEMY

The Hasanah Academy is Yayasan Hasanah's online learning portal for the delivery of capacity building training for our grant partners. Beyond programmatic funding, our aim is to support our partners by developing capacities, to ensure the sustainability, resilience, and effectiveness of projects.

The Academy embodies Yayasan Hasanah's commitment to equipping nonprofits to tackle society's most pressing challenges, towards a more robust civil society movement, and advancing long-term social change in Malaysia.



### The knowledge to create impact, all in one place

The Hasanah Academy seeks to empower you with the right tools to make a real impact. Access customised e-learning offerings, thought leadership content, and facilitated learning paths to grow your career as a professional in the social impact sector.



**Learn Anytime, Anywhere**  
Dive into learning when it suits you, with the freedom to pause, resume, and master skills at your own pace.



**Exclusive Partner Flagship Series**  
Get ahead in the social impact sector with custom curated courses meeting global industry standards.



**Building Changemakers**  
Capacity development for Hasanah partners, offering personalised development paths to amplify your organisation's impact.



**Digital Certification**  
Celebrate your accomplishments with digital certificates upon course completion.

## Flagship Training: Monitoring & Evaluation

This year, the very first Flagship training, the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) e-learning course was rolled out, welcoming over 700 registered learners to equip themselves with foundational knowledge on M&E principles and tools to track project progress, measure results, and enhance project effectiveness, for greater impact and accountability.



Tailored for Yayasan Hasanah's grant partners and project implementers, the self-paced course offers a comprehensive learning journey featuring interactive lessons, practical exercises, and case studies specially designed to be relatable to all Hasanah's Impact Areas. The course is estimated to take the average learner up to 5 hours to complete, and is structured in five modules:

Module 1: Understanding and designing an effective Results Chain

Module 2: Setting and using well-designed indicators

Module 3: Using data collection methods, analysis and storage

Module 4: Understanding data reliability, accuracy, and quality

Module 5: Learning principles of evaluation and sharing results





► Interactive: To learn more about such pre-planning tool, click the + symbol for a brief description.

Context Analysis	+
Community and Stakeholder Consultations	+
Desk Review and Research	+
Problem Analysis	+



To date, almost 80 learners have been awarded the M&E Practitioner's Certificate of Completion. Learners shared feedback on how the course has helped them, with many who appreciated for the delivery formats.

**"I really hope to be able to access these contents again later for my reference. Very well done, loved the content." - Yayasan AMIR**

**"If I had perused the course prior to [grant] submission, it would have helped me greatly in navigating my submission. The resources are excellent." - Kelab Rotary Pusat Damansara, Selangor & Wilayah Persekutuan**

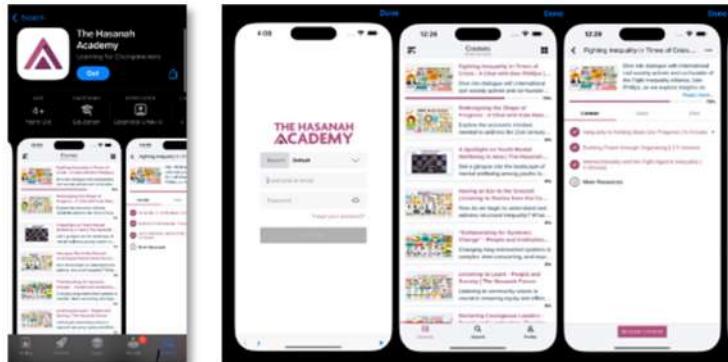
**"Overall, it's a valuable course that offers strong foundational tools for project monitoring and evaluation." - Pertubuhan Seni, Budaya & Kraf Kedah**

**"The course has given us a framework to fine tune our entire proposal and future fine-tuned proposal in a better way." - Pertubuhan Tindakan Wanita Islam Malaysia (PERTIWI)**

**"I am very satisfied with this course as it already exceed my expectation." - Yayasan Food Bank Malaysia (YFBM)**

**"I especially appreciated the inclusion of short video case studies and interviews—they made the concepts more practical and engaging." - Pertubuhan Seni, Budaya & Kraf Kedah**

In line with Yayasan Hasanah's organisational digitalisation plan, the Hasanah Academy iPhone mobile app also was rolled out this year, increasing accessibility for learners while on-the-go.



An advertisement for the Hasanah Academy app. It features a smartphone with a blue screen displaying the app's interface. A speech bubble above the phone says 'DOWNLOAD'. The text 'Get Hasanah Academy in Your Pocket' is displayed in a green box, followed by 'Maximize your impact on the go!'. Below this, it says 'Available now at:' with icons for the App Store and Google Play.



Scan the QR code  
to visit The  
Hasanah Academy



Scan the QR code  
for special sector  
registration form

## ILMU Hasanah

ILMU Hasanah are knowledge sharing events planned for Hasanah's civil society partner organisations, stakeholders, as well as the public - on a range of relevant topics led by sectoral experts. These sessions are aimed to enable and support learning for our partners, the wider stakeholder community, as well as for ourselves in Hasanah.

We believe that continuous learning is essential and that there should be no barriers to learning. ILMU Hasanah panel discussion forums are conceptualised annually by each of the Impact Areas, with key takeaways centred on the Hasanah Theory of Change framework.

This year's ILMU Hasanah sessions continued to combine evidence-based insights, innovative solutions, and community empowerment to tackle pressing social, environmental, educational, and cultural conservation challenges.

