



community
leaders
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convention 2013

Network Review Reports
Education • Youth

A Community Connected:
Renewing Common Purpose, Inspiring Engagement, Enabling Participation



education network

EDUCATION NETWORK REVIEW

“Our task is to educate their (our students) whole being so they can face the future. We may not see the future, but they will and our job is to help them make something of it.”

— Ken Robinson, *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*

BACKGROUND

At the inaugural CLF 2003 Convention, MMOs agreed that the educational landscape then required the community to look at developmental programmes to reinforce children’s confidence and upstream interventions to strengthen the parents’ competency as co-educators to their children’s learning.

The research on home factors for achievement in Mathematics by MENDAKI in the same year, revealed that parents from low socio-economic status (SES) acknowledged the importance of education but very often did not know how to help their children.

In May 2004, the Education Network was launched with two key recommendations: (i) implement both short-term and long-term strategies in uplifting the Malay/Muslim children’s achievement in education and (ii) scale-up a parent-mediated learning programme to disadvantaged families with preschool children. A total approach in a tripartite partnership of community, family and school is taken. This is depicted below in the ‘Conceptual Model for Education Excellence’.



Since the network launch, between 2004 and 2009, there were many academic intervention programmes that were piloted and rolled-out to Malay/Muslim students at both the primary and secondary level. These academic intervention programmes were meant to complement the academic programmes that were offered in schools. These academic intervention programmes aimed to narrow the learning deficit of the students at an exponential rate. They were developed in response to the recommendations made for the provision of differentiated approach to targeted students. These differentiated academic intervention programmes focused on specific needs of the groups of students. The network leveraged on the strong partnership between MENDAKI and schools to conduct academic intervention programmes for primary and secondary school students as school-based projects. The students are generally underperforming and from the low income sector of the community. Refer to Annex A for the list of academic intervention programmes.

At the same time, there are concurrent non-academic, support programmes that were expanded to partners in the Malay/Muslim Voluntary Sector (MMVS) for greater outreach and impact. The programmes were well received by the participating Malay/Muslim organisations (MMOs). The non-academic support programmes were conducted by 8 MMO partners including 4PM, AMP, Ain Society, Clubilya, Jamiyah, KGMS, Muhammadiyah and Pertapis. These programmes which are called the Community Projects (See Annex B) included

Maju Minda Matematika (Tiga M), Education Seminar Series, Life Skills Series Workshops for Normal Academic (NA)/Normal Technical (NT) students and Career Awareness Series for NA/NT students.

Between 2007 and 2008, a review of the programmes under the network indicated the need to eventually phase out the academic intervention programmes, with the exception of the Success in PSLE Maths Seminar Series. This was due to one or a combination of a few factors. The outreach and participation rates of the programmes were too low for any effective impact on the overall performance of the MM students. This was mainly due to the fact that the sessions were conducted during the weekdays as a before/after school programme. Students were exhausted and hence were not attentive. Students were also occupied with school activities.¹ As the programmes were school-based, there were extensive marketing efforts, which was resource intensive. At the same time, in 2007, MOE introduced the “Teach Less, Learn More” (TLLM) initiative where there was a shift in focus from “quantity” to “quality” in education. “More quality” in terms of classroom interaction, opportunities for expression, the learning of life-long skills and the building of character through innovative and effective teaching approaches and strategies. With these new initiatives by the schools and the additional resources from MOE, the Education Network seemed to duplicate the schools’ programmes. What was initially lacking then when the network was started, is now available to students. The network is clear of its role which is

¹ CLF Report: Education Network pg 8 to 14

to play a complementary and supportive role. Since the schools had the resources to assist our weaker students, these academic intervention programmes were phased out within two years.

A review of the community projects was conducted in 2008 and similarly it revealed the schools are also providing life skills and career development programmes for their secondary school students. The Education Network eventually phased out these two programmes to avoid duplication and ensure that our MM students partake in their schools' programmes.

At the same time, Yayasan MENDAKI as a key MMO player in providing education programmes and assistance, continues to provide and strengthens the education programmes from preschool to post-secondary. The range of existing education programmes is grouped into upstream and downstream with customisation to meet the needs of the different ability groups (see Annex C).

The educational landscape has moved rapidly. The Network's directions in the next 10 years should be more focused in upstream work. Tiga M is one upstream programme that has proven to be successful based on the annual programme evaluation as reported in the annual CLF reports from 2004 to 2012². The community realises the urgency in focusing on upstream measures to ensure that the MM community levels up.

CURRENT REALITY – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Singapore has developed into a global city and economic hub. Like other major global cities, Singapore is a place where people want to come to live and work. We have diverse education and job opportunities, a good quality of life, rising real wages and a safe environment for families. These have benefitted Singaporeans, and are what draw others to Singapore.³ Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said in his National Day Rally Speech 2013, that it is timely for Singapore to make "a strategic shift" in strengthening itself given the evolving landscape. In the same vein, the community must have the tenacity, resilience and will to succeed and strive in raising their children to excel either in the academic or non-academic.

Academic Progress

Our students are making progress academically. There is a narrowing of the gaps in our students' performance in the national examinations though a lot more still needs to be done. It is also reassuring to see an increasing number of MM students proceeding to post-secondary institutions in the past 10 years. 87.7% for the P1 Malay cohort of 2011 progressed to post-secondary institutions. At the 2013 Anugerah MENDAKI Award Presentation ceremony, 145 polytechnic students received the Diploma with Merit Book Prize. In addition, the community can be proud of total of 21 First

² CLF Report 2003 to 2012

³ <http://population.sg/introduction/#.UkL20X-KD3A>

Class Honours graduates who received the prestigious award. The recipients included graduates from emerging areas in sciences such as life sciences, mathematical sciences and biological chemistry. The successes of the Anugerah MENDAKI recipients proved that our community can do just as well.

