

Founders' Insights Series

From Unbankable to Creditworthy: How MADCash is Turning Behavioural Data into Financial Infrastructure



Founder and CEO, Nuraizah Shamsul Baharin, did not set out to build a fintech. She set out to test a simple premise: A single donation, structured to recycle rather than disappear, could do what charity cannot. What followed was a VC-backed platform operating across three countries, multi-international awards, and a proprietary credit scoring system that Malaysian financial institutions are now seeking to access. She explains how a small pilot during Malaysia's first pandemic lockdown became the foundation for a financial inclusion model that is drawing attention from investors and policymakers across the region.

Three Women, RM3,000, One Condition

In 2020, Malaysia's first national lockdown had shuttered businesses overnight. Three women micro-entrepreneurs, one selling mixed rice, another making cookies and one

selling Malay traditional treats, had watched their cash flow disappear in a matter of days. They had no credit history and no collateral.

Nuraizah Shamsul Baharin, then running her second technology company, had this idea for a fintech that facilitates paying it forward. She reached out to friends and raised RM3,000, then gave these three ladies zero-interest microfunding with one condition: when they recovered, they would pay it back so the money could go to the next woman in line.

One month later, the three women had collectively generated RM18,000 in revenue.

They are not outliers. Some 15% of Malaysia's adult population of 23 million are unbanked¹, meaning they have little to no access to the formal financial system. Another 40% were considered underbanked, holding basic accounts but receiving none of the services that actually build economic security: credit, insurance, or long-term savings. Many are housewives running home-based or micro businesses, invisible to the formal financial Institutions, not because they lack discipline or potential to run a business, but because they never had the opportunity to generate a credit history.

For these women, sometimes a small amount of funding is not just a convenience. It is the difference between having a business and having none.

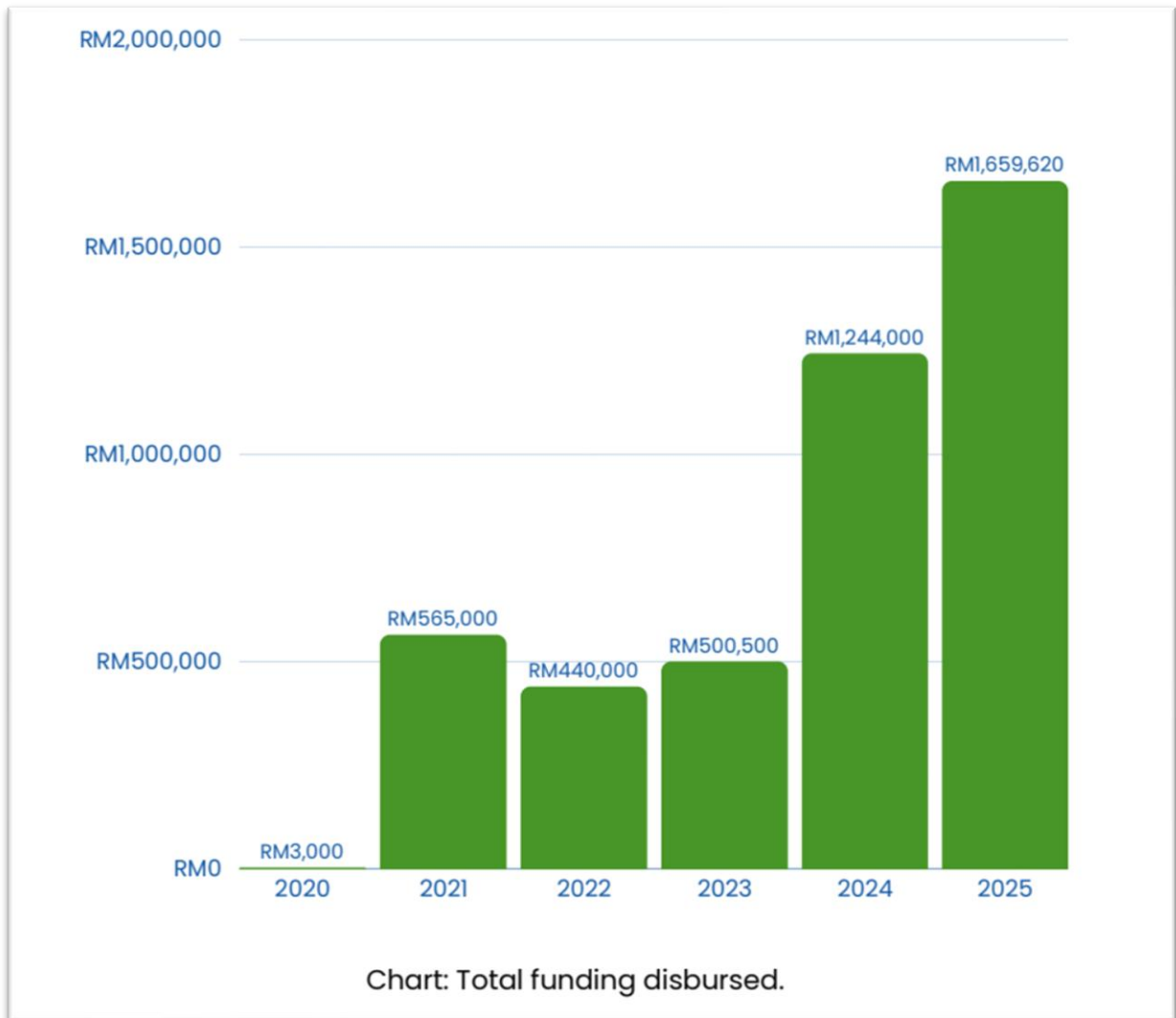
MADCash steps in with capital and training to help realise their aspirations.

