

# UNITED WORLD COLLEGE MALAYSIA SHORT COURSE

**2018 REPORT:  
ARCHITECTS OF DIVERSITY  
18-25 AUGUST**

# FOREWORD



As a Malaysian alumna of the United World Colleges (UWC), I have often thought about how my UWC experience could benefit my home society on a wider scale. The lessons learnt during those intense two years of living with peers of various backgrounds have made me a firm believer of two truisms: the young are curious and capable of grappling with questions of inclusive co-existence regardless of how difficult the task seems; and diversity can come in many forms and deserves to be celebrated.

So, it gives me deep joy and hope that Architects of Diversity (AoD), the brainchild of our alumni, has made its successful debut. I was certainly not alone in wanting to link my UWC experience to meaningful initiatives in Malaysia (not that there was any doubt on that front), and Sanggeet, Jason and their entire team had put into concrete, implementation plans the enduring vision of a program that allows Malaysian youth to celebrate and critically engage with the topic of diversity and becoming change makers.

Digging their heels in and criss-crossing geography and time zones, our alumni performed the end-to-end tasks of fundraising, publicity, formulating lesson plans, and performing on-the-ground logistics for a program that gathers young people from Sabah to Perlis. For an unforgettable week that made them learn more about themselves and their role in building the healthiest version of diversity in the Malaysian context.

With the support of our alumni and the wider UWC network, AoD's first incarnation came to be as a UWC Short Course and received generous support from the UWC International Office as well as a "Projects for Peace" grant received by one of our alumni from his university in the United States. Although making the dream a reality required support beyond Malaysia's borders in its initial phase, we have always sought to make AoD come home, so to speak.

Incorporating the wider lessons of intercultural communication and understanding that we gained as alumni of the UWC with our desire to be active citizens of our beloved 'tanahair,' AoD is a program that is relevant to many organisations and individuals in Malaysia. There are lessons in communication, diversity, resilience, creative thinking and leadership that we believe could be invaluable to many other "architects" of Malaysian society.

This brief report is meant as an introduction to AoD and precursor to conversations with any parties in Malaysia with an interest in exploring experiential education modules or any empathy-building and teamwork-reinforcing activities for Malaysians of all backgrounds, especially the young.

On behalf of the UWC Malaysia alumni community, I extend my sincere appreciation for your time and express hope that AoD could become the starting point for exciting and uplifting initiatives in Malaysia in the future.

**Adriana Nordin Manan UWC USA '03**  
**President**  
**United World College Alumni Association Malaysia**

# ORGANISING TEAM

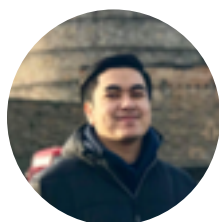
***Sanggeet Mithra (UWCCR '10)***  
***Lead Coordinator***

Since 2014, Sanggeet (UWCCR' 10) facilitated and coordinated UWC Short Courses in Spain and Turkey and has dreamt of bringing the impact of these programmes home for young Malaysians. Her professional background is in curriculum development for youth programmes and public policy research. She studied political science and Spanish at Scripps College (USA).

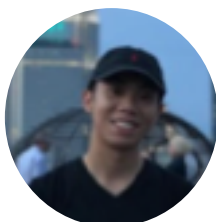


***Jason Wee (UWCCR '16)***  
***Lead Coordinator***

An undergraduate at the Woodrow Wilson School of Princeton University, Jason (UWCCR '16) is involved with the UWC movement as a committee member of the UWC Malaysia Alumni Association and a board member of the UWC Costa Rica Alumni Association. His passion lies in the development of interventionist methods to bridge Malaysia's ethno-religious communities.