The Early Years

Pre-school education plays a pivotal role in laying the foundations for children's learning and academic trajectories. The early years are imperative for children's development as the brain is most receptive to learning, and access to quality pre-school education ensures that children get a strong start in life. Despite making improvements in educational achievements over the past 30 years, our Malay students can do better to narrow the gap with their peers of other ethnic backgrounds⁴. As such, it is imperative that the younger generation of Malay/Muslim students be exposed to quality pre-school education to ensure they get a good start to their educational journey, and able to remain competitive in their educational pursuits.

It is apparent that the move towards higher quality preschool education at the national level is a major one. In recent years, various policies and efforts have been put in place to ensure that every Singaporean child has access to quality and affordable pre-school education. The Kindergarten Financial Assistance Scheme (KiFAS) was introduced to ensure that kindergarten education remains affordable and accessible for children from modest backgrounds through a monthly

fee subsidy. In addition to the monthly fee subsidy, families earning below \$1500 per month may also receive a start-up grant of \$200 per child to pay for the deposit, registration fee, insurance and uniforms.

First launched in 2003 by the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Kindergarten Curriculum Framework (KCF) aims to ensure that pre-schools' curriculum meets the needs of our children. A refreshed KCF was recently introduced to guide pre-school centres in designing and implementing a curriculum that is appropriate to the development of children in this age group. This will in turn enhance the programme quality and delivery across the pre-school sector.

MOE will also be setting up 15 pilot government-run kindergartens over the next three years to provide quality and affordable pre-school education for all. These kindergartens to be located at primary schools and community spaces in Housing Board estates are expected to benefit children from modest family backgrounds. Out of the 15, five will start operating in January 2014.

With effect from 1 Apr 13, the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) was set up to integrate the Government's approach towards early childhood care and education in Singapore. This is an integral part of the national effort to raise the quality of early childhood programmes in Singapore. ECDA will oversee the regulation and development of kindergarten and child/infant care programmes for children below the age of 6. It will be established as an

⁴ <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/files/2012/10/performance-ethnic-group-charts-b3-b5.pdf>

autonomous agency jointly overseen by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), and administratively hosted by MSF. This will allow ECDA to develop children holistically, nurture positive attitudes towards learning, facilitate the transition of pre-schoolers to formal education, as well as increase efforts to support and strengthen Singaporean families.

These various efforts signify the Government and community's commitment in ensuring that every child has access to quality and affordable preschool education. The network should leverage on these momentum, take stock of the community's capacity and capability and push for initiatives that will enhance our young students' abilities especially in foundational skills to level them up.

At the community level, MENDAKI provides financial assistance to low-income Malay/Muslim families through the Education Trust Fund (ETF) Pre-school Subsidy Scheme. The objective of the scheme is to encourage parents to send their children pre-school and consequently, to ensure that Malay/Muslim children get a good head start in life.

Within the MMVS, there are also many MMOs who provide preschool education the community. In July this year, the network engaged some of these MMO-run kindergartens, PCF kindergartens and mosque based kindergartens in a focus group discussion. A total of 17 representatives from 10 preschools shared their challenges,

successes (See Annex D). One of the many challenges they faced is the lack of qualified and passionate teachers. The preschool operators also articulated the issue of high turnover rate amongst preschool teachers. A support network is pivotal for the well-being and development of preschool teachers. Such support network acts as a safe platform for fellow preschool teachers to discuss on issues that are relevant to the sector. In July 2012, a support network for pre-school teachers, Pre-school Teachers Network Singapore (PTNS),⁵ was created to not only provide an avenue for pre-school teachers voices to be heard, but to also "advocate for early childhood education as a community of practice", to improve the quality of pre-school education through discussions and sharing of data.. It is encouraged that the MM providers leverage on this platform.

Early Literacy

Data has indicated that our Malay students need to continue to strengthen their literacy skills as early as preschool. A weak foundation in literacy if not addressed will lead to underperformance. Numerous studies have provided support that "Students from low-income backgrounds perform significantly lower in reading and writing achievement than students from higher income families. This was reported by the National Centre for Educational Statistics.⁷ In addition, according to a national longitudinal analysis in 2002 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)⁸, economically disadvantaged children may know only one or two letters of the alphabet when entering kindergarten,

⁵ Pre-school Teachers Network Singapore (PTNS) (2013). Retrieved August 22, 2013 from <https://www.facebook.com/groups/PreschoolTeachersNetwork/members/>

⁶ The National Center for Educational Statistics : <http://nces.ed.gov/>

⁷ Lee, V. E. & Burkam, D. T. (2002).: http://www.epi.org/publication/books_starting_gate/

⁸ <http://www.read20.org/matrix.html>

while children from higher income families will know all 26. By the age of 2, children who are read to regularly display greater language comprehension, larger vocabularies, and higher cognitive skills than their peers⁹.

Parental Involvement and Support

The challenges faced by our students will continue to increase even more with the influx of foreign students and the emphasis in developing our children into becoming confident, self-directed learners, active contributors and concerned citizens who are rooted to Singapore. The schools certainly cannot do this alone. Parents MUST journey with the school and their children to realise these desired outcomes of education.

The active role of parents in the development of children's education cannot be overemphasised. Various efforts were introduced, both at the national and community level, to ensure that parents play a proactive role in their children's education.

At the national level, the Parent Education in Preschool (PEPS) programme was introduced as a pre-school extension to the then Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports (MCYS) School Family Education (SFE). The PEPS programme was launched at all 40 NTUC Childcare Centres in 2005. Currently at the helm of Child Development Network (CDN), the PEPS programme aims to enhance the quality of family life for parents and their preschool children. Through the programme, parents learn practical tips on guiding and managing children's behaviour and have access to parent support groups.

