

CHAPTER 7

Sports, Volunteerism and Philanthropy, and Public Education

VISION

PWDs will have access to sports for recreation; rehabilitation; and competition. There will be strong volunteer participation and philanthropy in the disability sector. Our society will understand the needs of PWDs, learn to appreciate and accept their differences, and embrace them into mainstream society.

INTRODUCTION

1. To create an inclusive society, PWDs must be integrated at all levels of society. The Committee believes that other than looking into the areas of early intervention, education, employment and care-giving, supporting services are just as important to enable PWDs to lead fulfilling lives. These include sports, whether it is for enjoyment, rehabilitation, or excellence; volunteerism in the disability sector for volunteers to contribute and play a part in the lives of PWDs; philanthropy by the general community to support the efforts of the VVO sector; and public education to raise awareness and change the mindset of the general public of PWDs.

SPORTS

2. Sports and physical activities are instrumental to promote the inclusion of marginalised groups in the mainstream community. Whether in the school playground, community clubs, or stadiums, sport activities and events forge cohesion among different groups. This atmosphere fosters increased social awareness and cross-cultural understanding, combats social exclusion and crime, and celebrates diversity. Sports should be made available to all to create an inclusive sporting community.

EFFORTS OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS

3. Currently PWDs in Singapore are supported by about 186 organisations including special schools and VVOs. Of the 186, only 11 provide some form of sports to the PWDs and almost all cater to persons of a specific disability only.

4. The Singapore Disability Sports Council (SDSC) is the only organisation in Singapore which reaches across all disability groups, offering a wide range of sports at both elite and recreational levels. It is Singapore's national disability sports organisation and receives an annual funding from the Singapore Sports Council (SSC).

5. Opportunities to participate in sports have grown exponentially over the years and SDSC runs a host of local competitions. SDSC also participates in a wide range of international and regional competitions including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) ParaGames, the FESPIC¹ Games, the Commonwealth Games and the Paralympics.

6. Efforts to encourage more PWDs to learn a sport or to enjoy sports as a recreation have been ongoing for some time now. SDSC's sports programme today include a *Sports For All* component, *Client-Specific Programmes* (specially tailored programmes to meet PWD's specific needs), *Youth Programmes* (aimed at encouraging children and students in both mainstream and special schools to take up a sport) and a *Sports Excellence Programme* (which is geared towards identifying and developing world class disabled athletes).

CHALLENGES FACING DISABILITY SPORTS

7. Currently, SDSC is the only organisation in Singapore that looks after the sports interest for all disabled Singaporeans. There is no clear platform between non-disabled sports and sports for the disabled in the sharing of expertise and resources.

8. Even at the international level, there is, admittedly, this division between disabled and non-disabled competitions e.g. the SEA Games vs. the ASEAN ParaGames, the Asian Games vs. FESPIC Games, the Olympics vs. the Paralympics. In 2005, the Commonwealth Games included, for the very first time events for both non-disabled and disabled athletes, each with full medal status.

9. There is a perception that sports for the disabled is not generally accorded the same level of importance and recognition as non-disabled sports. It is seen mainly as a concern of a "special interest" group and this has in turn impacted morale, funding, awareness and interest from the public and media, resulting in minimal recognition being accorded unlike the non-disabled athletes who generally receive strong support and attention.

10. The Committee observes a lack of publicity on the achievements of disabled athletes, thus creating low awareness about the disabled athletes who

¹ FESPIC - Far East and South Pacific Games Federation for the disabled - is the sports organisation for the persons with disability in Asia and South Pacific.

did Singapore proud by winning medals at regional and international competitions.

11. The other challenge facing disability sports is the lack of emphasis on the importance of sports in the rehabilitation of PWDs. However, the Committee also recognises that sports cannot be treated as the sole form of rehabilitation as an end in itself. Where sport is viewed as an end-goal itself, it becomes nurturing of special sports talents.

