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LIFE . EXTRAORDINARY

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RESTORING SELF-CONFIDENCE

PERTIWI is a 48-year-old non-governmental organisation and its mobile soup kitchen has been operating on the streets of KL for the past five years. Munirah Hamid, the chairman behind the soup kitchen, dedicates four nights a week to feeding the city's urban poor. Her desire to give back to society stemmed from her experiences as a child when her mother first took it upon herself to feed homeless individuals at the mosque in her hometown.

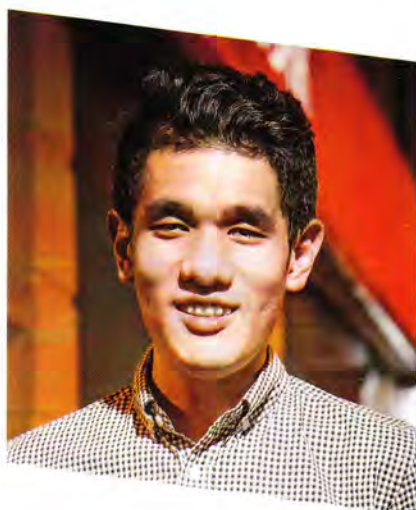
Subsequently, her sisters were among the 10 founding members of Pertiwi and her involvement with philanthropy work snowballed since then. "It's not to score points or rewards in the afterlife, no. It's because somebody else is struggling and he or she deserves something better. You can't make their lives perfect or you can't change the circumstances they are in but at least if you can improve their lives then they wouldn't feel hungry or be in pain," says Munirah.

The organisation's mobile soup kitchen operates out of a truck and feeds 500 to 700 individuals four times a week at Chow Kit, Kota Raya, Masjid India and Masjid Negara. Each meal pack consists of rice, one protein dish (fish or chicken), one vegetable and a slice of fruit together with drinks, all packed in a brown paper bag to remain environmentally sustainable and friendly. In fact, the soup kitchen appreciates the steady flow of volunteers offering help at any given time during their operation hours.

With a full stomach, these people are less likely to involve themselves in any criminal activities, thus reducing the alarming crime rates in the country. "I know for sure that there would be less pickpockets and misfits because they will be contented with what they have been given, meaning that they won't be so angry to do something wrong. The malnourished children are also starting to look much healthier," says Munirah. "A few of them have gone on to secure a job and have turned their lives around. You have to help them slowly and it takes time," she adds.

During soup kitchen operation hours, Pertiwi also provides on-site free medical and hair grooming services. For the healthcare service, the organisation has a pool of doctors who have volunteered to provide health advice and medication through a mobile clinic, while working alongside volunteers to send critical patients to the hospital should the need arise. Pertiwi has also gotten some volunteers to offer free hair grooming to those who need the service mainly for the purposes of self-hygiene. Azmina Burhan runs her own saloon but decided to give out free haircuts after coming across some individuals whose unkempt appearance means they couldn't even afford a simple haircut.

Feeding the needy helps, but getting a haircut and maintaining their health can make them feel renewed and that can impact one's self-confidence and the way they perceive life to be in the long run.



DR PETER GAN

Volunteer doctor at PERTIWI Soup Kitchen

What was the main motivation for you towards contributing your time in helping the soup kitchen's mobile clinic?

"I feel that as a medical doctor I could do more. I actually volunteer for other

organisations. I like doing this for charity as I enjoy helping people. I just have to provide my time."

How has volunteering with Pertiwi's soup kitchen affected your outlook?

"It has given me a whole new

perspective of how people are living on the streets, as I wasn't aware of the actual number of people and who were actually on the streets. I didn't know that we have such an endemic in KL. It is quite disheartening to see families trying to survive."

MUNIRAH HAMID

PERTIWI



ALL HANDS ON DECK

Chairman Munirah Hamid spends four nights a week supervising and helping out in Pertiwi's soup kitchen