STARTING SMALL BUT AIMING FOR MEANINGFUL IMPACT

s a government-owned private equity

Yasir Arafat Syed Abd Kadir. "This makes us says Syed Yasir Arafat. we want the money to benefit the community," he adds.

execute our corporate social responsibility impact from every ringgit spent. Furthermore, we seek to generate a positive spillover effect in everything that we do."

structured investment strategy centred on three years. rational decision-making that is based on facts and figures and a meticulous reporting system to select and evaluate the progress of each investment. This approach and the best practices extend to its CSR programme Ekuinas' CSR initiatives are directed through known as ILTIZAM.

Yasir Arafat.

"It is a professionally run CSR programme are not marketing opportunities for Ekuinas." capital, operating expenditure funding or fi-

The private equity firm's CSR initiatives started fund, Ekuiti Nasional Bhd (Ekuinas) in 2012 when employees were encouraged to is primarily concerned with investing spend some of their free time supporting local in and growing profitable companies. The entrepreneurs and selected communities. "We underlying objective of promoting bumiputera acknowledge that there are bumiputera busieconomic participation is achieved when the nesses that can benefit from our knowledge and companies it acquires fulfil their potential. know-how but are not within our investment man-While its focus is on profitability, the end date. This exercise resulted in tangible benegame is to channel the profit back to the bu- fits for the selected recipients and was deeply miputera community, says Ekuinas CEO Syed rewarding on a corporate and personal level,"

different from other private equity firms and Ekuinas' commitment to contributing to the companies. Making money is important, but broader society was formalised in 2013 with its corporate responsibility framework. Two years later, a dedicated CSR department staffed with "Another difference is how we choose to full-time employees was established.

In February, the CSR activities were branded (CSR) initiatives. While we may not have an ILTIZAM, which stands for commitment, deterextremely large budget, we want maximum mination and will. It reflects the unbreakable spirit and strength of will of those who desire to change and go on to succeed.

Ekuinas has invested more than RM13 million Ekuinas operates like a conventional pri- in its CSR activities over the last five years and vate equity fund. It uses a disciplined and plans to invest another RM18 million in the next

ENTREPRENEURS. THE BEDROCK OF ECONOMIC GROWTH

three pillars — entrepreneurship, education and "As professionals, we focus on results and community — and their respective programmes. consider the tangible and intangible outcomes The Entrepreneur Mentorship Programme, which of our investments in our daily operations. comes under the first pillar, refers to capaci-This is the same for ILTIZAM," says Syed ty-building initiatives that assist small business

owners in growing their enterprise. These companies are taken through a sixwith objectives and evaluations, and it ad- month to one-year engagement process with heres to corporate governance standards. We Ekuinas once they have undergone a diagnoswant to make the biggest possible impact, so tic evaluation that identifies the company's we channel our funds and efforts directly to strengths and areas for improvement. Support the recipient or work with trusted third-party services are provided by Ekuinas or third-parcompanies to broaden our reach. The focus ty consultants to address and overcome those and priority is the recipient. Our CSR activities challenges. These projects do not involve any



SYED YASIR ARAFAT

Above: Ekuinas' CSR programme, ILTIZAM, has many initiatives including building the capacity such as Fatihah Frozen Food Right: Helping bumiputera graduates become more marketable and employable





nancing from the private equity firm.

"Building sustainable small businesses is perhaps the most powerful and direct way of helping families and communities prosper. We have found that by bringing people together business owners, Ekuinas employees and third-party partners — we can find and implement practical and effective solutions that last far beyond our engagement period," says Syed Yasir Arafat.

"We look for genuine and passionate entrepreneurs who really want to do more. This year, we looked at 54 candidates and identified an Islamic enrichment centre for children and a graduate career recruitment company to mentor. We are also in the midst of selecting another three to four bumiputera

Companies that Ekuinas is still working with under this programme include Eight Designs Sdn Bhd, one of the pioneers of online Muslimah fashion retail, and Fatihah Frozen Food Sdn Bhd, which makes frozen traditional delicacies.

