

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release



YAYASAN SIME DARBY EXTENDS ADVOCACY GRANT FOR MALAYSIAN AIDS FOUNDATION TO CHAMPION ENDING AIDS

RM 850,000 grant from Yayasan Sime Darby will enable the Malaysian AIDS Foundation and Malaysian AIDS Council to undertake high-impact HIV advocacy projects in community development, resource mobilisation and stigma reduction for another three years, coinciding with the end of the Championing Ending AIDS strategic plan.

KUALA LUMPUR, 15 APRIL 2017 – Yayasan Sime Darby (YSD) has extended its sponsorship of the Strengthening National Advocacy on HIV project for the Malaysian AIDS Foundation (MAF) and its sister organisation the Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) for another three years beginning November last year, worth a total of RM 850,000.

YSD's previous support to the organisations, which ended in April 2016, amounted to RM 870,000.

The extended support will fund the salaries of three key staff members of the MAF working on its advocacy strategy towards sustaining an enabling environment for the national AIDS response in the areas of community development, resource mobilisation, and stigma reduction aligned with the MAC and MAF Strategic Plan 2016-2020: Championing Ending AIDS.

"Despite consistent reduction in new HIV infections or decline in the HIV notification rate, HIV/AIDS remains a threat to the health of the Malaysian community as there were 3,330 new HIV infections reported in 2015. Therefore, efforts to address issues that exacerbate the epidemic must be accelerated," Puan Hajjah Yatela Zainal Abidin, Chief Executive Officer of YSD, said.

"This is why YSD decided to continue supporting MAC and MAF on their advocacy strategy, to ensure that the rights of people living with HIV are protected, stigma is reduced and treatment access is improved.

"The effective implementation of the harm reduction programme led by MAC and MAF has catapulted Malaysia towards being a leader in the region, especially due to the Ministry of Health Malaysia's Needle and Syringe Exchange Programme which led to a significant 49% decrease in new HIV infections."

"YSD's funding has also enabled MAC to work closely with the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and the State Islamic Councils to mitigate stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV.

"As the work conducted by MAC and MAF has indicated significant impact in these areas, YSD is confident that both organisations are able to lead the fight against HIV/AIDS," she said.



Yayasan Sime Darby (YSD) presents a mock cheque of the grant extension for the Strengthening National Advocacy on HIV programme to the Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) and Malaysian AIDS Foundation (MAF) at the HIV & Islam Roundtable Meeting welcome dinner reception. From left: Muzdalifah Mohd Nasir, Head Projects, YSD; Puan Hajjah Yatela Zainal Abidin, Chief Executive Officer, YSD; Tan Sri Dato' Haji Othman Bin Mustapha, Director-General, Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM); Professor Dato' Dr Adeeba Kamarulzaman, Chairman, MAF; and Bakhtiar Talhah, President, MAC.

Launched in 2013 at a critical juncture when MAC and MAF were faced with the challenge of sustaining their workforce due to limited resources, YSD's support has helped both MAC and MAF to strengthen their organisational capacity to develop and expand their activities, networks and linkages on HIV advocacy and beyond.

Most notably, the HIV & Islam programme grew as a result of MAC's continued engagement with the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) and State Islamic Councils and Departments. More than 20 workshops have been conducted nationwide to train over 760 imams and religious leaders using the [HIV & Islam Manual](#) on HIV related issues affecting the Muslim community, the least of which is stigma and discrimination, the single largest barrier to access to HIV healthcare.

The grant has also helped the MAF to revitalise the [Malaysian Business Consortium on HIV and AIDS \(MBCH\)](#), a platform for the Malaysian corporate sector to provide leadership and pool resources for the AIDS response. The MBCH Forum, held in August last year, united 30 businesses and corporations on a renewed commitment to ending AIDS at the workplace through policy change and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Another milestone of the YSD advocacy grant for the MAC and MAF is the expansion of the [Red Ribbon Youth Club](#), a youth AIDS leadership and peer education programme with a membership base of 10,000 students from 17 local universities. Through student volunteer projects under the Red Ribbon Youth Club banner, the MAC and MAF succeeded in raising over RM 100,000.

