

COUNTRY PAPER ON SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY IN SINGAPORE

(Presented by COL Tay Tiong Beng & Aaron Ng, MINDS - Singapore)

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, Singapore has seen significant development in the provision of services for persons with Intellectual Disability. The turning point for the expansion, enhancement and better coordination of services for the disabled was the publication of the Report of the “Advisory Council for the Disabled” in 1988. The recommendations of the Report formed the basis of many initiatives to provide more comprehensive and systemic services for the disabled.

As part of its continuing nation-building effort, the government formed the Singapore 21 Committee in 1997 to look into strategies to cope with the issues and challenges for Singapore in the new Millennium. One of Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong’s Singapore 21 tenets is that “every Singaporean matters”, and that resources should be galvanized to help the less fortunate pursue their rainbow. This propels a concerted effort by the National Council of Social Service and the Ministry of Community Development – the 2 key agencies in charge of social welfare, to study further into government support and community involvement needed to provide better social services.

Admittedly, being a small country with limited resources, services for persons with Intellectual Disability in Singapore are grounded in a unique local socio-cultural backdrop which upholds pragmatism and productivity. While basic services are generally adequate, there are rooms for value-added services, and the journey towards inclusion is still some way to go.

[In Singapore, welfare agencies are called “Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWO)”.]

OVERVIEW OF SERVICES FOR THE INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED IN SINGAPORE

Early Intervention Program

Organisations	Age	Intellectual		ID with Autism	ID with Cerebral Palsy	Multiple
		IQ<50	50<IQ<70			
AWWA Special School	0-5			✓		✓
Autism Association (Singapore)	2-6			✓		
Rainbow Centre (2 schools)	0-4			✓		✓

Special Schools

Organisations	Age	Intellectual		ID with Autism	ID with Cerebral Palsy	Multiple
		IQ<50	50<IQ<70			
APSN Schools (5 Schools)	6-18		✓			
AWWA Special School	0-18			✓		✓
Grace Orchard Special School	7-18		✓	✓		
Metta School	6-18		✓	✓		
MINDS Schools (5 Schools)	4-18	✓		✓		
Rainbow Centre-PCMH	4-16			✓		✓
Rainbow Centre-Step	2-12			✓		
Spastics Children’s Association of Singapore	5-18				✓	

Community Integration Support Program

Organisations	Age	Intellectual		ID with Autism	ID with Cerebral Palsy	Multiple
		IQ<50	50<IQ<70			
Autism Resource Centre	7-18			✓		
TOUCH Learning Support Services	3-8	✓	✓			✓

Vocational Assessment, Training and Job Placement

Organisations	Age	Intellectual		ID with Autism	ID with Cerebral Palsy	Multiple
		IQ<50	50<IQ<70			
APSN Centre for Adults	From 19		✓			
Bizlink Centre	16-60	For All Types of Disabilities				
MINDS EDCs (3 EDCs)	From 18	✓				
SCAS Goodwill Rehabilitation & Occupational Workshop	From 18				✓	

Day Activity Centre/Independent Living Training Centres

Organisations	Age	Intellectual		ID with Autism	ID with Cerebral Palsy	Multiple
		IQ<50	50<IQ<70			
Autism Youth Centre	12-21			✓		
Blue Cross Thong Kheng Day Activity Centre		✓	✓			
Bishan Home for the ID	18-45	✓				
Christian Outreach for the Handicapped	From 12	✓	✓	✓		
Metta Welfare Association Day Activity Centre	16-55	✓				
MINDS TDCs (2 TDCs)	From 18	✓				
SUNDAC Centre for the Disabled (2 Centres)	16-60	✓				
SPD-SOKA Day Activity Centre	From 16		✓			
TOUCH Community for Independent Living	16-55	✓	✓			

Sheltered and Production Workshops

Organisations	Age	Intellectual		ID with Autism	ID with Cerebral Palsy	Multiple
		IQ<50	50<IQ<70			
APSN Centre for Adults	From 19		✓			
Bizlink Centre	16-60	For All Types of Disabilities				
MINDS EDCs (3 EDCs)	From 18	✓				
SCAS Goodwill Rehabilitation & Occupational Workshop	From 18				✓	

