

CRPD Parallel Report



Singapore

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Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This parallel report describes the progress and developmental updates for MINDS in Singapore aligned with UN CRPD articles. As an organization, MINDS has contributed to the local disability landscape's progress in relation to articles 8 (Awareness raising), 9 (Accessibility), 13 (Access to justice), 21 (Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information), 23 (Respect for home and the family), 24 (Education), 25 (Health), 27 (Work and Employment) 30 (Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sports) and 31 (Statistics and data collection).

The report highlights the key initiatives that MINDS has launched in support of the above-mentioned articles as well as how MINDS can continue to move forward as an organization to further impact the local disability landscape. In doing so, these initiatives complement Singapore's progressive realization of the goals for UNCRPD in advocating for persons with disabilities, alongside persons with disabilities.

Strategically, on an empowerment front, MINDS supports PwIDs in upholding their rights in a responsible manner as contributing citizens through the inaugural self-advocacy platform for persons with intellectual disabilities called "Our Lives, Our Voices." On the accessibility front, MINDS has forged strategic community partnerships with community sectors such as transport and healthcare.

On the employment front, MINDS has co-designed and conducted a rigorous study on current gaps and future trends in employment and employability for persons with intellectual disabilities, with emphasis on their subjective experiences and aspirations. Concurrently, MINDS has piloted with a Community Development Council (CDC) to pilot a programme to provide employment to persons with intellectual disabilities within the community setting.

In the health area, MINDS has engaged government and public health entities to drive a more inclusive healthcare system and data infrastructure to better measure social impact. On the human rights front, MINDS has identified gaps in the treatment of persons with intellectual disabilities with complex needs in the forensic and criminal justice systems as well as developed programmes to facilitate advocacy and fairness when their voices are unheard.

Further, MINDS has embraced innovation through technology to identify and/or develop technological solutions to complement programmes to enhance processes and also quality of support such in the area of inclusive community living and aging-in-place.

OBJECTIVE

1. This report aims to provide an independent view of the progress Singapore has made in relation to the CRPD, from the perspective of MINDS, a civil organization in Singapore.

ABOUT MINDS¹

2. MINDS is a Social Service Agency (SSA) in Singapore that provides services and support for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (PwIDs) and their families across the lifespan. This year marks 60 years since MINDS' establishment onto the social service scene in Singapore. MINDS' vision is to be a world-class organization that advances the development, well-being and aspirations of persons with intellectual disability and their integration into society. MINDS aims to achieve this by maximizing the development and well-being of persons with intellectual disability through the provision of a comprehensive range of quality services, empowering persons with intellectual disability and their families so as to enable them to maximize their potential and fulfil their aspirations as well as advocating the interests and causes of persons with intellectual disability so as to enable them to participate as fully as possible in society. MINDS services range from special education schools, training and development centres, employment development centres, community-based services, residential services, volunteering and befriending services as well as research and advocacy. Annually, MINDS services are accessed by about 4000 PwIDs of low to profound cognitive impairment from the age of 7 to 65.

BACKGROUND

3. Singapore has delivered three Enabling Masterplans (EMPs) since signing and ratifying the CRPD in 2012 and 2013, respectively. The first 5-year EMP was rolled out in 2007. The most recent 5-year EMP started in 2017 and was completed in 2021.

¹ MINDS Annual Report FY 20/21- https://www.minds.org.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/MINDS_AR2021_FA_ForWeb.pdf

The latest 10- year EMP is to be released this year and carry through to 2030. The EMPs are roadmaps for the government and the community to work together, to support persons with disabilities (PwDs). The EMPs cover many areas across each life stage, including early detection, education, employment, health, assistive technology, infrastructure, among others.

4. Each EMP carries on the work from the previous EMP and sets new focus areas as well. Broadly, the objectives of the EMPs are to improve the Quality of Life (QoL) of persons with disabilities across the lifespan as well as promote and facilitate their inclusion in society. Importantly, the strategic focus areas in each EMP were identified through a multi-stakeholder, consultative approach involving a diverse steering committee comprising of government, disability support organizations, persons with disabilities as well as caregivers. MINDS has participated in and contributed to the steering committee for each of the EMPs, including the latest, and hence is well placed to provide a view to the progress Singapore has made to the CRPD articles since its ratification in 2013, from the perspective of a civil organization in Singapore's disability space.

PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

5. The following sections highlight some of the evidence that point towards the progressive realization made in Singapore pertaining to the accession and adoption of relevant articles in the CRPD with regards to the PwID community.

6. Raising Awareness. This section highlights MINDS efforts in education and training to raise awareness of PwIDs' support needs, strengths and aspirations. It is in alignment to Article 8 of the CRPD, which posits that states parties undertake to adopt immediate, effective and appropriate measures to raise awareness throughout society regarding persons with disabilities, and to foster respect for the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. It also specifies that states parties are to combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to persons with disabilities in all areas of life as well as to promote awareness of the capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities.

6.1 In a recent survey on public attitudes towards PwIDs done by MINDS, almost 75% of the public in Singapore reported that they have not

interacted with a PwID before and admitted not knowing enough about PwIDs, their strengths and needs. Further, majority of them also mentioned that they would be more willing to interact with PwIDs if they had more knowledge about them and how to support them. It was also found that having more exposure to 'success stories' of PwIDs being integrated in the community would improve receptivity towards PwID inclusion.

