

Dear Team

This morning, 20 of our pre-school children were at the Tanglin Trust School welcoming 5 of their teachers who had just returned from Sepang, Kuala Lumpur on bicycles. These teachers were the Heads of the Junior Houses and they certainly led by example as they impressed on their students the value of service to the community and the joy of doing so. Together they had covered some 380km on a journey that began yesterday morning to raise funds for our Family Learning Centre Programme. The school appreciated how the programme brought families together to resolve difficulties and celebrate successes and decided that “quality family time” will be their gift to our children. <https://vimeo.com/64860342>
It was Junior House Day and the students in a show of support for their teachers, collectively covered 380km. Our children chipped in too and in the process made new friends. The friendship was a lovely sight to behold. Children sharing food, running around in the gym, laughing and basically having a great time together inspired and convinced the school and us to make our visits to the school a regular feature in our calendars.

Please excuse the cliché but like any charity in the social sector, we exist to make the world a better place. However, what really is our value proposition to children and their families? While we give out food and keep kids off the street, it is not exactly food or shelter. I would say our value proposition is friendship. Friendships between and among families, friends and volunteers. Friendships within and between neighbourhoods.

We leveraged on a food distribution exercise to connect neighbours and were heartened at how much neighbourliness there was among our members. We began by sharing with one household that like them, several of their neighbours were receiving food rations too. We elaborated that our difficulty was that we did not have the storage space to hold the rations indefinitely and needed them collected as soon as they arrived. Were they willing to co-ordinate the food distribution among their neighbours? Hardly anyone turned us down and everyone gladly cooperated with their neighbours to get the job done. One woman was so organized with a note book and a checklist that we started feeling a little embarrassed about our own organizing skills.

A shared responsibility facilitates friendship, a sense of belonging and community. By organizing people to work together, the gift of food became food for friendship.