

The Jendela Project: Community Integration & English Immersion for Rohingya Refugees

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University of Pennsylvania • Johor Bahru, Malaysia • May 2022 - June 2022

Introduction and background: As of December 2021, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that there are 103,380 Rohingya refugees in Malaysia fleeing violence by the Burmese military.¹ The vast majority of refugees in the state of Johor Bahru are Rohingya.² Due to ethnic tensions, racial prejudice, and rising xenophobia, the Rohingya community remains ostracized.

Our program creates opportunities for community integration through collaboration between Rohingya children and students from Johor's public and international schools. These students share one thing in common: a home in Johor. We create an authentic experience where students work together to preserve their shared habitat. This is a project of placemaking—strengthening the sense of ownership between students and their home—by using environmental education to flatten hierarchies.

Developing English language skills is critical to our students' livelihood. Rohingyas have the lowest literacy rate among Malaysian refugees, at 20%.³ Learning English helps them connect with Malaysian neighbors and access social services. The significant need for English education is corroborated by our interviews with researchers and Rohingya community members. However, refugee children cannot attend Malaysian government schools⁴. Instead, they are educated through community learning centers. Our program creates an opportunity for the children to be immersed in an English-speaking environment, and creates a lasting language education partnership between Malaysian community learning centers and Penn.

We named our project Jendela, an old Malay word for window, because our team sees this program as an opportunity to provide a window of opportunity for refugee students. Growing up in Myanmar and witnessing the injustices caused by the Burmese government, Win is emotionally invested in supporting the Rohingya refugees as much as she can. Passionate about creating equitable opportunities and access to resources, Yasmin sees Jendela as a way to leverage Penn's wealth of expertise to serve under-privileged communities in Malaysia, her home.

Partnerships: We have established 3 partners who are supporting our project. [Cahaya Surya Bakti \(CSB\)](#) is a UNHCR-recognized community learning center for Rohingya children in Johor. We will work with their students, receive support from their teachers, and access their classrooms.

[Kelab Alami](#) is an environmental education non-governmental organization (NGO) that trains village youth as habitat experts and documents the cultural heritage of Johor.⁵ Local youth will teach Rohingya students under the guidance of Professor Rahman from the National University of Singapore (NUS).

[Marlborough College Malaysia \(MCM\)](#) is a British international school in Johor with strong existing programs with local nonprofits, including CSB and Kelab Alami. MCM is an IB school, so volunteer students will use their mandatory community service time to mentor Rohingya refugee children.

Implementation Strategy: The Jendela Project will develop an evidence-based curriculum for 30 Rohingya refugee students in Johor, aged 12-15, to engage in community integration, English language immersion, and environmental education activities.

Program Overview: Our 4-week program consists of a 1-week in-person, full-day intensive with classroom instruction at CSB and site visits to Kelab Alami supervised by the Jendela team. This will be followed by 3 weeks of workshops as students execute self-led projects, mentored by MCM students. The program will be designed with a trauma-informed approach in collaboration with professors from SP2 and the Peace & Conflict Neuroscience Lab. We will also teach the Problem Solving Learning (PSL) framework designed by Dr. Harkavy from The Netter Center.

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance-in-malaysia.html>

² <https://www.johorocc.org/>

³ <https://theirworld.org/news/100-days-crisis-rohingya-refugee-children-education#:~:text=Why%20are%20they%20so%20poorly,a%20national%20by%20any%20country.>

⁴ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346177288_Language_Mastery_of_Refugee_Children_in_Malaysia_Despite_Adverse_Circumstances

⁵ <https://kelabalami.weebly.com/kelab-alami.html>

Goals	Activities
Develop students' English abilities	• Provide a space where students can practice English in team activities and workshops
Build community in a cross-cultural context	• Diverse youth from CSB, MCM and Kelab Alami will collaborate during mangrove habitat exploration and self-led projects
Build interpersonal, teamwork & self-reflection skills	• Student teams will develop ideas and implement their environmental service projects with seed funds held by CSB faculty • Conduct self-reflection, conflict resolution workshops, and cultural show

COVID contingency: By mid-April, we will decide whether the program will be run in-person or online. If we cannot travel internationally, we will train MCM students and CSB faculty to run the original program in-person. Should the students also engage entirely online, the 1-week intensive will run as 3-hour sessions with MCM and Kelab Alami, and the 3-week workshop series will be online.

Metrics of success: Students will be surveyed on English language confidence, teamwork and tolerance before and after the program. We will virtually check in with students 6 months after the program to understand how they have applied their summer experience in their everyday lives.

