

# ONE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Meet three inspiring individuals with unique dreams for the future as 2023 winds down, all dedicated to causes for community betterment.

Text: Chow Ee-Tan Image Courtesy of Respective Interviewees iStockphoto

## COVER STORY

As 2023 approaches its end, we eagerly anticipate the upcoming year with rejuvenated hopes for a brighter future. *Calibre* engages three prominent figures, each to express a cherished aspiration for the approaching year or the near future, a dream they hold dear. These dreams are intricately tied to the causes they champion, aiming to pave the way for community enhancement and the prosperity of future generations.

### VISIONARY SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAILBLAZER

Kuhan Pathy, a chartered engineer by trade and a dedicated social entrepreneur, co-founded Masala Wheels in 2015, launching it as a lone food truck. This venture has since evolved into a diverse array of Indian and Sri Lankan culinary initiatives, spanning cafes and catering services. The primary objective behind Masala Wheels is to empower marginalised communities, particularly at-risk youth, by imparting valuable food and beverage (F&B) skills.

Kuhan's vision for the future is intrinsically tied to social entrepreneurship. In recent years, he has worked tirelessly to raise awareness about the social enterprise model through Pepper Labs, fostering businesses for the B40 demographic and programmes to engage the youth. In 2018, he, along with like-minded associates, founded the Chambers for Social Entrepreneur Development, where they ventured into the domain of government policies.

His core belief revolves around

### Kuhan Pathy

*Social Entrepreneur*

#### MY ONE HOPE:

To advance an equitable economy through policy advocacy.



“My mission is to inspire young people to step beyond their professional lives and contribute to building a purpose-driven community. It’s also about helping them identify skills to create a lasting impact on their environment, leaving a legacy for future generations to flourish in.”

advancing an equitable economy through policy advocacy.

“Many individuals seek careers or businesses with a higher purpose,” Kuhan emphasises. “My mission is to inspire young people to step beyond their professional lives and contribute to building a purpose-driven community. It’s also about

helping them identify skills to create a lasting impact on their environment, leaving a legacy for future generations to flourish in.”

Kuhan recognises the yearning of many young individuals for more meaningful work. In response, Masala Wheels initiated a programme last year that not only assisted young people in finding employment but also addressed critical issues such as environmental preservation, social justice and good governance.

In addition to its F&B services, Masala Wheels actively engages in policy advocacy, with a strong focus on capacity building to empower more entrepreneurs and instil essential financial literacy within their ranks, as well as aiding NGOs in transforming into sustainable social enterprises. Kuhan reveals his upcoming pilot programme aims to elevate the standing of the third sector, where social enterprises play a

pivotal role, as trustworthy delivery services.

Kuhan has actively participated in various leadership fellowships and programmes, including his selection for the Obama Foundation Leaders Asia-Pacific programme last year.

“As a young person, I wanted to have a voice and a seat at the table, but making an impact in the Malaysian ecosystem can be challenging. That’s why I decided to build my credibility elsewhere and later return to advocate for policies,” he shares.

With the growing dialogue and engagement in policy advocacy, he envisions his social enterprise becoming a reliable partner for the government.

“We work across political divides and support policy discussions. Whether it’s inclusive economics or social cohesion, these are conversations we want young people to engage in,” he asserts. “Many may think that our efforts won’t influence or change anything, but change does take time. We can influence policymakers with our economic perspectives.”

“Individuals with a shared civic commitment should come together to discuss ESG (environmental, social, and governance) issues and enhance societal wellbeing. Social enterprises serve as catalysts and facilitators,” he adds.

Kuhan notes that in 2015, social enterprise was scarcely discussed, but with the establishment of the Chamber for Social Entrepreneur Development, policy conversations surged. In 2018, the government

allocated RM10 million as an initial investment in the social enterprise sector, and it has since quadrupled in size.

“We’re also collaborating with civil society organisations and partnering with the private sector, other social enterprises and NGOs. By working closely with NGOs and their social beneficiaries, we can navigate the necessary procurement services,” he reveals.