For each of the five ILMU Hasanah sessions conducted, the hybrid event format allowed participants the flexibility to join either in-person or online. In total, 517 participants, of whom most are Hasanah's grant partners, attended these knowledge-sharing sessions.

YAYASAN HASANAH *Hasanah* 2015

PANEL SESSION

## CARING FOR OUR ELDERS: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Dr. Azimah Pilis  
Medical Practitioner in Geriatrics  
Medical Expert on Palliative Care

Dr. Sarlina Kamardzman  
CEO and Co-Founder  
Delta Seniors Care

Orelia Herrera  
Founder  
Delta Seniors Care

Errazli Noor  
Co-Founder  
Tenten Malaysia

7 MAY 2025 | 2PM - 4PM

HYBRID EVENT

Yayasan Hasanah, L3, Block A  
Dataran PHB, Saujana Resort  
40150, Shah Alam, Selangor  
& Zoom Webinar

REGISTER HERE [bit.ly/ILMUHasanah43](https://bit.ly/ILMUHasanah43)

JOIN THE CONVERSATION  
SCAN TO REGISTER  
[bit.ly/ILMUHasanah43](https://bit.ly/ILMUHasanah43)

YAYASAN HASANAH *Hasanah* 2015

## BEFORE THE STORM

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS IN COMMUNITIES

MR. MOHD FAZAL  
Deputy Director of Risk and  
Disaster Preparedness and  
Management Agency (BMD)

MS. HUET Y. YONG  
Head of Disaster Risk  
Implementation, Selangor State Govt, GDR

MR. HAFIZ AMERIOL  
Deputy Executive Director, MECY Malaysia

MS. WENIS SIA  
Co-Founder of Qarina Art

WED, 2 JULY 2025

YAYASAN HASANAH, LEVEL 3,  
BLOCK A, DATARAN PHB,  
SAUJANA RESORT, SEKSYEN U2,  
40150, SHAH ALAM, SELANGOR

REGISTER HERE [bit.ly/ILMUHasanah44](https://bit.ly/ILMUHasanah44)

YAYASAN HASANAH 

# Learning Against the Odds

Education Access for Refugee & Undocumented Children in Malaysia

Fairuz Alia Jamrouddin, Head of Education, Aksi Academe 

Deborah Henry, Co-founder, Biggs School 

Felicia Yoon, Co-founder, Aksi Academe 

MODERATOR: Davina Anne Rajah, Programmes Associate, Architects of Change 

THU 18 SEPT 2025 10AM - 2PM  
LEVEL 1, GURKUL, YAYASAN HASANAH, BLOCK A, DATARAN PNB, SAWAJA RESORT, SEKSYEN U2, 40150, SHAH ALAM, SELANGOR

 [bit.ly/LHkiasannah45](http://bit.ly/LHkiasannah45)  
SCAN TO REGISTER

YAYASAN HASANAH 

# NAVIGATING ECO-ANXIETY

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CLIMATE CHANGE

HANIS ALWANI, Founder of the Malaysian Youth Interpreters 

DR. OOI WEE LIAM, Lecturer in Environmental Psychology and Social Sciences, Research University Malaysia 

JOLENE TAN, Founder of Green Wave 

MODERATOR: AIFAN MAZLAM, Urban Planner and Environmental Engineer, Aksi Academe 

THU 26 OCTOBER 2025 10AM - 2PM  
LEVEL 3, GURKUL, YAYASAN HASANAH, BLOCK A, DATARAN PNB, SAWAJA RESORT, SEKSYEN U2, 40150, SHAH ALAM, SELANGOR

 [tiny.cc/meyahaynah](http://tiny.cc/meyahaynah)

YAYASAN HASANAH 

# Crafting Continuity

Keeping Heritage Alive Through Responsible Collaboration

Adlina Barham, CEO of Co-Answers, Aksi Academe 

Shafiqah Othman, Regional Creative Director, Zaa Coffee 

Haris Rayhid, Multidisciplinary artist 

MODERATOR: Nabil Marini, Head of Arts & Public Spaces, Aksi Academe 

8 DECEMBER 2025  
Yayasan Hasanah, Level 1, Block A, Dataran PNB, Sawaja Resort, Seksyen U2, 40150, Shah Alam, Selangor

 [tiny.cc/meyahaynah](http://tiny.cc/meyahaynah)

Feedback received reflected ILMU attendees' high satisfaction and engagement with the discussion, with many participants taking the time to pose deeper questions to panellists.

**All ILMU sessions received high ratings, ranging from 4.1 to 4.4 – out of 5 stars!**

*(All feedback are anonymous)*

**Participants' Feedback:**

**ENV ILMU**

★ Enjoyed the depth of knowledge of the panelists, especially the idea of psychological distance and discounting, as well as the steps we can take to mitigate eco-anxiety. It is my first learning session about this topic and I feel more empowered to help those around us with climate anxiety. I am also inspired to include it in my research and programs to expand the efforts of empowering youth.

**CD ILMU**

★ I enjoyed the 'Insiders' sharing by En. Faizal on how NADMA operates, as well as the PSA on what to do in the event of a disaster. I also found the panel discussion sessions to be very informative and eye-opening, with many personal experiences shared by both the panelists and the moderator. The laid-back and relaxed mode of the session also made it more engaging.

**SE ILMU**

★ The insight on what is actually needed to support the ageing population. The erection of more centres is unfeasible and wasteful - embedding caregiving into community life is an creative and unconventional to address the needs of the ageing community and their caregivers, as well as providing sustainable job opportunities for the young. Great session!