Sustainability measures: Jendela will turn over curriculum and implementation instructions to CSB and the Marlborough College Outreach program to repeat the program annually. This summer's program is a pilot program, and, if successful, CSB will integrate a modified English teamwork program into their school curriculum. Secondly, we will establish The Jendela Project as a Penn club to develop an online English conversational exchange between CSB, other UNHCR-recognized Malaysian refugee schools, and American students. The MCM curriculum mandates service, so Jendela can be organized and self-sustained by their students.

Project Timeline

Activity	2021	2022					
	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Planning	Speak & finalize logistics w/ partners						
Curriculum Development	Speak to 9 Penn & Malaysian experts		Finalize curriculum w/ assistance from Penn Centers				
Training				Select and train MCM volunteers & CSB faculty			
Implementation						Jendela Program	

Previous Experience and Qualifications: **Yasmin Abdul Razak**, a recipient of the national Yayasan Khazanah Global Scholarship Program and a Penn SNF Paideia Fellow, has worked with many nonprofits in Johor, Malaysia while attending MCM. She collaborated with the Johor Area Rehabilitation Organization, Rotary Orphanage, Calvary Shelter Home, SK Sungai Melayu and Green Earth Society.

Win Mya Thet Htwe is a scholarship recipient of the US Department of State-sponsored Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program and the East Asia Regional Council of Schools Global Citizenship Award. She founded United Youth Institute when she was in high school, hosting workshops on multiculturalism and tolerance in rural middle schools in Myanmar.

Caroline Li is a student fellow at Perry World House, mentored by international affairs experts including the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. She was part of a team that passed a state-wide financial literacy requirement through the Massachusetts Board of Education in 2017. She also established a team of student translators to make Greater Boston-area nonprofit resources more accessible to immigrant communities.

Name: Caroline Li, Yasmin Abdul Razak, Win Mya Thet Htwe
Project Name: The Jendela Project: Community Integration & English Immersion for Rohingya Refugees in Malaysia
School: University of Pennsylvania

TOTAL FUNDS REMAINING:
 \$ -

Projects for Peace grant: \$ 10,000.00
 Additional Funding, if any:
Total funding available: \$ 10,000.00

Notes
 * = Verified with Org (CSB and Kelab Alami)
 All funds shown in US dollars.

TOTAL EXPENDITURES:
 \$ 10,000.00

Student Expenses					Project Expenses				
Travel (Including Airfare)	Lodging	Communications	Food	Miscellaneous	Non-Student Travel and Lodging	Direct Equipment and Supplies	Marketing and Event Support	Staffing Costs	Miscellaneous
Roundtrip Airfare (Caroline)	Hotel (7 nights)	SIM cards (3 ppl - 7 day)	Groceries (7 days) - Caroline		Bus Fare to Kelab Alami - 30 children for 3 day *	30 Sunscreens for Mangrove Exploration	400 Lunch Boxes for 40 Students & Staff (5 day x 2 meal/day) (May 23-27)*	Environmental Activity Staff Costs*	Emergency/ Unexpected Funds
1028	250	9	70		110	70	800	800	1000
Roundtrip Airfare (Yasmin)			Groceries (7 days) - Yasmin		Bus Fare to and from CSB school - 30 children for 5 day*	30 Water Shoes for Mangrove Exploration	315 Lunch Boxes for 35 Students & Staff (9 day x 1 meal/ day) (May 30 - Jun 19)*		Incorporation cost of 501c3
1028			70		180	105	630		600
Roundtrip Airfare (Win)			Groceries (7 day) - Win			30 Mosquito Repellent for Habitat Exploration	Seed Funding for 6 Self-Directed Student Projects*		
1028			70			50	450		
Daily Commute (3 ppl - 7 day)						Art & Supplies for Workshops	Merch: 40 T-shirts with printed Jendela logo		
70						40	150		
Travel Visa (2 ppl)						30 Journals for Daily Reflection Activity	AIA Malaysia Insurance for 30 Students (for program duration)		
90						30	121		
						Environmental Kits (Covid Contingency or Donation for Sustainability)	Fun Farewell Event for 30 Students		
						840	100		
						Rice & Dry Food Donations for 30 Families of Refugee Students	30 Certificates of Completion		
						160	20		
							Brochures for MCM International Students		
							31		
Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
\$ 3,244.00	\$ 250.00	\$ 9.00	\$ 210.00	\$ -	\$ 290.00	\$ 1,295.00	\$ 2,302.00	\$ 800.00	\$ 1,600.00

Total Student Expenses: \$ 3,713.00

Total Project Expenses: \$ 6,287.00