The Malay/Muslim community has also been playing an important role in encouraging Malay/Muslim parents to be involved in their children's pre-school education. Maju Minda Matematika (Tiga M) described earlier is currently run and supported by 18 strong partners ranging from PCF kindergartens, schools, mosques and community clubs. It aims to assist parents in equipping themselves with the necessary knowledge and skills to help their children develop competency in learning mathematics.

To date close to 5000 parents and children have benefited from the programme since 2003. In 2013, a total of 18 partners, an increase from 16 partners in 2012, collaborated with the network, in conducting Tiga M. This year saw the participation of 6 new partners. Annual programme evaluations and post event feedback seemed to indicate that the initiatives have met with the respective programme's objectives.

Arising from the Community Leaders' Forum Forward Planning Exercise (FPE) in 2010, the Education Workgroup calls for a Parent-School-Community partnership to enhance the educational needs of our children. Parents, playing the role of children's early teachers, need to be proactive in ensuring pre-school readiness. To do so, one of the recommendations of the Education Workgroup was to propose the setting up of Parent Academy to provide parents with the resources and information they need to assist in their children's early educational development. In addition to being a useful resource hub for parents, the Academy will

⁹CLF Reports 2006-2012

also be conducting research to influence policies and practices in children's early development. A similar recommendation was articulated at the Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP) Convention in 2012. As part of the Social Panel's strategy in fostering cohesive and resilient families, the panel proposed for the setting up of Parent School for the community. These recommendations reflect our community's heightened awareness of the importance of preschool education and also the need to provide enhanced support for Malay/Muslim parents to be active co-educators for their children. It is hopeful that the proposed Parent Academy or Parent School could aid in elevating Malay/Muslim students' educational achievements through coordinated and upscale interventions.

MOVING FORWARD

Academic Intervention

The network partners recognised that the educational programmes conducted by MENDAKI are meeting the needs of the community particularly those from the disadvantaged background. Through strong partnerships with key partners like MOE, schools, CCs, MAECs, we have the capability and the capacity to cater to 13,000 students from primary, secondary to junior colleges through the various academic programmes offered by MENDAKI. MENDAKI will continue to focus on strengthening our students' foundation in the core subjects ensuring they pass and strive for quality passes. At the same time, there will be continuous enhancements

to the current system to further ensure quality tuition. In order to ensure that more needy students participate in our programmes, we will intensify our outreach efforts. With the systemic structure in place for academic intervention from primary school onwards, it is proposed that the Education Network focuses on other upstream strategic areas.

Creating a Community of Readers and Thinkers

Literacy provides children with the opportunity to learn basic reading skills and nurture an appreciation for books. A child's ability to read effectively directly impacts his or her future opportunities for success in all aspects of life, ranging from education and job preparedness to self-esteem and quality of life. Reading to children is one of the best ways to encourage language development.

The Education Network is proposing to explore conducting various pilots of reading programmes to increase community learning efforts in early literacy. MENDAKI has been organising reading programmes since 1993 such as the "Read with Me" programme. "Fun with Tots", a collaboration with National Library Board is targeted at parents and toddlers. The "Maju Minda Membaca" programme reaches out to children from four to six years of age which designed to inculcate reading habits amongst parents and their children at an early age. This allows for parent-child bonding through reading activities. To further continue the love for reading, families are given a bookshelf and free storybooks as start up to their Home Library. This programme promotes lifelong

reading among families and facilitates their personal growth and creative thinking through reading strategies, sharing and discussions. This leads to the formation of Reading Circles amongst parents and children.

The network will continue to work with strategic partners operating preschool centres like AMP, Jamiyah, PPIS, Muhammadiyah, mosques and private MM kindergartens as well as PCF, to conduct reading and thinking programmes that are easy to deliver yet impactful for children and parents from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Outreach and Capacity Building for Tiga M

Tiga M has been a successful programme for the network in developing MM children's competency in numeracy through parental empowerment. Tiga M can be scaled up to ensure better service delivery and improve impact and outcomes.

There is a continuous need to build the capacity in the community for trainers and facilitators to deliver the programme. Through community engagements, talented volunteers may be recruited to be trainers and facilitators proficient in conducting evaluation and programme management. In addition, there is also a need to enhance the monitoring and evaluation mechanism to support partners in conducting evaluation, collation and data processing to ensure programme fidelity with preschool agencies to embark on a reading pilot before conceptualising a working model that can be duplicated easily by other CLF partners.

CONCLUSION

After nearly ten years, the network has been able to address the challenges faced by the MM students. Intensive intervention programmes were introduced to assist students who would have otherwise been left out in class because of their learning deficit. We continue to face challenges in closing the gap of our students' Mathematics performance at PSLE. We must ensure that every MM child completes 10 years of education and progresses to post-secondary (ITE, Polytechnic and University) In order to achieve these visions the community must make that quantum leap which could only be achieved through collaborative efforts.

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ANNEX A

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME (2004 to 2009)

Primary Level Intervention

Lower Primary Maths (LPM)

The programme was targeted at P1-P3 students who were identified by their teachers as needing support in Mathematics. The programme was to narrow the students learning gaps in numeracy and mathematical concepts.

Intensive Maths Programme for EM2 Students (M-Power)

The programme was targeted at students from Primary 4 to Primary 6 who scored between 25 marks to 55 marks in their school's examinations. M-Power was designed to raise the developmental level of the students to obtain a pass in their PSLE Mathematics and progress to secondary school.

Intensive Maths Programme for EM3 students (Math-Trix)

The Primary 5 and Primary 6 Foundation students who scored U grade were identified to undergo an intensive foundation revision.

Intensive Science Programme (S-Power)

S Power was for P6 students lacking in the science concepts and understanding of higher order thinking skills. They were scoring between 25 marks – 55 marks in Science. The programme aimed to raise the students' developmental level to pass their PSLE Science.