Residential Homes/Hostels

Organisations	Age	Intellectual		ID with Autism	ID with Cerebral Palsy	Multiple
		IQ<50	50<IQ<70			
Bishan Home for the ID	18-45	✓				
Blue Cross Thong Kheng Home		✓	✓			
Moral Welfare Home for the Disabled (2 Homes for adults)	From 21	✓				
Moral Welfare Home for the Disabled (Children)	Below 18	✓				
Metta Home for the ID	16-55	✓				
MINDS Tampines Home (2 Homes)	From 10	✓	✓			
Red Cross Home for the Disabled	10-50	✓	✓			✓
TOUCH Ubi Hostel	From 16		✓			

Family Support and Training

Organisations	Intellectual		ID with Autism	ID with Cerebral Palsy	Multiple
	IQ<50	50<IQ<70			
Autism Association (Singapore)			✓		
Autism Resource Centre			✓		
Disabled People's Association	For All Types of Disabilities				
Down syndrome Association of Singapore	✓	✓			
Rainbow Centre			✓		✓
Spastics Children's Association of Singapore				✓	
TOUCH Learning Support Services	✓	✓			

Sports, Social, Recreation and others

Organisations	Types of Disabilities
Riding for the Disabled	For All Types of Disabilities
Special Olympics Singapore	
Singapore Sports Council for the Disabled	
Very Special Arts Singapore Ltd	
Wataboshi Music Movement	

MAJOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

MINDS (Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore)

MINDS was founded in 1962 and is one of the oldest VWO providing education, training and care services to intellectually disabled persons and their families. It serves Intellectually Disabled persons with IQ 50 and below. With about 2300 active clients and 420 staff, MINDS is one of the largest affiliates of NCSS (National Council of Social Service).

MINDS firmly believes that persons with intellectual disability possess the capacity to learn and develop, and have the potential to become contributing members of society. The Organisation's main objectives are therefore, to develop the IDs' potential to the fullest through education and training, help them secure employment, promote their welfare, and educate the public towards greater acceptance of persons with intellectual disability in the society.

The organization runs 12 facilities across 4 main categories of programs, with 2 value-add services :

- 5 Special Schools
- 3 Employment Development Centres
- 2 Training & Development Centres (day centers)
- 2 Residential Homes
- MINDS Youth Group - a volunteer arm
- Care Givers' Support Group – a parents' mutual-support & self-help group

The Special Schools offer basic education to ID persons from age 4 to 18 years. The Employment Development Centres provide sheltered work, vocational training, rehabilitation, job placement, and run “social enterprises” to create employment for its trainees. The Training & Development Centre is MINDS' own brand of day activity centers, which prides itself in providing more than just baby sitting. It helps to develop the independent living skills of the IDs through a comprehensive curriculum and intensive training. Of the 2 Residential Homes, one accommodates mainly clients with multiple disabilities, the other is a hostel for ID adults working in sheltered or open employment.

MINDS Youth Group is made up of volunteers who are largely youth and working adults. It conducts well-structured weekend programs complementing the mainstream curriculum of MINDS' schools and centers.

Care Givers' Support Group

The Care Givers' Support Group comprises parents and siblings of persons who have come together to build bonds, share experience, offer solace, and enhance the well-being of their Intellectually Disabled charge. Members are keen to journey with other parents who share the same needs and concerns and to help each other in caring for our children through a support network.

First met in 9 March 2002 with 29 parents, the group is gaining strength and momentum. Its members have volunteered to attend the AFMR Conference to learn more about Intellectual Disability, and to network with like-minded groups in Japan.

Objectives :

- Encourage caregivers to support each other through sharing, discussions, group activities and outings.
- Inform caregivers about community resources for themselves and their dependent children.
- Cultivate the efficient accessing of formal and informal resources for the ID child's development.
- Provide useful feedback for policy planning and the future development of MINDS.

Activities :

- Discussion sessions on current/policy/strategy issues mirroring developments at MINDS' various facilities. Members also share common or specific issues faced by them.
- Outings to major attractions around Singapore.
- Home parties - Members have also invited each other to their homes. A small group comprising 7 families will be visiting Cameron Highlands in June.
- Talks & workshops organised by MINDS specially for the Group on topics such as sexuality, employment opportunities, behaviour management, physiotherapy, special identity cards for IDs etc.