Ekuinas is also collaborating with The Entrepreneurs Edge and Centre for Entrepreneur Development and Research (CEDAR) to reach out to more entrepreneurs. The Entrepreneurs Edge is the first resource in the country set up by established and successful entrepreneurs to offer personalised consulting and mentorship for entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, CEDAR, a subsidiary of SME Bank Malaysia, offers entrepreneur development and coaching programmes.

EDUCATION, A FORCE FOR

Education is the second pillar of ILTIZAM as

it is a force for public good and critical to creating an inclusive society, says Syed Yasir Arafat. "Education is a powerful tool for social mobility. Our belief in this is reflected in our investment in the sector. The Professional utera graduates become highly marketable and employable while the Education Empowrment Programme (EEP) provides financial support for students with great potential but lack the resources."

come families, mostly from rural areas, who difficulties and those with good academic results. have been unsuccessful in securing employment for more than six months and have not been a part of any management training pronas, its portfolio companies or other partner

"We also place the trainees at our portfolio companies and selected external companies such as Fatihah Frozen, KAF Group, Yayastheir professional development from their a full scholarship. first day of work," says Syed Yasir Arafat.

All nine graduates of the programme time employment. Word of its effectiveness an increasing number of applicants eager to says Syed Yasir Arafat. work for Ekuinas. Last year, it received 1,500 applications, of which 59 were shortlisted. This year, 3,000 applications were received THE COMMUNITY and 75 candidates were given a one-year Ekuinas' Community Enrichment Programme employment contract.

from us. We want to see what can be done indigenous bumiputeras from the Temuan tribe. to ensure that all the participants complete the PDP with enhanced employability levels," says Syed Yasir Arafat.

The ILMU fund provides financial support Test (UPSR). and Asia Pacific University of Technology & and teaching. Innovation (APU). The bursary is extended "SKBL registered its first 5As in the UPSR in

Ekuinas partners YPPB in developing bumiputera talents through academic and vocational education. YPPB's mission is to increase the qualgramme. They are given the opportunity to ity, quantity and relevance of bumiputera talents

learn and develop skills in a structured and to help Malaysia become a high-income nation. professional manner by working for Ekui- Ekuinas' contribution to selected programmes managed by YPPB complements its goal of providing educational opportunities to Malaysians. But more importantly, it is needs-based and focused on those who need a helping hand.

In support of its oil and gas portfolio, Ekuian Peneraju Pendidikan Bumiputera (YPPB), nas is helping to develop senior officers in the Habib Jewels and Kumpulan Perangsang Se- maritime industry by sponsoring an 0&G cadet langor Bhd. Even though they are not phys- programme. Those with the relevant work exically at Ekuinas, we keep a very close eye perience are given the opportunity to attend on their performance as we are invested in training at Akademi Laut Malaysia (ALAM) under

"This programme will assist our portfolio companies to increase the number of senior officers when it was launched in 2012 found full- on their payroll. This position is rarely held by Malaysians as it is quite financially demanding for got around and the subsequent years saw junior officers to fund the training themselves,"