**EDU ILMU**

★ The speakers were very resourceful, and I got to know more about the conditions of the marginalized, refugees and undocumented children in Malaysian context.



In collaboration with the [Social Enterprise](#) team, in **May 2025, ILMU #43: “Caring for Our Elders: A Shared Responsibility”** addressed Malaysia’s rapidly ageing population, projected to reach 20% by 2040. Experts highlighted gaps in healthcare, mobility, and social inclusion, presenting community-based palliative care, dementia-friendly initiatives, and volunteer companionship programmes. The session emphasised holistic elder care that preserves independence, dignity, and social connection.



In collaboration with the [Community Development](#) Impact Area, **July’s ILMU #44: “Before the Storm: Disaster Preparedness in Communities”** examined Malaysia’s rising vulnerability to floods and extreme weather. Representatives from NADMA, MERCY Malaysia, and CSOs discussed preventative strategies, community resilience, and climate-conscious urban planning. The session stressed the importance of local knowledge, coordinated responses, and empowering citizens to reduce risk and thrive despite disasters.



In collaboration with the [Education](#) Impact Area, in **September, ILMU #45: “Learning Against the Odds: Education Access for Refugee & Undocumented Children in Malaysia”** explored barriers faced by approximately 330,000 displaced children. Panelists from UNHCR, Fugee School, and Arus Academy discussed policy gaps, discrimination, and the role of Alternative Learning Centres, emphasising community-driven solutions and inclusive educational opportunities.



In collaboration with the [Environment](#) Impact Area, in **October, ILMU #47: “Navigating Eco-Anxiety: The Psychology of Climate Change”** addressed the emotional impact of climate crises. Experts encouraged translating eco-anxiety into local, collective action—small conservation efforts, community projects, and shared responsibility—to foster resilience and meaningful environmental impact.



In collaboration with the [Arts & Public Spaces](#) Impact Area in **December, ILMU #48: “Crafting Continuity: Keeping Heritage Alive Through Responsible Collaboration”** discussed the aesthetic appeal of modern products which carry elements of cultural heritage, while being cognisant of the responsibility of both artists and commercial brands to educate consumers on the heritage stories behind these new art pieces in fresh forms.



To read the full session feature articles, please refer to Appendix at the end of this booklet.



Scan the QR code  
to watch ILMU Hasanah  
session recordings

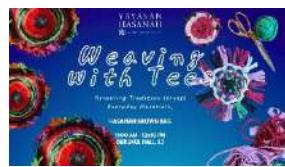
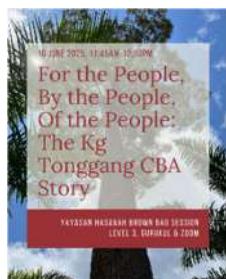
## Brown Bags

Brown Bags are informal knowledge sharing sessions, serving as a platform to Hasanah staff to share knowledge on a wide range of issues or matters pertinent to Hasanah's work. We encourage a 45-minute sharing with Q&A, and speakers are free to choose how and on which topic to deliver their sessions.

Every month, Hasanah staff members huddle for a Brown Bag session at the Gurukul (Sanskrit: गुरु - कुल) space on Level 3 of the office. True to the spirit of its name - the abode of the guru – these sessions foster learning that goes beyond theory, encouraging close interaction and shared knowledge. By bringing together team members across pillars and units, the sessions spark conversations, ideas, and reflection on matters pertinent to our work, reinforcing our belief that learning begins within ourselves - and that everyone has something valuable to contribute.

Recognising that social sector work can be demanding emotionally, the sessions also provide a space for connection and mutual support. In 2025, topics have ranged from strengthening rural infrastructure and applying community-based approaches, to environmental issues. Through these gatherings, we cultivate both professional insight and personal growth, reminding ourselves that we are part of a larger, collaborative community.





## Learning Visits

*Learning Visits are thematic, on-the-ground engagements designed to deepen our understanding of the communities that Hasanah's partners work with. Community-led and driven by a genuine desire to step out of our "funder mentality", these visits help us gain a holistic view of lived experiences and needs, beyond project results.*

*Learning Visits help us to gain evidence-based insights that strengthen deeper learnings and reflections, inform decision-making, and refine adaptive strategies for greater impact. Subsequent Learning Reports capture key findings across Hasanah's Impact Areas, with strategic recommendations to guide more effective engagement and support for communities with high needs.*

This year, team members from the Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation (MLE) team conducted visits to five Orang Asli communities across Selangor and Pahang. We approached each visit with interest and curiosity, listening to community members and seeking to understand their perspectives.

In contrast to traditional Monitoring Visits which assess projects through the structured lens of project progress, challenges, successes and sustainability, Learning Visits take a different approach. The MLE team does their best to step away from the funder role, communicating to community members that our presence is supportive, not evaluative; and guided by a stance of listening to learn.

We ask questions to explore each community's practices, local knowledge, traditions and beliefs, with support from our partners to help facilitate the engagement process. Language barriers are considered, and general questions shared with partners before each visit.

Example questions asked:

- ***What are unique aspects of their culture, practices, and beliefs, as well as their community's history?***
- ***How are some ways to foster meaningful connections with their community?***
- ***What changes has the community experienced over the past few years, and what were the key factors or events that initiated these changes? (including socio-economic changes, shifts in cultural practices, increased awareness on the importance of education – to name a few)***
- ***What matters the most to them?***
- ***What are their aspirations for their younger generation?***

Furthermore, such visits support our ability to have a clearer frame of reference on the challenges faced by as well as aspirations of the communities where YH has a presence. They help to increase and deepen our awareness, empathy and accountability, enabling us to better identify unintended consequences, assess aspects of sustainability, and how the definition of "success" might differ for different communities.



