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SPORTS changed her life and Datuk Nicol David is now intent on giving opportunities to children in hopes that they can dream big just like she did, and transform their lives through sport and education.

"When I was five years old, I was given the greatest opportunity in my life, and that was to play a sport – squash," she says.

"That opportunity changed my life forever, as it showed me the importance of hard work, dedication and humility," she adds.

The former world squash champion together with Colombian professional squash professional Mariana de Reyes recently launched the Nicol David Organisation, located in Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur, to "empower girls

# Empowering women and children in sport

Malaysian squash ace Nicol David wants to give back to society through her newly-launched foundation to help underprivileged children.

and boys through sport and education".

"The Little Legends programme supports B40 and M40 children with an after-school programme

that includes squash training, English tutoring and life skills," says Nicol.

"The subsidised programme enables children from the ages of

eight to 12 to be trained for five years before they go to secondary school," she says.

"Children are selected for the programme from public schools in the surrounding areas of Bukit Jalil and Sri Petaling," she adds. Nicol says that her desire is that this programme will give more opportunities to families whose children don't have the chance to take part in sports or get tutored in English.

"It's my desire to see more people taking part in sports, especially squash.

"Sports is important for health, self improvement and character

development," she says.

Nicol who was in competitive sports for 20 years, says that she is now ready to give her all to the foundation.

"I wake up with a purpose to give back to society," she says, revealing that her day comprises work meetings, working out, and meeting up with people since she returned to Malaysia from Amsterdam where she was based.

"Now, I'm ready to give my heart and soul to the foundation to empower girls and boys through sports and education," she says.

Nicol is no stranger to giving



Warm-up exercises with Nicol. — Photos: FAIHAN GHANI/The Star



'Sport changed my life and now I want to give these opportunities back to children in hopes that someday they can dream big just like I did,' says Nicol.



**#BREAKTHEBIAS**  
Challenge inequality, make a change

In support of the 2022 International Women's Day global collective against discrimination and gender bias, **The Star**, as chair of the World Editors Forum (Asia Chapter), and in collaboration with its regional media partners, will embark on a year-long initiative to highlight stories that celebrate and promote equality. Go to [thestar.com.my](http://thestar.com.my) for more [#breakthebias](https://twitter.com/breakthebias) stories.

back to the community.

Earlier this year, 20 women had the opportunity to play squash with the eight-time world squash champion at the **#AIASquashTheStereotypes** Squash Clinic to advocate for gender equality.

Women were asked to share on social media how they squashed gender stereotypes and inequality, and those who were selected would get the opportunity to take part in the Squash Clinic and

spend the day with Nicol.

Nicol admits that women in sports do face certain challenges that male players do not.

"In sports, there are always challenges as a female athlete.

"When I was world number one, I had to take on the additional responsibility of representing the women's tours.

"By doing so, I had to turn down some tournaments which didn't give women the same priority as men, such as when the prize money for the men was higher than the women, because it should be equal," she says.

"Women are powerful in their own right and have a lot of capabilities and potential for sports as well as in other areas," she says.

Her advice to young women: "Never let people look down on you or judge you, saying 'you can't do this or that because you're too young or too old, not good enough, or not athletic enough' because you are enough.

"You don't have to compare yourself with anyone else because you have self-worth and are capable of doing all that you want," she concludes.

More info at: [nicoldavidorganisation.org/](http://nicoldavidorganisation.org/)



Nicol and Mariana de Reyes coaching the women during the squash clinic at the National Squash Centre, Bukit Jalil.