12. A quick scan of the social service sector shows that promotion of disability sports is not the core business of various disability organisations and thus not widespread but for disability organisations that have the necessary resources, facilities and availability of coaches, they are able to providing sporting opportunities for their members. Besides the SDSC, organisations like the Society for the Physically Disabled, AWWA and Handicap Welfare Association promote sports for the physically disabled; Association for Persons with Special Needs, MINDS etc for the intellectually disabled; Christian Outreach to the Handicapped for those with autism etc. Among the 20 special schools, 17 have included them as part of their curriculum for student participation and rehabilitation, although these could be more structured and properly resourced.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISABILITY SPORTS

Strategic Framework for Sports for PWDs

13. The Committee recommends that Sports for PWDs adopt the following framework:

- a. Sports for All
- b. Sports Excellence
- c. Sports for Rehabilitation

14. Such a framework clarifies the objectives of sports in relation to PWDs and better ensures that key bodies and programmes in each of the three areas will be adequately resourced to carry out their respective objectives.

Sports for All

15. The Committee wants to see a society where PWDs can enjoy sports under a sound and comprehensive Sports for All approach. In this regard, we would like SSC and SDSC to consider how best to align the administration, growth and development of disability sports with mainstream sports. In order to encourage the mainstreaming of sports for the disabled, **the Committee suggests that targets for the participation rate of the PWDs be set as part of SSC's performance indicators.** By doing so, it will help ensure that the awareness of disability sports is maintained. To further facilitate the process, **the**

Committee also recommends that staff from SDSC and key divisions within SSC work closely together to chart the future direction and sports policies for the disabled. So as not to duplicate efforts in organising sporting events and more importantly, to create an inclusive sporting sector, **the Committee proposes that all major sporting events, which are organised by SSC, should have a category for PWDs. SSC should also encourage major sporting events sponsored by the NSAs and private sector to do so.** Notable sporting events that have already become inclusive of PWDs include the Standard Chartered Marathon, River Regatta and Singapore Dragonboat Festival.

16. The Committee has studied the UK's Inclusive Fitness Initiative and **proposes that SSC take on the task of implementing an island-wide initiative to modify gym equipment to allow disabled users to use them, without causing any inconvenience to other users.** SSC should also work with HDB and the National Parks Board to have or replace outdoor exercise equipment with those that are disabled friendly.

Sports Excellence

17. **The Committee recommends that the role of SDSC has to be strategically defined and better scoped to ensure its resources are not thinly spread.** The SDSC, because it is the only pan-disability sports body, has had to take on the roles of SSC and the Singapore National Olympic Council (SNOC) combined, while advocating for sports as rehabilitation which neither SSC nor SNOC has to consider. On top of these three demanding roles, SDSC also acts like a federation of National Sports Association (NSA) managing 11 disabled sports, and runs programmes and organises events for specific sports for PWDs. Going forward, **the Committee is of the view that SDSC should focus more on the promotion and development of sport, i.e. supporting Sports For All and Excellence initiatives. The Committee feels that greater effort and resources be made available for disabled sports club development. The Committee would like to see more disabled sports clubs formed and being independent and in particular PWDs being empowered and supported to manage the sports.**

18. The Committee observes that there are four major competitions for disabled athletes that parallel those for the non-disabled. The competitions (with the parallel for non-disabled highlighted in brackets) are as follows: Paralympics (Olympics), FESPIC (Asian Games), the Commonwealth Games (Commonwealth Games) and the ASEAN ParaGames (SEA Games). These competitions for the PWDs should be given their due coverage in the media and their due support from the government. The Committee observes that the Multi-Million Dollar Award Programme (MAP) set up by the SNOC is to reward non-disabled athletes for achievements at major international competitions. The MAP is funded entirely by corporate donors such as Asia-Pacific Brewery (APB) and

Singapore Pools. **The Committee proposes that a similar award scheme should be set up for disabled athletes to recognise their achievements in the international scene.** SDSC could work with private companies to help initiate such a reward scheme.

19. Unlike other athletes, PWDs do not enjoy sufficient media spotlight to celebrate their victories at their regional or international competitions. Disability sports competitions are also not covered in the media, which in turn, leads to lack of public awareness and interest in disability sports. **The Committee hopes to see the media playing a more active role in profiling our disabled athletes.** This will help to raise the awareness of sports for the disabled.