Through all our past, present and future visits, we remain grateful to the community members who generously share their time and perspectives, capturing grounded insights that might otherwise have gone unnoticed.



## APPENDIX: ILMU HASANAH 2025 FEATURE ARTICLES

### **ILMU #43: “Caring for Our Elders: A Shared Responsibility”**

#### **Malaysia’s Accelerating Ageing Population**

Malaysia is rapidly becoming an ageing nation with 7.3% of its population aged 65 and above - a figure projected to triple to 20% by 2040 - becoming an aged nation where 1 in 5 Malaysians are seniors. The accelerated rate of the ageing population brings great challenges as 40% of seniors currently live with chronic illnesses and our palliative care operations only reach about 4% of those in need. In addition, Malaysia’s ratio of geriatricians to elderly patients remains critically low at approximately 1 per 10,000 seniors. Equally concerning, one in three elderly Malaysians reports isolation, a risk factor linked to cognitive decline and higher mortality rates. Addressing these issues requires reimagining care models, bridging accessibility gaps, and fostering social collaboration.

At Yayasan Hasanah’s 43rd ILMU forum titled Caring for Our Elders: A Shared Responsibility, four pioneers in elderly care convened to address these gaps through policy, innovation, and community action. The experts presented targeted solutions for Malaysia’s ageing population, each addressing critical gaps in the senior care ecosystem. Dr. Azimah Pilus, a preventive medicine and palliative care specialist, redefined palliative care as essential post-recovery support, demonstrating how trained caregivers could enhance quality of life while reducing dependence on specialists. Building on this foundation of community-based care, Dr. Sazlina Kamaralzaman’s innovative transport initiative Jom Makcik empowers women drivers to deliver both mobility solutions and meaningful companionship, directly combating senior isolation.

The discussion expanded to holistic care models, including Oretha Herrera’s home-based concierge services and daycare programmes through Oretha Senior Care, as well as Ezzati Nasir’s Teman initiative,

which provides dementia-friendly communities and volunteer companionship programmes. Together, these diverse approaches create an integrated framework addressing seniors' physical, social and emotional needs - underscoring that comprehensive elder care extends far beyond medical interventions alone.

### **Bridging the Mobility Gap**

Transportation barriers and technology gaps disproportionately exclude seniors from essential services. A 2023 survey found that 68% of Malaysian seniors avoid medical appointments due to lack of transport, while 52% struggle with digital health platforms. While apps and cashless payments dominate modern services, many elderly struggle with these changes. For example, insisting on cashless-only payments at care centres could unintentionally exclude those who rely on cash. Mobility solutions tailored to seniors - such as wheelchair-accessible vehicles and culturally sensitive services employing female drivers like Jom Makcik - can simultaneously address isolation and unemployment. Japan's hybrid approach offers a blueprint, balancing technological advancement with accessible alternatives for their seniors. By maintaining cash payment options alongside digital systems, Malaysia too, could ensure no senior is excluded from critical services, fostering inclusivity in its digital transformation.

### **Home-Based Care Innovations**

These insights reveal a powerful statement: non-medical support is just as vital as clinical care in helping seniors maintain independence and dignity. The growing demand for dementia care in Malaysia could be addressed by caregivers through training programmes that would equip communities to identify early health complications, symptoms of dementia and prevent costly hospital readmissions. Volunteer companionship programmes, such as those organised by Teman Malaysia, where youth are paired with seniors, have reduced self-reported loneliness by 40% in pilot projects.

Systemic gaps continue to persist, where many seniors are discharged without care plans or dietary guidance, leaving families or the seniors themselves to navigate complex needs alone - which is how Oretha Senior Care came about. Strengthening partnerships between healthcare providers and community networks could mitigate these challenges, ensuring continuity of care and reducing familial strain and building a community-driven ecosystem where seniors, families, and caregivers collectively shape a future where ageing doesn't mean losing autonomy.

### **Rethinking Palliative Care**

Palliative care is often perceived as end-of-life support, but it is far from that. Experts argue that it functions as a lifeline for post-recovery quality of life, particularly for seniors managing chronic conditions. Community-driven models in New York illustrate the potential of training non-specialist caregivers, which reduced hospital readmissions by 25% and saved billions in healthcare costs over five years. In Malaysia, where only 20,000 of 200,000 patients needing palliative care receive support, this approach has the potential to significantly alleviate pressure on hospitals and clinics. Key priorities should include certifying family caregivers and integrating pain management training into community health programmes, ensuring that patients are informed and treated appropriately for their condition, resulting in a healthier, more active, and connected senior community. This approach also addresses the loss of income, stability and personal freedom that families face when they have to stay home to care for their elderly.

### **Towards a Collaborative Future**

Addressing Malaysia's ageing wave requires a shift in how seniors are perceived and supported. Policy reforms must recognise and subsidise caregivers, acknowledging their role as pillars of the healthcare ecosystem. At the same time, community-driven innovations - from intergenerational mentorship programmes to neighborhood resource directories - can bridge gaps in medical and non-medical care. These

efforts would in effect contribute to a culture of support and inclusivity where compassion grows as naturally as our grey hairs. After all, how we care for our elders today defines the dignity we'll all inherit tomorrow.