“Our efforts in building our economy and promoting sustainability will leave a lasting impact for future generations in our nation,” he says.

#### **WOMEN FORWARD TOGETHER**

Wong Chui Ling, a versatile entertainer and a mother to eight-year-old twins, adroitly manages

her diverse roles. Fondly known as Chui Ling, she passionately extends her support to empower women in her community through a campaign she conceived two years ago, the ‘Female Forward’ campaign.

“Since I arrived in Malaysia, I’ve undergone various roles as a woman—from a single young professional to a team leader, a wife and a mother,” says Chui Ling, a Hong Kong native who has called Malaysia home for over two decades.

People often ask me, ‘How do you balance work and family so effortlessly?’ I do invest significant

### **Wong Chui Ling**

*TV Host, Radio Personality & Soft-Skill Coach*

#### **MY ONE HOPE:**

To grow and move forward with women.

“Some think overnight transformation is possible with effort, but real change occurs gradually. Small, consistent steps yield significant results over time.”





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effort,” she chuckles. “At this life stage, I want to share my knowledge and tools with other women to help them advance and grow.”

Chui Ling’s motivation for her ‘Female Forward’ campaign draws from her practice of Chinese metaphysics.

“According to metaphysics, we are transitioning from one energy pillar to the next, from 2024 to 2043. It’ll be a period of substantial change, with the last few years being chaotic,” she explains.

“The keyword for this upcoming era is ‘female’, and women’s energy is crucial. Given the favourable environment, we should seize the opportunity to learn, equip ourselves and mature.”

Chui Ling initiated her campaign by gathering small groups of women for coffee sessions focused on life skills. The first topic was financial literacy.

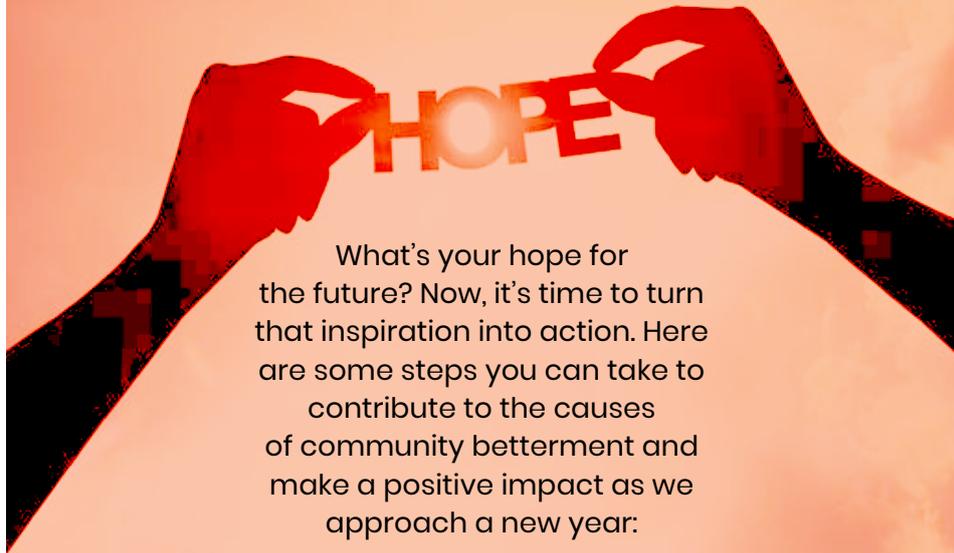
“Many women earn well but lack financial planning skills. I wanted to offer tips and new knowledge in this area,” she says. She subsequently covered detoxification, encompassing both physical and spiritual aspects.

Chui Ling works with mothers and high-achieving female entrepreneurs, seeing brilliance in both groups.

She emphasises that the time is ripe to share her life knowledge and experiences. She doesn’t use the term ‘empowerment,’ as her aim is simply to help women lead better and happier lives.