Evaluation

Parents find the support group a great source of comfort and share a sense of belonging. They find themselves among members of an extended family where everyone speaks the same language (of pain, anxiety, denial, anger,

frustration etc). Every parent in the group has encountered similar journeys in his/her life with an ID child. They get moral support from each other,, sharing many issues, exchanging parenting tips, medical knowledge etc. The group means a lot to them and is the top priority in their lives. Many joined the group hungry for information and a kind, sympathetic ear to hear out their pain, sense of loss & confusion. 90% have stayed on since its inauguration and this speaks volumes of the comfort and sense of belonging they now enjoy.

ASSOCIATION FOR PERSON WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (APSN)

The other large organization catering to the intellectually disabled in Singapore is the “Association for Persons with Special Needs (APSN)”. Inaugurated in 1976 as “Association for the Educationally Subnormal”, it caters to persons with mild intellectual disability of IQ range 50 – 70.

It currently runs 5 Special School : three Primary (for pupils aged 6-12 years), one Secondary (13-16 years) and one Vocational Training School (17-18 years).

Those above the age of 19 can enroll at the Centre for Adults which serves as a one-stop center providing a wide range of services: - job placement, psychological services, counselling, and therapies depending on the needs of the clients. Legal assistance can also be provided.

Some of the more significant events held in recent times by APSN are :

- (1) games and other activities between our special children and children from the educationally gifted program
- (2) public awareness education seminar where by public learnt about our schools and facilities and the training programs we have
- (3) a big talent-night concert under the patronage of the wife of the President of the Republic of Singapore where the musical and acting abilities of our school children are showcased,

In general, the aim of APSN is to ensure that the education and training it provides will enable the client to lead an independent life and to find a job in open employment.

EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMME FOR INFANTS & YOUNG CHILDREN (E.I.P.I.C.) AT RAINBOW CENTRE'S SCHOOLS

In Singapore, early intervention programs for children with special needs are gaining recognition of its importance and value In helping these children with a good head start in their development. Studies have shown that children who have received early intervention have a better prognosis of their conditions. Experiences also suggested that some children with developmental delay as the initial diagnosis, were able to ‘catch up’ in their development, and progress well like other children.

Rainbow Centre is a non-profit organization that runs two special schools namely Margaret Drive Special School and Balestier Special School for children with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, multiple disabilities and autism. It serves around 250 children. EIPIC is one of the three specialized programs provided at the schools.

EIPIC serves infants and young children whose ages range from 2 months to 4 years. There are 3 levels within EIPIC- Infant stimulation, Motor Training and Special Education. Depending on the level of the child, EIPIC aims to help facilitate the development of gross motor, fine motor, perceptual-cognitive, language/communication, socialization and self-help skills. The Schools conducting EIPIC adopts a holistic approach to intervention. Special education teachers are supported by a team of professional staff comprising speech language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, music therapist, psychologists and social workers. All work together as a team on specific learning/educational goals set for the individual children in the program.

A unique feature in EIPIC is the parental involvement in the programme. Parents/caregivers are encouraged to participate in class and therapy activities with the staff. Parent Training and Support Groups are in place to facilitate support to parents.

SPECIAL SCHOOL EDUCATION IN SINGAPORE

In Singapore, children below the age of 18 years, who are unable to cope with the demands of mainstream schools and who need specialized instructional techniques, management and interventions to realize their full potential, are provided education in the Special Education Schools. To date there are a total of 19 Special Education Schools and a Vocational School providing basic education and vocational training for persons with special needs.

- Special Education (SPED) Schools in Singapore are set up by the respective Voluntary Welfare Organisations
- They are registered as private schools under the Education Act, and managed by their respective School Management Committees (SMCs) which are made up of volunteers.
- There are various Schools catering to the respective physical and educational needs of the special population.
- Funding is provided by Ministry of Education and the National Council of Social Service.
- In all programs, the instructional approach is pupil centred involving the application of an Individualised Educational Plan for specific areas of need.
- Additional in-house therapy services are also available in most of these schools
- Staff in special education schools may include: Teaching staff, social workers, psychologists, speech therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists.
- The underlining principle in all provisions is that every individual, regardless of intellectual and physical disabilities, is capable of learning, given the opportunity and appropriate instructional strategies and interventions.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS BY MINDS (FOR MODERATE INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED PERSONS)

