

Project Amicis Written Report

7-27

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Project Type: Single Year

Section 1: Project Overview

A. Area of Concern

In Singapore, there is a sizable number of “latchkey children”, a term referring to minors who are unsupervised at home after school. According to Singapore Children’s Society, spending long hours alone at home often causes these children to feel “restless and lonely”, which can leave them extremely vulnerable to danger arising from curiosity and coming across negative influences from their peers. As such, this may disrupt their educational journey and deprive them of equal opportunities.

The screenshot shows a news article on the AsiaOne website. The article is titled "New generation of latchkey children" and is dated September 30, 2014, published at 9:00 AM. The author is Venessa Lee from The Straits Times. The main image shows a close-up of a child's hand holding a large, dark metal padlock. The padlock has the word "CHILD" embossed on it. The child's face is partially visible in the background, looking towards the camera. The article text on the right discusses the challenges of latchkey children, mentioning a social worker Gwen Koh and the Boys' Town YouthReach program. The website's navigation bar at the top includes "asiaone", "LATEST", "NEWS", "ENTERTAINMENT", "LIFESTYLE", and "DIGITAL CULTURE". At the bottom of the screenshot, there is a CNA navigation bar with various categories like "CNA Insider", "CNA Lifestyle", "CNA938", "Singapore", "Asia", "World", "Commentary", "Business", "Sport", "Climate Change", "News Clips", "VOD", "Podc", and "All Sections".

By **Cindy Ng**

10 Nov 2018 06:18AM
(Updated: 02 Feb 2021 06:07PM)



★ [Commentary](#) | [Commentary](#)

Commentary: A wake-up call, when a disadvantaged child gets 8 out of 100 for an exam

Uplifting disadvantaged children requires us to create ecosystems of support and actively facilitate their access to this support, says Cindy Ng.

SINGAPORE: Income inequality creates divisions in our society.

From birth, children from the bottom 20 per cent receive less access to financial and social resources than their peers from other socio-economic status.

This gap widens with each year and its effects become evident by the time these children turn seven, when formal education begins.

A number of years ago, I visited an eight-year-old boy who lived with his

B. Challenges Identified

Based on discussions with our beneficiary, the children tend to feel lonely due to the fact that their parents work multiple jobs and long hours, which leaves little time for building parent-child relationships. Most of these children who come from less-privileged backgrounds lack access to physical and socio-economic resources which are key to growing up. Covid 19 has only aggravated the issue by increasing household income inequality where many of these children may face family pressure at home and are constantly being cooped up in less conducive learning environments, having a direct impact on their academic grades and mental well-being.

C. Underlying Problem

Given that there is a tendency that latchkey children are more susceptible to negative influences, and are impacted due to lack of guidance and being cooped up in less conducive living environments, how might we alleviate these problems by providing them with holistic educational opportunities, through regular interaction sessions and spreading awareness so as to develop them into all-rounded individuals?

D. Plan of Action

We conducted a needs analysis to assess the level of awareness of latchkey children among the general public and identified some problems that these children might be facing, especially under Covid-19. Through weekly volunteering sessions, we planned and conducted activities targeted at holistic education and provided opportunities for interactions with these children to understand them at a personal level.

Section 2: Implementation of Plan

DATE	EVENT
Jan-Feb	Contacting beneficiaries + Recruiting of External OT members
24 Mar	Meeting and Discussion with CDAC@Punggol on collaboration
15 Apr	First session (Introduction) Ice breakers
22 Apr	Performance etiquette and planning of plays (Emotional confidence series)
29 Apr	Prop making Presentation by children (Show and Tell) (Emotional confidence series)
06 May	Session on Malay Culture/Celebration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Language and Linguistics, food, culture, art, music (Cultural awareness series)
June Holidays	Purchase and Packing of lesson packages (Coordinated with CDAC to deliver packs to the doorsteps of the children)
08 July	Appreciation of Chinese culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chinese media, music, art, literature (Cultural awareness series)
15 July	Appreciation of Japanese culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Japanese media, music, art (Cultural awareness series)
29 July	Art and Craft Session (Painting + Clay modelling)

