

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> Brunel University London		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 17 Business and Management Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Growing businesses through social and community-based entrepreneurship in Malaysia		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2019 - 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Ainurul Rosli	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Reader - Enterprise and Entrepreneurship	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 08/2018 - present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> June 2019 – December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		

**1. Summary of the impact** (indicative maximum 100 words)

Dr Rosli has applied practice-based entrepreneurial research which led to community development in Malaysia. Ulu Sapi in Sabah, the poorest region of Malaysia, have used her work to create an independent marketplace which decreased their need for governmental aid. Smallholders have significantly increased their earnings from GBP85 per 1,000kg to GBP1,318 per 1kg and expanded their businesses into China. Following this success, other constituencies in Sabah have started revising their existing strategies to adopt the same method. Additionally, the Activity Centre for the Older Persons (PAWE) in Putrajaya have used Dr Rosli's research to expand older adult entrepreneurial activities to alleviate the challenge of an ageing population. The intervention led to a return on investment (ROI) of GBP62,625, following an initial investment of GBP14,150. As a result, negotiations with new industry partners (Telekom Malaysia) and plans to share Dr Rosli's approach with PAWEs across the nation are now in process.

**2. Underpinning research** (indicative maximum 500 words)

The National Entrepreneurship Policy (NEP) is a long-term strategy for Malaysia to become an outstanding entrepreneurial nation by 2030. This policy is to create a holistic and conducive entrepreneurship ecosystem to support Malaysia's inclusive, balanced and sustainable socio-economic development agenda. One of the thrusts is to create a nation that possesses and enculturates entrepreneurial thinking.

Dr Rosli is Reader in Enterprise and Entrepreneurship at Brunel Business School and chair of Practice and Impact SIG at Institute of Small Business and Enterprise (ISBE). Her research reaffirms the importance of effective university-business-community engagement and individual self-initiative (entrepreneurial thinking) to help shape local entrepreneurial business ecosystems (Ref. 1, Ref. 5). This includes the importance of supporting individuals to become self-sustainable and add value to their local community. With Dr Rosli's expertise in entrepreneurship, university-industry-community collaboration and co-creation, she was able to achieve both, through community development and an intergenerational approach. What makes it more impactful is that the research by Dr Rosli contributes to the debates regarding the strengthening of entrepreneurial capabilities in neglected social groups (the rural entrepreneurs and older adults) (Ref. 4).

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Dr Rosli's research reaffirms the importance of locally available entrepreneurial support to help navigate local challenges, particularly in relation to businesses who generate social or cultural value, whereby "business can strike a balance between social mission and enhanced business performance" (Ref. 3). Furthermore, for many businesses, the focus on a social mission may hamper profitability in the short term although, in some cases, it improves the credibility of the business. She also conducted research into "main characteristics of this support and collectivism" for individual entrepreneurs to stand out, through the "supportive system, collective system, and stakeholders' impression" (Ref. 2).

The effort by the Malaysian government to ensure that Malaysia continues to grow sustainably through an impartial economic distribution highlights Dr Rosli's importance of supporting rural and older age communities for entrepreneurship. Her work focuses on rural villagers and older adults and emphasises the importance of "coming together collectively to contribute towards maximising the impact of what they are doing" (Ref. 2). Her work advocates the importance of policies that are aimed at supporting businesses to find new markets for their existing offerings or to work together and repurpose their capabilities to help localized entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Drawing on the research funded by Brunel University London in Malaysia (focusing on rural villagers in Sabah and older adults in Kuala Lumpur), Dr Rosli's work highlights the benefits that arise when entrepreneurs are involved in practice-based activities. It shows that entrepreneurs are more likely to be successful and their participation in the local economy is likely to result in better social ties, which improve their confidence in handling entrepreneurial activities.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

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**Ref. 1** Rossi, F., De Silva, M., Baines, N., & Rosli, A. (2020). *Long-Term Innovation Outcomes of University–Industry Collaborations: The Role of 'Bridging' vs 'Blurring' Boundary-Spanning Practices*. *British Journal of Management*. [10.1111/1467-8551.12449](https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12449)