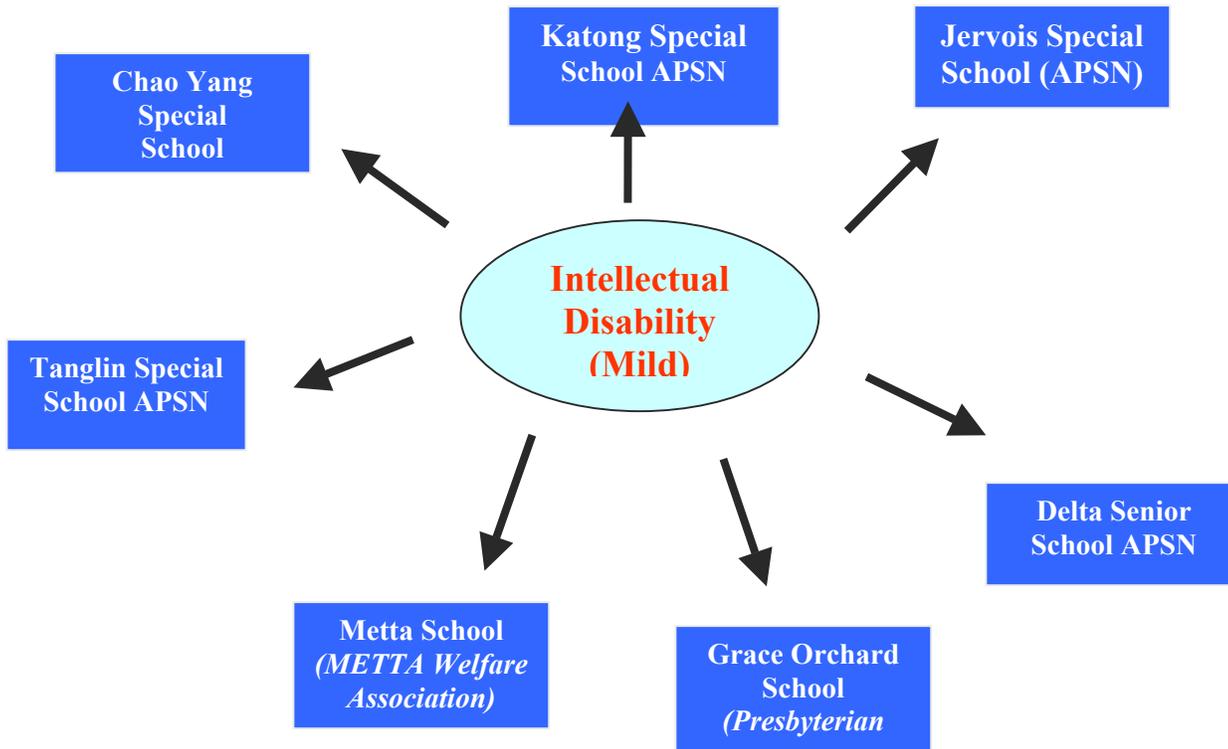
MINDS' Special Schools provide special education to pupils with moderate to profound intellectual disabilities - of IQ 50 and below, and between the ages of 4 and 18 years. The Schools now admit pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The mission of the schools is to provide every intellectually disabled pupil with the possible opportunities, educational, social and otherwise to acquire maximum learning and progress to enable him/her to be independent and to integrate into society.

MINDS operate 5 schools:- Guillemard Gardens School, Jurong Gardens School, Lee Kong Chian Gardens School, Towner Gardens School, Yio Chu Kang Gardens School.

- Curriculum is ordered into 4 levels : pre-school, junior, senior and special class levels.
- standardized basic literacy, numeracy, independent living and vocational preparation curriculum, based on individual educational planning according to each pupil's individual level and needs.
- Upon completion of school, pupils would be channeled into MINDS Employment Development Centers or Training & Development Centers for further training and open employment if capable. If not, they would remain in the in-house sheltered employment or day activity services.

SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR PERSONS WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY



METTA SCHOOL BY METTA WELFARE ASSOCIATION

Established in 2001, it services pupils with mild intellectual disability as well as those with mild autism spectrum disorders. Caters to ESN children between ages of 6 and 16 years including those with mild autism.