### **ILMU #44: “Before the Storm: Disaster Preparedness in Communities”**

#### **Disaster Management in Malaysia**

Between November 2024 and March 2025, floods in Malaysia affected 274,533 people, according to the National Disaster Management Agency (NADMA). The devastation was concentrated in three states - Kelantan (40.3%), Terengganu (24.4%), and Sarawak (11.5%) - where rising waters submerged homes, roads, and livelihoods. While survival rates remain high, the aftermath has left a multibillion-dollar burden on state governments, federal agencies, and local communities. Extreme weather, from relentless storms to scorching heatwaves, has become a disruptive force in daily life. A four-day downpour, once manageable, now unleashes destruction that takes months or even years to repair. Disaster preparedness is no longer just a reactive measure; it is a preventative strategy that demands integration of community infrastructure, environmental stewardship, and climate adaptation.

At Hasanah's 44th ILMU session on Disaster Preparedness, representatives from NADMA, MERCY Malaysia, C40 Cities, and Gerimis Art gathered to share their knowledge on what true resilience means for communities. Mohammad Faizal, Senior Principal Assistant Director at NADMA presented shocking data on crisis response costs and its increasing occurrences around the country. For example, evacuating and feeding 270,000 flood victims costs RM4 million per day - a figure that excludes search and rescue, logistics, damage repairs and other infrastructural support.

Since the catastrophic floods of 2014, which displaced over half a million people, Malaysia has strengthened its disaster response systems by establishing NADMA. Their central role in disaster response is to ensure streamlined management and coordination with other agencies, international bodies and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Yet effective crisis management hinges on public cooperation. Well-intentioned but uncoordinated efforts - such as delivering 500 meals to a shelter of 1,000 victims can strain resources rather than relieve them. Volunteers must therefore align with registered NGOs and agencies, ensuring aid is equitable and logistically viable before mobilising support.

## **Building Resilience Nationwide**

To further maximise its reach and resources, NADMA launched the GDRN Network (Government-Linked Companies Disaster Response Network), a collaborative platform that streamlines aid distribution between government-linked entities, NGOs, and CSOs. By coordinating efforts, the network ensures no assistance is duplicated or wasted in the disaster response, which can sometimes last for months. Mohammed Faizal emphasised that every RM1 spent on preparedness saves RM15 in emergency response.

This principle was echoed by Hafiz Amirrol from MERCY Malaysia, who also addressed the holistic mindset that is needed when approaching the topic of resilience. Innovations like floating houses may seem progressive, but long-term resilience demands climate-conscious urban planning that is inclusive of sustainable mitigation. Despite a decade of preparedness efforts, Malaysia's flood-related losses increased by 23% (2023-2024) to RM933.4 million according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) - illustrating how unpredictable weather patterns now threaten even historically low-risk areas.

CSOs like C40 Cities focus on shaping policy that prioritises sustainable urban adaptation that will accommodate our increasing population. Huey Yoong, its Head of Implementation for Southeast Asia, stressed the importance of curbing development in high-risk zones - areas often kept

off public radar to protect property values. Resilience requires strategies that bridge environmental health, social equity, and economic stability. Practical solutions include green infrastructure such as urban forests to absorb floodwaters; adopting low-carbon public transportation to mitigate climate change; and community-centric designs that weave local knowledge into urban planning.

### **The Role of Communities in Disaster Preparedness and Resilience**

Effective disaster resilience begins at the grassroots level. Malaysia's diverse terrains - which are prone to floods, earthquakes, and heatwaves - demand localised solutions. Wendi Sia, Co-founder of Gerimis Art highlighted Orang Asli wisdom, and how traditional knowledge from Orang Asli communities have been used for centuries to prepare and recover from natural disasters. "Sungai itu ada satu sahaja," a common phrase used among Orang Asli communities in the northern peninsular reveals an intimate understanding of the interconnectedness of rivers, and how it is possible to predict the consequences for villages based downhill, versus those that are further uphill.

Such knowledge is the local aspect that strategies must adopt in modern preparedness to uncover potentials, empower communities and significantly reduce disaster risks. Practical ways that this can be achieved is by strengthening community-agency partnerships such as connecting with relevant agencies such as NADMA on disaster risk management guidance. CSOs or community groups can host climate awareness initiatives to educate adults and children alike on the necessary precautions to take in a disaster and develop wider programs as community reach increases. Leveraging diverse and traditional ecological knowledge is also a critical aspect to avoiding unnecessary blunders in implementation.

Disasters may be inevitable, but devastation is not. While NADMA and the GDRN Network provide essential support, true resilience takes root in communities - in their collective wisdom, adaptive capacity, and

determination to safeguard what matters most. By blending traditional knowledge, modern innovation, and cross-sector collaboration, Malaysia can shift from reactive recovery to proactive preparedness. The goal is not only to survive disasters, but also thrive despite them - this transformation begins when every individual recognises their role as both steward and beneficiary of resilient systems - preserving cultural heritage and natural landscapes for generations to come.

### **ILMU #45: “Learning Against the Odds: Education Access for Refugee & Undocumented Children in Malaysia”**

The movement of refugees across the world is a phenomenon that's been happening for decades, even centuries. Some flee from war and persecution, while others from poverty and exploitation - this journey gets even more complicated when children are involved. There is an estimate of 40,000 refugees and 290,000 undocumented children of schooling age in Malaysia, facing severe learning disruptions. Thankfully, the compassion of many Malaysians and a few governmental leeways has allowed them to access alternative learning programmes that are continuously trying to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed for their survival.