***Fariq Sazuki***  
***UWCAD '15***



***Jurleo Jurit***  
***UWCAC '16***



***Seet RuiXi***  
***RBCUWC '16***



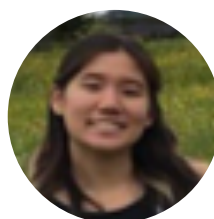
***Ng Sin Seanne***  
***MUWCI '10***



***Kong Phui Yi***  
***MUWCI '11***



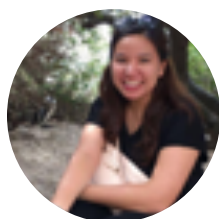
***Frieda Violet***  
***UWCAD '18***



***Syuen Chia***  
***UWCM '18***



***Nehemiah Moses***  
***MUWCI '10***



***Evelyn Wong***  
***LPC UWC '09***



***Teh Min Sern***  
***RCN UWC '08***



***Ikmal Azman***  
***UWC USA '15***



***Nicole Tan***  
***UWCAC '11***



# ABOUT

**Architects of Malaysia (AoD) is a program for young Malaysians to bridge the various communities and identities in the country.**

An initiative of Malaysian alumni from the United World Colleges, an international network of schools with intercultural understanding at its core, AoD gathers young people between 16-18 years old for a week-long experience of getting to know one another and charting their role in building a diverse and inclusive nation.

Through group activities, facilitated discussions and ample room for personal reflection and sharing, AoD allows young people who call Malaysia home an invaluable opportunity to understand Malaysia's complex yet fascinating diversity, and provides them the tools to be critically engaged, empathetic and committed stewards of the country's present and future.

**AoD does not shy away from the more difficult conversations of privileges, policies and stereotypes,** but as a program designed by Malaysian for Malaysians, these conversations are always nuanced and prompt deeper consideration of historical and social context while also forging conversations that look to the future.

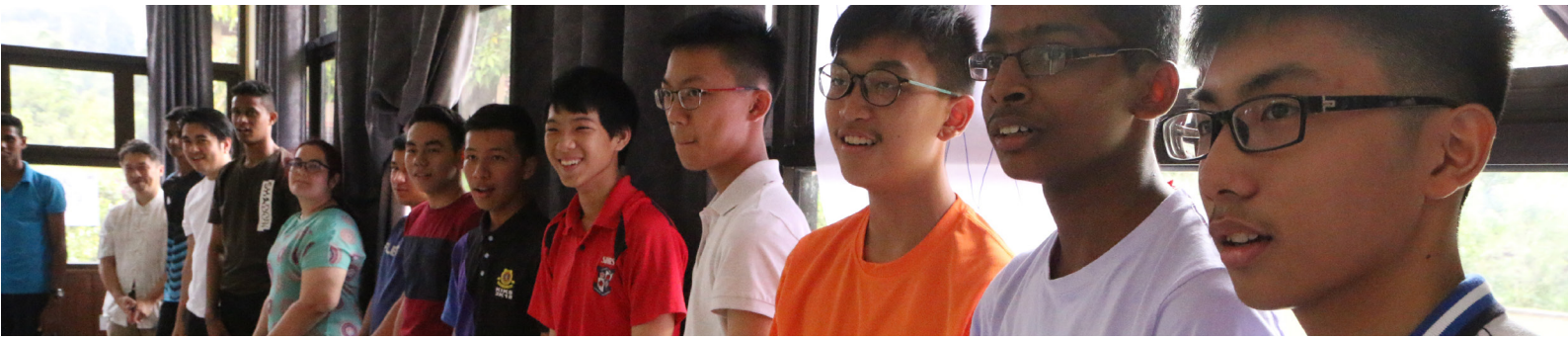
In addition, AoD guides participants to harness their youthful resolve and curiosity by proposing and pursuing independent projects related to the program's theme, after the week has concluded. Beginning in the week of the live-in camp and extending to their independent projects after the camp, AoD impels participants to understand the Malaysian society that they inhabit, and visualise how the country can be a more thriving and inclusive home to diversity in its multiple facets.

## *What is United World Colleges?*



UWC (United World Colleges) is a **global education movement that makes education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future.** At a time when the Cold War was at its height in 1962, the aim was to bring together young people from different nations to act as champions of peace through an education based on shared learning, collaboration and understanding.