Programs include :

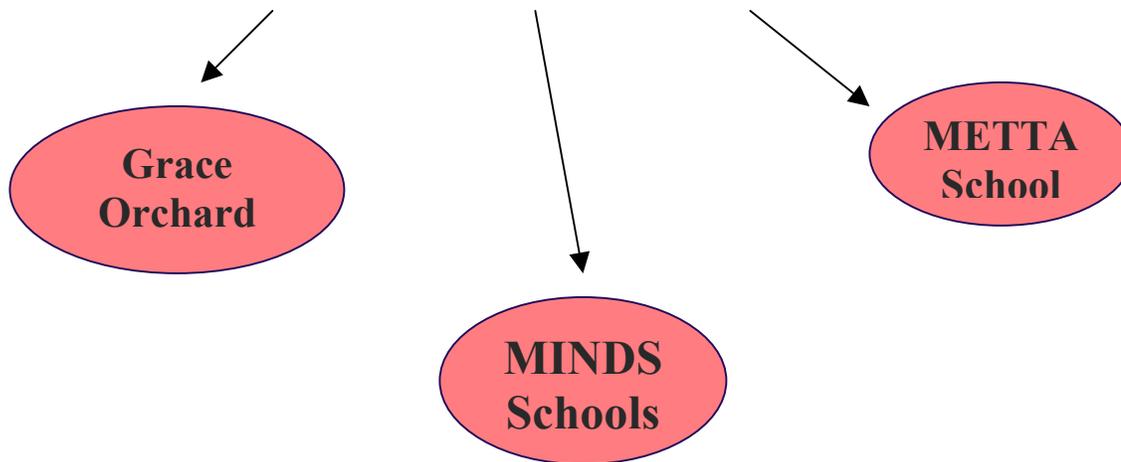
- Autism Spectrum Disorder Program
- Basic Education Program with emphasis on English Language and Mathematics.
- Career Education Program with emphasis on career preparation.
- The BEST program is also offered.

GRACE ORCHARD SCHOOL BY PRESBYTERIAN COMMUNITY SERVICES

- Set up in 2002, it caters to ESN pupils aged between 6 and 16 years including those with mild autism spectrum disorders.

- Curriculum includes English language, Mathematics, Independent living skills & Communication Skills for those with ASD.

**Intellectual Disability
with ASD**



COMPULSORY EDUCATION IN SINGAPORE

The mission of the Education Service is to mould the future of the nation. All children should be provided with a balanced and holistic education which strives to develop their potential to the fullest, and develop them into good citizens with a sound awareness of their responsibility to family, society and nation.

Singapore has achieved almost universal education at the primary and the secondary levels, even though education has not been made compulsory. About 3% of the age cohort is not enrolled in national primary school, and 3.5% from secondary school.

A Committee on Compulsory Education (CE) was formed in December 1999 to review whether CE should be introduced in Singapore and study the issues involved. It was decided that Compulsory Education be introduced for education in national schools for Singapore citizens residing in Singapore subject to the exemption of certain categories.

It is unfortunate that Special Needs children who are not able to go to national schools because of physical / intellectual disabilities, are automatically exempted from Compulsory Education in national schools.

It is felt that despite their disabilities, Children with Special Needs should also be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to be productive citizens in the knowledge-based economy (KBE), and to share a common educational experience which will help to build national identity and cohesion. They have the right to be extended the privilege of basic education.

SERVICES FOR INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED ADULTS

MINDS' EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT CENTRES (EDC)

- The Employment Development Centres provide sheltered employment, vocational & social skills training, rehabilitation, job placement and business projects to keep the Intellectually Disabled gainfully occupied, and promote social integration. Cater to moderately intellectually disabled persons.

- Clients in the EDCs are paid an allowance, ranging from \$50 to \$250, depending on their ability level.

- Apart from engaging in work activities, the IDs are given training and leisure activities, and are assessed periodically to be streamed or upgraded to other suitable work segment.

Major components of the EDC Service

Production Work segment

Trainees at the EDCs who are of moderate abilities, are first trained in basic work skill, and placed in the production work segment. Apart from contract work, curriculum teaching, “Quality of Life” training, and professional intervention are also conducted based on the trainees’ needs.

Apart from contract work, the trainees also engage in art-&-craft production.

Open Employment Segment

Trainees identified to have potential for Open Employment are given intensive training focusing on job skills, independent social living skills, and adaptive behaviour & social attributes. Work hardening is emphasized. MINDS actively solicits employment, and trainees will be placed out when employment is secured. The Training Officers will usually shadow them for an initial period, serving as “Job Coaches”.

Training and “Quality of Life” Segment

The following types of training, therapies & activities are conducted :

- Job related skills and general attributes for employment
- Reinforcement on Activities of Daily Living (ADL)
- Life skills training – eg sexuality education, psychosocial training
- Leisure activities & social integration
- Professional Intervention / rehabilitation / Advocacy: eg. behaviour modification, therapies, legal advice etc
- Training leading to certification.