Success in PSLE Maths Seminar Series

The success in PSLE Maths Seminar Series was designed to provide students with study tips and strategies in solving Mathematical questions as part of preparation for PSLE. A one day programme, the seminar series focused on increasing students' motivation in Mathematics. Results of their pre and post- tests during the sessions indicated that at least 80% of the students achieved one grade jump.⁹ To date, it has benefited 17,069 Primary 6 students.

Secondary Level Intervention

SPEED (Focus on Maths and English)

To assist Sec 5 NA students obtain passes in the English Language and Elementary Mathematics papers at the GCE 'O' levels.

Intensive Maths Programme for Express Students (Project A1)

To assist Sec 4 Express students who are weak in Maths to obtain passes in Elementary Mathematics and Combined Science at the GCE 'O' levels examinations

Intensive Maths Programme for Normal Academic Students (Achieve)

To assist Sec 4 NA students to obtain passes in Elementary Mathematics and Combined Science at the GCE 'N' levels examinations

ANNEX B

Non Academic Intervention Programmes

Education Seminar Series (ESS)

The Education Seminar Series (ESS) was introduced in 2004 as a platform to keep parents updated on the latest changes in

the education landscape. At the same time, it also served to engage parents on issues related to their children's education such as recognising their child's learning style, creating conducive and supportive home environments. Feedback from the previous partners; Jamiyah, PPIS, Pertapis and 4PM indicated that outreach was a challenge. The community was competing with the schools which were then conducting similar series during their Parent Teachers Meeting. Nevertheless, ESS continues to remain relevant for the MM parents, as it addresses issues that parents are uncomfortable to share with the schools. Many are more comfortable sharing with the CLF partners. The ESS is organised by the Education Network Secretariat and to maximise resources, it is supported by the MMO partners in terms of outreach to ensure maximum capacity.

The Lifeskills Series of workshops for NA/NT students

The Lifeskills Series of workshops for NA/NT students focused on building their confidence and enhancing their soft skills through Public Speaking, Goal Setting and Communications Skills. Implemented in 2006, MMO Partners: 4PM, AMP, Clubilya, Jamiyah and KGMS delivered the workshops at schools. The programme was eased in 2009 when aspects of it were subsumed into the Positive Youth Development (PYD)¹⁰ curriculum adopted by the Youth Development Network.

Career Awareness Series for NA/NT

Career Awareness Series for NA/NT students aimed to equip students with the necessary knowledge on career options and appropriate

¹⁰ PYD Manual developed by FDN supported by MCYS, 2010-2011

educational pathways leading to their choice career. It was supported by MENDAKI Club, AMP, Jamiyah. Schools began introducing Career Awareness as part of their curriculum too. Aligned to the network's objective of not duplicating national initiatives, the programme was eventually ceased in 2009.

Maju Minda Matematika (Tiga M)

Tiga M was conceptualised in 2002 in response to the urgent need to provide an upstream measure to tackle the issue of the underperformance of Malay students in Maths. The programme is the brainchild of Dr Sharifah Mariam Aljunied, Principal Specialist Educational Psychology, Ministry

of Education. A pilot run was conducted which involved a group of 16 families in the Boon Lay area in 2002. The objectives of Tiga M are to:

- i. increase parents' knowledge and understanding of the development of basic concepts in Maths
- ii. Increase parents' confidence and skills in engaging their children in home-based activities that would develop problem-solving and numeracy skills.
- iii. The activities and skills taught would enable parents to provide a strong foundation for the children in Maths by the time they start formal education.

ANNEX C

Continuum of MENDAKI Education Intervention 2013

	PRE-SCHOOL	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	POST-SEC/ TERTIARY
Students / Youth & Parents	Tiga M (4 – 6 yrs)	MTS (Math, English, Combined Science) MTS @ School, MTS @ CCs, MTS @ Agencies		JC Tuition
	Bridging I play, I learn	Collaborative Tuition Programme		(YDN) ALCP
	Reading Programmes	ROPE	Exam Ready Campaign - Publication in BH	
		PSLE SUCCESS SERIES		
		Foundation English & Math		
		(YDN) Youth In Action		
Thinking Skills	(YDN) NURteensLINE & Drop-In-Centres			
Parents	Brunch with MENDAKI (a.k.a Education Seminar Series)			
	Parent Packages (Core Parenting Skills, Strengthening Family Series Brunch, FEC)			
	Primary 1 Starter Kit			
	Publications & Public Education: Cahaya M / Mesra, Mega Math Festival & SOS Matematik (TV/DVD) / Science / Preschool Learning Festivals			
	Methodologies: PYD, Inquiry-based Learning, MLE Experiential, Workshops, Group Work, Peer Learning			

ANNEX D

Participants of FGD on Preschool

1. AMP
 2. Ar Raudah Mosque
 3. Al Khair Mosque
 4. Darul Ghufuran Mosque
 5. En Naeem Mosque Kindergarten
 6. Huda Kindergarten
 7. Iman Kindergarten
 8. Iyad Perdaus
 9. Kampung Siglap Mosque
Kindergarten
 10. Mercu Learning Point Pte Ltd
 11. Zulfa Kindergarten
-

youth development network

BACKGROUND

During the formation of the Community Leaders Forum (CLF) in 2003, one of the main focal concerns highlighted was the high Malay/Muslim youth base. At that time, it was noted that close to 38% of Malays were aged between 0 and 19 years. The Chinese and Indian communities recorded similar age proportions of 26% and 31% respectively¹. A large youth proportion within the community was regarded as an asset that allowed opportunities for young Malay/Muslims to make positive contributions. However, a MENDAKI study then also pointed out that there were service gaps in the Malay/Muslim youth sector. The study recommended that these gaps be filled and a community-wide approach to youth development be developed in order to avoid the risk of the youth becoming delinquent and left behind amidst the on-going structural economic shifts².

