

NGO celebrates a decade of serving the underprivileged

KECHARA Soup Kitchen (KSK) has come a long way since it was registered as a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in 2008.

The NGO is the brainchild of Tsem Tulku Rinpoche who was determined to ensure that no one would go hungry as he did in his youth.

After a decade, it has grown into a well-known food distribution network that also offers various types of assistance – from feeding the less privileged to setting up mobile clinics and food banks, upskilling and training single mothers for job placements and providing shelter for the elderly.

To celebrate its 10th anniversary, KSK held a Food Bank Symposium which featured seven experts who shared their expertise in food collection and distribution with the aid of corporate partners and logistics companies.

The event was graced by Selangor princess Tengku Zatashah Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah, a regular KSK volunteer who has worked alongside Malaysians of all ages and backgrounds, bringing food and medical care to the needy.

Tengku Zatashah also initiated the #zero-foodwastage programme.

Also present were Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail and Deputy International Trade and Industry Minister

Dr Ong Kian Ming.

The celebration also included a giant cookout by 60 UCIS University Hospitality students and staff, with food items and ingredients sponsored by Tesco. UCIS University also sponsored the venue of the event.

KSK president Henry Ooi said: "While we have grown in scale and impact over the past decade, we have remained true to our original mission of feeding the less fortunate.

"Hunger knows no barriers, and there are hundreds who go hungry daily in the heart of the Golden Triangle alone.

"Identifying the hotspots and providing aid in the most respectful and thoughtful manner possible is the ethos of KSK.

"We are proud of what we have achieved but more needs to be done.

"Over the years, we have forged partnerships with many corporate entities such as Tesco, Aeon, Segifresh, Hero, KFC and Hong Leong Foundation, which have also helped with job placement initiatives for KSK's clients."

He added that these individuals had every right to be treated with the same dignity as more privileged Malaysians.

KSK gathers more than 10,000 Malaysians annually to help fellow Malaysians in a multitude of ways.

This includes serving over thousands of meals, delivering food parcels to families,



Tengku Zatashah (third from left) with some of the guests at KSK's 10th anniversary celebration.

helping doctors and other medical personnel treat thousands of patients and even helping with free eye-checks and haircuts.

The NGO has one of the largest databases of "clients" which is updated each week to ensure accuracy of information. The data is also accessible via an app and each individual seeking assistance has to register for any kind of service.

They are given access to food, medical or other services upon producing their identification card, which is also used to help KSK identify the root cause of homelessness and poverty in urban areas.

This is also critical in fund-raising, planning and operations, especially during peak periods and extreme weather conditions. Medical records in the database are also essential for doctors following up on clients'

health status.

KSK also works closely with the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry as well as the Federal Territory Ministry to tackle homelessness issues, and has collaborations with more than 30 NGOs across eight states.

Its flagship centre is in Jalan Imbi, Kuala Lumpur, with large operation centres in Penang and Johor.

It became a member of the Association of Asian Food Banks in 2015 and embarked on the Zero Food Wastage programme in 2016, which entails working with hotel and supermarket chains to collect unsold perishable items for distribution.

To support or donate to KSK, visit www.kechara.com/soup-kitchen, email ksk@kechara.com or call 03-2141 6046.



A group photograph shot during the event.