



Global Compact
Network
Malaysia & Brunei

eMpowering Youths Across ASEAN: Maybank Foundation's Regional Youth Leadership Platform

A Case Study of



Knowledge Partner:



Malayan Banking Berhad

Building a regional youth leadership platform through long-term, multi-stakeholder collaboration



As a publicly listed financial services provider, Maybank has embedded Humanising Financial Services at the core of its purpose, guiding both its business and social impact initiatives across ASEAN. Through Maybank Foundation, the Group advances long-term community empowerment by investing in programmes that build capability, resilience, and opportunity.

Launched on 8 August 2018 during the 51st ASEAN Day, eMpowering Youths Across ASEAN is Maybank Foundation's regional flagship youth leadership programme, in partnership with the ASEAN Foundation. The initiative stands out for its scale and longevity—spanning all 10 ASEAN Member States and multiple cohorts—while combining structured capacity-building, Civil Society-led mentorship, and on-ground project delivery to enable youth volunteers to drive community-based solutions.



This case study highlights how eMpowering Youths Across ASEAN has evolved into a sustained, multi-stakeholder platform that equips ASEAN youths with leadership capabilities and practical experience to address socio-economic and environmental challenges, while fostering regional cohesion.

Company At A Glance

- Industry: Financial Services
- Headquarters: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Malaysian Workforce: 43,000 (as of Dec 2024)



The Challenge

Bridging youth potential with structured, regional impact pathways

Across ASEAN, universities, civil society organisations (CSOs), and social enterprises (SEs) consistently highlighted a gap between youth potential and meaningful opportunities to contribute to community development. While young people demonstrate strong motivation and capability to create societal change, they lack structured platforms, mentorship, and regional exposure to translate their ideas into sustained, on-the-ground impact.

At the same time, CSOs and SEs working with underserved communities identified persistent social, economic, and environmental challenges that could benefit from youth-led solutions if supported through strong partnerships. These insights, reinforced by Maybank's country teams and aligned with its Humanising Financial Services mission, underscored the need for a structured, partnership-based regional platform to enable youth-driven, community-centred impact at scale.

The Action

Operationalising a regional youth leadership platform through partnership, capability-building, and community delivery

To translate its youth empowerment vision into sustained, on-the-ground impact, Maybank Foundation (MF) implemented eMpowering Youths Across ASEAN (eYAA) through a structured, multi-phase model that combines regional collaboration, rigorous youth volunteers selection, capacity-building, and community-based project execution across ASEAN.

1. Establishing a Regional Multi-Stakeholder Platform

MF partnered with the ASEAN Foundation (AF) to establish a regional platform connecting civil society organisations (CSOs), social enterprises (SEs), tertiary institutions, and government bodies across all 10 ASEAN Member States. The platform was funded by MF and designed to reflect regional priorities, while enabling CSOs and SEs to provide mentorship and implementation support, and tertiary institutions to broaden youth access.

2. Rigorous Youth Volunteers Selection and Onboarding

A structured application and selection process was implemented to identify Youth Volunteers (YVs) with strong leadership potential and community-relevant project ideas. An online portal enabled regional submissions, with selections assessed based on relevance, feasibility, and potential impact by judging panels comprising of MF and AF.

3. Capacity Building Through Training, Mentorship, and Grants

The selected youths participate in regional orientation workshops covering leadership, project management, and cross-cultural collaboration. Each team was paired with CSO or SE mentors for hands-on guidance, supported by micro-grants to fund project implementation and monitoring mechanisms to provide ongoing support.

4. Community-Based Implementation Across ASEAN

The YVs then co-design and implement two-week community projects in partnership with local CSOs, SEs, and communities.

Project themes span education, empowerment, livelihoods, arts, and environmental sustainability, with MF and AF providing coordination, logistical support, and safety oversight.



5. Embedding Knowledge Sharing and Policy Engagement

MF and AF document programme learnings and outcomes through case studies, reports, and digital channels, sharing insights via ASEAN's networks and internal governance platforms, including reporting to the MF and AF Board of Trustees (BOT).

6. Strengthening Accountability Through Monitoring and Evaluation

A structured monitoring and evaluation framework is applied throughout the programme, including financial tracking, site visits, progress and final reports, and regional dissemination to support transparency, learning, and continuous improvement.

Enablers For Sustainability Performance And Impact

Leadership & Culture



Strong leadership from MF and AF anchor the programme's direction and delivery. Alignment with Maybank's Humanising Financial Services mission ensures sustained commitment across countries and internal stakeholder buy-in.



Strategy

eYAA supports Maybank's strategic ambition to uplift the lives of two million households across ASEAN. The programme also aligns with regional youth development priorities by promoting youth volunteerism, empathy, and sustainable community engagement.



Process

A transparent and regionally harmonised process governs the selection of youths and partner organisations through an online platform. Core programme components include orientation workshops, mentor matching, toolkits, and structured reporting to ensure consistency and quality across cohorts.



Governance

Defined roles, selection panels, and documented scoring criteria ensure accountability throughout the programme. Cohort-level progress and outcomes are reviewed by senior management from MF and AF to provide oversight and support continuous improvement.