“As much progress has been made and resources continue to be scarce, the YSD grant extension is especially crucial now in keeping the momentum and ensuring the growth, development and sustainability of the MAC and MAF to drive our advocacy efforts towards championing Ending AIDS,” remarked Bakhtiar Talhah, President of the MAC and Trustee of the MAF.

The grant extension, expiring in October 2019, will coincide with the aforementioned MAC and MAF Championing Ending AIDS strategic plan, the five-year organisational blueprint ending in 2020 that looks to strengthen the role of MAC and MAF in complementing the Ministry of Health Malaysia’s [National Strategic Plan for Ending AIDS 2016-2030](#) in four priority areas – organisational development and growth driven by values and principles; leadership, political and organisational commitment to the AIDS response; community systems strengthening; and resource mobilisation.

“Building on the successes and learning from the challenges faced in the first grant implementation, we will strive not only to expand our scope and reach but also break new grounds by introducing high-impact activities, frameworks and innovations that will effect meaningful change,” added Professor Dato’ Dr Adeeba Kamarulzaman, Chairman of the MAF.

Among the new key activities planned for the extended grant period is media sensitisation, a series of capacity building workshops for media practitioners on HIV journalism ethics and best practices to improve evidence-based reporting and shape public opinion on HIV and AIDS issues in hopes of achieving further stigma reduction.

News of the grant extension was announced at a welcome dinner reception to commemorate the National HIV & Islam Roundtable Meeting 2017, another key activity under the same grant. The event was organised in partnership by JAKIM, Ministry of Health Malaysia, MAC, MAF, and Yayasan Ihtimam Malaysia; and supported by YSD, [AbbVie Sdn. Bhd.](#), and Vistana Kuala Lumpur Titiwangsa.

“We are proud to align ourselves with the MAC and MAF at the forefront of championing Ending AIDS and, together, look forward to making more significant inroads into the national AIDS response,” concluded Yatela.

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Yayasan Sime Darby

Yayasan Sime Darby, or Sime Darby Foundation, was established in 1982 and is the primary driver of Sime Darby Berhad's Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives.

The objectives of Yayasan Sime Darby are supported by its five pillars, namely: community development; education; youth, sports and recreation; arts and culture; conservation of the environment and protection of ecosystems. While led by independent members of a Governing Council and managed by a dedicated team, Yayasan Sime Darby works closely with the Sime Darby Group, in areas of mutual interest.

Since its inception, Yayasan Sime Darby has awarded scholarships worth RM198 million to 2,090 students both in and outside Malaysia. It is supporting long-term research projects of significant scientific value like the Stability of Altered Forest Ecosystems (SAFE) project, which is the world's largest ecological project, a joint effort with the Royal Society (The UK and Commonwealth Academy of Science). Yayasan Sime Darby is also actively involved in the development and improvement of sports in Malaysia namely lawn bowling, cricket, tennis and golf. Under its community development pillar, Yayasan Sime Darby supports initiatives to promote the well-being of disadvantaged people irrespective of race, culture, religion, creed or gender and works with established organisations to promote the development of arts and culture.

Malaysian AIDS Foundation

The Malaysian AIDS Foundation (MAF) was formed in 1992 to raise and administer funds to support the activities and programmes of Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) and its Partner Organisations. MAF funds prevention, treatment and care programmes conducted by MAC. MAF also distributes corporate donors' funds to support projects that have been unable to secure government funding or projects located in parts of the country where resources are scarce. Learn more at <http://yam.org.my>.

Malaysian AIDS Council

The Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) was established in 1992 to serve as an umbrella organisation to support and coordinate the efforts of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on HIV & AIDS issues in Malaysia. MAC works in close partnership with government agencies, the private sector and international organisations, to ensure a committed and effective NGO-led response to the HIV epidemic. In addition to providing nationwide coverage of HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services, MAC and its Partner Organisations serve as the common voice for communities most affected by HIV & AIDS in the country. Visit www.mac.org.my to learn more.

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