

## A Community Centre that Preaches Zero Waste Lifestyle



Children of Penang Suya Meiyarivagam learn to grow herbs in recyclable water bottles with self-watering system.



Winding up the lesson learned on recycling solid waste. Student T. Mokeash giving talk on the need to recycle to children and parents.

Penang Suya Meiyarivagam, a community centre at Gelugor, Penang, conducts activities for the holistic development of an individual, focusing on children and teenagers. Besides other activities, zero waste practices are an integral part of this centre. As the students and parents meet every Sunday from 10.00 am to 12.30 pm at the centre, the drilling of zero waste messages to this group was effective and most satisfying.

Learning recycling methods, appreciating and taking care of a product, acquiring upcycling skills and composting are some of the activities conducted at the centre. This was implemented through lectures and activities. Parents and children bring their recyclables to be segregated at the centre. An average of 23 kg of solid waste is collected and diverted by the centre every month.

After a successful drilling of zero waste messages for the whole year, the children of Penang Suya Meiyarivagam disseminated what they had learned to the public. In between other cultural performances, students imparted messages on the need to recycle for the benefit of the earth. At the end of the event, each student received a metal water bottle (pic page 29) and pledged to use these bottles and avoid plastic water bottles in the future.

## Inculcating Mindful Consumption and Minimalist Lifestyle through Activities



Penang Suya Meiyarivagam community centre students: each student with the products they had pondered over.

Aggressive advertisements and the never-ending desire to own brand new products is turning consumers into impulsive buyers. Lured by the advertisements, consumers are tempted to buy new products, even before the previous one is worn out. Such scenario eventually renders us as waste producers.



Happiness is not derived from the products we buy alone. These children were taught to make toy bags out of mango leaves. The toy making session not only leads to mental stimulation and imbues the child with a sense of achievement but is also environmentally friendly.

Each child of the Penang Suya Meiyarivagam community centre was given one item (Example: mineral water bottle, plastic toys, camera, bulb, umbrella, CD, mug, tumbler, plants, flower, leaf, plate etc.) and was asked to contemplate on the product. They were then asked to explain how the product relates to them, how long it

has been existing in their life, the amount of happiness and benefits it gives them, and how it will be treated after being worn out. These products, although lifeless make our life meaningful and as a way of appreciating we have to make sure it's meticulous use, prolonging the life of the products by repairing and learning the proper way of discarding it by reusing, recycling and upcycling.

This activity is an opportunity for students to ponder over the products that exist in their daily life. It will trigger them to think when buying, using and discarding products and be a mindful consumer in the future, all of which is vital in creating a waste-free society.



Meal for children at the Penang Suya Meiyarivagam centre is served in dried leaf plates.





Zero-waste lessons materialise into action: Students of Penang Suya Meiyarivagam pledge to avoid plastic water bottles.