Resources

MF funds all major aspects of the programme, including travel, training, grants, and operational support, through PATAMI allocations. AF contributes regional expertise, networks, and implementation support to strengthen programme delivery.



People

MF and AF teams collaborate across programme design, execution, and review stages. CSOs, SEs, and Maybank employees contribute as mentors and partners, while participating youths gain hands-on leadership and community-building experience.



ESG Data

Structured data collection supports programme monitoring and evaluation across the eYAA lifecycle. AF's monitoring and evaluation framework enables ongoing alignment with Maybank's ESG priorities and social impact objectives.



Digital Transformation

Digital tools support regional coordination, online applications, training delivery, and programme communications, enhancing efficiency and enabling broader reach through digital storytelling.



Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement

AF provides regional coordination, credibility, and access to ASEAN networks. CSOs, SEs, programme alumni, and local organisations contribute local insights and implementation capacity, while engagement with ASEAN youth platforms supports regional alignment.



Supply Chain and Procurement

While eYAA does not involve a traditional supply chain, local vendors are prioritised for logistics and venues. AF's procurement processes ensure transparency and support local economies.

Overcoming Barriers

Implementing a regional youth leadership programme across ASEAN required navigating coordination, quality assurance, and contextual diversity at scale.

1. Coordinating Youth and Partners Across Diverse ASEAN Contexts

Managing YVs, CSOs, and SEs across 10 countries presented challenges related to timelines, language, regulations, and culture. MF and AF addressed this through clear engagement structures, standardised documentation, and regular coordination mechanisms, supported by AF whereby it is monitored through consistent progress tracking.

2. Ensuring Project Quality and Community Relevance

While all participants demonstrate strong motivation, experience levels varies from one youth volunteer to another. To ensure meaningful outcomes, the programme integrates structured training, hands-on mentorship by CSOs and SEs, and team compositions that combine students and working professionals to strengthen project design and execution.

3. Navigating Local Community Engagement and On-Ground Implementation

The diversity of community needs across ASEAN requires culturally sensitive engagement.

Working closely with local CSOs, SEs, and community leaders help YVs co-design initiatives, secure community buy-in, and implement projects in a respectful and locally relevant manner.

4. Managing Logistics, Safety and Programme Continuity

Cross-border deployment involves logistical and safety considerations, further complicated by post-pandemic uncertainties. MF and AF mitigated these risks through structured deployment protocols, full logistical support, and flexible delivery models—including hybrid training and phased implementation—to ensure continuity and participant safety.

Impact and Results

Since its launch in 2018, eMpowering Youths Across ASEAN (eYAA) has delivered sustained, multi-level impact across youth participants, communities, partner organisations, and the wider ASEAN ecosystem. Through its cohort-based, region-wide model, the programme has evolved into one of MF's most enduring youth empowerment platforms.

1. Youth Empowerment at Regional Scale

eYAA has equipped ASEAN youths with practical leadership experience and cross-cultural exposure through structured training and on-ground implementation.

480 youth
changemakers



from all
10 ASEAN Member States



have participated across five cohorts



- Youths demonstrated strengthened leadership, communication, problem-solving, and teamwork skills, particularly in navigating diverse cultural and community contexts



- Participants gained first-hand experience in translating ideas into action through real-world project delivery, reinforcing long-term commitment to social impact



2. Meaningful Community Reach and Localised Solutions

Youth-led projects delivered tangible benefits to communities across ASEAN by addressing locally identified needs in partnership with CSOs and SEs.



eYAA projects have impacted over **100,000** community members across the region

- Each cohort deploys 10 community-based project teams, with interventions spanning:



Education and skills development



Livelihoods and income generation



Environmental sustainability



Empowerment of marginalised groups

- Communities reported improved morale, skills development, and engagement as a result of youth-led initiatives implemented in collaboration with trusted local partners

3. Strengthening Civil Society and Social Enterprise Capacity

Beyond youth outcomes, eYAA has strengthened the ecosystem of CSOs and SEs involved in programme delivery.

- Partner organisations benefited from increased visibility, expanded reach, and opportunities to pilot innovative, youth-driven solutions
- Long-term partnerships between CSOs, SEs, MF, and the AF were reinforced through repeated cohort engagements and shared learning

4. Growing Demand and Transformative Youth Experiences

The sustained demand for eYAA reflects its credibility and perceived value among ASEAN youths.



Over **3,500** applications were received for Cohort 5 in 2025, significantly exceeding available slots

- Youth participants consistently cited the programme as a transformative experience that deepened their understanding of regional challenges and strengthened their commitment to community service and advocacy beyond the programme cycle

5. Internal Engagement and Organisational Impact

eYAA has also delivered positive internal outcomes for Maybank by fostering employee engagement and reinforcing the Group's purpose.

- Maybank employees actively contributed as panel members, mentors, and programme supporters across cohorts
- The initiative strengthened internal pride and alignment with Maybank's Humanising Financial Services mission by enabling employees to support tangible regional social impact

6. Regional Recognition and ASEAN Alignment

eYAA's design and outcomes have been recognised within the ASEAN ecosystem.



