

Project IDentity

Group 7-17

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Project Type: Multi-Year

Section I: Overview

1. Area of Concern

We are looking at the low acceptance levels of the intellectually disabled, and the public's lack of understanding of Intellectual Disability (ID). Low acceptance levels of the intellectually disabled is evident and this is due to the public's lack of understanding of Intellectual Disability (ID). According to Ms Ng Rei Na, senior manager for MINDS social enterprises, less than 5% of their adult population are able to secure employment. Most adults were unable to find jobs to integrate into the workforce.

Based on a survey conducted in April 2016 by the Lien Foundation on 1,000 respondents, there was a general lack of inclusiveness for those with intellectual disability. Moreover, although two-thirds of respondents are willing to share public spaces with special needs children, they are not willing to interact with them. Only a third of respondents felt that Singapore was an inclusive society, and a mere 8% of respondents believed that Singaporeans were ready to go the extra mile to make intellectually disabled children feel welcome.

2. Challenges Identified

Some of the challenges we have identified are:

1. PWIDs lack the ability to be independent and rely greatly on their caregivers for daily activities. In the event where their caregivers are not around to support them, they will have to rely on the government to invest resources such as money and manpower to help them.
2. The intellectually disabled lack the social skills set, having little interaction with people outside their family and school
3. The general public has a social stigma towards this group

3. Underlying Problem

Given that the lack of understanding and low acceptance levels in Singapore have led to the negligence and stigma of the intellectually disabled, how can we help to provide them with the adequate social skills to be self-sustaining and integrate well into society?

4. Identify Strategies/ Propose Solutions

We have identified several strategies to tackle the problem:

1. Conduct social skills lessons and organise activities for the PWIDs at MTC to improve their basic communication and survival skills, hence better enabling them to integrate into society and find sustainable jobs in the future.
2. Educate the general public about the PWIDs in Singapore and develop a sense of connection between themselves and the PWIDs, hence removing stigma towards PWIDs and easing their integration into society and the workforce.
3. Creation of resources and tools to better impart the technical and social skills to the clients

5. Plan of Action

Our plan of action is detailed in the table below which indicates the date of completion of each action. We started with visiting the beneficiary and volunteering with them to better know the objectives of the organisation as well as to break the ice with the clients. We then proceeded to conduct social skills lessons with the clients to equip them with basic skill sets that would help them be independent in their daily routines. We subsequently carried out camps and interaction days for clients to gain more knowledge through computer courses, art lessons and for them to practise what they learnt from the social skills lessons while starting to interact with strangers to allow them to be less shy when communicating.

Section II: Implement Solutions

Date/2019	Activity
Step 1: Setting the Foundation	
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Formed an Organising Team ● Goal setting ● Going down to the beneficiary for briefing and to better understand the needs of the PWIDs
February - March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meetings and Volunteer Orientation with the coordinator of Me Too! Club ● Volunteer sessions to help break the ice and foster a closer relationship with them
Step 2: Preparation and Organisation	
January - March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creation of publicity materials such as posters ● Preparation of logistics for lessons
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Funding from Youth Change Makers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Seed funding of \$3000
Step 3: Implementation of Action Plan	
April - May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sales event in school selling merchandise to raise funds to obtain the resources needed for our subsequent events. ● Carried out 4 Social Skills Lessons, aimed to better prepare the clients for communication with others, easing their integration into society. ● Organised hands-on activities for clients to practice what they have learnt. ● Lessons include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Greetings & Manners ○ Money Management ○ Dining Etiquette ○ Time Telling and Management
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organised a 2-day day camp in our school, Hwa Chong Institution (HCI). Activities include:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Computer skills lessons to teach clients how to use simple technology. Clients tried out Microsoft Powerpoint and familiarised themselves with technology. ○ Recycling/gardening session where clients learnt how to make potted plants with recycled materials to teach them about being environmentally friendly ○ Sports session at Singapore Sports Hub to teach them about teamwork and sportsmanship while building their confidence (clients led the warmup sessions), encouraged them to lead a healthy lifestyle. ○ Mini-concert at MTC where clients performed for their caregivers, served as a family bonding session
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organised art lessons to engage clients to think creatively and provided a platform for them to showcase their artistic talents. ● The clients sold snacks to the school population, which served as an activity for the clients to hone their money management skills learnt through the social skills lessons held previously in MTC.
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Going down for volunteer sessions with our junior batch to introduce them to clients ● Handing the project over to them and showing them the ropes at MTC
Step 4: Outreach & Publicity	
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clients toured around HCI, which allowed them to interact with students and teachers (familiarisation with strangers). ● A booth was set up to increase exposure to raise awareness about the clients to the school population.
January - August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Throughout the year, we posted pictures and stories to keep followers updated about our events and progress.

Section III: Project Outcomes

1. Accomplishments

Social Skills Lessons for intellectually disabled students at MINDS: We received positive feedback on our lessons from the caregivers and staff at MTC. The students we taught absorbed the social skills we imparted to them, as they showed greater confidence in interacting and communicating with others. The clients applied their knowledge and skills learnt such as money handling to communicate with students from HCI during the interaction day, where they helped to sell snacks to the school population.

Campaign: Through programmes such as the 2-Day Camp and the HCI Interaction Day, we managed to impart social skills to the clients from MTC and promoted understanding between PWIDs and students. We also have 555 followers on Instagram, at which we provide updates on our events through stories and posts.

2. Reflections

This project has been an enriching journey which has opened our eyes to see things in a slightly different light. It helped to remove our stereotypes towards the Intellectually Disabled as we truly understood the everyday difficulties faced by them and uncovered the present social stigma between them and society. On hindsight, we could have had a campaign of a wider scale and create more opportunities for closer interaction between the intellectually disabled and members of the public. Furthermore, the issue of PWIDs being fully self-sustaining and independent has not been solved. Nevertheless, we are satisfied with the work our project has done and hope that our efforts would go a long way in enabling the intellectually disabled to be able to integrate well into society. We will work with the next batch of members from Project IDentity to ensure that the project is sustainable and will help more PWIDs integrate into society.

3. Scope of Impact

Community impact: The PWIDs this year were lower functioning compared to the PWIDs from MINDs Schools as we had changed our beneficiary. Therefore, we decided to focus more on interacting with them and imparting social skills through lessons to foster a closer relationship with them. We have also exposed our high school population to the clients when they came down for Interaction Day and it was successful and future batches of Project IDentity can slowly help them to interact with the mass public.

Community involvement: We managed to get 5 OT members together with volunteers from different secondary schools to assist us in events like the Day Camp and Interaction Day. The OT members were vital to run the different events smoothly.

A briefing was also conducted for the volunteers so that they are aware about the Dos and Don'ts when interacting with PWIDs. We seek to involve and inspire these volunteers to contribute their time and effort into our cause.

Resolution of AOC/UP: Given that we identified that there is a lack of understanding and low acceptance levels in Singapore have led to the negligence and stigma of the intellectually disabled, how can we help to provide them with the adequate social skills to be self-sustaining and integrate well into society?

We have curated lessons and provided clients with opportunities to practise what they learnt. Through our time working with them, the beneficiary also commented that the clients have started to be more open around strangers and rely less on their caregivers. More importantly, we have sowed the seeds for sustainable development of this project, by creating reusable resource packages and activities that can be used for other beneficiaries working with PWIDs, not limited to MTC. We hope that future batches will be able to take on the mantle and build on this foundation to provide a sustainable, long-term solution to ensure PWIDs become self-sustaining and independent in society.