- 6.2 MINDS recognizes that education and awareness building amongst the community is a key enabler to social inclusion. In this vein, MINDS has driven a number of public education initiatives within the community. From 2020 to 2021, MINDS ran a series of webinars/symposiums to educate the public on PwID Health, Employment and Inclusive Living. Each of the 3 webinars/symposiums were attended by almost 300 people, comprising of members of the public, caregivers, employers and healthcare practitioners. Evaluation of the webinars/symposiums through feedback surveys showed that people who attended felt that the webinars had improved their knowledge and awareness of PwID issues pertaining to health, employment and inclusive living. Notably, there was strategic collaborations forged at the end of the Healthcare Symposium, which culminated in the development of a model for inclusive healthcare for Singapore as well as a Healthcare Action Plan. The Action Plan comprises of key initiatives to continue to sense the needs and gaps in PwID healthcare management within the public health space in Singapore as well as track progress made in this area. More details are found below in the section on 'Health'.
- 6.3 Another key awareness building platform for MINDS has been the MINDS Film Festival (MFF), which runs every two years in collaboration with Singapore Film Society (SFS) with the intent of raising public education through film. The films are specially curated by an expert panel and typically touch on issues faced by persons with disabilities as well as highlighting their unique strengths as contributors to society. Below is a quote from a PwID self-advocate on how films are a useful means to raise awareness and promote inclusion:

“I think films are very useful to help public understand people with disabilities better. In films, there are characters and animation which are more interesting and easier to understand. People can focus on the story line (i.e., the strengths and needs of persons with disabilities) better.”

- AC, Male, 31

- 6.4 On a regular basis, MINDS actively engages government agencies, public, community leaders, corporate partners and schools to understand evolving needs as well as raise awareness of PwIDs, their gifts and abilities as well as the challenges that they (and their caregivers) face. Through our engagements, we galvanise them to play a more active role in supporting PwIDs and advocating for greater social inclusion in Singapore. This ranges from volunteering and donation/fundraising to creating/offering employment opportunities for PwIDs.
- 6.5 MINDS has also started engaging the various Community Development Councils² (CDCs) to enlist their support to promote the social inclusion message and enhance our environment to enable PwIDs to work, live and play in our community. We are also working with them to review/redesign jobs so that new employment pathways can be created for PwIDs, enabling them to be financially independent.
- 6.6 While education and awareness building initiatives are important, one of the gaps has been the lack of an objective and reliable way to track the extent society has progressed regards to the inclusion of PwIDs. This is especially so since a National Council of Social Service (NCSS) study in 2016 found that awareness and acceptance of intellectual disability amongst the public tends to be lower than that of physical or sensory

² The Community Development Councils (CDCs) were established in 1997 to build a cohesive, compassionate and self-reliant community. The CDCs strengthen social infrastructure, build social capital and resilience, and promote the culture of giving back through the aggregating of Needs and Resources, building of capability and Capacity in Partners and Networks as well as connecting communities. At the national level, the five CDCs come together to strengthen the Ministry / government agency to ground connectivity by supporting national initiatives and policies. At the district level, the CDCs collaborate with partners from the People, Public and Private sectors to meet emerging and felt needs as well as promote greater corporate and community social responsibility. At the constituency level, each CDC works closely with the Grassroots Organisations and community partners to facilitate their engagement with residents.

disabilities. Hence, it is important to also have a reliable and valid indicator to measure the state of awareness of intellectual disabilities and acceptance of PwIDs in society. In line with this, MINDS developed the Social Inclusion Index (SII) to establish a national baseline for public attitudes and behaviours towards persons with intellectual disabilities as well as track the needle-shift over time. The SII considers perspectives of members of public, persons with intellectual disabilities and their caregivers. The index provides a quantifiable and objective measure of the level of awareness of the society in Singapore as well as their receptivity towards social inclusion. It also allows employers and community entities to track the impact of their own inclusion initiatives.

7. Enhancing Accessibility. MINDS has rolled out new initiatives to enhance accessibility of PwIDs to their environment so that they can be better included in the community. This is aligned to Article 9 of the CRPD, which emphasises that persons with disabilities need to be enabled to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life. It specifies that states parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas. It also mentions that these measures, shall include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility.

7.1 In Singapore, most persons with intellectual disabilities live in their family homes even in their later years. Often, this results in their outliving their parents or their aging parents struggling to tend to their own needs as well as theirs. This then precipitates a situation where adults with intellectual disabilities who are at risk of being excluded from the community and being institutionalized if their primary carers are unable to continue supporting them within their family homes. Further, persons with intellectual disabilities Quality of Life (QoL) has also been compromised when they age-in-place in the community, given that accessibility to community amenities and resources has been a barrier.

- 7.2 MINDS launched the 'Life+' pilot initiative in April 2022 by MINDS to address this barrier and empower persons with intellectual disabilities and their surrounding community to facilitate accessibility, raise community inclusion and enable aging-in-place sustainably. It adopts an approach that is aligned to Singapore's '3Ps- Public, People, Private' approach to tackling social issues. The programme aims to provide alternative living arrangements and supports for PwIDs within the community so that they can access the community, live inclusively and age-in-place for as long as possible. By pooling together existing people and resources and building new bridges to community and building community capacity, it aims to also improve accessibility of PwIDs to the community infrastructure by implementing an elaborate plan that is based upon the PwID's and/or caregiver's expressed hopes and needs.
- 7.3 The pilot postulates that a three-pronged strategy is needed for greatest impact, specifically in the areas of Client, Caregiver, and Community. Upon intake, an extended time will be spent dialoguing with the client and the caregiver together and separately. The objective of this is to understand their unique needs and prioritise them accordingly, instead of pigeon-holing them into existing services which may not meet their needs or may not be a priority at this moment. Termed 'Life Plan' and 'Support Plan', the plans enable a person- and family-centred approach towards planning for the future and addressing their needs. It serves as the blueprint for services to know how to serve them in a focused manner, so that there can be a coordinated impact on their lives.
- 7.4 Through the 'Life+' initiative, community partnerships have been established in six key domain areas of transport, food and beverage, safety and security, leisure and recreation, healthcare and housing. Within each of these community domains, the strategy is to 'Connect' with unserved and underserved PwIDs, 'Co-create' collaboratively with community entities to develop structures and policies that would enhance accessibility and usability of facilities and services as well as 'Coach' and educate community stakeholders and public in targeted ways to effectively engage PwIDs in specific community contexts so that public attitudes and perspectives are more inclusive. In employing this 3

Cs approach, the desired outcome is that PwIDs are able to access the different community domains more effectively and seamlessly.