The Youth Development Network (YDN) was then formed in early 2004 to provide the recommended community-wide approach, and it brought together existing Malay/Muslim organisations (MMOs) and partner agencies to address the challenges and recognise the potential of our Malay/Muslim youth. The Network sought to maximise available resources and build capacity and capabilities within the Malay/Muslim youth

services sector so as to provide the necessary infrastructure to develop our youth, particularly those deemed at-risk. The YDN aimed to ensure the minimum standards that our Malay/Muslim youth stay in school, receive at least ten years of formal education and also widen their horizons through the various YDN programmes and services.

CURRENT REALITIES

At its formation, the Network recognised the value of remedial developmental programmes but it felt that more emphasis should be placed on upstream efforts, targeted at vulnerable and disadvantaged youth³. Youth developmental programmes started with the mentoring-based Youth-in-Action (YIA) for those deemed at-risk of dropping out of school prematurely and life skills workshops for Normal (Academic) and (Technical) students. The pioneer partners in youth development then were Jamiyah, 4PM, KGMS, AMP, Clubilya, Al-Falah, PPIS, Pertapis, Taman Bacaan and MENDAKI.

Since 2004, the Network has steadily grown into what it is today – an established and successful network of MMOs, schools, government bodies and youth agencies working together to empower our Malay/Muslim youth through positive engagement. During this time, the YDN has launched

¹ Source: Census of Population 2000.

² Source: Community of Excellence: Leaders' Forum 2004 report.

³ Community of Excellence: Leaders' Forum 2004 report.

five programmes, serving the different age groups and needs of youth development. More than 5,000 youth have benefited from the YIA programme that started in 2004. In 2005, the Max Out programme for premature school leavers was started and since then, about 700 out-of-school youth (OSYs) have been assisted in this alternative academic pathway. In 2006, the NUR (Nadi Usia Remaja) Integrated Programme for Teenagers was introduced and has since helped approximately 18,000 youth and their parents through the services of their drop-in-centres and telephone helplines. The Network then ventured into gender-specific programming with the Empowerment Programme for Girls (EPG) and the Engagement Programme for Boys (EPB) in 2008 and 2011 respectively. Both have reached out to more than 1,500 youth.

As observed through the years, the Network has evolved from primarily addressing those at-risk (through YIA, NUR and Max Out) to providing programmes that are more upstream and developmental in nature (EPG and EPB). In keeping relevant to the changing youth landscape, YIA has also transformed itself to being more developmental in its programming approach.

REVIEW

As the Network enters its 10th year, it would be useful to have an overview of the status of the youth sector⁴ and in particular, the Malay/Muslim youths, in relation to the programmes and services provided by the

YDN. This Network review seeks to:

1. Present an overview of the status of Malay/Muslim youth in Singapore in contrast to the general youth population;
2. Present the coverage of youth services for Malay/Muslim youth in particular;
3. Identify and highlight gaps in services for Malay/Muslim youth; and
4. Make recommendations to address the service gaps identified.

In the conduct of the review, the Network needed to establish an overview of the status of youth (especially Malay/Muslim youth) in Singapore. To achieve this, the Secretariat extracted and reviewed statistical data and write-ups from the relevant ministries and national agencies, discussed with various Malay/Muslim youth agencies, engaged 24 out of 36 of the Enhanced Step-Up programme providers and spoke with the Full Time School Counsellors (FTSCs) of 17 schools that run the YIA programme. As much of the required information is not readily available in the public domain, estimates were made based on reports of the numbers attended to by the agencies that provide the services.

Low Level Needs (Low-Risk) (generally age 11 to 16)

These are students identified by schools with attendance issues and requiring additional school social work support to remain in school. There are an estimated 5,000 to 7,000 students in this category, out of which an estimated 40% (2,000 to 3,000) are Malay/Muslim students.

⁴The following are useful definitions that have been used to refer to the various segments of young people. The first three are from the Children and Young Persons' Act. The last are definitions used by organisations within the Youth Sector.² Source: Community of Excellence: leaders' Forum 2004 report.
 - Child(ren)
 o Person < 14 years old
 - Young Person
 o Person 14 years old and above but below 16 years old

- Juvenile
 o Person 7 years old and above but below 16 years old
 - Youths (11 to 19)
 o Low-level needs (low risk)
 o Mid-level needs (at-risk)
 o High-level needs (at-risk)
 o Very High-level needs (high-risk)

Students identified are enrolled in the following programmes:

School-Specific Programmes	Agency Programmes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced Step-Up A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YIA EPG Kem Perkasa

For these students, some of the more common issues faced and the intervention initiatives available for them are as follows:

Issues	Intervention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally able to cope except for difficulties every now and then in schoolwork and relationships at school and at home Family doing well for some while others may face challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light intervention in the form of "live" access to support to sort out the occasional difficulties Mentoring on a 1-1 or group basis Enrichment activities to boost motivation, confidence and esteem

Mid-Level Needs (At-Risk) (generally 14 to 17 including ITE students)

These are students identified by schools with high truancy rate and requiring additional school social work support, and at risk of dropping out of school. There are an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 students in this

category out of which, again, an estimated 40% (1,600 to 2,000) are Malay/Muslim students.

