

# Loving our rivers

Students from Perak learn the importance of waterways such as the Kampar River.

SEVENTY-FIVE students were recently trained as "River Rangers" to encourage them to protect our source of life: our rivers.

The project was called W.A.T.E.R (Working Actively Through Education and Rehabilitation), a joint initiative between Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Kampar (Utar Kampar) and GAB Foundation.

Elaborating on the initiative, GAB Foundation Trustee, Renuka Indrarajah, said, "In Malaysia, 90% of our water supply comes from rivers, yet only 58% remain clean. GAB Foundation aims to spark positive changes in our surrounding communities.

"Through our W.A.T.E.R Project, we want to change mindsets and empower Malaysians to take greater ownership of our rivers.

"The younger generations are key to this, since they are catalysts for change."

During the one-day workshop, participants learnt about the effects of river pollution and the steps taken to preserve our natural water sources, starting with the rivers in the vicinity.

The topics covered included river basin ecosystems, river monitoring methods, and most importantly: why people need to actively safeguard their water, especially through effective waste management.

The students who participated in the workshop came from Utar Kampar, Universiti Kuala Lumpur Royal College of Medicine Perak (UniKL RCMP), Perak College of Technology, Cosmopoint College (Ipo) and Politeknik Ungku Omar.

To put their theoretical knowledge to test, the workshop included a field trip to the Kampar River, for the students to try out the river monitoring methods for themselves.

Speaking on his experience during the programme, Leo Mixsbohic Edwin from UniKL RCMP said, "I have learnt how crucial it is for us to do our part



Some of the participants of the W.A.T.E.R (Working Actively Through Education and Rehabilitation) project. — Photos: GAB

in protecting and saving our natural water sources.

"By participating in today's workshop, I am motivated to be an active member of the River Rangers and implement the vital steps I have learnt to help preserve our rivers for future generations."

The W.A.T.E.R Project is a joint collaboration between GAB Foundation and Global Environment Centre (GEC) that began at Sungei Way (Petaling Jaya, Selangor) in 2007.

Based on the initial success, the project was extended to the Kinta River (Perak) in 2012, with more emphasis on educational outreach and smart partnerships with local stakeholders, including government agencies and communities, as well as Utar Kampar.

The Smart Ranger and River Ranger programmes were two initiatives adopted in partnership with the Department of Irrigation and Drainage Perak (DID Perak) and GEC.

The main focus is training special interest groups on river

basin management and solid waste management, providing a holistic and long-term approach to river conservation within the state.

Dr Yap Vooi Voon, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Green Technology at Utar Kampar said,

"Through the W.A.T.E.R Project, we are able to provide a platform for students from all over Perak to find out first-hand the impact of river pollution and how critical it is for all of us to include river conservation and proper waste management into our daily lives," he added.

Over the past decade, the Foundation has invested more than RM6.9 million in the W.A.T.E.R Project, engaging with over 30,000 people to conserve key water sources around the country.

Working together with local authorities and community-based organisations, the project has created awareness, especially among youths, to play an active role in river protection and management issues.



The students gathering samples of plants and animals for observation.