7.5 Further, MINDS is working with technology companies to test mobile applications and other assistive technology that will enable greater accessibility. For example, MINDS is working with 'SIX', which is an application developer that simplifies the processes for PwIDs when they make purchases in food outlets and retail malls, pay their bills and transport fares as well as any other day-to-day expenses. Through the application, PwIDs are empowered to be independent and access their community effectively, even when their caregivers are no longer supporting them physically. Concurrently, the application also builds the capacity of the community to support PwIDs in the ecosystem.

7.6 Once the 'Life+' pilot is completed in Dec 2023, there will be a post implementation review and scaling up process to take place thereafter to impact more persons with intellectual disabilities to access the community, live inclusively and age-in-place. Below are some quotes that have been extracted from focus group discussions carried out with PwIDs and their families who have been part of the Life+ programme:

"I am not used to sharing [my dreams for the future] like this because I am afraid that others don't understand me. I am worried they may not understand what I am saying because of my speech ability.

When I think about my life in the future, I see myself staying in a HDB flat, on my own, with my friends from church visiting me occasionally. I hope to live healthily and independently where I am included and heard. Besides working, I want to continue learning, to be an artist because I like art, and improve my social communication skills."

- LXW, Male, 31

"Even when I am 90 years old, I hope to continue living in the community where there is more freedom and independence. I know there will be a lot to learn and more responsibility. What I will be doing in the next five years is a question I have started to think about lately."

- BT, Male, 41

“Living in a [residential] hostel felt like being in jail. I had no freedom to do what I wanted. Now that I am living in my own flat, I am happy with where I am now. I have only one friend. I don’t mind joining more groups or making new friends. It’s good to have more friends, because when I need help, if one friend is not able to help me, I can go to the others.”

- TKS, Male, 40

“I have been expressing my thoughts to a lot of care organisations that providing for the intellectually disabled in their old age is not just a matter of having financial resources. That is not the end in itself. What is more important is the care that has to be given to such people, for example, what you are organising here in Life+ which is very comprehensive. I have been waiting quite a long time for something like this.”

- YKK, father of an adult female

7.7 Another gap in accessibility for PwIDs are those services and supports they require are geographically far from their home. This makes it a challenge for them, especially if they require supports in independent travel skills. Further, at a systems level, there is a lack of integration and synergy of services rendered to PwIDs, which results in PwIDs having to go to different locations to access different services. To address these issues, MINDS is targeting to launch ‘MINDS Hubs’, which are intended to be regional Centres located in the heartland of Singapore’s Housing Development Board (HDB) residential estates, so that they are accessible and near to place of residence of PwIDs and their families. The first MINDS Hub is slated to commence operation at the end of 2022.

7.8 MINDS Hubs facilitate service accessibility for PwIDs through the following initiatives:

a) Proximity to the natural place of residence of service users, i.e., PwIDs and their caregivers

- b) Provision of Information & Referral Services, which will help link service users to the myriad of services that are most relevant to them, so that PwIDs and their caregivers can overcome the hurdle of navigating the maze of disability service landscape
- c) Diagnostic and Assessment Services, that will provide the necessary diagnosis for PwIDs to gain access to services because a diagnosis holds the key to service accessibility in the Singapore Disability Service landscape
- d) On-site services that provide social engagement, continual learning for PwIDs and respite services for their caregivers.

7.9 MINDS Hubs also pro-actively work towards outreach and disability awareness by breaking the silo nature of the disability service landscape and facilitate a person-centric, needs driven assessment and service mapping. The objective is for PwIDs to have a simplified way to have needs assessed and referred for appropriate services. This is done in the following manner:

- a) Partnering with Social Service Agencies (SSA) and Community and Grassroots agencies that will come into contact with PwIDs and their family, through the Information and Referral Services, Networking and training sessions with these agencies to help increase aware of Disability Services, skills training on identifying common issues and needs of PwIDs and their caregivers in the community and their family life, communication skills and helpful tips to address social and practical needs of PwIDs and their caregivers in the community.
- b) Collaboration in organising Community Inclusion activities with identified Community partners, including schools, Institutes of Higher Learning, shopping malls, public libraries and community centres. For example, MINDS partnered with the National Library Board (NLB) in the design of the first inclusive Ponggol Regional Library which has makes accessibility to library services and facilities more seamless for PwIDs.

8. Improving Access to Justice. MINDS has identified that it is important for PwIDs to represent themselves fairly and appropriately in the criminal justice system and that it is important that they are supported where needed to achieve this. This is aligned to Article 13 of the CRPD, which advocates that states parties shall ensure effective access to justice for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others, including through the provision of procedural and age-appropriate accommodations, to facilitate their effective role as direct and indirect participants, including as witnesses, in all legal proceedings, including at investigative and other preliminary stages. Further it mentions that in order to help ensure effective access to justice for persons with disabilities, states parties shall promote appropriate training for those working in the field of administration of justice, including police and prison staff.