In-house Industries

These are economically viable projects that offer employment for the IDs, within the confines of the Centre. . They provide opportunities for higher level skills development for the trainees. Examples of such industries are : cafeteria, thrift shops, launderette etc. They also serve to hone the high-end skills of the IDs and prepare them for Open Employment.

Social Enterprises

MINDS runs 2 “Social Enterprises” - a Car Wash business and a Thriftshop. The genesis was to engineer a breakthrough in seeking employment for the IDs. Corporate linkage was sought to provide funding and to infuse business know-how into the management system. Marketing & business development are intensively carried out, and efforts are constantly made to maintain the competitive edge of the business to ensure sustenance. Attempts are also made to harness the artistic talents of the IDs to form “Performing Art Troupes” which allow the IDs to earn a living.

MINDS’ TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT CENTRE (TDC) - a unique Day Activity Service

“Training and Development Centre (TDC)” is MINDS’ own brand of Day Activity Centre. It caters to Intellectually Disabled adults of lower functioning abilities who do not qualify for placement into the Employment Development Centres.

The TDCs run a day training program which emphasizes on independent living, self maintenance, home management, social and recreational skills. They operate from the void deck of public housing flats, enabling them to stay close to the community at large to encourage social interaction and raise public awareness.

Training is based on a holistic approach which addresses the physical, cognitive, emotional and social needs of each individual ID. Individualized training plans crafted from a comprehensive curriculum, reinforced with systematic

execution helps ensure progress of training. The ultimate objective is to enhance the IDs' ability to lead a meaningful life, fully integrated into the family and society. Evaluation of clients' progress is done on a regular basis.

Program emphasis

- self-help skills
- community living skills
- maintenance and promotion of cognitive skills
- leisure & recreational activities
- productivity and pre-vocational training
- emotional support essential to their psychological well-being
- specialist therapeutic intervention to improve functioning abilities.
- Sports, music & movement

RESIDENTIAL HOME SERVICE

Increasing demand for service

In the 90s, with mounting difficulties and lesser flexibility for the extended families to care for their intellectually disabled relatives; the demand for more and better residential care facilities increased rapidly. Other than MINDS' Tampines Homes, a few other agencies have also set up Residential Homes to meet the growing demands. In 1997, the Thye Hua Kwan Moral Society opened the Moral Home for Disabled Adults and the Moral Welfare Home. The Bible-Presbyterian Welfare Services set up the Bishan Home for the Intellectually Disabled in 1998, and the Metta Home for the Intellectually Disabled was set up in 2000. The latest addition is the Blue Cross Thong Kheng Home which was set up in the year 2002.

Over the past decade or so, Singapore's residential services for the intellectually disabled have seen much transformation and progress :

- a. better quality purpose-built buildings and facilities
- b. recognising the needs to cater training and day activity services for the home residents
- c. enhancing professional services and therapies

Focus on Training Programs and Social Activities

With better facilities and increased funding, the residential homes' main and primary function of providing care and nursing services have improved tremendously over the years. The focus in recent years has been on improving the **overall quality of life** for the home residents. Other than satisfying their basic physical and medical needs; attention is now given to incorporating activities and rehabilitative programs into the residents' daily routine, to meet their emotional and social needs. The objective is to ensure that the residents' days are meaningfully occupied and their social well-being is enhanced.

Desired Outcome of Residential Services

In 2001, the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) implemented the Programme Evaluation System (PES), which aims to measure output and performances of the homes using reliable output indicators. The homes are expected to ensure that the overall quality of life of the residents is being maximized, other than catering to their health and physical well-being. It is desirable to have Individual Care Plans to ensure that the basic objectives are achieved :

- a. residents are able to perform independent living tasks at the home with minimal assistance
- b. residents are able to meet long and short term therapy/rehabilitative goals

- c. residents' social well-being is enhanced, and they are meaningfully occupied by attending individual training programs and social activities

Care Staff & Professional Staff

Nurses & care staff form the backbone of the care system in the homes. All homes are staffed with local and/or foreign nurses to look after the basic health care needs of the residents. With qualified and stayed-in foreign nurses, the homes can ensure that the medical needs of the residents will be promptly attended to around the clock.

