

CATEGORY 7 SERVICE LEARNING

GROUP 7-13

Project Concordia

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Multi-Year Project

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project Concordia is a third-year running Service Learning group working with ex-offenders as well as their families to assist them in reintegrating back into society. We are currently partnered with the Industrial and Services Co-operative Society Ltd (ISCOS), a beneficiary engaging with the ex-offenders, their families and members of society in general. Through our efforts, we aim to assist the family members of ex-offenders and their children.

1.1 Area of Concern

Stigma against ex-offenders deprives them of a chance to live an honest life, causing a trickle-down effect to the family members, in particular, children. A 35 year-long study by Cambridge University's Institute of Criminology found out that if children had a convicted parent by the time they were 10 that was the "best predictor" of them becoming criminal and antisocial.^[1] Similarly, in an article titled "Focus On Intergenerational Crime" by the Straits Times, it mentions how children of ex-offenders are likely to follow in the footsteps of their parents.^[2] With one parent being incarcerated, and the other being occupied with making ends meet, these children would have a lack of proper moral and physical guidance, increasing the chances of the child mixing with the wrong company and ending up as latchkey kids, and possibly being negatively influenced by their peers, committing crimes.

1.2 Challenges Identified

The challenges that the children of the ex-offenders might have been overlooked. As the main focus of ISCOS are the ex-offenders themselves, there might be a lack of resources and manpower to personally interact and engage with the children of the ex-offenders. Hence we close the gap by interacting and engaging with the children specifically through our various activities and also raise awareness about the ex-offenders' families.

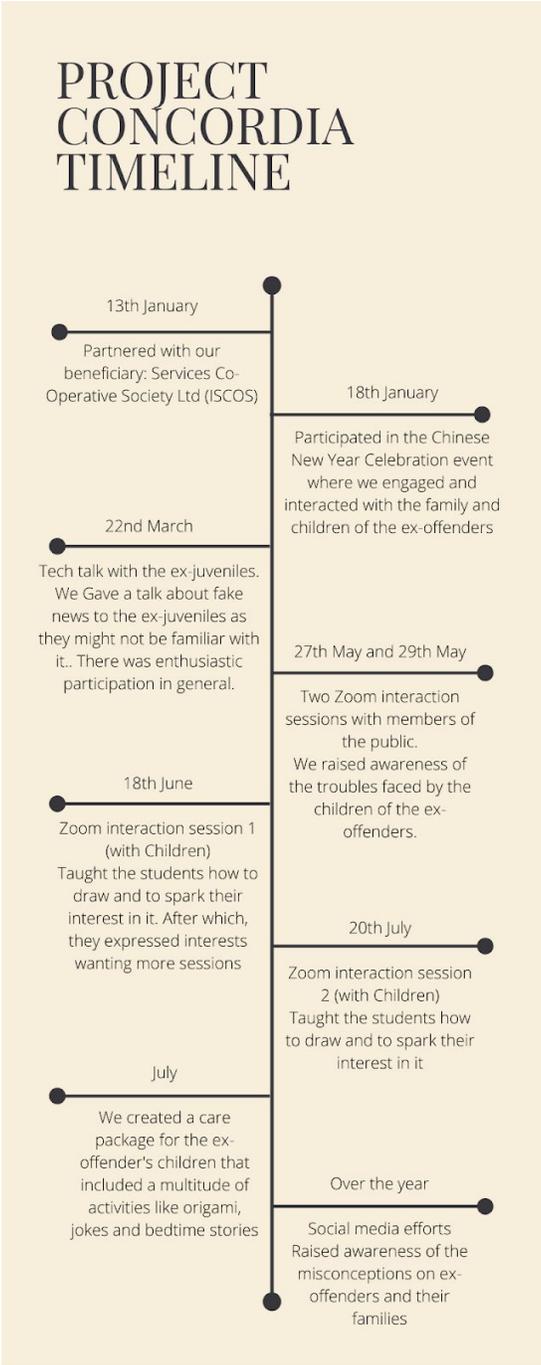
1.3 Underlying Problem

Given that the ex-offenders and their families in Singapore face difficulties in their lives such as the social stigma and prejudice, leading to a lack of awareness in the public about the plight of ex-offenders and their families, how might we be able to raise

awareness and help their children so that they do not walk down the same path as their parents by helping them better integrate into society and break the vicious cycle?