During a panel discussion at Hasanah's 45th ILMU session, we delved into the complexities of this very topic with representatives from four organisations and institutions involved in providing education to refugees and undocumented children; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Arus Academy, and Fugee School. In a panel moderated by Davina Anne Rajah, a representative from Architects of Diversity, UNHCR's Head of Education, Fairuz Alia Jamaluddin explained that the main role of the organisation is to safeguard refugees in Malaysia by issuing identity cards which provide protection from authorities until they are relocated. However, there is zero pathway for refugees to gain citizenship or special work permits from the government of Malaysia while

undocumented children (sometimes referred to as stateless) have a very small chance of gaining citizenship.

### **Perception and Funding: The challenges of Alternative Learning Centres (ALCs)**

In her opening remarks, Puan Siti Kamariah, Managing Director of Hasanah, talked about education being a fundamental tool to break cycles of poverty and because refugee and undocumented children are denied a nurturing and conducive learning environment, a question like “what do you want to be when you grow up”, turns into a luxury. Many of these children are eager to find a way to be trained as doctors or teachers so they can help those that have faced the same difficulties, whether in Malaysia or back in their own country. She explained that prejudice is the main barrier that is stopping national interventions for the undocumented population. A sentiment that Davina echoed in a survey report on discrimination and social cohesion, which found that 31% of Malaysians believe that refugees should not be given the right to work, while the remaining 69% want to see better integration, but have no idea what that would look like.

Integration of refugees and undocumented children into Malaysian culture and economy is not an easy feat yet, it is not impossible either. Deborah Henry, co-founder of Fugees stated that a conversation like this was not even possible five years ago, so even if we move the needle one inch at a time, we are still heading in the right direction - although it can cost millions. Many private companies and citizens have made schools like Fugee and Arus Academy possible through donations, volunteering and training. Felicia Yoon, the co-founder of Arus Academy highlighted the challenges that undocumented children face, where some may get their documentation eventually but then cannot integrate with the national schools because years of delay have put them way behind, forcing them to drop out anyway. Teachers are also not equipped with the resources and expertise to accommodate these types of students in national schools.

A survey of 30 Alternative Learning Centres (ALCs) found that many teachers helping to educate these undocumented and refugee children are severely underfunded, with some teachers taking home RM 200 a month while catering to dozens of students. Learning modules are also limited due to the unique nature of these students' circumstances, while resources are also lacking. But the students themselves never give up hope. Felicia learned about the daily challenges of her students who explained to her that even getting a phone number, travelling by bus, or visiting friends in gated areas requires identity cards - these barriers seem to be present in all aspects of their lives, beyond just education and employment. Every time a child misses out on education, the country loses, that was the sentiment that was felt in the room while hearing the stories of children and their families navigating survival and knowledge through unshattering resilience.

### **Implementing sustainable policies**

To streamline alternative learning centres across the country, a resource bank filled with modules, guidelines and curriculum needs to be established to improve the effectiveness of programmes and ensure that those with no choice, still have an opportunity to expand intellectually. The Sekolah Bimbingan Kasih established under the zero-reject policy have provided some opportunity for undocumented children to attend school, provided that at least one parent has an IC. Even among these students, the chances of the child receiving proper documentation for their citizenship is extremely rare with no opportunity at all for refugee children. With working rights also denied to their parents, many remain unemployed and desperate to establish a better future for their children. Deborah pointed out that millions of migrant workers are brought into the country every year yet the obvious solution of meeting worker demands with our refugee population of merely thousands is deliberately ignored. Many of our refugees come from Myanmar, highlighting the need for a regional solution that can be mutually beneficial for Malaysia and refugees seeking a better life and a chance to prove themselves.

Countries such as Turkey, Lebanon and Thailand have adopted unique strategies to accommodate their refugee population. Thailand for instance, implemented the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) schools which allows all non-citizen children to enrol while also ensuring funding through the Equitable Education Fund (EEF) for private companies to donate and receive tax rebates in return. Adopting a similar model would provide sustainable educational support for these children, building a foundation for a more inclusive and unified future for all who call Malaysia home.

### **ILMU #47: “Navigating Eco-Anxiety: The Psychology of Climate Change”**

October 2025 saw a major tipping point for climate change, where the loss of all our coral reefs - a major habitat for thousands of aquatic species - became irreversible. Even for those who want to care, the path forward is unclear. This global phenomenon has become abstract for many, while only frontliners and people from high-risk areas feel its concrete and undeniable effects. Nonetheless, climate reports have had a major impact on individuals, with a greater weight on young people. On one hand, it feels impossible to single-handedly save the environment; on the other, we often don't know where to start, and so we don't start at all. What is now termed "eco-anxiety" is very real and very worrying.

Hanasah's 47th ILMU session brought together frontliners in the battle against environmental degradation, all of whom shared insightful knowledge on perseverance as nature's custodians and resilience in the little things we can do for the planet without feeling overwhelmed or burnt out. In his opening remarks, Prof Datuk Dr. Andrew Mohanraj from the Malaysian Mental Health Association (MMHA) talked about Malaysians from high-risk areas around the country who are constantly distressed by impending floods or heatwaves. "It used to be a once-a-year phenomenon, where you were not sure if it was going to be mild or devastating," he noted.

"However, over the past few years, it can happen multiple times a year, making it a major source of anxiety, fear, grief, and helplessness."