20. **The Committee encourages NSAs that are established and capable to take on disability sports clubs under their wing, to not have the sport separately managed by the SDSC.** However, where the NSA, disability sports clubs or sports interest groups are not yet ready, SDSC would still continue to manage them directly.

Sports as Rehabilitation

21. **The Committee also feels that it is important to recognise the role of disability sports as rehabilitative. The Committee encourages VWOs to provide sports activities within their expanded disability scope as part of their service.** Like Sports for All and Sports for Excellence, SDSC should be resourced to promote Sports for Rehabilitation with the support from MCYS, MOH, MOE and NCSS.

22. To maximise returns from sports as rehabilitation and therapy, and to inculcate sports in the lives of PWDs, **the Committee recommends that sports be part and parcel of the school life of children with special needs. The Committee further proposes that an in-service training on disability sports for teachers** should be implemented to provide training, resource materials and ongoing support network for aspiring Physical Education teachers, coaches and sports administrators to help them include PWDs in their activities. This is similar to the Australian Sports Commission's Disability Education Programme.

23. **A robust volunteer management system** to recruit, train and provide necessary logistic support to the PWDs is required. This would help to pave more opportunities for the volunteers to work with the disabled and to heighten awareness of sports. The SDSC would need to look into this for the disability sports clubs or interest groups that are under its management.

24. The Committee hopes that with the above initiatives put in place over the next five years, it would lead to a more vibrant sporting scene for PWDs. Our society would celebrate with as much pride when our elite PWD athletes bring

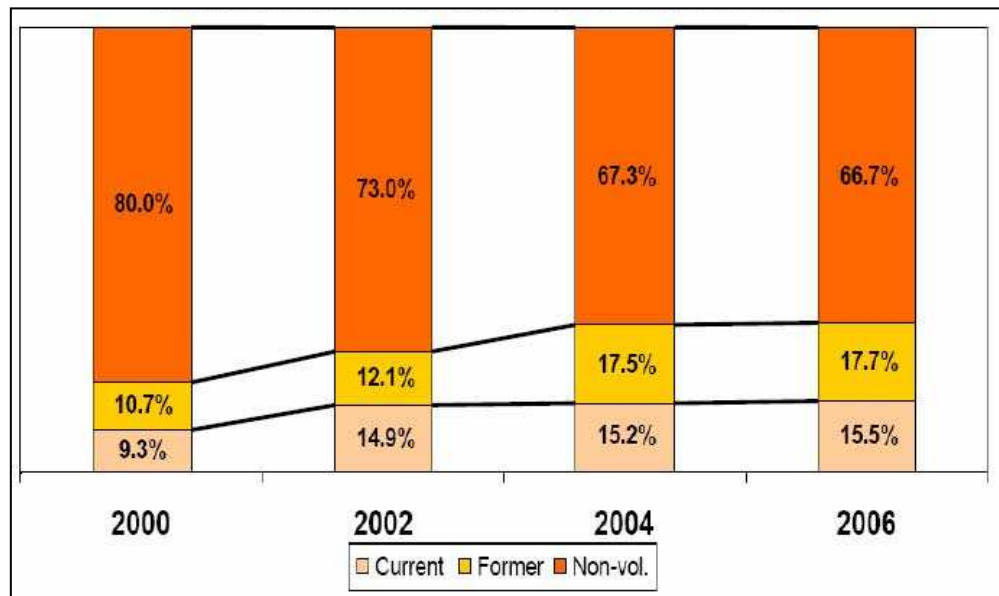
glory to our nation, and our PWD athletes would be rewarded for their achievement in reaching sports excellence.

VOLUNTEERISM AND PHILANTHROPY

25. The National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre (NVPC) is a national body to promote volunteerism and philanthropy in Singapore, working in partnership with the public, people and private sectors. NVPC provides useful resources on volunteerism and philanthropy, training workshops and consultancy service on Volunteer Management System and grants for non-profits organisation start-ups.