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

2.1 Actions and Outcomes to Date



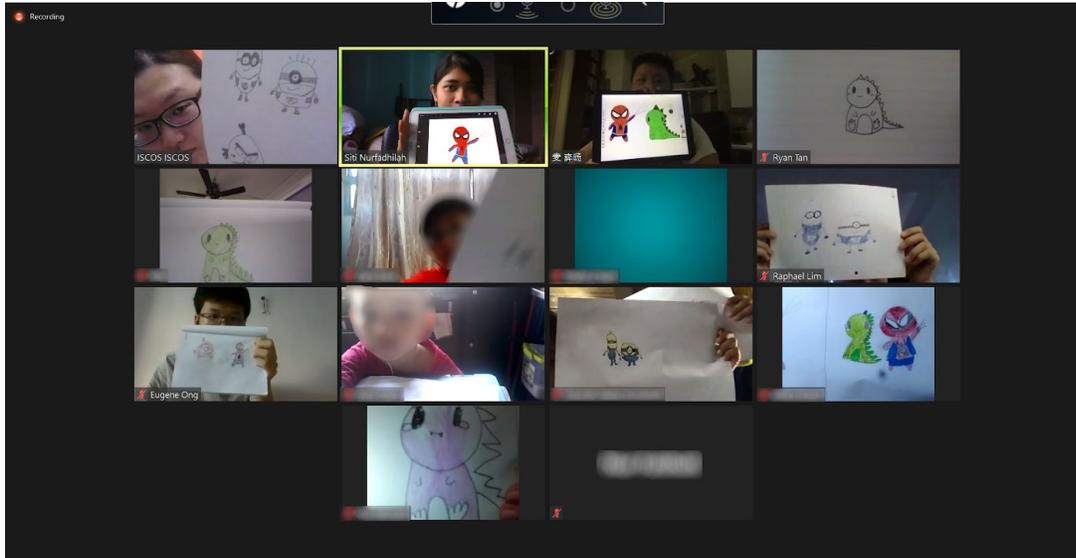
Project Outcomes

3.1 Accomplishments

We organised a few events such as a Chinese Calligraphy session. We also **interacted with the children online on numerous occasions**, promoting positive hobbies and fun activities. We have interacted and **engaged with the members** of the public in dialogic discourse about the children of the ex-offenders and through social media have reached out to people **who are now aware** of the plight of the ex-offender and their families.



Previously, there were **inadequate opportunities** for the children to interact and engage with young teens and **spark their interest** in different endeavours. We have therefore provided the children with various possible hobbies, and through personal interaction, **empowered them** through **enriching their lives**. These activities provide them with **meaningful things to do** and create a **positive attitude** towards life.



Importantly, the children now realise that they are **cared for and loved**, and that they **can trust others** who want to lend a helping hand. These children will hence not **spiral into anti-social behaviour** and will be more interactive with others.

3.2 Reflection on Outcomes

We all felt it was a very **enriching experience** as we were given the chance to help a very special group of people. People who are **not visibly marginalised** but face challenges throughout their growing years. These are people who are discriminated against and **are vulnerable to becoming potential criminals**. Being able to help them is really fulfilling because what we are doing is **carving the future** for these children, and the **stakes were much higher** because there is so much potential in what could happen to them. One core event was the interaction with the public where we realised there were many other people who **felt strongly for the injustice and prejudice** faced by the families and children of ex-offenders and were **enthusiastic for change** in the mindsets of society and advocating for systemic change. This touched all of us as we realised that even though these children might be overlooked by majority of society, there were still innumerable people who **expressed their enthusiastic support** which would be integral in the future. It also shows the **passion of the general community** to uplift the marginalised and this **motivated us to push on even in these turbulent times**, allowing us to **be innovative and flexible while increasing our awareness in society**, making us extremely proud to be **part of this endeavour**.

3.3 Scope of the Project

Community impact: Through our sessions, we ensured that the children do not face similar problems which may adversely affect their future lives. We hope that the public would take note of the problems that these individuals face and support them in any way they can.

Community involvement: We had 5 core members and 4 extended core members that helped us during our various events. Through briefings by ISCOS, we managed to learn how to interact with the children of the ex-offenders, to maximise our effectiveness in working towards our goals.

Resolution of UP: As we identified a **lack of engagement with the children** and that **insufficient awareness** was raised about the families of the ex-offenders, we have **engaged and interacted** with the children meaningfully. More importantly, we have **laid the foundation** for the future as we have engaged with the public who also feel strongly for these families while also mentoring a junior group to take over. We hope this project will remain **sustainable** and **be pushed to greater heights** to help the children and families of the ex-offender.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

References:

- [1] JURY, R. (2011, October 23). Children follow convicted parents into crime. Retrieved August 19, 2020, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/children-follow-convicted-parents-into-crime-1321272.html>
- [2] Tan, T. (2016, November 27). Focus on intergenerational crime. Retrieved April 12, 2020, from <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/focus-on-inter-generational-crime>