

ARTICLE:

NEURODIVERGENT COMMUNITY: EMPOWERING INCLUSIVITY

SEE • HEAR • BELONG: ENABLING NEURODIVERGENT VOICES THROUGH CULTURE, NATIONHOOD and WORKPLACE READINESS

The Prelude: A New Connectivity

For decades, our story has been told through the lens of infrastructure: kilometres of fibre optics, submarine cables and the invisible waves of connectivity that bind a nation. Yet as we advance towards our aspiration of becoming a Digital Powerhouse, we recognise that the most meaningful connections are not solely technological. They are shaped by empathy, recognition and the ability to see the world through diverse perspectives.

In 2025, we embarked on a deliberate shift in how we approach inclusion. Rather than relying on isolated initiatives, we adopted a full-spectrum ecosystem aligned with our sustainability positioning and long-term social impact goals. This approach reinforces our commitment to social inclusion and community development, with an emphasis on sustainable empowerment, especially during moments of shared cultural significance.

This is the story of how we sought to See untapped potential, Hear voices too often overlooked and create conditions where diverse minds can truly Belong.

SEE:

THE VISION OF SALAM TERISTIMEWA

Enabling Expression through Culture and Authenticity

To See is to recognise talent beyond conventional frames of ability. For many neurodivergent individuals, expression may not follow familiar norms yet their creativity, capability and unique perspectives are often profound.

In April 2025, during World Autism Acceptance Month, we introduced Salam Teristimewa as our Aidilfitri campaign, aiming to shift public perception from limitation towards talent, capability and potential. In collaboration with NAK SENI, a platform that empowers autistic artists to showcase and sell their work, the campaign featured original pieces by artists including Izzati Shahrin and Yuri Azzari. We worked with existing artworks created by the artists themselves, ensuring full creative ownership and authenticity throughout the collaboration.

The artworks were translated into other visual expressions to broaden accessibility and engagement, while preserving the integrity of the original creations. The initiative was also extended through physical platforms, including TM's Hari Raya Open House, where the artists' works were showcased and Raya packets were sold to *Warga TM*. Proceeds were channelled back to NAK SENI, creating a tangible pathway for economic participation.

Salam Teristimewa helped reframe autism from a narrative of sympathy to one (1) of respect, enabling the public to engage with neurodivergent perspectives through shared cultural moments. The initiative demonstrated that inclusion is most meaningful when it is grounded in dignity, ownership and authentic representation.

HEAR:

THE RHYTHM OF HELO MALAYSIA

From Awareness to National Advocacy

Building on this foundation of awareness, we expanded our neurodiversity efforts from cultural engagement to national advocacy through Helo Malaysia. The campaign was launched in conjunction with Hari Kebangsaan and Hari Malaysia 2025, where we participated as the Platinum Strategic Partner.

The campaign featured ZIMI'J, a neurodivergent rock band, alongside artistic contributions from children supported by the Early Autism Project Malaysia. By placing neurodivergent talent at the heart of a national celebration, we sought to normalise inclusion within mainstream platforms, demonstrating that autistic individuals exist across a diverse spectrum and bring unique perspectives to our society.

While we initially considered the potential challenges of sensory environments and public exposure, we addressed these through careful preparation, strong support systems and the professionalism demonstrated by the performers.

The Helo Malaysia music video reached 19.8 million viewers across YouTube and META, significantly increasing visibility and opening new performance and income opportunities for ZIMI'J. The campaign also received industry recognition in the Marketing Magazine Expert's Choice Awards, earning a place among the Top 10 Merdeka TVCs in Malaysia.

Beyond the impressive reach, we were deeply encouraged by feedback from caregivers and members of the public who shared that the campaign enhanced understanding and acceptance of neurodivergent behaviours during festive and public settings, signalling a meaningful shift in societal perception.

Composite image featuring artworks by autistic artists for TM's Aidilfitri campaign.

*BELONG:
THE PWR 2030 WORKPLACE*

From Visibility to Sustainable Empowerment

Visibility and voice are incomplete without belonging. That is why our external initiatives are complemented by internal efforts under PWR 2030, our transformation agenda that places people, capability and culture at the centre of long-term value creation.

We recognise that our success in the years ahead will not be defined by awareness alone, but by sustained empowerment. This includes creating structured entrepreneurship pathways, expanding economic participation and supporting greater independence within the neurodivergent community. It reflects our shift from short-term campaigns to long-term enablement.

Within the company, inclusion is embedded into our broader approach to workforce readiness and governance, ensuring consistency, accountability and scalability across all *Warga TM* nationwide.

Through this commitment, we aim to build a culture where every individual has the opportunity to thrive and truly belong.

*THE SYNERGY:
A FULL SPECTRUM APPROACH*

Together, *See*, *Hear* and *Belong* form an integrated ecosystem.

When talent is *Seen* through culture, it gains a *Voice* on national platforms and is supported to *Belong* through sustainable pathways and systems.

This approach ensures that our commitment to neurodiversity is embedded within our broader Sustainability ambition of Empowering the Future Together, across Prosperity, Planet and People, rather than confined to isolated moments or reporting cycles.

**OUTLOOK FOR TM: SUSTAINING
INCLUSION AS A DIGITAL ADVANTAGE**

Looking ahead, we view neurodiversity as an evolving dimension of how a future-ready Digital Powerhouse engages with society, talent and innovation.

The experiences of Salam Teristimewa and Helo Malaysia have reinforced the importance of moving beyond awareness toward sustained empowerment where creativity, capability and participation translate into long-term opportunity.

Over the coming years, we intend to deepen this ecosystem approach by strengthening pathways that support economic participation, entrepreneurship and independence for the neurodivergent community, while continuing to embed inclusion within mainstream cultural platforms and our organisational systems. These efforts sit most directly within the People pillar, while also reinforcing Prosperity through broader workforce readiness, talent diversification and long-term national competitiveness.

As Malaysia's digital economy continues to expand, we believe that inclusive growth will be critical to sustaining resilience at both organisational and national levels. By integrating social responsibility into how technology is designed, deployed and experienced, we aim to ensure that digital progress is accompanied by lasting social value, consistent with our ambition of Empowering the Future Together.

