

# Teh Tarik Satu



*“There are bound to be hindrances and rejections from the people while working in such a community with diverse cultures and beliefs”.*

**//** *Teh tarik satu, kurang manis!*” Sitting down and sipping tea is probably one of the most integral parts of the life of a community worker. It takes just one simple *minum teh* with the community to morph into a new level of relationship known as *kawan* (friend). Working, serving and *minum teh* in a multiracial community such as the low-cost flats in Setapak is not always a walk in the park as the simplicity of *minum teh* varies with the complexity of the diverse cultures. Below are some instances of our interactions with people from different cultures.

**“Ambik ambik, jangan malu!”**

*(“Just take, don’t be shy”)*

Kak Wi\* operates a stall near the flats. She sells a

variety of scrumptious Malay pastries such as karpap and other traditional delicacies like cokodok, cucur udang, keropok lekor and kuih ketayap. There are other stalls similar to hers, but her fun and bubbly personality makes all the difference. Whenever some of us from Malaysian Care visit her, she is very welcoming, inviting us to have a seat and even offering us some of her kuih for free! *“Ambik ambik, jangan malu!”* is what she always says when she sees us but of course, we insist on paying her. She sometimes makes time to *minum teh* with some of us and talk about the community. Through constant and regular interaction with her, we get to know her perceptions of the community—which actually gives us insights into how we can better serve people in the community with different cultures.

■ Nicholas Goh is not a fan of “teh tarik” but believes that “minum teh” and interacting with people are imperative in community development.



Low-cost in Setapak

### ***“Boleh boleh, apa pun boleh”***

*(“Anything also can”)*

Encik Nam\*, a committee member in the Residents’ Association, also operates a food stall in the area. Unlike Kak Wi, he is rather quiet and reserved but when it comes to us asking him for favours, his immediate response is always, *“Boleh, boleh, apa pun boleh”*. Of course, such an established friendship did not just happen overnight. It required constant interaction and understanding of the cultural differences to eventually forge such a friendship with him.

Our interaction and *minum teh* sessions with him still continue. We talk about almost anything in the community. From these interactions with him, we have learned and have a better understanding of how to approach and interact with other people from different cultures.

### ***“Cho mat yeh?”***

*(“What are you doing?” in Cantonese)*

The process of relationship-building and interaction in the community is not always as smooth sailing as our relations with Kak Wi and Encik Nam. There are bound to be hindrances and rejections from people while working in such a community with diverse cultures and beliefs. In a few programmes that we run in the community such as Bumblebee and PRUkasih, some people walk up to us and utter, *“Cho mat yeh?”* with an intimidating posture and tone.



Ambik aje! Taken from Kak Wi's stall

Some of them demand that we identify ourselves, to make sure that we are not in the community for self-interested agendas. Some of them also reject our approaches and intentions to interact with them, although deep down we know that we have no hidden intentions other than to just sit down, interact and be their *kawan* regardless of the cultural differences.

### **We Are His People**

Jesus did not allow cultural differences to dictate whom He interacted with. He sat down with Zacchaeus and Matthew, both of whom were tax collectors. He also interacted with the Samaritan woman by the well, in spite of the cultural differences between Jews and Samaritans. Jesus broke the wall of cultural differences and focussed on interacting with people, offering hope to them as a friend.

We set out as His people to bring hope to the community. We ought to model ourselves on Jesus, who interacts with people from different cultures as a friend, bringing hope to people. That is how God’s glory shines through us, **His people.** ■

*\*Names have been altered in protection of identities.*