



**COLLABORATIVE TRANSFORMATION :
UNLOCKING YOUTH POTENTIAL**

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP DISCUSSION 20 MAR 2020

PREPARED BY



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 20th March 2020, the Social Innovation Movement (SIM) held its first Thought Leadership Dialogue discussion under its Collaborative Transformation initiative “Unlocking Youth Potential”. This dialogue discussion, the first of the series, aimed to bring together relevant stakeholders currently supporting underprivileged youths in various capacities to identify gaps and ways to collaboratively build robust social innovation models and drive inclusive youth programs. The dialogue was held with 8 participants from 5 youth-based organizations and chaired by SIM. Input on the topics of discussion was also collected from 2 organizations post-session via questionnaire.

The dialogue started off with the definition of 'full youth potential'. It was mutually shared that “full youth potential” comprise of 1) The ability to make informed decisions, 2) Having access to information, education, and resources and 3) Having purpose, confidence and self-worth, and 4) playing impactful roles in society. In addition, it was also generally agreed that underprivileged youths are youths, usually under the B40 classification, who lack access to opportunities to education, jobs, social mobility, etc.

Recurring themes identified during the discussion were narrowed down into 4 categories:

- **Recruitment of Opportunity Youth**

Challenges in engaging and recruiting Opportunity Youth, youth aged 16 to 24, that are neither in school or participating in the labour market.

- **The Importance of Long-Term Relationship Building**

Effective youth development programs starts with building long-term relationships

- **Monitoring, Sustainability and Scalability of Program**

Challenges and gaps identified in post event monitoring and scalability of impact.

- **Self Esteem & Self Confidence**

Self - esteem and self confidence continues to be one of the major barrier in youth development.

Further research into the identified themes and discussions with other relevant stakeholders are needed to determine strategic solutions and partnerships.

PARTICIPANTS

ORGANIZATION

1. Malaysian Care
2. Majlis Belia Malaysia
3. Biji Biji Initiative
4. Selangor Youth Community
5. MySkills Foundation
6. Shelter Home For Children
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RECRUITMENT OF OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

One of the major themes discussed was the lack of focus on opportunity youth in existing youth development programs. Opportunity youth, or previously termed “disconnected youth”, are youth (age 16 to 24) that are neither in school or participating in the labour market. Participants in the dialogue shared that their youth development programs are mostly targeted to youth aged between 13 to 18 years old, usually targeted to specific communities (eg. low income and refugees).

The challenges reported on opportunity youth by the participants are narrowed down to lack of manpower and resources, reluctance from opportunity youths to participate in programs, as well as difficulty in identifying this group in society. It was shared that this group of youth are more keen on looking to generate income and typically obtain jobs through peers and inner circles. Difficulty in identifying this group may also be due to the fact that this group has left family homes and thus been “absorbed” into society at large, making them harder to be identified geographically. Hence, current programs that address younger youth (at-risk or in school) take precedence as a preventative and early intervention strategies.

Each participants shared their views on their current target groups and their aims to include different age groups to ensure a holistic approach. This showcases that, with a systematic ecosystem, different organisations can know what other organisations are doing, thus producing a pipeline of programs for different aged youths in achieving their full potentials.

“Our focus has always been 18 and below, but it’s something that needs to be discussed. How we can tap into these group of older youths who are so unsettled in their life right now.”

Malaysian Care

“Somebody that is already 18, 19, they won't surrender for a teen program. All they believe is “I want to work. I want to get cash in my hand”... These are the common excuses we received. So I want to avoid that and make earlier intervention when they are 13.”

MySkills Foundation

THE IMPORTANCE OF LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

“So how we approached this, in one example is through sports. We started off by just playing sports with them first. And then through the sports activity, we gather youths. And from there, we build relationships with them. Once the relationships are formed, we will then able to work with them through multiple levels. Youth would not come in if we just come up and say “Hey, let’s join this program, we want to teach you about healthy relationships”. It’s through something that they are interested in, and it grew into something very substantial for them. “

Malaysian Care

Another issue that was brought forward during the discussion was difficulty in youth recruitment. Several participants expressed struggles in attracting and sustaining interest from youths and convincing them the value of their respective programs. Youth participants are reported to be difficult to identify and reach, or do not fully commit in programs. In most cases, underprivileged youths have to be recruited through on-ground outreach or through community heads as digital outreach can be restricted to echo-chamber effects. Furthermore, Youths are often observed to be lackadaisical, unmotivated, lacking aspirations, reserved, not communicative, and prefer to prioritize other factors in their lives (such as income).