**Ref. 2** Granados, ML. and **Rosli, A.** (2019) "Fitting in" vs "standing out": How Social Enterprises Engage with Stakeholders to Legitimise their Hybrid Position. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*. pp. 1 - 20. [10.1080/19420676.2019.1604405](https://doi.org/10.1080/19420676.2019.1604405)

**Ref. 3** Cacciolatti, L., **Rosli, A.**, Ruiz-Alba, J.L., Chang, J. (2020) Strategic alliances and firm performance in startups with a social mission. *Journal of Business Research* Vol 106, 106-117. [10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.08.047](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.08.047)

**Ref. 4** Rosli, A & Chang, J (2020), *Team Entrepreneurial Learning in Adult Entrepreneurship Education: Building and retaining knowledge for sustainable businesses*, in Colin Jones (ed), *How to Become an Entrepreneurship Educator*. ISBN: 978 1 78990 002 6

**Ref. 5** Chang, J., **Rosli, A.** (2019). Entrepreneurship Education and Employability Agenda in Malaysia. *Innovate Higher Education to Enhance Graduate Employability: Rethinking the Possibilities*, 133. [10.4324/9780429058899-12](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429058899-12)

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

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Dr Rosli's research has contributed significantly to the development of sustainable ways to support entrepreneurship in marginalised communities in Malaysia such as the poor, economically deprived and older communities. Her work has helped transform individual workers, farmers and producers into entrepreneurs. This was done through building community resilience and establishing their own locally rooted capacity-building exercise to build their

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business ecosystems (Ref. 2; Ref. 3) whereby support, resources, know-how are created, retained, shared and sustained in the local community. Her work directly supports individuals to take up initiatives, understand who they are—individually and collectively as entrepreneur(s)—and what they stand for as a community.

### I. Sabah, Borneo, Malaysia.

Dr Rosli worked with the poorest region of Malaysia. The Ulu Sapi community in Sandakan Sabah (approximately 1,125 inhabitants) has been struggling to survive due to the fluctuation of prices in palm oil, and the lack of economic development in the area. In 2017, the European Parliament issued a resolution to phase out, and eventually ban, biofuels made from palm oil. At the time, Malaysia was supplying approximately 85% of the global trade and the smallholders in Ulu Sapi (who make up approximately ¼ of the community, equivalent to approximately 280 people) were badly affected. Dr Rosli's work has helped the smallholders to cross the boundary of palm oil dependency, and transition from production-oriented palm oil to entrepreneurship activities such as food production (for example, bird-nests, meat, and poultry), grocery store and hospitality service providers. With the support of Dr Rosli's work, the smallholders alleviated the "difficulties in generating a fixed income due to the deterioration of prices because of the palm oil crisis" (E1) and established "greater flexibility in dealing with uncertain economic conditions" (E1). They became more confident and equipped in doing business online via their mobile phone, and became less dependent on government subsidies.

As a result, the beneficiaries increased their business sense significantly and were able to create new services for the community, with their own "Dana" in Malay language (which means the collective investment fund), and developed a market place, where local rural businesses can come together, trade openly, and encourage other smallholders to be like them. The Village Head "was so impressed to see the Ulu Sapi villagers' growth without any support from the local government compared to the neighbouring villagers who received money from the local government" (E1). For instance, one of the villagers used his improved business sense to build a business in edible bird nests. He says, if he had not received Dr Rosli's training and held onto his existing business in palm oil, he would still be earning RM454, equivalent to GBP85 (11-2020), per 1,000kg. With his new business, he earns RM7,000, equivalent to GBP1,318 (11-2020), per 1kg and he was able to build a client base in China (E1). This means he now earns GBP1,318,000 per 1,000kg, a staggering increase from the original GBP85 before the research intervention. He will be able to pass down this business to his children, thereby contributing to a sustainable economic ecosystem and good foundation for future generations.