8.1 In Singapore, as often the case internationally, PwIDs are often placed in an unfavourable position before the law, as they may be unaware of their legal rights and have limited ability to comprehend questions and the possible repercussions of their responses (Medford et al., 2003). This may lead to their providing inaccurate or self-incriminating accounts during investigation interviews (Medford et al., 2003). Gudjonsson (2010) highlighted how various intellectual, cognitive and behavioural disorders may render an individual “psychologically vulnerable” during police interviews and can potentially lead to miscarriages of justice.

8.2 In response to address this issue, MINDS started the Appropriate Adult for Persons with Mental Disabilities (AAPMD) scheme. The scheme was first piloted by the Law Society Pro Bono Services in 2013 as a voluntary service (Law Society Pro Bono Services, 2021) for one selected police division before later extending to all police land divisions. In 2016, MINDS was appointed the national service provider for AAPMD and continues to oversee the management of the scheme. Under the scheme, MINDS supports the various law enforcement agencies in Singapore, including the Singapore Police Force (SPF), Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), Immigration and Checkpoints Authority of Singapore (ICA), Singapore Customs, the Animal Veterinary Service (AVS) and the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF). AAPMD is a nationally centralised scheme administered by a local

disability social service agency and comprises solely of volunteers, which excludes the involvement of family members or friends as AAs.

- 8.3 The scheme operates with a round-the-clock national hotline in which the Police can request for the activation of an AA to support their investigation interviews with PMDs. Volunteers are then deployed to the interview locations to assist in the interviews. As the service provider of the AAPMD scheme, MINDS also recruits and trains the pool of volunteer AAs to ensure they are adequately equipped with the necessary skills to perform their role in investigation interviews. Singapore's AAPMD scheme thus presents a unique model of service delivery worth examining. Till date, almost 1200 PwIDs have been supported through the AAPMD scheme to ensure they get a fair representation during forensic investigations.
- 8.4 Complementing the AAPMD, MINDS also launched the Community Forensic Services (CFS) in 2021. This is a new programme which adopts a community-based case management approach in supporting offenders, victims and/or witnesses with IDD through the stages of arrest, investigation, prosecution, trial, sentencing and post-sentencing. The programme was meant to address three needs: a) PwIDs were over-represented in the criminal justice system but the available rehabilitation programmes were found unsuitable for PwIDs, b) witnesses and victims with ID faced issues due to limited cognitive skills and challenges in recollection, c) witnesses with ID may face trauma due during investigations.
- 8.5 In line with these needs of PwIDs in the criminal justice system, the objectives of CFS are to: a) Reduce recidivism among offenders with IDD, b) Rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders with IDD, c) Emotional and practical support for victims and witnesses with IDD, d) Enhance social support and caregiving skills of families and e) Address existing service gaps in the provision of specialised programmes which target offenders, victims and/or witnesses with IDD. CFS delivers this through a 3-tiered approach of person related supports, family supports as well as community linkages. Since the start of AAPMD, about 60 PwIDs have

been supported. Below are quotes from PwIDs and their caregiver who have been supported by CFS:

“My social worker shared with me quite a number of things about relationships and stuff like that. I learned about being assertive and saying no to protect myself. It helps to just talk to another person you can trust and able to understand what you’re dealing with and struggling with.”

- CFS client, Female, 23, involved in public order offence

“My child now understands the concept of what good and bad friends are and having the right behaviours in relationships, as the service understands my child’s intellectual disability and provides appropriate help and assistance. With their help, more persons with special needs can understand the (legal) processes, be treated fairly and understand the serious consequences and impact of their behaviour.”

- Father & caregiver, 54, of a CFS client involved in a sexual offence

8.6 Aside from the above initiatives, MINDS has also worked closely with the Singapore Prisons Service (SPS) to build capacity and capability of SPS staff in supporting prisoners with ID in a more constructive and engaging manner. This includes training on the needs of a person with ID and ways to support them as well as the possible development of a curriculum for learning that prisoners with ID can be engaged with in the prison setting. Thus far, about 30 staff have been trained, with more trainings planned for the next year.

8.7 Additionally, MINDS is in discussion with SPS to also look supporting offenders with ID when they leave the prisons so that they are integrated back into the community with appropriate supports with a supportive community ecosystem.

9. Enabling Freedom of Expression and Opinion, and Access to Information.
MINDS believes that PwIDs have their own unique strengths and should be

empowered to be contributing and valued citizens, rather than being considered purely beneficiaries. This is aligned to Article 21 of the CRPD, which mentions that states parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice.

- 9.1 As a relatively new nation, Singapore's social fabric has been continually evolving. Similarly, the disability sector is undergoing a paradigm shift of thinking from a charity-based model to one that emphasizes empowerment and 'active' participation of persons with disabilities in the socio-cultural landscape.
- 9.2 The term "Nothing About Us Without Us," was coined by James Charlton (Charlton, 2000), who expresses the conviction that people with disabilities know what is best for them. This mantra became the rallying call for the United Nations CRPD as well. The notion of self-advocacy is synonymous to this and posits that people with disabilities must be front and center as visible leaders to share our voice and our experience. It reinforces the role of people without disabilities as allies and partners who share the road toward inclusion and equality. Consistent with this, MINDS recognises that PwIDs should be empowered to speak up, voice their opinions and have a say in policies, systems and practices that influence their lives.
- 9.3 "Our Lives, Our Voices (OLOV)" is a self-advocacy group that was initiated in 2019 by MINDS. OLOV is facilitated by PwID champions alongside staff to deliberate issues faced by the PwID community in Singapore as well as proposing possible recommendations to mitigate these issues. One such example is the participation of OLOV in the re-design of a major transport hub in Singapore, where OLOV champions' views were taken in consideration when identifying barriers to accessibility in the bus interchange as well as the design of the solutions. Another example is the participation of OLOV in the inaugural PwID healthcare symposium in 2020 as well as the consultative Focus Group

Discussion by the Housing Development Board (HDB) to provide inputs from the PwID perspective to accessibility issues in the public health system as well as barriers to social inclusion in community neighbourhood. Additionally, OLOV had also partnered with Singapore Management University (SMU) students to co-develop short videos on PwIDs advocating for their and aspirations, while providing the PwIDs opportunities to experience campus life alongside their university friends.