While it is a problem acknowledged by most participants, some shared methodologies used that has been proven effective. This includes the effectiveness of long - term relationship building in garnering youths’ interest. Long-term relationship building may be developed through creating activities and programs catered to their specific interests such as sports and games, youth centres with facilities as well as peer mentorship. Once familiarity and relationship has been established, youths are more likely to be keen to participate in other programs offered. Additionally, through relationship building, program owners are able to understand and develop suitable programs that suit youths’ needs and interests.

“Sometimes they call you in the middle of the night, some parents will be calling 'my child just ran away with boyfriend' we have to become counsellors and not influence their decisions as well. We need to give them the power to make decisions, then only they can make ethical decisions”

MySkills Foundation



MONITORING, SUSTAINABILITY & SCALABILITY

One of the concerns identified by participants is post-program monitoring to ensure the sustainability of impact achieved on youths. While most of the youths programs are successfully run, many programs (and participants) still struggle in maintaining its outcome. This is due to the lack of resources in continuity of engagement and programs as well as monitoring of youths' progress post programs.

"We get a pool of young people, but I think one of the ways that we find it hard to engage is afterwards. The engagement after the program. During the program they will behave their best. We can have as many interventions as we want, upskilling for them, to prepare them, what matters is the engagement afterwards as well"

Selangor Youth Community

Despite efforts in long - term relationship building and investment in longer duration programs to engage youths, priorities are also needed to be placed on scalability - running the program for the next group of youths to be "transformed". Hence, program owners may not be able to provide further support on youths that complete programs. For example, vocational training will require job matching at the end of the program, and youths matched to the jobs require further support and attention to maintain its impact. But, this cannot be done as the resources are allocated to other groups of youths that are in need vocational training.

Conversely, as effective programs require a long- term relationship, most resources are invested in building this and leaves minimal resources to replicate, and scale the programs to other youths in the communities or different communities.

Perhaps, there is a need for a Collaborative Transformation initiative that strategically streamline programs that solely focus just on building communities, just on running capacity building programs, and specifically just on monitoring to ensure a holistic end-to end solution for youth development.



"We feel it is important for them to have that, and that's why we want to reach out to their support group, after the program, that can help us sustain the engagement with them. So the support group should come from marginalized group as well, but has been successful in life. "

Selangor Youth Community

SELF ESTEEM & SELF CONFIDENCE

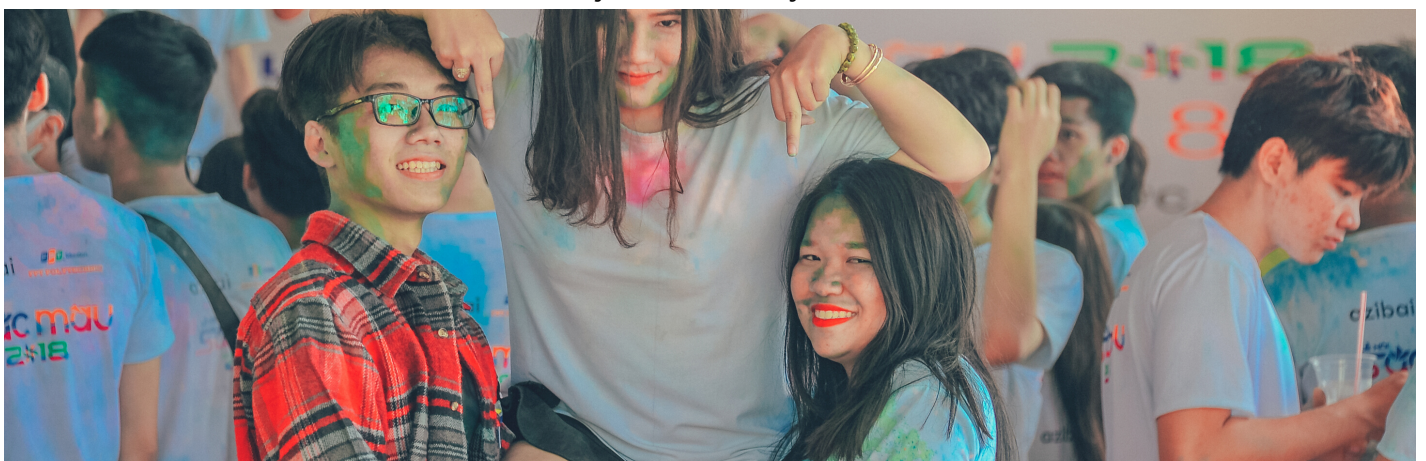
The largest theme that was discussed in terms of observed youths' problem by participants was self-esteem and self-confidence. This comes with no surprise as youth is a crucial age in human development, and is known to be the phase in life where a person is most vulnerable psychologically. It is during this time that youth needs as much support as possible to help facilitate them through this confusing time so that they can have healthy, productive and impactful lives.

