

Headline **Corporations can give more**  
 Date **16 Dec 2009**  
 MediaTitle **The Sun**  
 Section **National**  
 Journalist **N/A**  
 Frequency **Daily**  
 Circ / Read **174,179 / 171,000**

Language **English**  
 Page No **17**  
 Article Size **285 cm<sup>2</sup>**  
 Color **Full Color**  
 ADValue **5,516**  
 PRValue **16,547**



# Corporations can give more

by **Daniel Chandranayagam**

**HAVING** attended PT Foundation's 21st anniversary recently, I was greatly encouraged by the numbers at the event. Even more encouraging was the number of people volunteering to help out with the event, as well as the number of PT Foundation volunteers attending the dinner. I later learnt that, notwithstanding the numbers, many volunteers did not turn up for the celebration.

This led me to wonder how many people are actually trained to take on the work in a not-for-profit, and also the challenges faced by such an organisation. First, while I am aware that PT Foundation does give its volunteers some training, this would take time and money away from its main cause. Unlike a for-profit organisation, there is a higher propensity for volunteers (as opposed to employees) to "drop out". And as any for-profit will tell you, training is time and money and opportunity cost.

Then there is the issue of money. Many NGOs are facing the "middle income" conundrum. Malaysia has developed beyond "Third World" status, so many international philanthropic organisations have dropped our country from their list for funding. Unfortunately, we haven't reached a state where NGOs are not needed in our

society, which leaves our NGOs looking around for funding.

So money for an NGO is a very precious commodity, and I am sure they would think carefully about the numbers of volunteer dropouts verses the need for training.

Not a digression, I am reading a book called *Philanthrocapitalism* by award-winning journalist, Matthew Bishop, and economics academic, Michael Green. It explains "how the rich can save the world". The book outlines how many business people have taken their skills and created a "new field", philanthrocapitalism.

What was most interesting for me was how men like these use their knowledge (as opposed to their wealth) and helped the not-for-profit world. Keeping to the fight against HIV/AIDS as an example, controversial hedge fund founder, Christopher Cooper-Hohn, together with Bill

Clinton, helped to cause the decrease in price of medication for a child living with HIV in the developing world to US\$180 (RM614) a year.

Further negotiations got the price down to US\$60 (RM205) a year. To cut a long story short, through Cooper-Hohn's

Children's Investment Fund

Foundation, Clinton and Cooper-Hohn "created a market" for the drugs, driving prices down, causing a "stunning stroke of leverage".

Malaysia has its fair share of business-savvy individuals. My question is: how many of them are lending their knowledge to the not-for-profit sector? A CSR consultant once told me, Malaysian society would crumble without NGOs. I believe him. How many of us make use of NGOs? Dialysis centres, cancer foundations, animal shelters, recycling centres, mental health awareness, blood donation drives, advocacy groups, education groups, almost everything is de-centralised into the hands of not-for-profits.

On a grand scale, it would be ideal if business tycoons helped our not-for-profits by causing "stunning strokes of leverage", but on a smaller scale, it would be nice to see senior executives offering NGOs their time and expertise, especially with matters they might not have expertise: accounting and reporting, information technology, legal advice, HR and training or public relations and communications. This would leave the not-for-profit time to fight the good cause.

Of course, there are many businesses which (and individuals who) do help out under the corporate social responsibility initiatives. Any help is better than nothing, but looking at the scale of "social investments" made by businesses in countries with far

greater social welfare systems in place than ours, especially in Western Europe, I wonder whether the help our corporations are giving is in proportion to our needs and their abilities.

With the year coming to a close, perhaps we'll see better things to come. Or perhaps, much like our entire political system, there is much to be overhauled before we'll see some innovation between our business and not-for-profit sector.

*Daniel* freelances in writing and publishing, and has a deep passion for sleeping, eating and labour law. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com



**Freespace**  
Where young views rule

We believe that the young should have a say in how things are run, because they have everything at stake in our future. This column creates that space for our panel of bright young sparks to debate a whole range of issues that they feel strongly about.