

## Hong Leong Bank Recognized for its Community Empowerment Initiatives for Fourth Consecutive Year

The Bank has conducted its HLB DuitSmart financial literacy and scam awareness workshops for over 9000 students and community members.



[Pic 1] Zalman Zainal, HLB's Chief Marketing and Communication Officer (2nd from right), receiving the award from YB Dato' Dr. Noraini Ahmad, Deputy Minister of Women, Family, and Community Development (2nd from left) at the Sustainability & CSR Malaysia Awards 2024.



*[Pic 2] Through HLB DuitSmart, the Bank has conducted financial literacy and scam awareness workshops in over 100 primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions.*

**KUALA LUMPUR, 12 AUGUST 2024 - Hong Leong Bank (“HLB” or the “Bank”) has been recognized as Bank of the Year for Community Empowerment at the Sustainability & CSR Malaysia Awards 2024**, attributed mainly to the Bank empowering over 9000 students and members of the community to date with financial literacy and scam awareness workshops through its financial literacy platform - HLB DuitSmart, as well as their various employee-led community empowerment initiatives.

Since its inception in 2019, the HLB DuitSmart program has brought financial literacy workshops to more than 100 primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions, equipping students with the knowledge needed to navigate personal budgeting, financial planning, and protecting themselves from financial fraud. HLB also conducts scam awareness workshops for SMEs and underprivileged members of the community, ensuring that the wider society can better protect themselves from the latest scams and better plan for their financial futures.

The program has also officially entered the Malaysia Book of Records for the “Most Students Graduated from a Financial Literacy Program”, as it witnessed 1789 students graduating from its flagship DuitSmart Kids program, achieved in collaboration with Smart Reader ® Worldwide.

**Kevin Lam, Group Managing Director and CEO of HLB** commented on how the Bank’s financial literacy and community empowerment initiatives serve to build connections and generate tangible change.

“At HLB, we believe financial literacy and community empowerment are not just initiatives, but pathways to building stronger connections and creating lasting positive change. We believe financial literacy isn’t just about numbers; it’s about empowering individuals to make the best life decisions. Through our education initiatives and resources, we strive to equip our customers with the knowledge and skills to navigate their financial journeys confidently. From managing everyday finances to planning for major milestones, we are committed to fostering financial literacy as a cornerstone for a prosperous and fulfilling life.”

HLB has a comprehensive employee CSR platform, which works to inspire its employees to engage with the wider community and drive social change through various community investment initiatives, ranging from book donation and

blood donation drives, to food distribution programs and even beach cleanings. Employees design and organise CSR programs specifically targeted to the needs of their communities, leveraging on the Bank's extensive branch network to mobilise manpower and run the programs efficiently across Malaysia. With this, HLB employees also receive 'CSR leave' days which they can redeem after participating in a CSR activity, which has encouraged employees to contribute over 1000 volunteer hours in 2023 alone.

**Zalman Zainal, HLB's Chief Marketing & Communication Officer**, who also leads the Bank's CSR team commented, "We see ourselves as a partner to our customers and the communities we serve, and our employee-led CSR initiatives are a natural extension of that customer-centric mindset. Through these initiatives, our employees have the opportunity to participate in on-ground CSR programs, ensuring they gain invaluable experiences while allowing us to forge stronger relationships with the community around us. Whether it is through financial literacy workshops, partnering with a social enterprise through their business growth journey, or a simple book donation drive, our CSR initiatives give us an opportunity to contribute to the community, in the hopes of driving tangible and meaningful social change."

The Bank has previously won several awards for its CSR and ESG initiatives, most recently being named Company of the Year (Banking) at the ESG Leadership Award 2023. Besides that, HLB has been named Company of the Year (Banking) at the Sustainability & CSR Malaysia Award 2022, Company of the Year (Banking) for Excellence in COVID-19 Support & Community Welfare at the CSR Malaysia Awards 2021, and Company of the Year (Supporting Social Enterprises) in 2019.

To learn more about HLB's community investment initiatives, please visit: <https://www.hlb.com.my/en/personal-banking/about-us/sustainability/community-investment.html>