

Ranessa Theyakaraja

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Strategic programme designer and community facilitator with 10+ years' experience across gender equity, performing arts-based learning, and grassroots education. Skilled in building partnerships, co-creating leadership programmes, and facilitating peer-led spaces that centre lived experience and emotional resilience. Experienced in both nonprofit and purpose-driven business contexts.

EXPERIENCE

Marketing, Partnerships & Program Development

School of Thought Malaysia

February 2024 - present

Serving in a non-salaried leadership capacity, with facilitation-based income earned per workshop or session.

- Contribute to the development of strategic partnerships, pitch development, and program frameworks for a leadership collective focused on collective learning and community transformation.
- Co-design the Human Intelligence Framework (IQ, EQ, SQ, AQ) to anchor all training and curriculum design — blending cognition, emotional awareness, social systems, and adaptability into one accessible model.
- Design and facilitate corporate middle-management leadership program integrating movement, performing arts, neuroscience and psychology.
- Facilitate pilot workshops on leadership presence, emotional regulation, and collaboration, using arts-based and participatory methods.
- Support early-stage branding, revenue models, and co-creative strategy — supporting long-term sustainability and values alignment for sustainable growth.
- Develop marketing materials, storytelling decks, and facilitator briefings to support visibility and outreach.

Community Steward - Economic Livelihoods & Grassroots Education)

Women's Circle of Malaysia

August 2021 - present

Currently serving in a non-salaried leadership capacity, focused on programme development and grassroots learning.

- Support the design and facilitation of interdisciplinary programmes that draw from theatre, storytelling, movement, and voice work to nurture personal development, emotional expression, and creative agency.
- Work alongside community partners to develop hyper-local community-rooted offerings, including conservation-aligned programmes and income-generating initiatives with grassroots communities.
- Help coordinate partnerships, facilitator support, and impact storytelling, with a focus on gender equity, cultural care, and ecological awareness.
- Contribute to the organisation's communications, programme development, and strategic planning, guided by a long-term commitment to accessible, community-held spaces.
- Maintain relationships with wellness practitioners, arts collectives, and grassroots organisers across Malaysia to deepen collaboration and shared learning.

Business & Project Lead

Earth Heir Collective

July 2024 - December 2024

Reason for leaving: Took on the role to gain hands-on experience in sustainable business and social enterprise. Stepped away due to unforeseen medical circumstances, now resolved, and re-aligned with long-term community-based work.

- Supported Earth Heir's evolution from an artisanal brand to a growing social impact marketplace, contributing to a significant increase in business development outcomes within six months.
- Worked closely with team members, artisans, refugee entrepreneurs and to enhance ethical supply chains, expand market access, and improve storytelling around sustainable livelihoods.
- Developed a Business Continuity Plan and facilitated board simulation sessions to help up skill junior team members and strengthen internal processes.
- Contributed to grant writing and proposal development, aligning funder interests with Earth Heir's mission to promote dignified work and artisan empowerment.

- Collaborated across departments to support brand positioning and build deeper connections between ethical consumption, cultural heritage, and social advocacy.
- Gained valuable insight into the social enterprise ecosystem and cross-cultural partnerships, which continues to inform my broader work in gender equity and community programming.

Partnerships Officer (Events, Campaigns & Corporate Engagements)

Women's Aid Organisation

August 2023 - July 2024

Reason for leaving: Completed a meaningful cycle of work and stepped away to pursue an opportunity with a broader scope.

- Designed and led public-facing F&B and retail campaigns contributing to over 50% of annual fundraising goal by activating community-based giving and CSR-aligned brand collaborations.
- Co-designed and facilitated youth and corporate programs focused on ending violence against women, with a strong emphasis on education, empathy, and institutional accountability.
- Represented WAO in media engagements, including press events, brand partnerships and national campaigns — advocating for survivor rights and amplifying WAO's mission.
- Coordinated large-scale public events, donor activations, and awareness campaigns, integrating creative storytelling with advocacy goals.
- Led relationship building with corporate partners, creative collaborators, and social sector allies to expand WAO's reach and deepen community trust.
- Contributed to grant writing and reporting, supporting sustained donor engagement and aligned with multi-stakeholder program outcomes.

Sustainability Communications & Brand Strategy Consultant

RNSE Consultancy

August 2017 - December 2020

Reason for leaving: Phased out the business due to the COVID-19 pandemic

- Developed brand narratives and digital campaigns that highlighted ethical practices, stakeholder engagement, and cross-sector innovation for clients in healthcare, construction, fintech and social impact sectors.
- Managed and worked alongside a team of 20 to produce content creation across web, PR and social platforms — translating complex ideas into accessible messaging aligned with each organisation's mission and ESG goals.
- Supported teams in aligning visibility with corporate responsibility objectives, delivering measurable engagement while preserving authenticity and impact.
- Advised clients on strategic repositioning, helping them communicate values with clarity and cultural sensitivity during growth or transition phases.

EARLIER EXPERIENCE (Selected)

Head of Content Marketing

Everpeaks E-commerce Agency | Jan 2017 – Jan 2018

Led digital content and brand messaging for multiple product verticals.

Special Projects Writer

Blu Inc Media (Her World Malaysia) | Jan 2015 – Jan 2016

Produced advertorial campaigns for F&B, beauty, and lifestyle clients.