Eco-anxiety is not a mental illness, the same way mass anxiety during a war wouldn't be blamed on the individuals. It is simply that some people are far more aware of the losses that are already occurring. Sure, we can say that eventually it will hit closer to home and then maybe something might be done, but the truth is, many species have already suffered and are continuing to suffer the consequences of excessive development and our lack of guardianship. Rivers are already running poisonous and killing aquatic life, deforestation is already starving thousands of creatures, and the mounting waste we produce has become a seemingly unstoppable tide.

### **The Weight of Witnessing**

The groups of people who have had to witness this deterioration firsthand - whether villagers, indigenous communities, or environmentalists - are often left feeling helpless. Dr. Ooi Wee Liam from Environmental Humanities and Social Sciences at Monash University Malaysia emphasised that the environment needs all the help it can get. He suggested that a million people doing a little bit to save whatever they can (even saving five minutes of running water) can make a bigger difference than five people doing everything perfectly. As we navigate the transformation towards sustainability, human consumption does not pause, and that is precisely where we need to make a difference.

Hanis Alwani, the focal point of the Malaysian Youth Delegate, highlighted the massive waste that Malaysians produce in a single day, which makes young people feel helpless and guilty over their inability to make a real difference. A report by Urbanice Malaysia found that 1.9% of plastic waste, equivalent to 8.4 tonnes, is littered and leaked each day in Kuala Lumpur alone. While many institutions have initiated programmes to address the growing issues, these programmes often lack collaborative efforts with the communities themselves, preventing them from contributing, learning, and taking ownership of their surroundings. In many flood-hit areas, like

the recent floods in Klang, massive coggings had to be cleared by the community because it was their roads and their homes that were affected. A viable and traditional activity that we all share as Malaysians is gotong royong, a Malay term translating literally to ‘jointly carrying burdens’ - which is exactly what we need to do before tragedy hits.

When discussing the effects of feeling useless in the face of a deteriorating environment, Jolene Tan, founder of GreenWeive, explained that people tend to create psychological distance from the issue just to get through the day without considering the planet's future doom. This is a perfectly understandable response, and the anxiety itself is proof that we care deeply. Despite it not hitting us every day, it's still hitting other people, wildlife, and the very atmosphere we breathe. On a grand scale, it would take the whole world to save the earth, but in reality, every individual can play a role with a profound effect. The trick is to consider the survival of the very place you are in, rather than focusing on everybody else's role. This requires emotional resilience that we have to address within ourselves because there is no KPI to reach here, only a consistent and continuous effort to improve. When we are present in our respective circumstances, we can lower burnout, transform anxiety into action, and be at peace with our own capacity.

### **Reclaiming Agency through Community Action**

In addressing media coverage of natural disasters around the world, one must consider that sensationalising news is a primary goal of the media, which is not at all helpful for the individual trying to make a difference. Pointing fingers or blaming corporations is useless if there are no action plans behind every report. As Malaysians, we have a duty to pay attention to the local issues around us, whether it's clogged drains, air pollution, or deforestation, by joining forces or creating movements that empower the community to decide and change what is not working for the environment and its future. While there may be many people who choose not to do anything or deny its occurrences, that is not a good reason for us to also ignore the problem.

Navigating eco-anxiety begins with acknowledging that this grief and fear are a testament to our capacity for care, not a personal failing. The path forward is not about carrying the world's burden alone, but about embracing the power of collective, local action. Start small: conserve water, participate in a gotong royong, or support a community garden. Channel the energy of your anxiety into these tangible acts, and remember the wisdom shared by the experts: a million small actions create a far greater wave of change than a few perfect ones. Be kind to yourself, celebrate the small victories, and draw strength from your community. The challenge is immense, but so is our capacity for resilience, innovation, and care. Your actions, however small they may seem, are a vital part of the solution and a powerful affirmation of hope for our shared future.

### **ILMU #48: “Crafting Continuity: Keeping Heritage Alive Through Responsible Collaboration”**

In a global marketplace saturated with mass-produced goods, a quiet but powerful movement is growing. Today's consumers are increasingly seeking more than mere products; they are searching for authenticity, story, and connection. This shift presents a vital opportunity for Malaysia's rich tapestry of heritage crafts. The true heart of this cultural wealth lies not in the objects alone, but in the vibrant communities of artisans and their techniques which keep these traditions alive. Their work is a profound cultural expression, embedding history, identity, and artistry into every piece. By empowering and centering these crafting communities, Malaysia can preserve its irreplaceable heritage while meeting a modern demand for meaning, ensuring that classical skills not only survive but thrive in the contemporary market, both at home and abroad.

At Yayasan Hasanah's 48th ILMU session, three pioneers in artistic collaboration came together to discuss a vital question: how can agencies and brands preserve the depth of cultural expression? Moderated by multi-artist Nini Marini, Head of Arts and Public Spaces at Hasanah, the

conversation flowed with stories and lessons from Adlina Borhan, CEO & Co-Founder of the Paris-based consultancy Ab & Artho; multidisciplinary artist Haris Rashid, who often works with cultural elements; and Shafiqah Othman, Regional Creative Director of ZUS Coffee, who leads the brand's storytelling.

In her opening, Nini highlighted a critical tension: while demand for cultural art is high, it is not always met with respect for the generations of creativity and refinement behind each craft. "If we don't tell our stories," she noted, "someone else will, and they might not get it right."