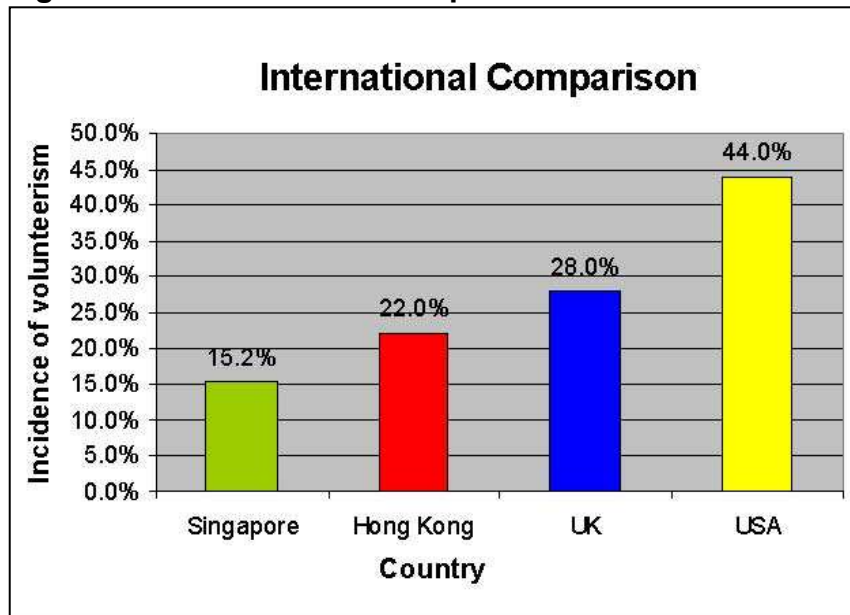
26. A survey commissioned by NVPC showed that the proportion of current and former volunteers from 2000 to 2006 has increased steadily (refer to Figure 7.1). The overall percentage of current and former volunteers in 2006 stands at 33.2%, compared with 32.7% in 2004.

Figure 7.1: Distribution of Population by Volunteer Status 2000-2006



27. On the global scale of volunteerism with other countries, Figure 7.2 shows that the incidence of volunteerism is relatively lower at 15.2% as compared with Hong Kong (22%), UK (28%) and the US (44%). The reason for low volunteerism in Singapore is attributed to the knowledge and culture of active volunteerism in those countries. Moreover, the infrastructure, which supports volunteerism, and practices enable many voluntary organisations to effectively reach out, recruit, retain and train volunteers.

Figure 7.2: International Comparison of Volunteerism



28. The survey also revealed that many volunteers are motivated to help the less fortunate and that is the main driving force for the current volunteers to come forward to work with the unfortunate group which could include PWDs, the elderly and youths-at-risk. For those who do not volunteer, the survey showed that many of them want to volunteer but they were deterred by lack of time or they felt that they do not possess the necessary skills to volunteer.

29. Singapore is a young nation. We have yet to develop a strong philanthropic culture. However, Singaporeans are generous. In 2006, \$341 million was donated by individual Singaporeans, with 89% of individuals aged 15 years and above donating at least once in the past 12 months². There have been individuals who have willed substantial estates to worthy causes. Some contribute significant sums from their earnings every year to charity. Corporates have also taken up the call to be more socially responsible. In a low tax regime environment like Singapore, there will be limits to tax funded programmes and services. More can be done to encourage individual and corporate philanthropy.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON VOLUNTEERISM

30. **The Committee encourages VWOs to devote manpower resources to employ a volunteer programme manager or coordinator to better manage volunteer manpower in an effective manner. Due to the insufficient information on figures to assess volunteers' preference for different areas, a robust and shared volunteer management system could be developed.**

² "Survey on Individual Giving in Singapore" 2006, National Volunteer and Philanthropy Council

31. **The Committee feels that the VWOs could step up their efforts by promoting volunteerism through the schools.** VWOs could play a greater part in coordinating and publicising volunteering opportunities to schools, the DIRC and NVPC. **The Committee also proposes that VWOs engage the private sector more actively.** The VWOs could work more closely with NVPC. In tandem with the employment initiatives of the Government, companies who are supportive employers of PWDs could also be further invited to lead in volunteering in the disability sector.