“Rather than empowering, let’s grow and move forward together,” she says. “It all starts with small steps. An open mind and

# TURNING HOPE INTO ACTION



What’s your hope for the future? Now, it’s time to turn that inspiration into action. Here are some steps you can take to contribute to the causes of community betterment and make a positive impact as we approach a new year:

### VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME:

Find local volunteer opportunities or join community organisations to give back and support causes you’re passionate about.

### DONATE TO CHARITIES:

Consider making a donation to a charitable organisation that aligns with your values. Every little bit helps!

### SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES:

Shop locally and dine at independent restaurants to boost your community’s economy.

### MENTORSHIP AND EDUCATION:

Share your knowledge and skills by mentoring others or getting involved in local educational initiatives.

### SUSTAINABLE LIVING:

Reduce your environmental impact by adopting eco-friendly habits like recycling, reducing waste and conserving energy.

### ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS:

Be a voice for change by advocating for important social and environmental issues in your community.

### JOIN COMMUNITY EVENTS:

Attend local meetings and community events to connect with neighbours and stay informed.

### KIND ACTS OF SERVICE:

Random acts of kindness, such as helping a neighbour, can create a positive ripple effect.

### COLLABORATE WITH OTHERS:

Join or create partnerships with like-minded individuals and organisations to amplify your impact.

Let’s work together to turn our hopes for a better future into tangible actions that benefit our communities and the world around us.

willingness to improve oneself lead to visible progress over time.”

Chui Ling advocates a soft, gradual approach.

“Some think overnight transformation is possible with effort, but real change occurs gradually. Small, consistent steps yield significant results over time,” she notes.

As a sought-after emcee and host, she teaches effective communication and emotional management to women.

“Accepting your weaknesses is the first step. Then, ask if you want to change, and take small, consistent steps to build new habits. This leads to helping others,” she advises.

Chui Ling plans to use various platforms for different target groups, including parenting.

The official launch of ‘Female Forward’ is set for 2024, with a more comprehensive approach to facilitate easier access to information, knowledge and support from her team.

“My hope is to uplift other women. This will be my legacy, offering life satisfaction,” she says.

#### **ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE**

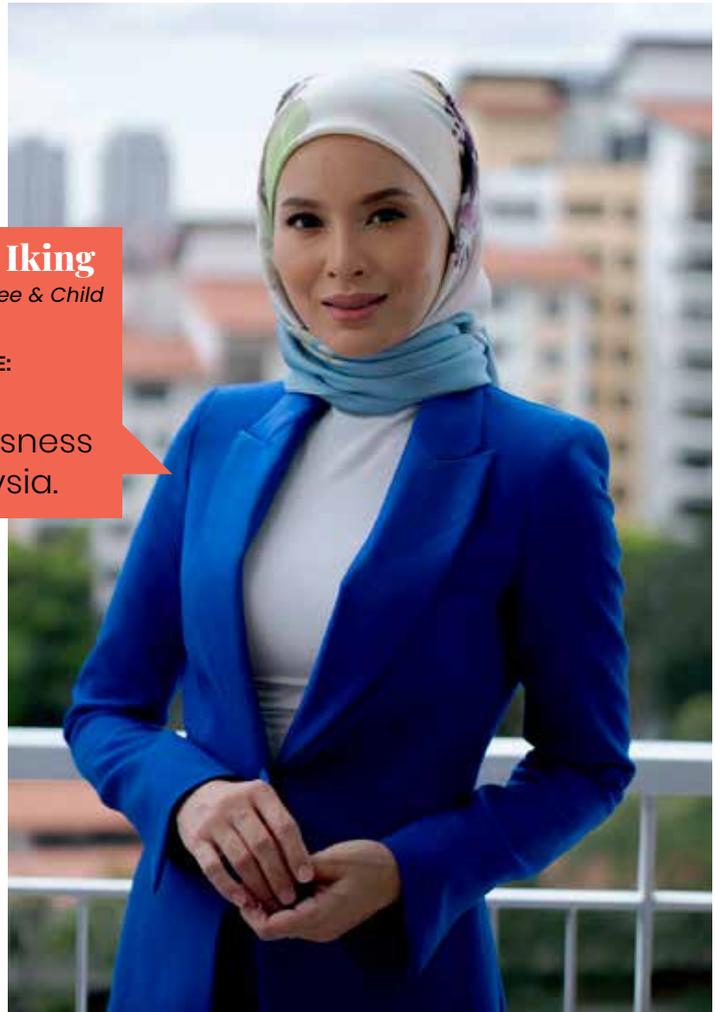
At the age of 20, Daphne Iking, a renowned television celebrity and fervent advocate for women and children, underwent a profoundly impactful experience. Daphne, originally hailing from the village of Keningau in Sabah, found herself introduced to a young, unmarried Malay mother facing dire circumstances. Struck by compassion, she contemplated adopting the mother’s child herself, driven by the fact that her