The beneficiaries of the loans have started a wide array of self-sustaining ventures, including food products, F&B industry, agriculture, mobile wellness and beauty services as well as heritage and batik crafts. Some have built their businesses online through social media and e-commerce, while others have formalised their financial management for the first time. Behind each of these ventures is a woman who, without access to structured capital and training, would have had no formal pathway to build one.

“We see entrepreneurship as a way to level the playing field in achieving gender equality, and when women increase their take-home pay, this will in turn, build higher economic growth for their families and their community,” Nuraizah says.

MADCash provides zero-interest micro funds to women entrepreneurs alongside a structured entrepreneurship program while building a Future Bankability Index which predicts how long it would take a woman with limited or impaired credit history to become bankable. The loans are not made out of charity. They are a stepping stone to long-term financial empowerment and, eventually, to a place in the formal financial system.

¹“[Limited offerings, fierce competition stall progress in Malaysia's digital banking sector](#)”, *The Business Times*



Source: MADCash Impact Report

To date, the fintech has supported over 1,500 women entrepreneurs, with approximately 1,200 receiving direct funding. MADCash has disbursed close to RM3 million in micro funds, with an additional RM1.5 million facilitated through a partner bank. Over a one-year tracking period up to September 2025, its participating women entrepreneurs generated cumulative revenue of RM5.4 million from their business ventures.

In its recently released impact report², MADCash notes that participation in its entrepreneurship programme grew exponentially as the company expanded support beyond financing to capability building. Last year alone, it supported more than 500 women entrepreneurs.