Today, UWC has 17 schools and colleges on 4 continents. UWC college students are selected domestically, in more than 155 countries, through UWC's unique national committee system. **UWC also runs short courses and summer programmes to bring a UWC education and the UWC mission to a wider audience.**

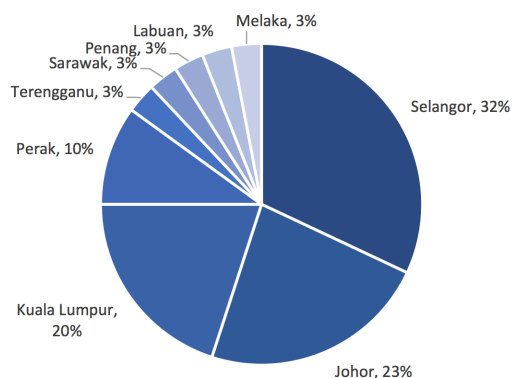


## About Architects of Diversity:

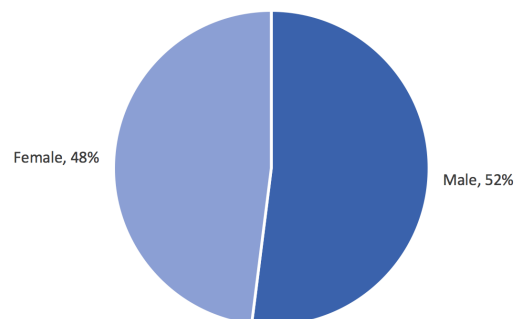
- A week-long residential program in Janda Baik, Pahang.
- 31 students from all over Malaysia, representing various states, ethnicities, religions and socioeconomic classes.
- Fully-sponsored accommodation and meals, alongside transport stipends with application.

**Participants were recruited with the intentionality of having as many facets of Malaysian society represented. We partnered with Teach for Malaysia to reach schools outside the Klang Valley. Additionally, we also recruited Afghan and Somali refugees in partnership with UNHCR.**

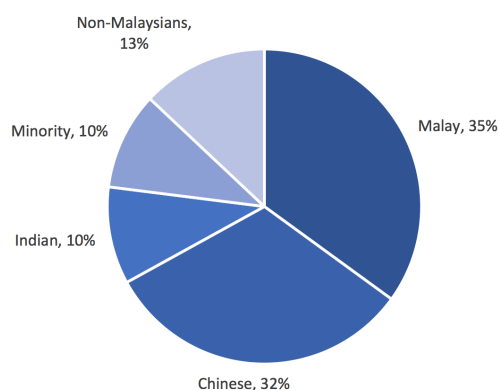
Participant Distribution by State



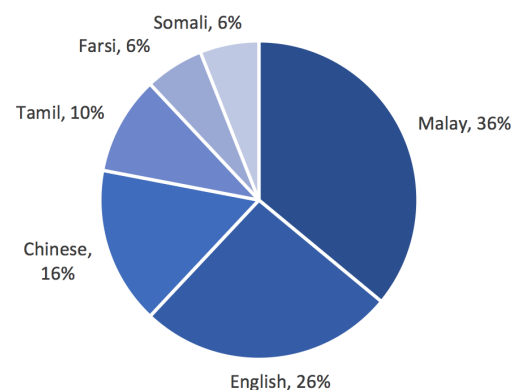
Participant Distribution by Gender



Participant Distribution by Race



Participant Distribution by First Language



# THEORY OF CHANGE

The sessions and activities were developed with the aim of encouraging participants to critically think and become aware of the critical questions surrounding diversity in Malaysia from the perspective of themselves as individuals and that of their peers. This was done through a mixture of intensely interactive activities, such as role plays, simulations, games and activities that promote critical thinking and questioning, either in a group or individual setting.

