



A group of enthusiastic MSU students braved the sun to clean up Sungai Way.

Making a difference to river's cleanliness

University students and residents team up to improve Sungai Way's condition

The W.A.T.E.R (Working Actively Through Education and Rehabilitation) Project's latest river conservation and community service programme attracted the enthusiastic participation of 50 students from the Management and Science University (MSU), who joined hands with residents of Desa Mentari in an effort to clean up Sungai Way and encourage sustainable living practices.

The full-day programme enabled participants to understand and appreciate the importance of rivers as a crucial source of water as well as learn practical skills that empowered them to take action that would contribute towards conserving Malaysian rivers.

The W.A.T.E.R Project is a collaboration between GAB Foundation and the Global Environment Centre (GEC).

The day's event started off with students and residents teaming up in four groups to clean up the river and a nearby park.

The students also conducted pollution mapping for both residential and commercial areas, allowing them to better appreciate the river basin concept.

The students were then trained to conduct water quality testing using chemical test kits and biomonitoring indicators.

Subsequently, the participants engaged in an interactive and informative discussion at the Sungai Penchala Information Centre, a base camp for the W.A.T.E.R Project.

GAB Foundation trustee Renuka Indrarajah said, "Water is a key element of life.

In Malaysia, 97% of water used for domestic, industrial and irrigation purposes comes from rivers and reservoirs.

As such, GAB Foundation is committed to drive greater awareness for the importance of protecting our rivers. We have spent more than RM4mil on the W.A.T.E.R Project since 2007.

Partnering with GEC to implement conservation projects with the support of relevant government agencies, we have significantly improved the condition of Sungai Way."

"We have always emphasised the importance of involving the youth and are pleased to collaborate with MSU today.

"We call upon more people to take up the challenge and join our W.A.T.E.R Project initiatives. Together, we can make a difference by rehabilitating water sources in Malaysia," she said.

The 2km long Sungai Way, a tributary of Sungai Penchala, is a clear example of how education and outreach can work. When the W.A.T.E.R Project was established in 2007, Sungai Way was classified as Class IV-V according to the water quality index.

The river was heavily polluted and no living organism could survive under such conditions.

It took GAB Foundation, GEC, government agencies and the local community three years to rehabilitate the river and improve the water quality to Class III, making it suitable for living organisms.

GEC rivercare coordinator Dr. K. Kalithasan said, "Our work with GAB Foundation's W.A.T.E.R Project is truly impactful.

"Together, we have reached out to thousands of next-generation leaders, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to safeguard the sustainability of our water sources.

"Our efforts, including today's programme, have effectively complemented the policies and initiatives of government agencies to drive concerted river conservation besides bringing communities together to jointly improve the health of Malaysian rivers," he said.

Through their participation, MSU students affirmed their commitment to environmental conservation through proven programmes such as SMART (Start Managing All Resources



Participants systematically combing the Sungai Way river for rubbish.

Today) Ranger or River Ranger.

The SMART Ranger programme educates participants from schools and communities about managing natural and non-natural resources, with an aim to gather people who will champion the "Zero Waste Concept."

The River Ranger programme, on the other hand, is a comprehensive knowledge project which enables participants to appreciate every aspect of freshwater ecosystems, with the aim to create a class of citizens committed to protecting Malaysia's rivers.

Commenting on her students' participation in the W.A.T.E.R Project one-day activity, MSU lecturer Habibah Mohd Nor said, "The event has opened the eyes

of our students, learning and experiencing first-hand the importance of protecting rivers.

"I am certain the students will go back to their friends and families with the message that our everyday actions do impact the health of our water sources, and everyone has a duty to protect our rivers."

Since its inception, the W.A.T.E.R. Project has educated and engaged more than 30,000 people to preserve key water sources in the country, including Selangor, Penang and Perak.

The initiative has also launched a first-ever *Handbook on River Management*, as well as activities in the form of an annual river carnival, the National River Forum and three dedicated Rivercare Education Centres.