

# YOUNG ENGINEERS IN COMMUNITY SERVICE – “SHOW THEM WE CARE”

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This year, the Graduate & Student Section (G&S) of The Institution of Engineers, Malaysia (IEM) in collaboration with The Rotaract Club of Kuala Lumpur (RACKL), has embarked on our first community service project with the objective of improving the quality of life of less fortunate people. The G&S section, in collaboration with the RACKL, undertook the task of improving the living conditions of the residents of Stepping Stones Home by carrying out refurbishment and renovation works of their lavatory facilities. This was a dream project for the G&S as it created an opportunity for us to contribute our expertise (as young engineers) to the community.

Stepping Stones Home is a shelter home located in Taman Seputeh, housing 54 women and children. The women and children who live at the Home have been abandoned, neglected or were victims of abuse. The children's ages range from 3 to 22 years old. The residents of Stepping Stones Home currently live in an old bungalow, which is a rented premise.

During our initial visits to the home, we discovered the conditions of the lavatories were extremely poor. There was only one common bathroom and 2 toilets, one of which was exposed. This was undoubtedly insufficient for the large number of children staying at the home and furthermore, was incapable of providing privacy for growing children. At that time, all the wastewater was channeled to a pit sump located in a neighbouring house. This wastewater was overflowing the drain, creating unhygienic conditions and a foul smell.

The G&S volunteers decided that the construction of new shower stalls and lavatories were necessary and proposed that 3 new bathrooms and 3 toilets should prove sufficient for the children. After finalising the conceptual design of the toilets, we then decided a new septic tank would be necessary to cater to the large number of children. The cost of the project was estimated at about RM10,000.

As entirely non-profit organisations, the G&S and the RACKL kicked off the project by seeking sponsorship to fund this project. We were fortunate as we managed to quickly secure contributions from a few individuals and corporate organisations.

The construction work commenced on the 13 February 2004 and lasted till the 27 February 2004. The G&S volunteered to supervise the construction work and arrange for the construction workers. The construction work proved to be really challenging, especially when it came to installing the septic tank. We discovered that the water table level in the area was too high, causing a lot of

problems. Five days were required to install the 6ft tank into the ground; with the help of grown up boys from the Stepping Stones Home, we managed to put the tank in place and backfill the hole with sand and cement.

Thence, the construction work proceeded smoothly:

- Plumbing works for sewerage
- Brickwork to raise up the floor
- Construction of the wooden frames
- Installation of metal sheets
- Plumbing work for the cold water
- Flooring and other touch up work

The final stage of the project was the official launching of the new lavatories and shower stalls. The session started off with a welcome address by the President of the Rotaract Club of KL, Miss Elyse Lee. Guests present at the launching ceremony included members from the Rotary Club of KL DiRaja; President A. Kanesalingam, New Generations Service Director Attan Akmar and Rotarian Abdul Halim. Also present were Ir. P.E. Chong (Vice President of IEM) and several contributors of the project. After Miss Lee's speech, the caretaker of the homes, Pastor Johnson, delivered a moving speech mentioning how touched he was by the work of the IEM G&S and the Rotaract Club of KL, which has improved tremendously the living conditions of the residents of Stepping Stones Home. Sdr. Suresh Yegambaram (of the G&S), the leader of the project, then briefed the audience on the challenges faced by the volunteers in completing the project.

After that, the session was a formalised with a simple Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and a short tour of the shower and lavatory area.

## CONCLUSION

Sdr. Suresh Yegambaram's simple speech during the launching ceremony has inspired the G&S to continue with our efforts to help those who are not as fortunate. Consequently, the Graduate & Student Section has decided to organise a G&S Charity Dinner & Dance in June 2004, whereby proceeds from the dinner will be donated to another charity-based project.

For those who would like to participate or contribute to the Charity Dinner, please contact Sdr. Suresh Yegambaram, (012-3059967), Sdr. Yau Chau Fong (012-3882570) or e-mail us at [iemgs@yahoo.com](mailto:iemgs@yahoo.com)

More information on the Stepping Stones Homes renovation works and the G&S Charity Dinner & Dance is available at our website at <http://www.iem.org.my/external/g&s>

## **"SHOW THEM WE CARE"**

PS: The G&S Committee would like to thank the RACKL, all volunteers, and all sponsors who have contributed to the success of the Stepping Stones Home project. ■