The homes will usually have a Physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist (or both) to provide therapy services. Regular therapy interventions provided by the Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists have often resulted in improvement in the motor and independent living skills of the residents through properly tailored treatment plans and intensive therapy sessions. MINDS' Tampines Home is staffed with a full team of multi-disciplinary professionals – psychologist, social worker, physiotherapist and occupational therapist.

All Singapore's residential homes are heavily staffed with foreign nurses and general workers as it is very difficult to recruit locals into this field of work. Heavy reliance on foreign contract workers also poses problems to the stability and continuity of service delivery. When the contract expires, the foreign staff will have to leave. The constant changing of caregivers creates confusion in the intellectually disabled persons, and hinders training progress.

Hostel & Group Home Services

In 1994, MINDS-Tampines Home established an extension at West Coast, to provide hostel services and training for higher functioning intellectually disabled persons who are independent in their activities of daily living. Another notable facility providing such services is TOUCH Ubi Hostel. The main objective is to provide a stable and supportive environment for intellectually disabled persons who have potential to venture out into open or sheltered employment. The hostels provide residential and training facilities, focusing attention on developing the residents' home management skills to prepare them for independent living. The eventual goal is for the residents to be gainfully employed and live independently either in group homes or returning to their family. MINDS has planned for Group Home units in its impending purpose-built home complex at Lorong Napiri.

MINDS' New Combined Service Center – a Modern Approach to the Provision of Residential Services in Singapore

In view of the demand for comprehensive & quality residential services, MINDS is planning to re-develop the two existing homes and re-locate them to a Combined Service Centre. The new center will include a Children's Wing to offer residential care for intellectually disabled children, which is currently very inadequate in Singapore. It will also encompass a Training and Development Centre (TDC) which provides day training activities to intellectually disabled adults. Such a 4-in-1 service center will be the first-of-its-kind in Singapore. The new center will have purpose-built facilities, providing a conducive environment to offer quality residential services and effective training programs. The center is expected to be completed in year 2005.

SITUATION OF “INCLUSION” IN SINGAPORE

Although there is no specific legislation yet in Singapore on the inclusion of persons with disability, the Singapore government supports the right of all disabled persons to participate actively and without discrimination, in the activities within their communities. Students with physical or sensory impairment who can cope with the curriculum albeit with additional support, are fully included in mainstream schools.

As for the Intellectually Disabled, adopting a pragmatic approach of maximizing limited resources, the concept of “Integration” is more commonly used & practiced in Singapore.

It is recognized that not all the needs of children with Intellectual Disability can be best met in a general classroom. In fact, children with special needs require more specialized intervention and care, which could be better provided in a Special School setting where programs & facilities are designed and developed to cater to their specific needs and potential.

However, the values of having mainstream students learning and playing alongside children with disabilities, to inculcate compassion and acceptance, is well understood. The importance of the Intellectually Disabled children gaining self-esteem and a sense of belonging by integrating with peers from mainstream schools, is also acknowledged.

Special Schools in Singapore therefore partner mainstream schools in providing students with an enriching learning experience, through various opportunities of “Integration” :

Location Integration

Special School students utilize resources and facilities together with mainstream school children

Functional integration

Children with special needs participate in specific activities or lessons alongside their mainstream counterparts – eg. Physical Education, music lessons, Sports Meet, concert, games, outings etc.

Social Integration

Mainstream schools organize activities with the aim of befriending special needs children. They visit each other’s schools, and take part in social functions together.

Such integrative activities have proven to be useful in developing understanding and meaningful relationship among mainstream and special school students.

We see “Inclusion” as a “Continuing Process” rather than a “state of being”. Whilst we are in agreement with the general principles of inclusion, as a country with limited resources, we are also mindful of the need to provide a whole learning environment conducive to help both students with or without disabilities achieve an enriching school experience followed by a successful career.

Singapore is committed to achieving a barrier free society in a win-win fashion, gradually but surely. Today, many pre-school centers in Singapore are accepting children with special needs in an integrated setting. The major Special Schools are admitting pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

Conclusion

Singapore has over the past 10 years seen considerable efforts made not only to improve service delivery, but also the image, education, employability, independent living, and social integration of Persons with Disability. Coupled with these two thrusts is the attention paid to improving professionalism and career prospects for social service workers. All these should translate into an improved social environment for Persons with Disability to live and work in. The progress made so far can only be sustained through fine-tuning the planning, coordination, implementation, management and service partnership of social services in a continuous and concerted manner. The challenge is for us to orchestrate the optimal mix of multiple players working together for the common good.