- 9.4 OLOV currently has about 60 actively participating self-advocates in the programme and the self-advocates have participated in 20 engagement sessions within the community, government and private sectors over the last two years to provide a voice to Singapore's PwID community to be actively involved in shaping their progress in different areas of life such as accessibility, health, employment and awareness raising as well as social inclusion. Below are some quotes from OLOV self-advocates:

“OLOV has made me confident about myself. OLOV has made me more independent now than before. OLOV has taught me to stand up for myself. OLOV has taught me to ask questions if I don't understand something. I now have a job and travel to and from work on my own.”

- DP, Female, 28

“Self-Advocacy has made me confident, has made me a better person. It helped me to work in a community. It taught me how to be kind, how to be loving.”

- GT, Male, 30

- 9.5 Moving forward, OLOV is setting up a special interest group to engage PwIDs in employment to provide inputs and work alongside the public, private and people sectors to shape new inclusive and sustainable employment opportunities for the PwID community. This would include traditional niche industries such as hospitality but also new and emerging industries like the 'Gig' economy and social entrepreneurship. This initiative would enable PwIDs to be active participants in driving the inclusive employment agenda in Singapore.

9.6 Separately, in recognition that communication challenges continue to exist as a key barrier to PwIDs accessing their environment and building meaningful social relationships, MINDS launched 'Key Word Sign (KWS) Singapore' in 2021 as an augmentative communication method to support PwIDs in communicating their needs and wants effectively with others. Concurrently, education and training are being ramped up to train community partners in healthcare, transport and retail on basic KWS relevant to each context so that the community is also able to support PwIDs when they access their environment. MINDS also seeks to extend this skillset to other Social Service Agencies.

10. Forging Strong Families. MINDS identifies the family as a key stakeholder in supporting PwIDs to be empowered and included. In this vein MINDS has rolled out a couple of key initiatives to strengthen families and build resilience and capacity. This is aligned to Article 23 of the CRPD, which postulates that, as far as possible, the persons with disabilities' interests are best served within the context of a family environment. This points towards the importance of persons with disabilities having the right to experience relationships and family life.

10.1 The family is a critical part of the social fabric of Singapore and also has been a key focus area in the past EMPs. For example, about 98% of PwIDs continue to live with their families in their senior years. Hence, it is important that the PwID is supported in the context of the family. The EMP3 focused heavily on building caregiver support and resilience. In line with this, MINDS recognizes that it is important to be person-centred and family-centric in its approach to designing and delivering services for the PwID community.

10.2 MINDS' Caregiver Support Services started the 'MINDS Care Circle' which recognises the importance of creating a safe community where caregivers of PwIDs can support each other and share freely. Aside from being a network for caregivers to gain access, share information, and resources with one another, MINDS Care Circle provides opportunities for caregivers to come together and seek social, emotional, and practical support from one another.

- 10.3 Another gap that has existed is the lack of a care and support plan for PwIDs that is proactively set-up with the family so that future care needs are taken care of in an informed and targeted manner. To address this, MINDS' provides an integrated case management service for caregivers to assess needs at both person and family levels, develop an individualised care plan and enable PwIDs to receive appropriate support service and care from their families. In doing so, MINDS journeys with caregivers through their challenges and choices to develop the best care plan and achieve an optimal outcome for their child with ID.
- 10.4 Additionally, MINDS has started deputyship services for caregivers with the dual intent of empowering PwIDs to make choices and decisions where they can and should but also to enable caregivers to make important decisions in specific cases and contexts where the PwID's mental capacity is assessed to be lacking. MINDS has also collaborated with Caregiver Alliance (CAL), an organization catered to support caregivers of people with disabilities and mental health issues, to help caregivers form support groups in their caregiving journey.

11. Strengthening Education. In line with the WHOQOL framework, where opportunities to acquire knowledge is a key facet, MINDS sees education and learning as a key enabler to improving the QoL of PwIDs throughout their lifespan. This also supports Article 24 of the CRPD, which advocates that states parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. Further, it mentions that, with a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, states parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels as well as opportunities for lifelong learning that enables development of their personality, talents, abilities and creativity.

- 11.1 In Singapore, the Compulsory Education Act was rolled out to the Special Education (SPED) Sector in 2019 so that even children with moderate to severe disabilities will need to be enrolled in a SPED school suited to support their disability and learning needs (Children assessed to have higher levels of cognitive functioning typically access the mainstream schools). MINDS runs 4 SPED schools for children with ID from the ages

of 7 to 18 years of age. The schools' curriculum and programmes are aligned to the Ministry of Education (MOE)'s SPED Curriculum Framework of Living, Learning and Working (LLW).

