

# A book sale to help rebuild lives

BY RASH BEHARI BHATTACHARJEE

Two of the worst storms on record to have hit the southern hemisphere, leaving three million people in need, have struck a chord with a Malaysian publisher and social enterprise, which is driving a humanitarian campaign to bring relief to the victims.

To help raise awareness of the devastation caused by cyclones Idai and Kenneth, which swept through southern Africa in April, Kuala Lumpur-based Akasaa Management is working directly with the Southern African Development Community (SADC), an intergovernmental organisation of 16 southern African states, to raise funds for disaster recovery.

"The scale of the destruction is so great that it calls for people everywhere to do something for the victims," Akasaa director Angela Yap tells *The Edge*. Some 1.6 million of those affected are children, according to Unicef.

"Malaysians will be able to relate to the chaos that was caused by the floods in Kelantan, when so many people lost their homes and there was much damage to public

amenities," says Yap, referring to the worst flood on record in the East Coast state in 2014-15. "So, they will be able to understand how much aid is needed to help the victims of this cyclone and to rebuild the damaged facilities."

The Kelantan flood has been described as the worst in 200 years, and some 500,000 people had to be evacuated at the height of the disaster.

As for cyclones Idai and Kenneth, three southern African countries have borne the brunt of nature's wrath. Unicef estimated in May that people and children in need in Mozambique numbered more than two million. In Malawi, over 869,000 people needed help and in Zimbabwe, the tally was some 270,000.

In April, Idai made international headlines when a victim in Mozambique gave birth on a mango tree while escaping flood waters. She clung to its branches with her two-year-old son and newborn daughter for two days before being rescued by neighbours, BBC News reported.

To raise money for the victims, Akasaa is donating 20% of the sales of all its books until the end of the year to SADC. It has set a target of raising RM100,000 for this cause.



Yap: The opt-in for this CSR endeavour for corporations is low

Akasaa's publications cover a range of genres, including motivation, psychology, global affairs, law and memoirs.

SADC's representative in Malaysia, Anne Namakau Mutelo, who is also the High Commissioner of Namibia, is supporting the aid effort with her presence at fundraising events and a planned meet-and-greet session with stakeholders.

As the current chair of SADC, Namibia is helping to raise awareness of the humanitarian situation in the affected countries, says Yap.

"Relations between Africa and Malaysia were at their height during the premiership of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad from the 1980s till 2003," Mutelo tells *The Edge*. "Africa and Malaysia have shared values on



Mutelo: Africa and Malaysia have shared values on a number of issues

a number of issues in the international community. We are optimistic that with Dr Mahathir's return to office, these ties will once again gain their previous importance."

Akasaa's appeal has recently brought in its first corporate sponsor, Yap says in an email.

Tokio Marine Life Insurance Malaysia Bhd has bought over 100 books from Akasaa in aid of the humanitarian drive.

"Tokio Marine is proud to contribute to Akasaa's Humanitarian Drive for Cyclones Idai and Kenneth. This is in line with our corporate culture of helping the less fortunate, especially in disaster-related programmes," the insurer says.

The sponsorship programme involves purchasing Akasaa's books

as a corporate social responsibility (CSR) activity. The books can be used by the buyer or donated to a school or recipient of the donor's choice.

"The opt-in for this CSR endeavour for corporations is low — they can procure RM7,000 worth of books and we will channel 20% of all sales to the African fundraiser," says Yap. "Additionally, they can choose to donate the books to any charities, schools or causes of their choice, making this a two-pronged CSR activity benefiting both Malaysians and Africans."

Tokio Marine is donating the books it purchased to SMK Permatang Tok Labu in Penang and SMK and SRK La Salle Brickfields and SM St Mary's in Kuala Lumpur.

"We hope this could help the beneficiary schools cultivate a reading culture among the students," says Wilson Tang, head of corporate communications of Tokio Marine.

To date, Akasaa has disbursed two tranches of payments to Mozambique, the worst-hit of the affected nations.

"We don't go through any middlemen," says Yap. ■

For more information, contact Angela Yap at (012) 2033 087, or visit [www.akasaa.com](http://www.akasaa.com)