### **Building Connection Through Art**

Malaysian art holds great potential - not only to display its own rich culture, but to amplify the global art scene with a unique twist that is unmistakably local. Adlina explained that introducing a Malaysian perspective in Paris wasn't easy at first. What helped, she found, was establishing a human connection - helping people understand what could be created through honest collaboration. She recalled one of her most meaningful exhibitions, where she brought a piece of Kelantan to Paris. With determination, she was able to display the creativity, resilience, and beauty of Malaysian heritage - and how it can inspire exceptional work.

When the meaning behind these works are laid out, whether through storytelling or performances, audiences often connect with the products in a deeper, more meaningful way. If handled thoughtfully, this can cultivate a consumer market that becomes more conscious of its own rich history and the lived experiences that fuel creativity. Brands like ZUS Coffee are already embedding this value by engaging local artists and providing them a platform to express themselves. This not only expands the artists' reach into new sectors, but also inspires others to evolve their craft in ways that can keep pace with - and contribute to - the accelerating global marketplace.

## Authentic Expressions in a Commercialised Market

“We want to define what makes us *buatan Malaysia*,” said Shafiqah. “When we include heritage in our branding, we don’t want to use an old story that feels nostalgic rather than relevant. That’s why it’s so important to understand current narratives which represent the living culture that holds communities together. That’s the story we want to tell, one that makes people feel connected and inspired to journey through their own history and appreciate it.” The method, she explained, is to capture one of the many colours that define us, turning these moments into tangible pieces that can evolve even further - not just narrating a story to sell.

Authenticity isn’t always easy, especially when brands come with fixed ideas and seek cultural input merely to be trendy or profitable, putting artists in a dilemma. This is where their personal resilience to safeguard the integrity of their work comes into play. But as every panelist echoed, this isn’t a moment for conflict - it’s a moment for respect. It’s about explaining why staying true to the art matters, and guiding clients toward wanting the same because there is no right or wrong in cultural expressions, there is only understanding. Haris reflected that opening people’s minds to new ideas is part of what makes Malaysians unique: “We are Malaysian - we make sense of a lot of things that don’t make sense to the outside world, and we make it look harmonious. Changing minds is part of our culture”

## Communities Forge Cultural Heritage

Culture is a continuous process - it creates the heritage we carry as our identity. Ultimately, it is not brands or institutions that steer the celebration of cultural heritage, but Malaysians themselves. The responsibility lies with us to keep understanding where we come from and to thoughtfully weave that history into our lifestyles and creative education. Supporting artists and creating spaces for them to develop their work is how we, as a community, ensure cultural understanding flows through diverse channels that we can consume - whether its through the beats of the *kompong*, the style of the *songket*, or the graceful movements

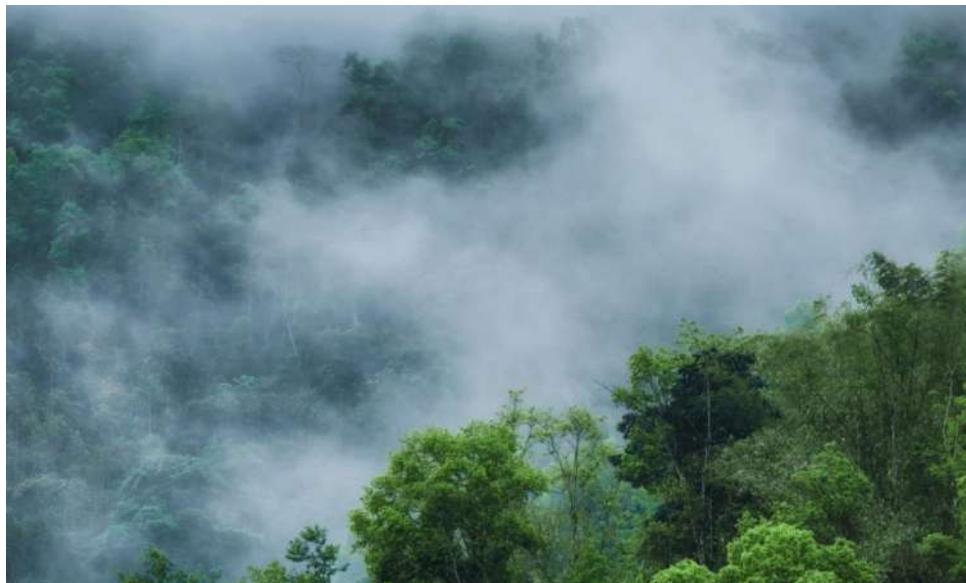
of *Mak Yong*. The beauty of such diverse expression is that it carries no fixed expectation. When embraced authentically, its only limit is potential.

While some nations champion their heritage outwardly, their own communities may feel disconnected from it as a lived identity. This is where Malaysia can chart a different path. Walk down any street, and you might spot someone wearing traditional patterns not as a costume, but as a part of their day. This points to a strong, embodied relationship with culture - a diversity that is not just seen, but lived. The task is to tell the true stories behind these expressions, inspiring lifelong appreciation rather than offering a bite-size "experience" of our culture. As Visit Malaysia 2026 approaches, inviting travellers to our homeland, we have the chance to reflect: how do we wish to be seen? "Crafting Community" is the hope that, together, we can weave the threads of Malaysia's diverse heritage into a coherent tapestry that we exhibit as our own - one that truly reflects the essence of who we are.



Signing off with our warmest greetings for the year ahead,

**The MLE & Knowledge Team,**  
Yayasan Hasanah



# YAYASAN HASANAH



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