The impact of Dr Rosli's work focusing on self-initiative and building up internal and entrepreneurial competences, also helped the community to "run their businesses in line with Sabah's unique cultural and natural heritage" (E1) and stay true to their vision to become a major hub for eco-tourism, which preserves their heritage and attitudes towards a clean and safe environment. The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture of Sabah affirms that "Dr Rosli's work has significantly contributed to Sabah becoming the prime example for the nation that shows how we can quickly build an economically successful rural community without sacrificing [Sabah's] natural and cultural heritage" (E2). The former Assistant Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment acknowledges that the Ministry is "keen to adopt this approach further in Tungku District (another constituency in Sabah)" (E2).

He confirms that "the positive outcome from Dr Rosli's work will provide us with a roadmap to achieve our national target [and turn the country into a true entrepreneurial nation by 2030]"

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(E2). “Dr Rosli’s research,” the former Minister reports, “had a direct impact on rural business and eco-tourism implementation, which supported the Malaysian government in reaching and training part of the 26% rural population of the country” (E2).

The Ministry confirms that Dr Rosli’s research has “not only enabled the rural communities to strengthen their own capacity for entrepreneurship and community sustainability, but also supported the Malaysian government in reaching their economic targets by 2030” (E2).

### II. Older Adult community

The changes in the family structure due to modernisation and urbanisation and the geographic separation increase vulnerability amongst older adults in Malaysia. 15% of the Malaysian population will be above 60 years of age by 2030, and the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (KPWKM) has been exploring options for how to ensure sustainability of the third age community with minimal monetary support from the government. Dr Rosli’s work helped the older adult communities in the Putrajaya district with 37,000 registered older adults, to find a new way of working and a strategy for an informed approach towards the growth of older adult entrepreneurial activities.

The Activity Centre for the Older Persons (PAWE) used Dr Rosli’s work for their project ‘Developing Entrepreneurial Mindset through Intergenerational Projects’ and community-capacity building “which has prompted policy and reform activities” at PAWE (E3). The impacts include: (i) improved self-esteem and self-confidence in doing entrepreneurial activities and creating financial solutions (up from 60% to 100%), and (ii) increased integration of technology into the senior citizens’ lives (E3). The president of the association commented: “With Dr Rosli’s help, we were able to scale the project up and are in the middle of negotiations with Telekom Malaysia (TM), the national market leader in telecommunications [with an annual revenue of RM11,430,000,000, equivalent to GBP2,092,987,118 (01-2021)] (E3).”

The president affirms that, “this has enabled us to begin to address the challenge of an ageing population at a larger scale, something that would not have been possible without the research ...we are more confident to work on new projects that have never been explored before in PAWE, so PAWE can grow and maintain itself from within” (E3).

Another impact from the project is (iii) improved relationships with the younger generation. Dr Rosli’s work enabled 25 members of the younger generation to experience personal growth and increase their understanding of the challenges the third-age community faces (up from 6% to 94%). The president reports that using Dr Rosli’s research led to such a successful intervention that “we wish to share this work with other PAWE’s across the country, and assist them in their ways towards sustainability. As the Government plans on setting up at least a hundred more PAWEs over the course of the next few years, we look forward to seeing this grow further” (E3).

Finally, the research used by PAWE determined a return on investment (ROI) ratio of RM4.40, equivalent to GBP0.80 (06-2020) for every RM1.00, equivalent to GBP0.18 (06-2020), invested. This is based on a total investment of RM77,213, equivalent to GBP14,150 (06-2020), which was provided by Brunel University London. In total, this contributes to an economic value of RM342,221, equivalent to GBP62,625 (06-2020) (E4). Consequently, the research has benefitted the most disadvantaged people in the poorest region of Malaysia and increased their economic wellbeing and livelihood.

**Impact case study (REF3)****5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

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- E1** Letter from Ulu Sapi Village Head, 14 May 2020 and <https://vimeo.com/349176533/9620cf5759> (“SARANG BURUNG - BIRD NEST” Testimonial from Ulu Sapi smallholder in Malay with English captions)
- E2** Letter from former Assistant Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment in Sabah, Malaysia, 3 December 2020
- E3** Letter from PAWE, 23 June 2020
- E4** Impact Report, Developing Entrepreneurial Mindsets Through Intergenerational Projects, June 2020