In fact, it was agreed by all participants that the struggle with self-esteem and self-confidence issues are more pronounced with this group. There may be various reasons for this, including family negligence, deficient environment and poor socio-economic background. Family negligence or lack of attention from family leaves the youth with free unattended time and this usually leads to negative peer pressure and influence. It was also interesting to note that some participants expressed that social support and public perception also contributes to self-esteem and self-confidence challenges for the youth communities.

Moreover, the lack of self-esteem and confidence often creates susceptibility to external influence. Peer pressure, it was discussed, influences youth's decisions and typically, such peer pressures leads to negative outcomes. This leads to herd mentality and subsequently, herd motivation. This group tends to be more uninterested in joining provided programs if the collective group does not join. Thus it is important for program owners to create programs that show empathy, acknowledge and treat youths with respect.

"Within just one month, about 20 of them had dropped out. When we asked them, they would say they're not interested, they don't want to do this. They don't want to talk about it and they feel that "No, we don't need help. We don't need any opportunity from you." Then we try to explain to them; "No, we are not putting you in some kind of category. We are trying to reach out to you, so that you can have better jobs, so you can have income, so you can support your family."

Majlis Belia Malaysia



OTHER MATTERS DISCUSSED:

The dialogue was an informative and an insightful session, covering a range of topics regarding youth development and empowerment. A series of dialogue to focus on each highlighted issues and findings are needed to understand them deeper and to collaboratively discuss actionable solutions. Some other matters discussed during the dialogue was :

1.Lack of Access

Due to socio-economic factors for underprivileged youths, many have to support their families or themselves and have to earn money rather than attending capacity-building programs. This deprives them of exposure and access to better opportunities. It was also reported that many underprivileged youths prioritize their own socioeconomic affairs.

2. Unevenly Distributed Youth Programs

Most youth development programs are centred around Klang Valley and thus many rural communities including Orang Asli are not being focused on and left out. Furthermore, youth programs mainly focused on Malaysian youths and thus, other vulnerable groups such as refugees remained underserved. This relates to the issue of scalability discussed above that is perhaps due to lack of resources.

3. Youth Leadership

Due to the various issues discussed above and more, youths tend to focus on their own affairs and thus are not empowered to lead and create positive impact for themselves, peers and subsequently society.

4. Impact Measurement

One of the participants brought forward a concern on how to determine and measure the effectiveness of outreach strategy and output of programs for the purpose of impact, sustainability and scalability.

CALL TO ACTION

The following key recommended actions were derived from the dialogue session :

Actions	Proposed Stakeholders
A need to know and understand each others' youth development program to ease collaboration via a comprehensive system mapping platform to increase collaboration, reduce wastage of resources and maximize impact	Government/NGOs: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To be the body that consolidate all things youth related• To support streamlining of collaborative strategies NGOs & CSOs : <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To share programs and initiatives to be contributed into the Collaborative Transformation Movement
To develop more sustainable solutions or programs to ensure inclusivity of 'Opportunity Youth'	All stakeholders to set mission to create more collaborative programs across stakeholders for Opportunity Youth
To develop youth development tool-kit and guidelines for programs	Government : <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To gather collective intelligence from NGOs and CSOs to develop toolkit & guidelines NGOs & CSOs : <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To share knowledge and experience for toolkit & guidelines

ABOUT SOCIAL INNOVATION MOVEMENT



ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION

Social Innovation Movement is a think tank that aspires to lead purposeful social innovations through research impact and systematic community development. We believe in collective intelligence for impact, particularly through working closely with corporates, academics, civil society organisations, government and local communities. Bringing together our own and others' initiatives, we are building a shared body of knowledge, evidence and insight about how communities are rewiring and reframing social innovation approaches.

ABOUT COLLABORATIVE TRANSFORMATION

As part of Social Innovation Movement's initiative, Collaborative Transformation designs effective pilot partnerships between relevant stakeholders towards achieving common thematic agendas. Aiming to drive social innovation frameworks holistically, it is a curated and structured avenue to identify opportunities and co-create solutions to achieve goals in a sustainable and impactful way.

Collaborative Transformation emphasizes an important discipline in open innovation: co-creation as a form of collective intelligence in action. In essence, various stakeholders come together to discuss targeted agendas openly and constructively; make actionable decisions with alignments; gather and share resources effectively; and pilot and scale impactful solutions collaboratively. With a long-term vision to build and strengthen the impact ecosystem, Collaborative Transformation advocates for social innovation capital.

CONTACT US



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