- The programme is acknowledged as a flagship youth initiative by the AF and ASEAN Secretariat
- It contributes to multiple UN Sustainable Development Goals, including SDGs 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 17, and supports the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint and SOMY Work Plan



- The initiative reinforces MF's ASEAN accreditation and positioning as a long-term regional partner

7. Sustained and Ripple Effects Beyond Programme Cycles

The impact of eYAA extends beyond individual cohorts.

- Programme alumni, CSOs, and SEs continue to collaborate, advocate, and contribute to community development initiatives after programme completion
- These sustained relationships have generated ripple effects through continued youth engagement, local advocacy, and community-driven initiatives across ASEAN

Key Lessons Learned

1. Youth Potential Requires Structure to Translate into Impact

While enthusiasm is a strong foundation, eYAA's multi-cohort experience showed that structured capacity-building, mentorship, and clear project frameworks are critical to enable youths to deliver credible, community-based outcomes across diverse contexts.

2. Strong Partnerships Anchor Relevance and Delivery

Collaboration with the AF, CSOs, SEs, and local stakeholders ensured cultural sensitivity, grounded project design, and strong community buy-in. These partnerships were essential in navigating local realities and sustaining impact across ASEAN.

3. Scale Demands Robust Governance and Systems

Clear governance structures, standardised selection and monitoring processes, and early investment in digital tools helped maintain quality, fairness, and consistency across 10 ASEAN Member States. Embedding impact measurement early strengthened learning and programme improvement over time.

4. Early Community Immersion Strengthens Project Design

Deeper and earlier engagement with communities—particularly in remote or culturally distinct settings—was identified as a key enabler for more contextually relevant and effective youth-led interventions.

5. Cross-Cultural Exposure Builds ASEAN Identity and Empathy

Working across diverse ASEAN communities deepened youths' understanding of regional challenges, strengthened intercultural skills, and reinforced a shared sense of ASEAN identity and cohesion.

6. Sustained Engagement Multiplies Long-Term Impact

The emergence of alumni networks highlighted the value of structured post-programme engagement. Continued collaboration among alumni, CSOs, and partners extends the programme's impact beyond individual cohorts.



Maybank has been a participant of the UN Global Compact since 2022

Through its alignment with the UN Global Compact's Ten Principles and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the eMpowering Youths Across ASEAN (eYAA) initiative is anchored in responsible business practices and internationally recognised development priorities. This alignment reinforces ethical standards, transparency, and accountability across programme delivery, while supporting youth-led projects that contribute to SDGs 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 17.



Participation in the UN Global Compact has also provided MF with access to peer learning, knowledge resources, and global best practices, strengthening programme governance, monitoring, and impact reporting to support sustained regional impact.

“ Supporting the eYAA over the past five cohorts has been one of the most rewarding experiences for us at MF. We have seen young people grow in confidence, lead meaningful community projects, become community elected leaders, and even establish their own CSOs after joining the programme. One highlight was meeting alumni who turned their workshop idea into a real initiative that now benefits hundreds. Moments like these reaffirm our belief that investing in youths creates lasting change. **”**

Izlyn Ramli,

Head, Group Corporate Affairs, Maybank & Chief Executive Officer, Maybank Foundation



“ At the AF, we believe true empowerment means equipping youth to be active shapers of change. Our eYAA goes beyond traditional volunteerism. This year, our 100 youth volunteers, aged 19 to 35 are actively co-designing community projects with their CSO and SE partners during the eYAA Regional Capacity-Building workshop.

They're not just implementing; they're bringing ideas to refine initial concepts, ensuring projects are truly innovative and responsive to community needs. This hands-on approach builds crucial skills, preparing them to tackle real-world issues. It's about bringing the youth's energy and creativity into the heart of community development. **”**

Dr Piti Srisangnam,
Executive Director, ASEAN Foundation



THE TEN PRINCIPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COMPACT



HUMAN RIGHTS

- 1 Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and
- 2 make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.



LABOUR

- 3 Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
- 4 the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour;
- 5 the effective abolition of child labour; and
- 6 the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.



ENVIRONMENT

- 7 Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;
- 8 undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and
- 9 encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.



ANTI-CORRUPTION

- 10 Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

The Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact are derived from: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Labour Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the United Nations Convention Against Corruption.

ABOUT UN GLOBAL COMPACT NETWORK MALAYSIA & BRUNEI

United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) is a strategic policy initiative for businesses that are committed to take actions to advance broader societal goals. UN Global Compact Network Malaysia & Brunei (UNGCMYB), the official country network of UNGC, is the leading advocate for business sustainability action in Malaysia and Brunei. We empower both corporates and SMEs through value-creating initiatives across learning, connections, and enablers to Forward Faster a collective sustainable future. We support Malaysian and Bruneian companies in aligning with the Ten Principles and contributing meaningfully to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while providing access to partnerships, tools and knowledge sharing to advance responsible business practices.

Talk to us about joining us or visit our website at www.ungcmyb.org



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