- 11.2 Introduced in 2012, the LLW framework sets a common direction for excellence in teaching and learning while providing flexibility and space for SPED schools to customise their curriculum to meet the unique needs of their diverse student profiles. The framework articulates the vision of 'Active in the community, Valued in the society' for special education, and the education outcomes of 'living, learning and working'. The seven core learning domains are: Communication and Language, Numeracy, Daily Living Skills, Social-Emotional Learning, Physical Education, Arts and Vocational Education. The framework also affirms the importance of Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) as the foundation for a values-based special education, and the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as an enabler for teaching and learning.
- 11.3 Children with moderate to severe special educational needs can take either the Customised or National Curriculum. In MINDS, the four SPED schools offer customised curriculum aimed at providing a child-centred, holistic learning experience for children with intellectual disabilities. The curriculum is intended to develop students' potential and equip them with essential knowledge and life skills through key learning areas in as mentioned in the SPED Curriculum Framework. Children with special needs can take the national curriculum at selected SPED schools if they have been assessed to have adequate cognitive skills to learn the national curriculum as well as have adaptive skills, such as communication, social skills, that require additional specialised support. To better meet their additional needs, these children will also receive support in practical skills such as daily living skills and social-emotional skills.
- 11.4 At MINDS, we have gone a step further by developing a flagship Autism Spectrum Disorder-Intellectual Disability (ASD-ID) programme to cater

to the evolving profiles of students in our schools, in particular the rising trend of ASD and ID. Fernvale Gardens School was earmarked to develop this programme in partnership with MOE. A scan was made on the current ASD programmes in Singapore and International Special Education landscape as well as existing research on the practices and approaches to meet the needs of students with ASD. These provided the basis to consider the following as key features of the MINDS ASD-ID programme.

- 11.5 Key features of the flagship ASD-ID programme include: personalised profiling and support, evidence-based pedagogies, individualised Interests-based approach, community of learners for learners, alignment to future of employment as well as an enhanced ASD-ID supported physical environment.
- 11.6 Further, the launch of INFINITE@FGS within the school represents MINDS' belief that there are infinite potential and possibilities in our students and staff. The flexible space fosters collaboration and problem solving centred around real-world problems. Adopting protocols like design thinking, students will be encouraged to explore, design, experiment and build prototypes. It also provides an authentic setting to facilitate our students in generalising the skills they have acquired as part of vocational education curriculum where they learn to serve as baristas or waiters/waitresses in a café; Or they learn to be customers to order food or beverages and chill or socialise as part of recreation in daily living skills.
- 11.7 Aside from the progress made in making learning accessible for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, MINDS has also been focusing efforts on lifelong learning and extending opportunities to PwIDs to continue to pick up new skills throughout their adult life.
- 11.8 Lifelong learning has been a nation-wide initiative by the Singapore government to encourage Singaporeans to continue to acquire new knowledge and skills to stay relevant and employable. At a national level, the SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) is a statutory board under the Ministry of Education that provides an array of lifelong learning and workforce

development programs for people of all ages, including students, early-to-mid career professionals, and even seniors.

- 11.9 As an extension of the lifelong learning initiative to PwDs, SG Enable launched the Enabling Academy in 2022 to bring lifelong learning to PwDs. It offers lifelong learning opportunities for PwDs and upskill the network of support around persons with disabilities.
- 11.10 In line with this, MINDS also recognized that PwIDs should not be left behind in the lifelong learning processes and hence commenced a three year pilot of a Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) for PwIDs in 2020. The LLP curriculum framework is designed with three considerations: a) Embedded on the SPED LLW framework for alignment, b) Aligned to the World Health Organization Quality of Life (WHOQOL) framework, c) Based on a person centric approach to learning where anyone with an intellectual disability is able to access the programme and learn based on individual needs and interests. Currently about 160 PwIDs have accessed the LLP curriculum with almost 95% of them seeing an improvement to their overall QoL. MINDS aims to roll out at least 16 courses for PwIDs by 2023, with view to scaling up the programme to benefit more PwIDs.
- 11.11 The courses in the LLP are mapped onto the six domains of the WHOQOL framework so that learning outcomes impact the person's QoL in tangible ways. The value-add of the LLP is that it recognizes that employment is not the only outcome for PwIDs when it comes to learning so that all PwIDs are able to access the courses. Hence, QoL was identified as the core outcome of the LLP and each course is structured in a scaffolded manner at 3 levels for greater accessibility. Further, a 'Transition to Employment' pathway was set-up in 2021 as an offshoot from the LLP which clustered courses that were relevant to employment to offer a more targeted approach to PwIDs seeking to improve their employability.
- 11.12 Beyond the pilot of the LLP, the plan is to continue to expand the suite of courses for adult PwIDs that cater to a wider range of interests and needs. Further, to allow for the LLP courses to provide traction and enhance employability in specific industries, the aim is for LLP courses

to be accredited and recognized as industry relevant courses. Additionally, it would be essential to integrate and synergise the LLP with the SPED school curriculum so that learning for PwIDs is scaffolded for continual learning through the lifespan as well as accessible and person-centric. This will manifest through the formation of a Lifelong Learning Department in MINDS. Below are quotes from adult PwIDs who have accessed some of the LLP courses.

"The LLP trainers taught us to read time and use money to pay for items. This is helpful so we are able to be more independent, travel and purchase things we want"

- Client A, Male, 36, who took the LLP's 'Financial Literacy' course

"I learnt how to talk to people properly like looking in the eyes and body posture. This helps me in interacting with my colleagues at work and my neighbours near my home"

- Client B, Male, 28, who took the LLP's 'Social Relationships' course

"I learnt how to use the iPad to access YouTube which helps me listen to my favourite songs and watch my favourite shows after work. I also learnt how to use my handphone for the 'Trace Together' app so I can go around places safely during COVID"

- Client C, Male, 32, who took the LLP's 'Technology Access' course

12. Improving Health. MINDS has identified that healthcare of PwIDs is an area of concern and that PwIDs lack effective and seamless healthcare management across their lifespan. In this vein, MINDS has started key initiatives to improve accessibility to the public healthcare system and improve PwID healthcare management. This is aligned to Article 25 of the CRPD, which emphasises that states parties recognize that persons with disabilities have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination on the basis of disability. Further it explains that states parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure access for persons with disabilities to health services that are gender-sensitive, including health-related rehabilitation.