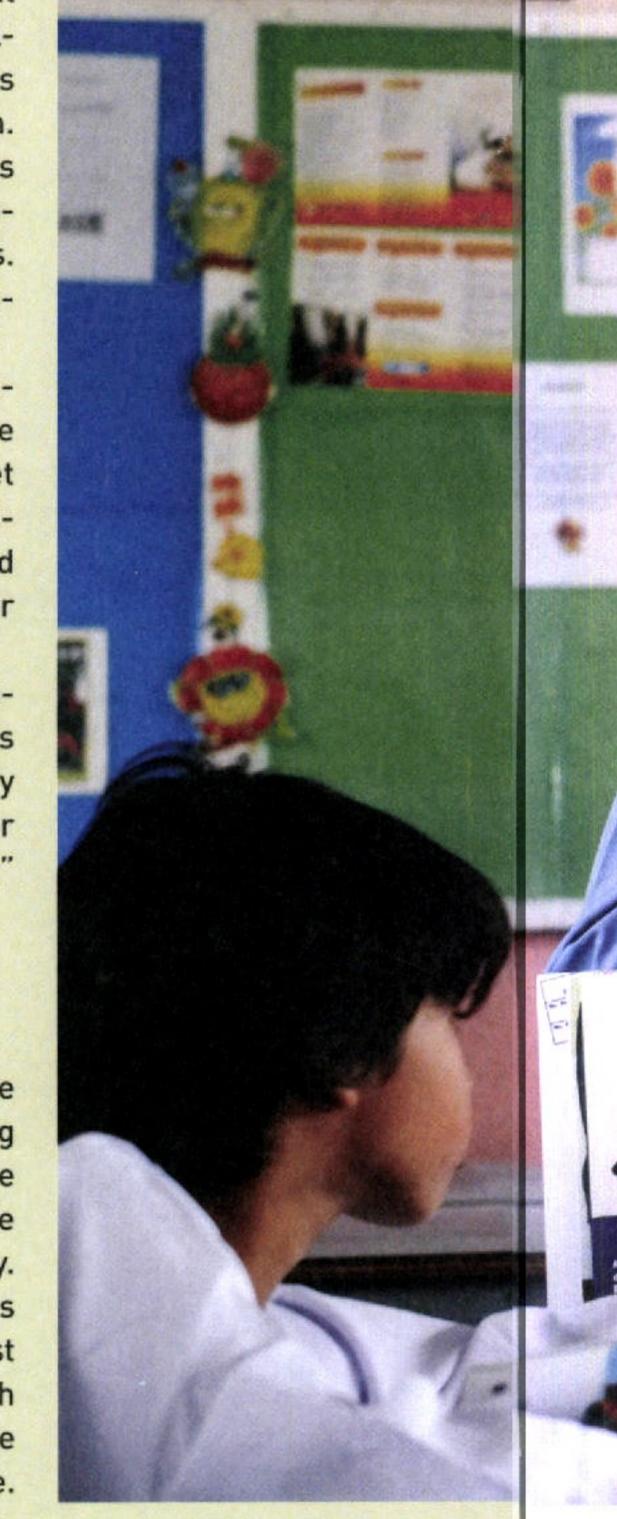
A SUSTAINABLE IMPACT ON

looks to help those promoting and preserving "Over the one-year period, we build their local arts, culture and heritage as well as those English proficiency with book clubs and dra- from a disadvantaged background to improve ma classes and we offer coaching and men- their quality of life, ideally in a sustainable way. toring sessions. Participants also take part in Sekolah Kebangsaan Bukit Lanjan (Asli) was teambuilding events, fitness programmes and selected as the recipient of this programme last work on special projects, including starting year. Most of the students of this school, which their own small business with seed capital is within a 2km radius of Ekuinas' office, are

Ekuinas started assisting the school by sponsoring tuition classes for students and helping Ekuinas hopes to to refurbish the school library to encourage a encourage a love of The EEP gives financial assistance to love of learning and reading. The idea was to learning and reading Ekuinas' ILMU Education Fund and Yayasan increase the number of students passing and among the pupils of Peneraju Pendidikan Bumiputera (YPPB). doing well in the Primary School Achievement Sekolah Kebangsaan

and sponsorships to students at the Kua- Moving forward, Ekuinas will partner PINTAR la Lumpur Metropolitan University College Foundation to officially "adopt" this school in its (KLMUC), UNITAR International University efforts to improve the overall standard of learning

to both existing and new students from the 2014. Its aggregate score had also improved. The low-income group who are facing financial school has been around for more than 50 years,



Bukit Lanjan (Asli)

so the results were very promising. We want to do more for these students and indirectly their community," says Syed Yasir Arafat.

Past community projects include supporting PUSAKA, a non-governmental organisation dedicated to preserving the traditional Malay arts. It approached Ekuinas to ask for support in its efforts to preserve the art of making rebana ubi by passing down the craft and also the knowledge of its rhythms to the younger generation.

For more information on ILTIZAM, visit www. ekuinas.com.my/iltizam.



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