

Project Auxilium 7-23

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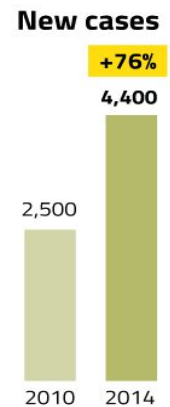
Single-Year



Section I: Project Overview

A. Area of Concern

Statistics from the KK Women's and Children's Hospital reflected a 76% increase in the number of children diagnosed with special needs, from 2,500 in 2010 to 4,400 in 2015 (TODAY Online, 2016). Experiencing behavioural differences, they often find it difficult to keep up with the pace of mainstream education and to interact in normal social circumstances. Despite active efforts to integrate them into society, only 28% of parents saw Singapore as an inclusive society, with one in three reporting to have insensitive remarks being directed at their child. In addition, only 53% of parents said that they were willing to have a special needs individual be seated next to their child. Moreover, only 8600 individuals with special needs were employed in the public and private sectors in 2017 (Lien Foundation, 2016). Evidently, there needs to be a concerted effort to reduce social stigma against these special needs individuals and integrate them into society.



Our beneficiary, MIJ Special Education Hub, was established in 2011 and is a member of the Singapore Centre for Social Enterprise (raiSE). It aims to provide a multitude of courses for special needs individuals across different age groups, allowing them to learn and develop skills in a safe and vibrant learning journey. In addition, MIJ also actively organises outreach events to raise public awareness about individuals with special needs.

B. Challenges identified

In the infancy of our project, we conducted an interview with the staff of MIJ, including the founder herself. We also observed the lessons conducted by the centre and actively interacted with the students to better understand their needs and challenges faced. Thereafter, we identified the key challenges faced by the students to be the lack of interpersonal skills and a dearth of public understanding regarding their conditions, which were echoed by numerous MIJ staff during our interviews.

C. Underlying Problem

As such, given that people with special needs often face **social segregation** due to a **lack of interpersonal skills and interaction with the public**, alongside a **lack of public awareness** regarding their conditions, how can we **hone their communication and life skills** and **raise public awareness** about their conditions to enrich their lives in the year 2019 and beyond?

D. Plan of action

Plan of Action	
Objective	Activity
Raise Public Awareness	Bazaar at Al-Abdul Razak Mosque Mass-Iftar Carnival
Hone communication and life skills	Communication Skills Lessons Interactive Art Lessons Learning Journeys
Recognition of Students' Development and Growth Affirmation and encouragement to boost student's confidence	Family Day

Section II: Implementation of Action Plan

A. Actions and outcomes to date

Time Frame	Action	Objective
January - February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recruitment of Volunteers ● Needs Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interview with the staff of MIJ ○ Background Research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identifying the need of beneficiary and its clients
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bazaar at Al-Abdul Razak Mosque (2nd March 2019) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Co-organised with MIJ and Friends of Ashraf (FOA) ○ Fundraising through the sale of Nasi Biriyani 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fundraising for MIJ ● Public awareness
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Combined Birthday Celebration for MIJ students (9th March 2019) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increases interaction with others and develops communication skills ● Allows them to feel our compassion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Amazing Race at Singapore Zoo (21st March 2019) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interaction opportunities with public ● Enhances team spirit and cooperation ● Increases their sense of achievement and self-confidence when they win

April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interactive Art Lessons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Thumbprint Printing ○ Balloon Printing ○ Freestyle Acrylic Painting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stimulate students' creativity ● Therapeutic benefits ● Train their neuromotor skills ● Increase their sense of self-confidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conversational and Interaction Skills Lessons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify key emotional identifiers ○ Practice real-life interaction situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enables students to identify key emotions and concept of personal space ● Enables students to do basic greetings and engage in simple conversations ● Contributes to their integration into society
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Origami and Paper Plane competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trains students' fine motor skills and concentration span ● Develop skills like teamwork and perseverance ● Bonding activity between students
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mass-Iftar Carnival with MIJ @Mega Woodlands which was graced by MP Faisal Ibrahim (11th May 2019) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An outreach of more than 350 people ○ Awareness Posters ○ Fundraising through the sale of merchandise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increases students' interaction with the public ● Heighten public awareness of people with special needs ● Fundraising for MIJ