32. The Committee believes in the inherent generosity of Singaporeans. It is encouraged by the response of corporates to be more socially responsible. The Committee recommends that **MCYS, NVPC and NCSS do more to encourage individual and corporate philanthropy in the disability sector.**

PUBLIC EDUCATION

33. While opportunities could be given to PWDs to maximise their potential and help them live life to the best of their abilities, it also takes understanding and acceptance by fellow members of the community before PWDs could be fully embraced and integrated into society. Besides helping to raise awareness in public mindset about disability and PWDs in general, public education needs to address and persuade the public that PWDs are a part of our community and that they too have the abilities to contribute to our society and economy. Public education is therefore an important foundation that must be laid even as the different pillars of efforts directed towards enabling PWDs to live independently are being established.

EFFORTS OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS

34. Public education efforts to raise disability awareness at the national level was spearheaded by NCSS and supported by MCYS over the last five years. Previous initiatives included funding sporadic small scale initiatives such as print materials and outreach to targeted groups by VWOs. Two surveys were conducted in 2003 and 2005 to gauge public perception towards PWDs and to gather feedback from employers with PWD employees.

35. In 2004, the DAPE campaign was launched on 3 December, in conjunction with the United Nations (UN) International Day for Disabled Persons which is celebrated annually on that date, to address the attitudes and perceptions of Singaporeans towards PWDs. The 2005 DAPE campaign targeted to create awareness on the general skills and abilities of PWDs with the message that “Disabled does not Mean Unable”. Riding on heightened awareness of employers on the abilities of PWDs, the 2006 DAPE campaign focuses on employability and employment of PWDs by increasing employers’ awareness on

the abilities of PWDs and creating employment opportunities for PWDs. The DAPE campaign is expected to continue the theme of employment over the next three years till 2008 to sustain the impact created. The DAPE campaign complements the ENABLE Fund, set up by the Government in July 2006 to provide incentives to employers to hire PWDs.

36. Facilitating the employment of PWDs under the “many helping hands” approach (involving the Government, NCSS, VWOs, private sector, families and most importantly the PWDs themselves) by creating more opportunities for PWDs to be gainfully employed is the best way of integrating PWDs into mainstream society. Employment is the key to self-reliance and financial security for all, regardless of whether one is non-disabled or otherwise. For those with disabilities, it raises their self-esteem and provides a dignified way for them to provide for themselves.

37. Several commendable initiatives have commenced given the greater awareness on disability and the call for a more inclusive society for PWDs. These include the review of the Barrier Free Accessibility Code, barrier-free accessibility programme announced for all housing estates and the surroundings of MRT stations, the implementation of accessible transport with lifts in MRT stations and wheelchair-accessible buses and the launch of the ENABLE Fund to provide incentives to employers to hire PWDs.

38. Although the overall heightened awareness of PWDs is a positive indication of the effectiveness of the DAPE campaigns, more could be done so that awareness could gradually translate into positive acceptance, especially with subsequent campaigns focusing on the aspect of employment. Ultimately, it is hoped that with greater awareness, society at large would be more spontaneous in embracing and including PWDs into every sphere of their lives where they study and work alongside them. Having assessed and evaluated the 2004 and 2005 DAPE campaigns, the Committee lays out a number of recommendations for future public education initiatives with this end objective in mind and to achieve greater effectiveness in general.

LEARNING POINTS FROM YELLOW RIBBON PROJECT

39. The Committee looked at the approach used by the Yellow Ribbon Project, organised by the Singapore Prison Service, as both share a similar underlying objective of getting the public to accept a group of individuals who are traditionally stigmatised by society. The Yellow Ribbon Project, with a publicity budget of approximately \$1 million each year, has enjoyed tremendous success in just three years since its launch in 2004 to offer a second chance to ex-offenders and their families.³ Through intensive media coverage, strong and

³ For the year 2005, more than 150 organisations were official supporters of the Yellow Ribbon Project.

consistent messaging, including an official website and events held throughout each year, this nationwide campaign has successfully educated the public on the need to give ex-offenders a second chance. More importantly, the inmates have shown strong ownership and responsibility for activities organised under the Yellow Ribbon Project and this is reinforced through the success stories of ex-offenders contributing to society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

40. In coming up with the recommendations, the Committee studied the mechanics when it explored the Yellow Ribbon project that enabled the public education programme to be a successful one within a time frame of three years. The success factors could be attributed to ***adequate funding; consistent clear message; ownership by the sector of the message so that events, publications, publicity, etc reinforce the messages***, rather than each going their own way with individualistic themes and messages.