Students identified such are enrolled in the following Programmes:

School-Specific Programmes	Agency Programmes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced Step-Up A Enhanced Step-Up B FTSC / PTSC Sexuality Education Programme (SEP) School Family Education Programme (SFE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Engagement Programme (YEP) NUR Integrated Programme for Teens R2 and FRENZ Academic and Life Coaching Programme (ALCP) Young Couples programme (YCP)

For these students some of the more common issues faced and the intervention initiatives available for them are as follows:

Issues	Intervention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular truant, doing quite badly in class, groupie or loner; • Poor relationships at home and/or with teachers, onset of smoking, sex, etc. • Family facing challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More intensive intervention and support • 1 to 1 mentoring plus counselling and group activities • Tutoring /coaching and enrichment support • Case-management for family may be needed

High Level Needs (At-Risk) (generally 15 to 18 and include ITE drop-outs)

These are OSYs and those who face multiple social/familial issues. There is an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 youths in this category out of which, an estimated 40% (1,200 to 2,000) is

Malay/Muslim students.

The OSYs reached out to generally are enrolled in any of the following programmes

National Programmes	Agency Programmes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Go! • Guidance Programme (GP) • Street-Wise Programme (SWP) • Youth Employment Assistance (YEA), • Beaconworks (for Parents) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Max Out, • NUR Integrated Programme for Teens • Giant Trampoline (GT) • PAL (SANA)

For these youths some of the more common issues faced and the intervention initiatives available for them are as follows:

Issues	Intervention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No longer attending school • Working odd-job or helping at home (girls) • Hang-out with regular group (usually older) • Smoking and sex and may start drinking/ substance abuse for some 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive intervention to resume academics or vocational training • Mentoring/coaching • Counselling and guidance support • Enrichment and developmental activities

Very High-Level Needs (High Risk) (generally 15 to 18)

These are youths who are deemed delinquent or have been involved with offending behavior, crime, gangs or substance abuse. Some of these youths may be on probation or are undergoing rehabilitation in prison or the Reformatory Training Centre, programmes in institutions

or approved homes. There are an estimated 2,000 of them out of which between 800 and 1,000 of them are MM youths.

Some of the more common issues faced by this group and the intervention initiatives available to them are as follows:

Issues	Intervention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youths already involved with offences, gang activities, violent conduct, substance abuse, etc. GP, SWP, Probation, Home Detention at Boys'/Girls' Homes, MWH, RTC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional care Post-Institution integration into family/ social settings 40% - 60% recidivism rate

Challenged Youths

This section of the review looks at the occurrence of youth demonstrating offending behaviour and their involvement in offences, crime and substance abuse. The universal data has been obtained from those published by the MSF. While the data does not provide a breakdown of the ethnic background of the youths, the number of MM youths involved has been extrapolated from earlier studies published by the Subordinate Courts through their Research Bulletins series. Where these are not available, discussions with agencies that run some of the programmes, e.g. the Guidance Programme and the Streetwise Programme, provided an estimation of the number of Malay/Muslim youth participating in them.

Beyond Parental Control (BPC)⁵

It has been estimated in recent years that Malay/Muslim youth make up approximately a quarter of all new annual BPC cases⁶. It has

also been observed that more girls than boys are admitted as BPC cases.

Juvenile Arrest Cases (JAC)⁷

In the past five years, there have been 8,426 JACs⁸ and an estimated 20 to 30% of these involve Malay/Muslim youth.

Guidance Programme (GP)⁹

From discussions with GP service providers, it has been estimated that up to 37% of GP juveniles are Malay/Muslim youths.

Street-Wise Programme (SWP)¹⁰

Juveniles who have been arrested due to their involvement with gang activities and who are not charged are placed in the Street-Wise programme (SWP). As with the GP, the number of Malay/Muslim juveniles involved has been estimated through discussions with the service providers of the SWP. It has been observed that roughly 35% of all juveniles in SWP are Malay/Muslims.

⁵ This refers to a child or young person who is below the age of 16 and deemed to be in persistent conflict with his/her parent/s and school or other authorities. Furthermore, the child or young person has been displaying at-risk behaviours as reported by the child's or young person's parent(s) or legal Guardian.

⁶ Source: Research Room, MSF

⁷ This refers to juveniles (less than 16 years of age) who have been arrested for any offence. These offences are observed to be mainly shoplifting, theft (by day/night) and rioting. All JACs are brought to the Juvenile Court for review. The court will then make an assessment of the juvenile based on, among others, the severity of the offence committed, the number of times the juvenile has offended, the age of the juvenile

and the support system available.

⁸ Source: Research Bulletins, Subordinate Courts Singapore.

⁹ This is a six-month programme for first-time juvenile offenders who have committed minor offences. The GP aims to help juveniles develop better self-control, take responsibility for his/her actions and to acquire the necessary life skills. The programme requires the active involvement of the parents of the juveniles. Upon completion of the programme, the Juvenile will not be charged, but let off with a police caution.

¹⁰ This is another 6-month programme which includes activities geared towards Gang-Renunciation. Parents are required to participate actively in the programme and the juveniles who complete it will be let off with a police caution.

Probation¹¹

According to the MSF¹², there has been a steady decline in new Probation registrants and last year, there were 930 new cases. Male probationers make up about four-fifths of these cases. There are no estimates for the number of Malay/Muslim probationers.

MSF Juvenile Homes¹³

Similar to the trend observed in the number of new probationers, new admissions to MSF juvenile homes are also declining¹⁴. Last year, there were 241 new admissions as compared to 403 in 2008. Through our discussions with the agencies that provide developmental and counseling services at these Homes, it is estimated that Malay/Muslim youth make up 40% of new admissions.

Substance Abuse

According to data released by the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), Malay substance abusers make up half the total number of cases. In 2012, there were 1,760 Malay abusers and this was a 10% increase from the previous year.

Services for youths – A Summary

From the observation and findings of the YDN Sector Review, a summary of the current services provided for or made available for youths are presented below:

The following tables show the services catering to the various levels of need of youths provided both by the National and Community agencies. The last column in Table 1 shows the estimated number of MM youths serviced by MM agencies.