The Course curriculum took participants through three key stages of self- and collective-introspection on the following questions:



The stages can be seen as stepping stones that begin at an examination of self. *Who am I?* is required to prepare participants to open up and engage vulnerably through an examination of “self”. Experiential learning requires immersive, personal participation that calls into question one’s own background and biases. The goal of this stage is the awareness that our relative positions in society informs and skews the perception of our surroundings.

The second stage, *Who is my community?*, builds off the first by positioning the “self” in relation to other individuals that are essential to defining the “self”. The goal of this stage was to build transparent and intimate connections with the other participants. By entering these new relationships and conflicts with the knowledge that biases are informed by one’s position in society, participants were hopefully able to suspend stereotypes and pre-judgement to form empathic relationships.

The third and final stage, *Who is my society?*, deals with the broader question of Malaysia and prepared participants to “re-enter” the real world. It is the hope that the empathy built in the second stage will translate to an imagination of Malaysia that considers the various identities they have encountered throughout the AoD.

*A number of Keystone Activities highlight the underlying theory of experiential learning:*

### **Community Agreement**

On the first day of the course, participants signed a contract that highlights the need for mutual understanding and empathetic conduct throughout the duration of the program. The Community Agreement underlined an agreed upon personal conduct that helped facilitate debates and personal interactions.

### **Veil of Ignorance**

A full-day immersive activity allowed participants to step into someone else's shoes. Participants received an Identification Card of a person not of their identity (e.g. a Malay-Muslim girl from Johor may receive the IC of a Chinese-Christian boy from Sarawak). Throughout the day, they assumed this identity and experienced various simulations imitating the differentiated lives of various Malaysians. One of the highlights included an earthquake simulation, whereby participants were required to establish new laws of a village that were agreeable to all ethnic groups.

### **Game of Cities**

Participants were divided into small groups and provided the tools and resources to produce sufficient "assets" to earn an income - the group

with the highest income wins. Each group is given different kinds of tools and resources, some having the items that predisposed them to win. The game highlights the inequalities between not just nations, but also communities, certain identity groups and served as a touchpoint to talk about power and privilege.

### **Refugee Crisis Simulation**

In this activity, participants were randomly divided into groups of stakeholders - a town Mayor, refugee supporters, lobbyists against refugee intake, and the police. Collectively, participants needed to balance advocating for their assigned positions while appealing to each other to support their cause. Through debate and discussion, participants learned how policies shape and impact the realities of the marginalised in extreme ways.

### **Daily Reflection**

In order to internalise the various experiences of the heavy programming, a reflection session was held everyday to encourage mindfulness and introspection. We employed tried and tested methods of facilitating meaningful hours of rumination so that participants were actively conscious of how they felt and how they made others feel.





# IMPACT

We administered pre- and post-course surveys among participants to measure the impact of the program on their personal experiences.

- 50%** of participants met someone of a different race or religion they otherwise wouldn't have.  
(50% reported that none or very few of their classmates were of a different race/religion)
- 100%** of participants said they made a close friend of a different race or religion in AoD.  
(48.4% previously reported that they had very few or no close friends of a different race/religion)
- 23%** of participants decreased their self-identification with their ethnicity.
- 97%** of participants would strongly recommend AoD to a friend.

*"The AoD experience was one like no other for me. It was refreshing having it away from the buzz of the city. It was truly wonderful that we, all from different walks of life, countries and religions, could come together, share beliefs and form a happy, family-like community in such a short amount of time. During the course, we were exposed to a variety of things, both in and out of the sessions."*

- Teresa Lau Zi Yu (Johor)

*AoD is the most memorable camp that I've ever attended. I've met people from different places, ethnicities and religions around Malaysia. We discussed a lot of things about identity, personality, stereotypes, refugees and others. I still can't forget all the experiences that I've been through with my friends and facilitators.*

- Nurul Afiefa binti Mohamad Kamal (Perak)

