

ENRICHING EXPOSURE

A CAPACITY-BUILDING VOLUNTEER PROJECT IN INDONESIA HELPED EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERS APPROACH THEIR WORK WITH RENEWED PASSION AND ENTHUSIASM.



Ms Pushpavalli (Centre) interacting with workshop participants in Jakarta

For early childhood educators, overseas capacity-building programmes can create opportunities to expand their professional networks and deepen their sensitivity to cultural diversity. These projects enable our educators and their regional counterparts to share ideas, skills and experiences to uplift EC quality, while effecting positive social change.

This was evinced by those who recently returned from Jakarta, Indonesia, as volunteers for the *Early Childhood Educator Development Project*. Officially started in September 2022, the project is a three-year collaboration between the Singapore International Foundation (SIF), the Central Board of the Indonesian Kindergarten Teachers Association (PP IGTKI) and Singapore's Presbyterian Preschool Services (PPS). It aims to expand the capabilities of preschool educators and boost the quality of EC education in Greater Jakarta.

IMPARTING STRATEGIES

Ms N Kannigadevi, Assistant Director (Development & Care) and a Special Needs Mentor at PPS, is spearheading the project. Over five days in February, Ms Kannigadevi, who is an ECDA Fellow, led a team of volunteers to Jakarta for the first in a series of training modules. The workshops focus on inclusive preschool settings and differentiated instruction to support children with developmental needs.

"I was impressed by the level of engagement among the workshop participants. They proactively presented lesson plans and samples of their children's work to seek feedback from the trainers. The participants' passion for knowledge and openness to learning new things were truly inspiring for me," says Ms Kannigadevi, a long-time volunteer with SIF.

Her sentiments are echoed by another team member, Ms N Pushpavalli. "The participants asked meaningful questions to clarify their understanding of EC concepts and shared how they would transfer the new knowledge into their practices," says Ms Pushpavalli, an ECDA Fellow and Honorary Mentor Principal of Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Kindergarten. "We also highlighted their good practices and helped them see value in their work."

A DIFFERENT PRISM

The team also visited two preschools in Jakarta, where they gained rich insights observing local teachers



Ms Kannigadevi on one of the preschool visits as part of the trip

interacting with children and families. For example, Ms Kannigadevi says, "Similar to Singapore, many parents in Indonesia may initially be in denial about their children's special educational needs. Indonesian educators avoid using terms like 'intervention' and 'diagnosis' when communicating with parents. By framing the intervention sessions as 'stimulation sessions' instead, parents tend to be more receptive to the idea."

EC educators in Jakarta have fostered a nurturing environment where children feel secure to explore, learn and flourish. "I saw many heart-warming and bonding moments where educators reached out respectfully to each child," says Ms Pushpavalli. "The trip reignited my passion as an educator. I am rethinking how best to do the same for our EC fraternity here in Singapore." ●

TRAINING THE TRAINERS

The *Early Childhood Educator Development Project* comprises six workshops in Jakarta over the course of three years. It aims to:

- ➔ **Enhance the pedagogy and practice** of local EC educators, especially in employing interactive and participatory teaching methods, play and facilitation, and integrating learning to support children's holistic development.
- ➔ **Train 50 'Master Trainers'** from various kindergartens in Greater Jakarta, who will then cascade the training for greater reach and impact.
- ➔ **Benefit over 5,000 members** of the Indonesian community, including children, teachers, parents and caregivers.