Table 1: Services Scan

Youths	Services Provided	Coverage by MM Agencies
Low-level (2,000 – 3,000 MMs)	eStep-up A, School-specific, Sex-Ed (MOE & HPB), E3 (4PM), YEP (AMP) YIA, EPG, NUR - CLF/MENDAKI	2,000
Mid-level (1,600 – 2,000 MMs)	eStep-up B, School-specific, FTSC/PTSC, Sex-Ed (MOE & HPB), R2 and Frenz (4PM), GT, Young Couples Pgm YIA, NUR, YEP, ALCP – CLF/MENDAKI	1,500
High-level (1,200 – 2,000 MMs)	Youth Go!, Time-Out, CEU, PAL (SANA) R2 and Frenz (4PM) Max-Out, NUR – CLF/MENDAKI	600
V High-level (800 – 1,000 MMs)	Guidance Pgm, Street-Wise Pgm, PODz, Approved Homes, Probation, Boys’ Home, Girls’ Home, Reformatory Trg Ctr,	300

¹¹ Juvenile Arrest Cases that are less serious but are deemed to be chargeable are placed on probation. This requires the juveniles to report to a court-assigned probation officer for a period of between six to 12 months. At the end of the probation period, a probation report is produced and presented to the Juvenile court who will then decide on the next course of action which could include a discharge or an extension of the probation period.

¹² Source: Research Room, MSF

¹³ JACs deemed to need more intensive intervention are placed in the Boys’ or Girls’ Homes run by the MSF, as well as Approved Homes run by various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). This can be for a period of 12 to 18 months after which the juvenile could be placed on probation for a further six to 12 months.

¹⁴ Source: Research Room, MSF

Table 2: Service Coverage

	Low Level	Mid Level	High Level	V High Level
National Agencies	eStep-up A, School-specific, Sex-Ed (MOE & HPB),	eStep-up B, School-specific, FTSC/PTSC, Sex-Ed (MOE & HPB),	Youth Go!, Time-Out, CEU,	Probation, Boys' Home, Girls' Home, Reformatory Trg Ctr,
Community Agencies	E3 (4PM), YEP (AMP)	R2 and Frenz (4PM), GT, Young Couples Pgm (YCP)	PAL (SANA)	GP, SWP, PODz, Approved Homes (MWH, PCWG, JCH), Probation
CLF/ MENDAKI	YIA, EPG, ALCP, NUR	YIA, NUR, YEP, ALCP, R2	Max-Out, NUR, R2	

Table 3: Service Providers

Programmes	Providers
eStep-up (B)	36 agencies – 2 Malay/Muslim agencies (4PM & 'Ain Society)
Time-Out	Schools
GP/Youth Go	Fei Yue – 1 Malay/Muslim trainer + Freelancers
Street-Wise Programme	6 agencies – 1 Malay/Muslim agency (Clubilya), 4 Church-based
PAL (OSY and Substance Abuse)	SANA
PODz (Post-Homes)	5 agencies – 2 MMY (4PM & AMP), 2 Church-based
YIA/EPG/Max-Out/ALCP	YDD and YDN
Sex Edn (MOE – Growing Years)	Selected VWOs
Sex Edn (HPB)	CARE – Malay/Muslim trainers and Vendors (Su Chi Success)
MSF Homes	MWH (RKM), PCWG

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

YDN programmes are conceptualised based on the needs analysis of our Malay/Muslim youth. These needs are surfaced through

various platforms such as focus group discussions, observations, data review, discussions with schools and partner agencies and engagements with students and parents. The YIA programme, for example, was

conceptualised because of an existing service gap in youth developmental programmes. In 2003, it was felt that “vulnerable youth should be engaged in developmental programmes involving a partnership of the community, families and schools” to ensure that they remain in school¹⁵.

Research forms the next step in the conceptualisation process to determine the relevant programme inputs, outputs and the short to long term outcomes. To cite another example, EPG was conceptualised after observations were made at one of Minister Yaacob’s visit to a secondary school in September 2007, where he felt that motivational and confidence building activities were necessary to help spur the girls to greater achievements. Through research carried out by the Research and Policy Department (RPD) at MENDAKI, it was recommended that EPG should include aspects of role modelling (volunteer Malay/Muslim women professionals fulfilled this part), leadership opportunities (through interest groups and community projects) and different outcome phases (outreach phase, engagement phase and empowerment phase) to determine age-appropriate and needs-appropriate effectiveness.

An annual evaluation (MaPES – MENDAKI Programme Evaluation System) is carried out to ensure continued relevancy amidst the changing youth landscape. Here, in evaluating the effectiveness of YDN programmes, the Network Secretariat adopts the Logic Model approach. This approach focuses on the core areas of programme inputs, outputs and

short to long term outcomes. Findings from the annual MaPES are published in the yearly CLF Reports to ensure accountability and transparency.

YDN partners play an important role in effective programme management. In order to reach out to more Malay/Muslim youth, MENDAKI partners with other Malay/Muslim youth agencies in carrying out YDN programmes. In 2013, YIA was carried out nine partners as compared to three in the previous year. Outreach this year stands at 1553, almost two and a half times more than in 2012. The Network will continue to engage new partners to carry out our programmes.

Additionally, with the introduction of more new partners, the Network is able to cater to the varied needs and interests of the youth through the partners’ strengths and niche areas. MyPart, for example, is a musically inclined outfit and also a new YIA partner in 2013. They have been engaging their YIA participants mainly through the medium of music. Dream+, another new YIA partner, has been providing sporting activities to their participants through their mentors who are current and past national athletes.

CAPACITY BUILDING

It was acknowledged during the early years of the Network that the Malay/Muslim youth services sector was lacking skilled youth workers, especially counsellors¹⁶. As such, investments in capacity building began almost immediately after the Network was formed. In 2004, a Youth Public Forum and a Youth Learning Conference were held

¹⁵ Source: Community of Excellence: Leaders’ Forum 2004 report.