Deputy Editor

Green Plus Magazine (Hash Plus Communications) | Jan 2013 – Jan 2015

Oversaw editorial planning, research, and feature writing with a focus on sustainability.

EDUCATION

MBA in Finance (Part-Time, Online)

Universiti Tun Abdul Razak (UniRazak), Kuala Lumpur

May 2025 – May 2026 (*In Progress*)

Diploma in Performing Arts & Media

Sunway University, Petaling Jaya
March 2009 – Sept 2011

AWARDS & FELLOWSHIPS

- **YSEALI Professional Fellowship 2025** – Shortlisted
- **BOH Cameronian Arts Awards 2023** – Nominee, Best Group Ensemble
- **BOH Cameronian Arts Awards 2019** – Winner, Best of 2019 (Producer)
- **YES! Broadway Academy Scholarship (Malaysia & Thailand)** – Awarded by the U.S. Embassy

CERTIFICATIONS & ADDITIONAL LEARNING

Fundamentals of Business Expansion, U.S. Mission to ASEAN (2024)
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development & Gender Equality (2024)
Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence, UN Women (2023)
Translating Between Gender and Finance, Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs (2023)
Gender Equality, Penang Women's Development Corporation (2017)
Certificate in Business Writing (2016)

CORE SKILLS

Programme Design & Facilitation, Community Engagement & Leadership Development, Partnership Development & Stakeholder Management, Grant Writing & Fundraising Communications, Content & Curriculum Development, Strategic Event Design & Facilitation, Monitoring, Evaluation, Research & Learning (MERL), Digital Communications & Community Platforms (Slack, Zoom, Notion, Canva, Mailchimp)

SOFT SKILLS

Feminist & Inclusive Leadership, Cultural Sensitivity & Cross-Border Collaboration, Strategic Thinking & Systems Awareness, Adaptive Communication, Team Mentoring & Peer Learning, Narrative Crafting for Social Impact, Empathy-Led Facilitation, Integrity & Values-Driven Decision Making

REFERENCES

Yap Tuck Khong
President, School of Thought Malaysia

Adelina Chan
Co-steward, Women's Circle of Malaysia

Sumitra Visvanathan
Former Executive Director, Women's Aid Organisation

Zaiti Zubir
Former Head of Development & Special Projects, Women's Aid Organisation

**Contact details available upon request*

Appendix: Key Projects & Impact Highlights

Women's Learning Circle

Women's Circle of Malaysia

- Initiated a monthly peer-to-peer learning space for women across diverse backgrounds, centring grassroots education, cultural care, and lived experience.
- Designed the Circle to be participant-led and theme-responsive, with a focus on shared knowledge, intergenerational exchange, and psychological safety.
- Positioned the programme as part of a broader vision for decentralised, community-rooted leadership development.

Girls Speak!

Women's Circle of Malaysia (in partnership with local performing arts facilitators)

- Co-designed curriculum and facilitated a performing arts-based programme for low-income, Malay speaking adolescent girls.
- Empowered self-expression and resilience through vocal work, movement, and storytelling.
- Secured grant funding to support programme development and delivery.

Play-Driven Leadership

School of Thought Malaysia

- Developed a leadership programme for corporate middle-management, grounded in the Human Intelligence framework (IQ, EQ, SQ, AQ).
- Integrated performing arts, psychology and movement to build emotional agility, team trust and leadership presence.

A Dialogue

Women's Circle of Malaysia x Men's Circle of Malaysia (School of Thought Malaysia)

- Co-created a dialogue circle bridging the gap between genders through conversations around polarity, vulnerability, and emotional responsibility.
- Held space for non-performative, reflective exchanges through storytelling and guided prompts.

5% Pledge for Change

Earth Heir Collective

- Conceptualised and launched the 5% Pledge for Change, a retail advocacy initiative urging brands to dedicate 5% of shelf space to goods by marginalised communities in Malaysia — both perishable and non-perishable.
- Secured buy-in from key hospitality and retail partners, including W Hotels, Sunway Resort, and QRA Foods, expanding the reach of social procurement into mainstream consumer spaces.
- Positioned the pledge as a scalable model for inclusive economic participation across Malaysia's ethical sourcing ecosystem.

We Pledge (Elimination Of Violence Against Women In The Workplace)

Women's Aid Organisation

- Identified key gaps in WAO's long-running We Pledge workplace campaign to eliminate violence against women, particularly around topic framing, talk titles, and engagement strategy.
- Led the repositioning and relaunch of the campaign by refining language, deepening thematic resonance, and adapting content to audience needs.
- Contributed to a significant increase in new organisational pledges, enhancing private sector engagement and visibility.
- Helped restore momentum to the campaign and align it more closely with evolving workplace equity narratives.

Leaders+ in partnership with ZUS Coffee Malaysia

Women's Aid Organisation

- Co-created a university-level leadership campaign to engage youth in tech-facilitated gender-based violence prevention.

- Co-designed a tech-activated campaign with 5000+ responses in under an hour via ZUS app, and designed workshop curriculum for on-campus engagement for 600+ students across three universities.
- Led campaign strategy messaging, partner alignment, and student activation strategy.