*I arrived at KL Sentral expecting nothing. Will the people there be friendly, outgoing or quiet? I was quite worried as I do not know anyone there. I would say that this is the most diverse group I've met. There are people from different races, ethnics, religion and even nationality. I felt really open to do all sorts of actions and had a great time with all my new friends. I was also able to be exposed to very different perspectives and opinions. The discussion was about 'Ask and Offer' - I realized that I've been only focusing on 'Ask' all the while and never actually thought of what I'm able to offer.*

- Celina Wong (Selangor)

*The difficulties that I face in the comparison between race and religion is that people sometimes stereotype the humans with a specific race which have a definite religion. For instance, I noticed that Malay people are stereotyped in having an Islam religion. To be honest, I would sometimes think that way. Changing this perspective would be difficult for me due to my influences. However, this AoD has changed me in ways that I couldn't have imagined. My opinion on race and religion are completely different now. My identity is a vast variety of attributes that I barely know of.*

- Ian Chang (Selangor)



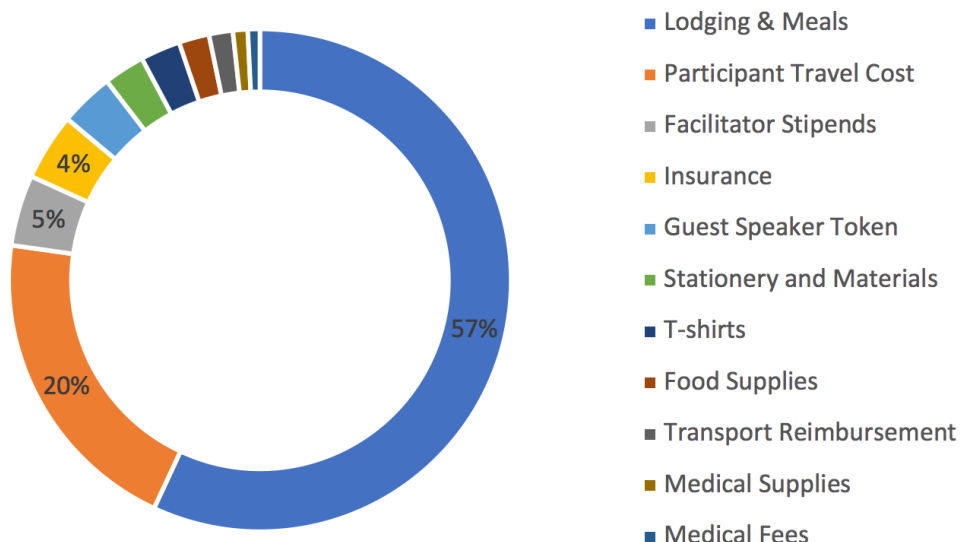
# FINANCES

The generous grants from the UWC International Office and Davis Projects for Peace allowed for the Short Course to be free for all participants. Additionally, we provided travel stipends for deserving applicants that greatly assisted with inter-state travel.

## *Expenditure 2018*

Category	Subtotal, RM
Lodging & Meals	26,220.00
Participant Travel Cost	9,354.00
Facilitator Stipends	2,100.00
Insurance	1,982.00
Guest Speaker Token	1,600.00
Stationery and Materials	1,217.65
T-Shirts	1,184.00
Food Supplies	900.48
Transport Reimbursement	707.35
Medical Supplies	437.55
Medical Fees	357.20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>46,060.23</b>

## *Distribution of Expenditure*



We thank Projects for Peace by Kathryn W. Davis and the United World Colleges International Office for providing the generous funding that made the first UWC Malaysia Short Course possible. We also thank the UWC Malaysia Alumni Association and UWC Malaysia National Committee for the constant support to the organising team.

The UWC Short Course Malaysia team is run entirely by volunteers, juggling work and university. Currently, we are looking for ways to expand our program and curriculum to make a bigger impact in the country. If you would like to support us financially or in-kind, or are interested in having a conversation on projects and collaborations, please contact us:

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