¹⁶ Source: CLF Report 2005

in July to provide a “better understanding of youth and youth-related issues so that practical solutions could be conceptualised and developed further¹⁷.” A total of 355 participants from MMOs and other Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) attended these sessions.

A second conference, focusing on youth crime, was held in mid-2005. This was a collaborative effort with the other Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and included partners such as the Singapore Police Force and the Juvenile Court. It also brought in foreign experts from Australia and South Africa to share different perspectives and experiences. The conference attracted 320 participants comprising mainly of teachers, volunteers and youth and social workers. Additionally, the Network conducted focus group discussions with partners to better understand youth-related issues. An action research piece on YIA participants was also carried out and findings were presented to the Malay/Muslim youth services sector.

Capacity building initiatives continued on in subsequent years. In 2006, 24 Malay/Muslim youth workers underwent a customised training programme, specifically for specific skills in the NUR Integrated Programme, by the then-Social Services Training Institute (SSTI). In 2007 and 2008 and in partnership with the US Embassy in Singapore, a total of eight Malay/Muslim youth workers went on study trips to the US to learn more about youth intervention programmes and Positive Youth Development (PYD) from

established youth agencies in various states. A PYD manual was shortly later written and released by the team and distributed to partner agencies. The manual continues to be distributed to youth workers today.

In 2011, the Network conducted two sharing platforms, specifically on youth work and Malay youth, for more than 150 youth workers. These platforms were follow-up sessions to the successful Engaging Hearts and Minds Seminar, carried out jointly with the then-Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) focusing on understanding Malay youth, which saw more than 300 participants in attendance.

A year later, a day-long Youth Symposium was carried out for 300 youth and youth worker professionals. In 2013, the Network conducted the first instalment of its annual YDN Seminar Series. The Series (and accompanying workshops) aim to build and strengthen the relevant skills necessary in successfully working with Malay youth. This year, the Seminar focused on effective youth outreach practices.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Resources are allocated in accordance to the gaps found in Programme Management and Capacity Building. These are reviewed annually to ensure optimum use of limited community resources. The Network has recently begun investing more in these two areas as it seeks to reach out to more youth through effective programming.

¹⁷ Source: Community of Excellence: Leaders' Forum 2004 report.

GAPS

From the observations and findings above, it is shown that there exist gaps in services and areas where services need to be scaled up or intensified. One such gap lies in the area of outreach, especially to Malay/Muslim OSYs. These are youth that stand to gain the most from the programmes that have been designed for them. It is estimated that any point in time, only 300 Malay/Muslim OSYs (out of approximately 800 to 1,000 Malay/Muslim OSYs) are engaged through the various programmes.

The review above indicates that there has been much focus on remedial work for youth with higher level needs but it also important to provide more upstream programmes. While YIA has seen new partners carrying out the programme recently, more partners would provide for better outreach and participation rates, allowing for more youth to benefit from the programme.

With regard to substance abusers, the number of Malay abusers has been rising and there is a clear need for Malay service providers to play a bigger role here. Currently, SANA is the only service provider in this area. Similarly for youth shelters, the only shelter for unwed mothers is run by PERTAPIS.

Generally, from the abovementioned points, there is also a need for more qualified Malay/Muslim youth workers to work with youth with higher level needs. There is a sizeable number of our youth with such needs but there is a clear lack of Malay/Muslim youth workers working with them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the data shared and discussed above, it has been observed that there is a strong Malay/Muslim presence in youth issues ranging from school truancy to substance abuse. In addition to that, while Malay/Muslim youth are being served through various programmes that are carried out by different agencies, Malay/Muslim youth agencies remain high in demand because of their limited numbers and the shortage of Malay/Muslim youth workers.

As part of the Network review, the Secretariat proposes two main recommendations to address the issues and service gaps. The recommendations are in line with the sustainable self-help community approach advocated by PM Lee in his speech at MENDAKI's 25th anniversary dinner.

"In this area, your self-help efforts are critical. It is much harder for the Government to intervene, or for other voluntary welfare organisations outside the Malay/Muslim community to take action, without being misunderstood or triggering a defensive reaction."

The recommendations are as follows:

1. Capacity and capability building
 - a. New Agencies
 - i. The Secretariat strongly believes in the setting up of new Malay/Muslim youth agencies to play a greater role in addressing the issues faced by our youth. The Secretariat will advocate and provide the necessary support for new agencies to be set up.

- ii. The Secretariat will look into partnering established non-Malay youth agencies to pair up and allow our Malay/Muslim agencies to 'fast track' their skills upgrading and also strengthen their presence in the higher level needs categories.
 - iii. In the areas of governance, the Secretariat will work with new agencies in ensuring correct governance is carried out.
- b. Current Agencies
- i. The Secretariat will invest in the development of specialised skills and expertise (especially in the higher level needs) through the provision of necessary training. The provision of training will be done in collaboration with established local and overseas agencies and individuals.
 - ii. The Network aims to adequately equip YDN agencies so that they may be eligible to take on national programmes such as the Enhanced Step-Up A and B. Such a move would provide them with access to national funding while serving the needs of Malay/Muslim youth.
2. Outreach
- a. The Secretariat believes that more direct outreach work is needed in order to engage the OSYs and the many other youth that do not fall under the radar. It is recommended that our agencies work with both national and other non-Malay agencies in carrying out direct outreach to the unengaged youth.

CONCLUSION

Since its formation a decade ago, the YDN has been carrying out effective programmes to targeted segments of the Malay/Muslim youth population. The conduct of this review serves to adapt the Network to the constantly changing youth landscape and help ensure its relevancy in changing times.

notes:



Celebrating Excellence
Community Leaders Forum

