

STREETS YOUR DIARY

Sports as a rehabilitation tool

REACHING OUT: Educational Welfare and Research Foundation has embarked on a project to help students with disciplinary problems

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A NON-GOVERNMENTAL organisation (NGO) will use sports as a platform to help troubled students from poor families.

The Educational Welfare and Research Foundation (EWRF) has embarked on a project called "On The Pitch and Off The Streets" to help these students stay away from negative activities.

EWRF was established in 1978 and has 23 branches throughout the country. The foundation has addressed problems and assisted about 15,000 students with a success rate of up to 78 per cent.

Children, especially teenagers, with serious disciplinary problems are identified through their school

authorities and later referred to EWRF.

The intervention will also involve the students' parents and teachers.

EWRF president A. Yogesvaran said the programme's main goal was to keep troubled students away from streets that may be rife with juvenile delinquency.

The programme hopes to keep them on the sporting scene and build positive values.

Yogesvaran added the foundation focuses mainly on improving underperforming schoolchildren.

"When you ask under-achieving students with disciplinary problems to study, they will not do so.

"If you invite them to motivational camps, they will not come. So, we tell them to come for football practice instead.

"The facilitators become their friends and their coach is the dis-

ciplinarian.

"In many cases, when we asked the students what motivates them to stay in class, they replied that it was to learn to read.

"In most cases, the students lose interest in studies because they can't read. We address these academic-related problems during tuition classes that we hold three times a week," he said.

In Sungai Siput, Perak, a group of girls with disciplinary problems were introduced to *silambam*, a martial art from India. Some of them excelled and even participated in national level sports such as Sukan Malaysia (Sukma).

Teenagers of both genders are sometimes involved in immoral activities, said EWRF general-secretary, K. Nadarajah.

"The gender ratio of problematic students are 70 per cent male and 30

per cent female.

"Boys commit crimes such as stealing motorcycles just to earn RM50 while girls at the age of 13 fall into prostitution, and attempt suicide. In many cases they lack attention and love at home.

"We help these teens to mould their characters via sports such as football and *silambam*," said Nadarajah.

Crime committed by these students have been reduced drastically after the intervention of EWRF.

"In some areas, gang fights do not happen anymore," said Nadarajah.

Recently the first EWRF Inter Branches Under-18 Football Tournament was held at Universiti Malaya.

For details, visit www.ewrf.org.my or call the toll free number at 1-800-88-3973 or visit the EWRF at 3rd floor, Wisma RA, 12 Jalan Dang Wangi, Kuala Lumpur.



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