41. **The Committee supports the DAPE campaign efforts and recommends that it should continue to be a regular feature of the overall thrust of public education for disability issues.** However, some enhancements are proposed in order to sustain public awareness and encourage positive responses from employers so that they would not only know about PWDs but be more open to have PWDs integrated into society. **The Committee proposes that the DAPE campaign should take on a two-pronged approach: employment and general education on integration of PWDs into society.** In addition to focusing on the employability and employment of PWDs over the next three years with public education efforts leveraging on the Employers' Network targeting employer bodies (as mentioned in Chapter 4), **the campaign should also be extended to year round to focus on public education.** This could include activities targeted at public perception in order to foster positive acceptance of PWDs among the general public. Year round talks, events and roadshows on the ground are some of the activities suggested. The objective would be to have PWDs and disability issues accepted as part and parcel of everyday life.

42. **The Committee also recommends that it could also be beneficial to reach out to the community and heartlands by decentralising public education efforts to the local authorities.** This could be done by involving more CDCs which have a better reach to the community to foster positive acceptance and integration of PWDs into the community. The partnerships of Central CDC and South-West CDC with VWOs in 2005 and 2006 to conduct public education efforts for the disability sector showed remarkable success at localised outreach. Other examples of localised outreach in other countries include Hong Kong where the Government engages the district councils and the public transport operators to promote awareness in conjunction with the UN

International Day for the Disabled. In Singapore, the Government could engage the CDCs in future DAPE campaigns and activities for the International Day for Disabled Persons, so as to achieve a wider reach to the local community.

43. One of the quickest and most effective ways to **spread the message to a greater audience base is through the use of the media**. Public education efforts should reach out to the general public and not be confined to those who are already in the disability sector or who are already involved in the lives of PWDs. Thus, mass media such as television, radio and print need to be channels through which the message of integration gets conveyed to the general public.

44. In anticipation of the proposed expansion of the DAPE campaign, **the budget allocated for DAPE should also be increased**. The DAPE budget over the last three years was within the range of \$150,000 to \$300,000 annually. This budget is relatively smaller compared to the million-dollar budget for family life education and public education on ageing annually. Without sustained publicity created through broadcast and print through the provision of adequate funding, the Committee feels that the campaign lacked national impact. Based on the funding for the Yellow Ribbon project, **the Committee proposes that a budget of up to \$1 million may be required to launch a sustained campaign**.

45. Interface with PWDs through promotion of employment opportunities at the national level such as DAPE campaign and ENABLE Fund alone would be insufficient as other avenues need to be explored. **Another avenue to spread the public education message is through hospitals** which will reach out to PWDs and their families in cases of acquired disabilities either through illness or accidents. This group of PWDs and their families often face drastic changes in lifestyles and being aware of the support services available would help facilitate their transit back into society in a less painful way.

46. Beyond the above and below the line initiatives, public education works best from integrating PWDs starting from the time they are young with education right up to adulthood in gainful employment. These could be done through the co-location of schools, working alongside them and locating sheltered workshops, where possible, within communities and residential homes within communities.

47. Publicity efforts and public education to address public perceptions towards integration of PWDs into our community must be accompanied by a progressive societal attitude towards PWDs. The successful reintegration of PWDs requires seamless co-operation amongst all stakeholders – the PWDs themselves seizing the opportunity to learn and change, their caregivers rendering care and support, the Government, people and private sectors providing comprehensive support services and promoting employment of PWDs, and the public opening up to encourage integration of PWDs into our community.

CONCLUSION

48. The Committee hopes that more will be done in the areas of sports, volunteerism, philanthropy and public education to benefit PWDs. This “software” part impacts the lives of PWDs. This same “software” gives inspiration and can shape the character of our society for the better.