- 12.1 Specialist Healthcare provision for children with ID is predominantly based in hospitals such as Kandang Kerbau (KK) Women's and Children's Hospital, in National University Hospital and in private hospitals. These specialist clinics are staffed with doctors and professionals who are trained in ID related issues. However, on a day-to-day basis, most PwIDs still access the mainstream public health system of polyclinics, public restructured hospitals and general practitioners, within which there exists barriers to accessibility and effective healthcare management for PwIDs.
- 12.2 Healthcare service users transit to adult care services at the age of 16 to 18. However, this transition may not be optimally implemented, resulting in challenges in the follow-up of healthcare management throughout adulthood. Additional challenges associated with healthcare management include the lack of trained professionals and specialized ID (intellectually disabled) clinics, the lack of an integrated model of healthcare management of PwIDs, the PwIDs' ageing caregivers who are unable to manage the healthcare needs of their adult child/ward who have ID, and the lack of a lifespan case management approach. Another significant gap is the lack of a local database for healthcare in the ID population to drive evidence-based practice, research and training for medical professionals.
- 12.3 To overcome these barriers, it had been important for Singapore to develop a model for effective healthcare management for PwIDs and their families across the lifespan. MINDS set-up an ID healthcare coalition to propose a healthcare model that focuses on a lifespan approach, positive health outcomes and improvement of the quality of life of PwIDs and their caregivers. The proposed model provides for a specialized ID healthcare service that is: a) integrated with the mainstream health system, b) evidence-based, c) person-centered, d) family-centric and e) inclusive. This model aims to improve wellness and prevention of health conditions while bridging the gap between primary, secondary and tertiary care.

12.4 In 2020, MINDS organized an inaugural Inclusive Healthcare Symposium to share the model, canvass views and engage partners in the local healthcare sector. Following on from that symposium, a healthcare action plan was developed by MINDS in collaboration with like-minded doctors with detailed initiatives on making the public health system more accessible to PwIDs. Examples of the initiatives and the gaps they are intended to overcome are in Table 1.

Healthcare Gap	Initiative
i) Lack of timely screening to detect health issues early	MINDS Clinic has been set-up to conduct health screening for PwIDs through a centre-based and home-based hybrid model. Following screening, referrals are made if necessary for treatment follow-up.
ii) Barriers in communication between PwIDs and healthcare staff in clinics and hospitals	Training for public polyclinic and hospital doctors, nurses and frontline staff on communicating with PwIDs and understanding needs of PwIDs.
iii) Lack of information to make accurate clinical assessment and diagnosis	MINDS Clinic supports in the referral process by supplementing the polyclinic/hospital a letter containing background information of the PwID patient.
iv) Caregivers are unable to support PwIDs with complex needs to the polyclinic or hospital	MINDS Clinic provides medical escort services to support the PwID with complex needs.
v) Lack of a healthcare management plan for PwIDs with complex needs	MINDS Clinic developed a Health Passport for each PwID detailing his/her healthcare and medical details. A feedback loop was established with the doctor in the public health system so that the MINDS Clinic can follow up on longer term health status of the PwID with complex needs.

Table 1. PwID Healthcare gaps and initiatives to address them

12.5 MINDS recognises that while these initiatives help to address the more salient and pressing gaps in the healthcare system for PwIDs, there is a need for longer term needs sensing to have a deeper understanding from a lifespan perspective as well as from an ecological systems perspective where healthcare needs of PwIDs are not just intertwined with social needs but also influenced by the dynamics of their micro, meso and macrosystems. In this vein, MINDS sees the collaborative work with PwIDs, caregivers and the public health entities as long-term.

13. Work and Employment. MINDS recognizes that access to sustainable work and employment can be a key contributor of QoL of PwIDs in their adult life and should be given equal opportunities to obtain and maintain employment in the open labour market. This supports Article 27 of the CRPD, which mentions that states parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.

13.1 Various studies have found that employment does not just provide a source of income for PwIDs, but PwIDs in employment also have greater levels of self-respect and autonomy. Employed PwIDs were also found to have greater participation in social activities, lower levels of depression and higher levels on indicators of QoL. Such indicators consequently reduce pressure on their caregivers from continuing to shoulder the full financial burden of supporting them, thus also gaining time for their own respite. However, when compared against 20 of the world's most developed countries, Singapore is one of the least inclusive, with a Disability Employment Gap (DEG)³ of 51.78 and low employment rate of 28.6% for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

13.2 The initiatives introduced following the government's Enabling Masterplans (EMPs) 1, 2 and 3 were found to have improved employment rates for PWDs in general. However, various stakeholders

³ The Disability Employment Gap (DEG) is calculated by measuring the difference in the employment rates of disabled people and people who are not disabled. Thus, a larger number indicates greater inequality in job attainment for disabled persons (Geiger et al., 2017).

shared that employment attainment and sustainability remained low for PwIDs, especially for those with higher support needs as existing training programs were broad based and catered more for those with mild intellectual disability. Furthermore, employers' misconceptions and stereotypes of PwIDs remain an obstacle limiting a PwID's access to constructive forms of support and opportunities for employment advancement⁴.

13.3 To further understand these barriers and generate concrete actionable steps to improve outcomes for PwIDs in the employment space, MINDS conducted a study in PwID employment and employability in 2021. The objectives of the study were to:

- a) Affirm active employment is integral to enhancing the quality of life of PwIDs
- b) Understand the current state of employment situation for PwIDs through the experiences and perspectives of key stakeholders (PwIDs, caregivers, employers, and ID sector employees)
- c) Understand the prevailing spectrum of barriers hindering PwIDs employment outcomes and employability
- d) Project and anticipate the potential but realistic future state of employment and employability of PwIDs
- e) Identify possible interventions that may be considered to improve employment.

