

UBS launches first sustainability case challenge with SMU, social enterprises

Competition seeks to provide students with opportunity to partner with local social enterprises to propose solutions for their businesses

NEARLY a thousand Singapore undergraduates from various universities took part in the inaugural SMU Sustainable Case Challenge, which saw the champion team outlast 229 others to take home the top prize.

The competition, held at the Singapore Management University on March 26, was organised by UBS Singapore and the university's Impact Investing Club.

It sought to provide students with an opportunity to partner with local social enterprises to propose innovative sustainability-linked solutions for their businesses.

Eight of the teams made it to the finals and they had the chance to be mentored and coached by UBS employee volunteers, who worked together with the teams to discuss and finetune their ideas for their final case pitches.

These sustainability-linked solutions were presented to the four participating social enterprises – Halogen Foundation Singapore, The Food Bank Singapore, Wateroam, and Zero Waste SG.

The many ideas pitched included onboarding the social enterprise onto a digital platform to garner the best engagement, and gamifying sustainability.

The champion team – which received S\$1,000 for their efforts – comprised four students from the National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University.

They evaluated and re-imagined Wateroam's business model to propose a solution that ensures its long-term sustainability by balancing its profit-making arm and social impact mission.

The winning idea was to scale the business regionally through B2C (business to consumer) and B2B (business to business) methods, while partnering tertiary institutions in developing countries for the deployment of its social mission.



This solution aims to help Wateroam reach more than 2.7 million people in the region and install more than 1,300 units of Wateroam's filters for water security in developing countries.

Two of the other finalists were declared runners-up and given S\$800 each in prize money, which they can use to further develop and implement their ideas for the social enterprises.

Desmond Kuek, the divisional vice chairman and chair of APAC Sustainable Finance Network at UBS, said that sustainability-focused solutions "are no longer just wishful goals, but a necessary course of action" in this day and age.

"At UBS, we have made sustainable investments our preferred solution for our private clients investing globally," he said.

"We believe the future of finance is sustainable and UBS is very pleased to co-host this meaningful sustainability challenge with SMU, to encourage young minds to explore innovative solutions that can benefit our people and planet now and into the future."

From left to right: Gerald Elflein, head of APAC Regional Treasury UBS; Yeoh Choo Guan, head of UBS SEA Global Markets; the four students from the SMU Sustainability Case Challenge champion team; Mathieu Buehler, director, Treasury Assets Singapore; and Valerie Lau, executive director, UBS Sustainable Finance. PHOTO: UBS SINGAPORE