July 2019	Outdoor Sports Sessions with MIJ students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Movement therapy for students ● Increase their level of happiness and enjoyment ● Learn the importance of teamwork and perseverance
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Upcoming Events		
29 th August 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learning Journey to Artscience Museum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Art Workshops for the students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Serves as a closure to our art lessons ● Provide opportunities for students to translate classroom knowledge to the real world ● Gives students a chance to practice behaving in public and interacting with others
September 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family Day @ MIJ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student's Art displays ○ Carnival games ○ Team bonding Activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Closure to our art lessons, celebrating the students' accomplishments ● Time to bond with family

Section III: Project Outcomes

A. Accomplishments

Accomplishments	
Interactions and Lessons	Over 15 Art and Communication Skills Lessons, involving over 35 students in our activities
Awareness	More than 500 individuals from the public have learnt about people with special needs, including <u>MP of Nee Soon GRC, Assoc. Prof Faishal Ibrahim</u>
Volunteers	Over 40 student volunteers, with more than 10 volunteers interacting closely with the students on a regular basis
Sustainability	Group of students have been decided on to be the core of the project in 2020

B. Reflection on Outcomes

Prior to this project, we had never interacted with special needs students and did not know what to expect. However, we have learnt through our interactions that many of the stereotypes against these special needs individuals are untrue, and that we should approach them with an open mind and heart. The predominant Muslim nature of our beneficiary was also foreign to us, but we quickly learnt to be aware and respectful of their religious practices. These cross-cultural interactions have heightened our cultural awareness, teaching us to respect the cultures of others, working together harmoniously despite differences in culture, be it race or religion.

In addition, we have also recognised the various challenges faced in the daily lives of special needs individuals, struggling with interpersonal interactions and social stigma. However, despite these challenges, they are still determined to live life to the fullest.

The joyful smiles on their faces during our lessons testifies to their optimism, and we grant them our utmost respect and admiration for this. Their determination to live life to the fullest is precious and admirable, and hence we sincerely hope that our lessons have made a positive impact in their lives! In addition, seeing how these students learnt to persevere despite being diagnosed with special needs, we have learnt how to be resilient in our pursuits and endeavours.

Lastly, as people with special needs are extremely sensitive to the amount of attention they receive, we have learnt to be compassionate discerning with our actions, picking up subtle cues and show greater care for them in order to enjoy more fruitful and conducive interactions with them. We have also learnt that there is no one-size-fits-all rule, and where every individual is unique in nature and we have to take a different approach towards interacting with them.

C. Scope of the Project

Community impact: Our project has been able to raise public awareness about the struggles and challenges through our various outreach events, equipping the public to better sympathise with and interact with special needs individuals. Throughout these interactions, some of the stereotypes can be overturned, easing the integration of such individuals into the society, reducing social stigma and possibly increasing employment opportunities.

Resolution of Underlying Problem: Through our various lessons and activities, we have managed to provide numerous opportunities for students to interact with members of the public, honing their interpersonal skills through real-life conversations, aiding in their social integration. Moreover, we have educated many members of the public about the struggles of special needs individuals, teaching them how to better interact with these individuals. This helps to reduce social stigma and reduces prejudice against them. More importantly, we sowed the seeds of sustainable development for this project, involving students from a diverse range of schools and education levels on hopes that future batches will be able to take on the mantle and build on this foundation, working with MIJ to further meet the needs of such students. Hence, we hope that throughout sustained and concerted efforts to resolve the underlying problem, individuals with special needs can be integrated into society.

(1373 words)

References

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