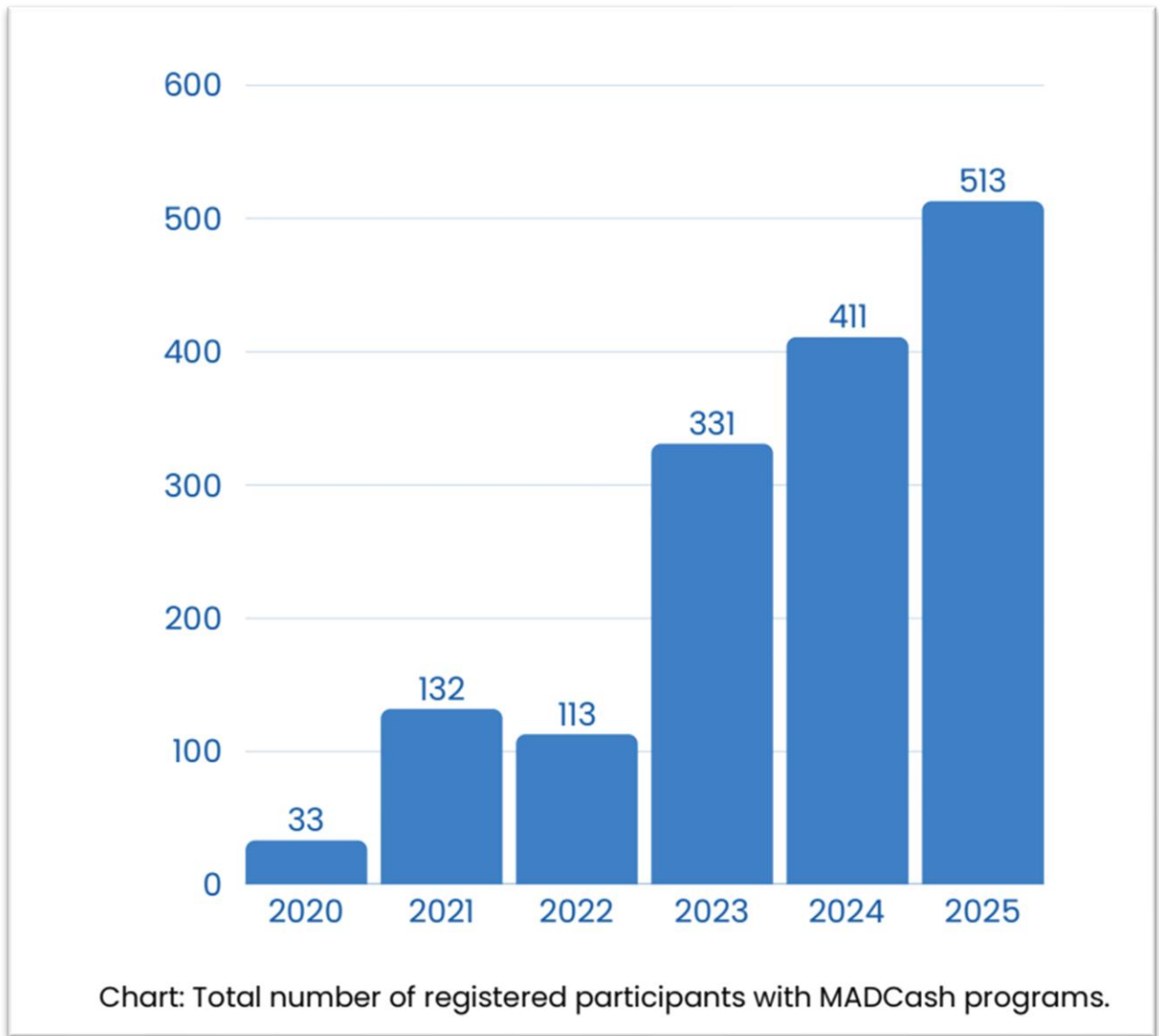
² [MADCash Impact Report 2022–2025](#).

The Engineer Who Saw What Bankers Missed

Nuraizah holds an engineering degree and spent years building technology companies, including CWorks Mobile, a mobile application development firm, and Madcat World, a software development company focused on community-based platforms. She understands systems, data, and scale.

With MADCash, the mission of helping the unbanked and underbanked addresses a clear funding gap in finance. The current formal financial system, which relied on credit history, collateral, and formal employment, was designed for a different kind of economic actor. The women she was working with had real business discipline. They repaid on time. Their revenues grew. They reinvested.

“By enabling women to increase their take-home income, MADCash supports broader household stability and community-level economic growth. When you invest in a woman, she will give 90% back to her family and her community, and we have seen that with the ladies we work with and this is also true worldwide,” Nuraizah explains.



Source: MADCash Impact Report

The Model: Why Zero Percent is Not Charity

Like any startup, MADCash operates as a for-profit organisation in the fintech industry. The company is often misperceived as a social enterprise, even though its business model is designed to be commercially sustainable while delivering measurable impact.

The instinctive reaction from the finance world, when MADCash pitches zero-interest microfunding, is scepticism. Zero interest sounds like a subsidy. It sounds unsustainable. Nuraizah has heard it many times. Her answer is structural, not ideological.