### **Daphne Iking**

*TV Host, Emcee & Child Advocate*

#### **MY ONE HOPE:**

To end statelessness in Malaysia.



“As a concerned citizen, I will persist in voicing my opinions from a non-political standpoint. I will continue to advocate for what I believe is right.”

own father had been adopted. However, Daphne soon realised the intricate web of laws governing adoption that she was unaware of at the time.

Tragically, Daphne later discovered that the unmarried mother had contracted HIV and eventually passed away, and they lost contact with her child. This encounter left an indelible mark on Daphne’s heart, inspiring her

to extend her help to numerous unmarried pregnant mothers. She also devotes her time and energy to volunteering with NGOs such as the Women’s Aid Organisation, where she has encountered countless cases of unwed mothers, children born out of wedlock and women trapped in abusive relationships.

Through her involvement in assisting unwed mothers, Daphne delved into the complex issues surrounding adoption, particularly the necessity of ensuring that innocent children are legally adopted to protect them from the potential dangers of sex crimes, human trafficking and exploitation by malevolent individuals.

“It becomes even more challenging when dealing with unwed mothers who are foreigners

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because foster parents face hurdles in registering a birth certificate for a child born out of wedlock,” she explains. “This, in turn, makes it exceedingly difficult to legally adopt the child. The absence of official documents deprives the child of essential opportunities in life.”

Daphne’s experiences led her to recognise the broader issue of citizenship rights in Malaysia, where statelessness strips individuals of their rights and privileges. Her research into the Federal Constitution revealed a multitude of restrictions and responsibilities placed on mothers, particularly in cases of statelessness, unwed motherhood and paternity laws.

Moreover, Daphne observed that these issues all contribute to the larger problem of statelessness, particularly concerning women’s rights. She strongly advocates for legislative changes to enhance the wellbeing of women and children in Malaysia. Additionally, she has been a prominent supporter of

paternity leave, emphasising the shared responsibility of fathers in raising children and shouldering the caregiving burden.

Daphne articulates, “The issue of statelessness also carries significant economic ramifications for our nation. Stateless individuals are often prohibited from working and contributing to the economy, hindering its growth.”

For over a decade, Daphne has been a vocal advocate, tirelessly bringing attention to the predicament of statelessness. She has engaged in public speaking and blog writing and even attended a summer course in the Netherlands to bolster her knowledge. In 2019, she had the privilege of participating in a short course titled “The Institute of Statelessness” at Tilburg University.

“It was a humbling experience,” she reflects. “I initially believed I could single-handedly change

the world, only to realise my own limitations due to a lack of expertise. Nonetheless, I’m proud to stay connected with fellow alumni via a WhatsApp group, many of whom are making a difference in their respective countries.”

Looking ahead, Daphne eagerly anticipates Malaysia hosting the World Conference on Statelessness in February next year at Taylor’s University. She has been invited to play a role as either a moderator or emcee at the event.

Though Daphne has been offered opportunities to enter the political arena, she remains resolute in her decision to stay apolitical in her mission to combat statelessness.

“As a concerned citizen, I will persist in voicing my opinions from a non-political standpoint. I will continue to advocate for what I believe is right,” she concludes. 

