

## **Forum Panelist 1**

### **COVID-19 Response: BBNGO ‘crossing’ the nationality borders**

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The Movement Control Order (MCO) due to the COVID-19 Pandemic implemented on 18 March 2020 for Malaysia and the closing of the borders between Malaysia and Thailand caused a lot of strain on the Thai citizens working in Malaysia. Many of them were unable to do their usual job especially in the restaurants all over Malaysia. Efforts were taken by the NGOs and its sponsors in Thailand to relieve the Thai citizens’ suffering.

On the 13th of April an agreement was signed between the Thai Islamic Medical Association of Thailand and ‘Pertubuhan Gabungan Bantuan Bencana NGO’ Malaysia (BBNGO) to support the Thai citizens in their daily life due to the difficulties during the MCO. Majority of those affected were the restaurant workers. According to reports there were about 40,000 Thai workers in Malaysia, most of whom worked in restaurants. On 18th April 2020 The Malaysian-Thai border was opened limitedly via five checkpoints, only 350 Thai citizens were allowed to cross each day. By early May 2020 more than 7,200 Thais have crossed the border including 2,100 who entered illegally by foot or small boats. Through the agreement between TIMA and BBNGO more than 400 packs of food supply were delivered to the Thai citizens mainly in Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, Penang, Perlis and Kedah. Information about their addresses and phone numbers were provided. Some were delivered direct to their homes while in some areas, they were asked to collect supplies from the nearby sundry shops. Knowing the difficulty of movement between districts during the MCO, the help of local NGOs was very much needed. The ‘Pertubuhan Ikram Malaysia’ (through its Yayasan Ikram/I-Bantu), having branches in many districts of Malaysia became our main partner. The SOPs were maintained during the deliveries.

Due to our good, continuous cooperation and relationship since our engagement in the 2014 flood in Kelantan and the 2016/17 flood in Southern Thailand, we have managed to implement several humanitarian missions and social activities with the Thai Islamic Medical Association and its partners. Other BBNGO activities during the MCO include aid for the university students, fresh cooked food for the front-liners, preparation of PPEs, food supply for the poor and needy. COVID-19, you are a blessing in disguise; you bring our hearts together may it be citizens or non-citizens, people of all races and religion. May Allah bless the human race and its submission to God.

**Keywords:** BBNGO, COVID-19 response, MCO, humanitarian missions