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Pharmacists and volunteers dispensing medicine



From left: Albert Teo, Chairman of BEST Society, Alexander Yee, President of KiTA, Haji Abdul Karim bin Abdul Hamid, Pengurus Komuniti 1Malaysia-Sukau, Haji Saharon b. Ahmad, Head of Village-Sukau, Nasrah bin Mokshen, Pemaju Masyarakat Mukim Sukau and Baton Bijamin, Deputy Chairman of BEST Society.

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Volunteers transferring equipment and medicine supplies to Kg. Abai



Elephant sighting was the reward for the volunteers



The Borneo pygmy elephants

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SUKAU MEDICAL CAMP 2012



Medical Project Saved One Life and Treated 565 in Kinabatangan

A third medical project was organized by BEST Society in Sukau, Kinabatangan on 16-17th November. A joint project with Sky Community Bhd, Sabah State Health and Dental Department, Sukau Rainforest Lodge, Borneo Eco Tours and co-sponsored by Kinabatangan Corridor of Life Tourism Operators Association, Sabah (KITA) it was aimed to provide free medical and dental treatment to the community in Sukau, Bilit and Abai villages. Currently, the villagers in the areas have to travel 1-2 hours to the nearest hospital in Kota Kinabatangan or Sandakan to seek medical treatment.

A total of 68 volunteers including 7 doctors, 1 Medical Officer, 6 dentists, 9 nurses, 3 pharmacists, 1 nutritionist travelled 8 hours overland from Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan and Kinabatangan and spent four days to serve community. A total of 565 patients were treated including 208 seeking dental treatment (Sukau; 312, Bilit; 115 and Abai; 138). Among the most common diagnoses of the patients here include hypertension, diabetes, respiratory diseases and fungal infections and skin allergies. The medical project also saved the life of a boy, Mohammad Razman, 10, of Kg. Abai who was diagnosed just in time with acute appendicitis. He was sent by Borneo Eco Tours speed boat to Sukau, and thereafter, transferred by ambulance to Kinabatangan and Sandakan Hospital for immediate surgery.



Dr. Tan Boon Hooi recording blood pressure of a patient



The Team of volunteers



Registration of patients at Sukau Community Hall

This is the third medical project organized by BEST Society (www.bestsociety.org). The medical project cost a total of RM35,042.36 which include promotion, homestay (RM2,100.00) medicines (RM7,427.86), logistics, accommodation and meals of the volunteers. Main sponsors, KITA (www.kitaborneo.org) contributed a total of RM20,000.00 with the balance sponsored by BEST Society (RM4,259.56), Sukau Rainforest Lodge (www.sukau.com) (RM7,840.00) and Borneo Eco Tours (www.borneoecotours.com) (RM2,385.00) while Sky Community (www.skylinesib.com) co-ordinated the trip of the volunteers from government hospitals, private clinics and private sectors.

One of the patients at Kg. Bilit, Salina B. Tombok who was interviewed expressed his gratitude to the medical team.



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Risiman bin Bani, Kg. Bilit



Jamal bin Ingau, Kg. Abai



Dr. Narjit Kaur



Dr. Erin Ong

"This project is very beneficial for us. We don't have to travel far to Kota Kinabatangan for check up. There is no similar medical projects held here before", she said.

Another local patient who came here to seek dental treatment, Risiman bin Bani welcomed the medical outreach at Kg. Bilit. "It makes it convenient for the villagers, who have difficulties to go to the town. Everything is at our doorstep and we hope that such project will be held here more often".

Jamal bin Ingau, the head of village of Kg. Abai had nothing but praise for the effort to provide medical check up for the residents there.



Mohammad Razman being transferred by boat to Sukau for further action

"There's no medical facility in the village while other medical outreach programmes only catered to women and children. The journey to Sandakan by boat takes between one and two hours and the fee itself is RM20 per person per way, which is expensive for the residents here", he said.

Meanwhile, the medical project here offered a wonderful opportunity to volunteers and doctors to help and be acquainted with the local community.

"The initiative for community service done through the years in different ways by the BEST Society and Sky Community is very commendable as it portrays the heart of leaders, to love others as they love themselves. This is my first joining this camp in Sukau and it brings me joy to serve the poor who have difficulties in accessing even the most basic healthcare. The spirit of excellence was definitely among the volunteers, and numerous friendships were made and strengthened", said Dr. Narjit Kaur of Klinik Pergigian Beaufort.



The young Eco Warriors; Melanie Lam, Amity Kissey, Debra Chong, Amber Wong, Charis Koh, Shana Teo & Renee Bong

"I truly appreciate the opportunity to serve the community out of my normal routine hospital work. Volunteer work is always fun as new friendships and new experiences are made through serving both Kampung Sukau and Kampung Abai. I had the best time of my life; truly an unforgettable adventure - from sighting the Borneo Pygmy Elephant (rare opportunity) to riding night river cruise under the forest and looking for salt water crocodiles to convincing my patient why smoking is bad for him.", Dr. Erin Ong of Queen Elizabeth Hospital II, Kota Kinabalu told us in an interview.



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"I'm glad that others have been blessed through this camp and that we, everyone in the team have been blessed in return with new experiences, new friends, new changes, new ways of looking at things, all leading to new doors of opportunity and many different possibilities in the days to come. I have gained more than I can imagine from this trip. I truly have been blessed!", said Shana Teo of Eco Warriors, one of 7 teenage girls who volunteered in this project.

Another member of the Eco Warriors, Amber Wong was also inspired by the voluntary work.

"I feel super blessed to be picked as one of the young eco warriors and had the opportunity to go on this trip. Honestly, the day before the trip I was incredibly hesitant whether to go or not. Being born and raised in the city, sleeping without air conditioning at night, seeing insects and lizards all around and not having phone reception is one of the worst things ever. Throughout this trip, I was inspired by the work done by the whole medical team and the hearts they have for the patients. Despite having a small role during the trip, I felt satisfaction in contributing back to the community".

BEST Society's efforts to improve the health conditions of the people of Sukau dates back to 2001 when they sponsored a four year boy, Azizi Suhaimin B.Bahrani in the first of two operations on his cleft lip at Duchess of Kent Hospital, Sandakan. BEST Society also provided a one year allowance of RM100 per month for his 3-year old brother, Mohd. Suhaizan who is suffering from thalassaemia, which required monthly transfers to hospital in Sandakan for blood transfusion.



It has been a wonderful opportunity to partner with different organizations to bring to fulfilment the goals and objectives of this mobile medical and dental clinic in the middle of the rainforest, literally, as it rained the whole of first day of the clinic.

Apart from delivering treatment and promoting health, nutrition and dental care to the less privileged villagers in Kampung Sukau, Abai and Bilit, the ripple effects of the Camp, to name a few - of excellent teamwork and unity, camaraderie, fostering lasting friendships as volunteers worked shoulder to shoulder, energized by each others' selfless contribution and the memorable Kinabatangan River cruises, amidst much laughter and fun - was experienced by all who participated and I am amongst the blessed ones.

Sowing into lives and making a difference - without counting the cost, with no strings attached - voluntary activities such as this is liberating and rewarding! Thank you for the privilege and opportunity to serve.

Annie Tseu,
Volunteer & Camp Co-ordinator
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Introduction to Nature and Community Work



Excited young volunteers with boundless energy and endless questions including "Are we there yet?"

Daniel Lee, 6,
Timothy Cheng, 6,
Jayden Cheng, 4



Early exposure to wildlife preservation and community work and having lots of fun!



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