The zero-interest model is grounded in Qard Hasan, a benevolent loan concept from Islamic finance that emphasises trust and repayment without interest. The commercial

elegance is in the recycling mechanism. A single donation does not fund one entrepreneur. It funds many, sequentially. A woman receives between RM1,000 and RM5,000 in micro financing, repaid over ten months through monthly instalments. As she repays, the capital is redeployed to the next entrepreneur in the queue. One donation becomes a perpetual fund.

MADCash has also been introducing elements of Murabahah (cost plus financing) that emphasise shared responsibility and value creation, to ensure flexibility in sustaining operations commercially over the long term.

“MADCash works with the simple premise that charity only solves a problem at one point in time. Our focus is on helping entrepreneurs build sustainable businesses so that they are not dependent on charity or aid,” she says.

The Infrastructure Play: Scoring the Unscorable

MADCash’s platform generates something that Malaysian financial institutions have found difficult to build independently: a credit dataset on borrowers that the formal system has never been able to profile.

When a woman entrepreneur without a formal credit history applies for a business loan, a traditional bank faces a binary problem. It cannot assess her risk because the inputs it normally uses, such as payslips or credit reports, do not exist. So, the bank declines. The entrepreneur stays underserved. The cycle continues.

By onboarding entrepreneurs digitally, tracking repayment behaviour, monitoring business revenue growth, and measuring capability development through its academy programmes, MADCash generates a dataset about each entrepreneur. This dataset is the foundation of its Future Bankability Index, designed to measure the potential creditworthiness of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) not based on what they own today, but on how they behave over time. For the entrepreneurs, this is a structured pathway to become bankable over time.

“As an impact-driven fintech, we utilise technology to onboard, educate, and engage with our beneficiaries, while providing them with access to support and networks,” she says.

How VC Supports Impact-Driven Fintech

MADCash raised RM5 million in its latest funding round led by Artem Ventures Malaysia, with added backing by MSW Ventures Singapore. The venture capital funding reflects that

MADCash is a scalable business with a trajectory towards long term growth and profitability.

“A key challenge was raising sufficient funds under management to be deployed as loans, which required us to redefine how corporate social responsibility (CSR) and Islamic social finance funds could be utilised. Our investors have been our sounding board from the beginning, helping us refine our business model and improve how we manage and grow the company,” says Nuraizah.

MADCash expanded internationally to Singapore and Tajikistan, while also strengthening its credibility through Malaysian and Singaporean investors participating in both pre-seed and seed rounds. In September 2024, the platform began providing entrepreneurship training in Singapore. In Tajikistan, the platform has been deployed in partnership with the IMON Foundation, serving a predominantly Muslim-majority market with significant unmet demand for Shariah-compliant microfinance.

Multiple international recognitions in 2025 have strengthened MADCash’s credibility in this expansion push. The company won the top prize at the 7th EFICA (Ethical Finance Innovation Challenge and Awards) in Dubai in April 2025 and was named the Catapult: Inclusion Southeast Asia winner in September 2025, an accelerator organised by LHoFT Luxembourg House of Financial Technology and the Asian Development Bank. MADCash was also awarded the Money Awareness and Inclusion Awards for Closing the Gender Gap and Best For Profit for Under-served Communities in Sep 2024.

Balancing Profit and Purpose

Small businesses funded by microloans create jobs and services within communities, stimulating local economies and reducing unemployment. Entrepreneurs then reinvest profits to grow their business, boosting economic activity. This cycle leads to lasting improvements for micro entrepreneurs, increased financial inclusivity, and added benefits to the communities, including job creation and economic growth.

For venture investors, the opportunity is in recognising that the Future Bankability Index and the data layer it represents is infrastructure. The company that builds the alternative credit scoring standard for Southeast Asia’s unbanked women entrepreneurs is a data business with recurring-revenue potential from financial institutions that need exactly that dataset to expand their addressable market.

The VC ecosystem has a role to play in driving this shift, Nuraizah says, suggesting that investors balance a profit motive with social impact.

“More VCs should establish funds designated for female-led and impact-driven companies. Intentional capital allocation and ecosystem support can significantly accelerate the growth of female-led companies in Malaysia,” she says.

MADCash is currently working on adopting AI tools to improve and simplify their registration and profiling process. They are also looking at building tools to engage better and encourage rewards in prompt repayment.