05 Aug	Amicis x Eco Wildcare Session - Environmental awareness
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Section 3: Project Outcomes

A. Accomplishments

- 1) Providing the children with holistic education on general knowledge and culture
- 2) Supplied all children, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds with tangible resources that facilitate their learning
- 3) Built strong student-mentor relationships through extended dialogue and interaction
- 4) Providing latchkey children within the batch with a form of healthy attachment and companionship
- 5) Raised awareness on the circumstances of disadvantaged children through our own experiences and understanding of their needs
- 6) Providing future batches of HCI students who intend to conduct projects with the same target audience with a form of reference

B. Reflections on Outcomes

The drawn-out pandemic, among other factors, have influenced the fundamental development of disadvantaged children. Extremist and rash personalities are reflective of their needs to connect while introverted personalities reflect a poor ego due to social comparison. Our project has acted as the stepping stone to integrate them into the community while teaching them important knowledge and skills that may not be available to them.

Empathy has been the core of our project as we aimed to cater to their needs while also trying to relate to their circumstances and treating them with respect. We concluded from numerous interviews that our project was able to supplement the childrens' educational and social needs. Though the short-term duration of our project has limited its span and reach, we believe that our practical initiatives have made a change in the childrens' lives and expanded our perspectives as to how guiding figures can shape a young person.

C. Scope of Project

a. Community Impact

Our project has made a small-scale, yet extremely concentrated impact on our specific target audience. By working with a miniscule group of 15 children who fitted our requirements, the core team was able to maximise the amount of personal interaction and attention directed towards each of our beneficiaries. Each individual child could also receive more resources which would enhance their learning at a more visible level. CDAC was able to deepen its mutual ties with HCI and increase the variety of education programmes for the kids through our project.

b. Community Involvement

We have 5 Core Team members, 1 continuing exco member, and 10 students who participated in our Organising Team at intervals. All had direct physical/online interaction with the kids and were better able to understand their overall personality traits and corresponding needs after sessions. The resource website design was also put up online and those who recognised latchkey kids in their communities were encouraged to forward the resources to them.

c. Resolution of AOC / UP

After identifying the AOC, we were able to assist our beneficiaries accordingly, through our initiatives, which included 3 main methods : Providing the children

with educational opportunities and resources, forging healthy relationships and guiding the children, and raising awareness of issues disadvantaged/latchkey children face. Although further disrupted by Covid-19, we ensured that the kids would not feel isolated by sending them weekly learning resource packs and conducting online sessions based on their progress on the learning objectives in the packs. Ultimately, sustained interaction is pivotal and we hope our template empowers and inspires others in the community to enhance our activities, reducing the challenges disadvantaged children face.

Section 4: Reflections

Team Reflection:

We have fostered a greater respect for organisations such as CDAC, whose members work tirelessly to provide these less fortunate children with meaningful and memorable childhood experiences. Besides, Project Amicis has taught us to treasure the time spent together with family and friends more after seeing how these children are deprived of such relationships. Through facilitating events, Project Amicis made us realise the importance of flexibility in working around many things as well as adapting to sudden changes. In addition, we have also learnt the importance of always having a backup plan not just in planning but also during interaction and execution. Lastly some of our personal biases and preconceptions about underprivileged children have also changed over the span of the project.

References

1. Lee, Vanessa. "New generation of latchkey children". AsiaOne (Straits Times). 30 Sep 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.asiaone.com/new-generation-latchkey-children>
2. Ng, Cindy. "Commentary: A wake-up call, when a disadvantaged child gets 8 out of a 100 for an exam." Channel News Asia (CNA). 10 Nov 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/commentary/singapore-inequality-helping-disadvantaged-child-ren-task-force-918241>