13.4 The nine key findings of the study were:

- a) Employment Enhances the Quality of Life (QoL) of PwIDs & their Families. The study showed that most clients would like to be employed as it expanded their social network, provided them with an opportunity to learn new skills, to have better mental and physical health, and overall,

⁴ Participants (persons with various disabilities, caregivers and other members of the disability community) took part in engagement sessions with Enabling Masterplan representatives through focus group interviews (FGD) and surveys to gather their feedback (Enabling Masterplan Workgroup, 2020; Poon, 2015, pp. 103-104). A timeline of the different initiatives rolled out under EM1, 2 and 3 is provided in Figures 1 and 2 under **Annex A**.

a higher quality of life. Separately, while their PWID charges were at work, caregivers had time to themselves as a form of respite. As for lower income households, the financial contributions from their child's work were also helpful.

b) Employers' Willingness to Employ PWIDs Differs. The study found that younger business owners (in their 20s and 30s), smaller start-ups with greater operational flexibility, larger organisations (e.g., chains, Multi-National Companies) that have additional resources and/or with clear 'social' vision show greater willingness to employ PWIDs.

c) Evolving Job Options for PWIDs. The study found that with the evolving global markets and employment trends, such as greater multi-tasking, office automation, and advent of technology, the availability of 'traditional' jobs for PWIDs has reduced significantly, but it has also given rise to other alternatives.

d) Need for Differentiated Approach. The study found that where there was greater individualised and longer-term support for PWIDs, the ability for PWID to sustain in employment was higher.

e) Need for Better Information Sharing. Greater upfront sharing of information helps reduce misunderstandings, builds trust, and allows for greater support for PWID clients at work. A lack of understanding of ID had led to unsupportive co-workers and employers hiring PWID that did not lead to meaningful employment.

f) Need to Review Job Support Models for PWIDs. Current resources allow for up to two years of job support, however, many clients with greater support needs were found to drop out of employment soon after support lapses. Concomitantly, there is a need for a competency development map to systematically train and qualify to provide support for PWIDs in the evolving employment landscape.

g) Current Funding Models Disadvantages PWID Hirers. SG Enable provide grants to encourage employers to hire PWIDs. However, employers surveyed reflected that the KPIs were too demanding for exclusively PWID employers to attain, disadvantaging smaller businesses that can only afford to hire one or two PWIDs. Separately employers also expressed difficulties finding SG Enable representatives

to guide them to navigate through the grant application. This often result in employers preferring to employ persons with other types of disabilities like physical or sensory.

h) Need for Greater Collaborations. There is a lack of collaborations and sharing of resources among social services agencies (SSAs) providing employment support. Despite having a shared vision to provide employment support for persons with special needs, working in silos and in competition was the modus operandi, resulting in employers forming the impression that PWIDs are consistently the least productive special needs workers.

i) Caregivers' Support is Crucial for Successful Outcomes. Caregivers' support is crucial for the successful job attainment and sustainability of a PWID; be it for socialisation opportunities at work or wages. Uninvolved caregivers or overly-involved caregivers however possess significant challenges for job coaches to emplace a PWID on a job or to sustain them in a job, in addition to difficult employers and unconducive work environment.

- 13.5 The current landscape in PwID employment in Singapore is that clients' preparation for work begins in the SPED schools, where students with potential to work are identified, then given the opportunity to receive customised training pathways leading to open employment (OE) after graduation under School-to-Work (S2W) Transition Programme. PwIDs with greater support needs are typically streamed into the Employment Development Centres (EDCs) where they would be engaged in further training for OE or assisted employment (AE) under the Sheltered-Workshop-to-Work (SWW) programme or put on simple job tasks in a sheltered work setting where work is a form of therapy. EDCs would also take in PwIDs previously employed in or assessed to have potential for the open employment but prefer a more sheltered work setting to train or retrain them to ready them again for OQ/AE. Once transitioned into OE, job coaches then continue to provide employment support for up to 1 year under the Hi-Job! – Job Placement / Job Support (JPJS) programme.

- 13.6 However, despite the possibility of progressing into open employment, the actual numbers of PwIDs doing so are relatively low. There are also currently, no formal skills assessments in place for the profiling and assessment of clients at different stages to measure their soft skills and job competencies to better determine if they remain in the EDCs or be upgraded to other employment pathways. PwIDs also do not currently receive formal training and certifications, further disadvantaging them finding open employment without recognised accreditations. Additionally, the relative success that S2W programme is experiencing means that PwIDs in EDCs typically require higher support and further training in order to have the opportunity of progressing into open employment. Lastly, the lack of a 'graduation' or 'outflow' mechanism for PwIDs in EDCs results in a long wait list, denying low support clients that require some additional training for OE placement to enrol.
- 13.7 Evolving PwID profiles is also a contributing factor- schools are currently experiencing increasing enrolments of students with ASD-ID. Current forms of assessments and practices that have previously been better catered towards clients with ID require a second look as it further impacts how PwIDs' strengths, weaknesses, interests, and capabilities for work are assessed. Its effects will be felt by subsequent services too as current students will eventually graduate and the EDCs as well as JPJS will also require training, skills and the know-how to accommodate and provide relevant support to them.
- 13.8 The study was important to provide MINDS with the insights into current gaps in PwID employment in Singapore. To overcome some of these gaps, MINDS has developed an Employment Development and Transformation Office to drive a number of new initiatives in 4 key areas:
- a) Area 1 - Targeted Expansion of the Current and Prospective Pool of Inclusive Hirers of PWIDs. Unsuccessful job placements take a toll on limited time and resources when it could be used on more potentially successful ones. In view of this, MINDS aims to scan and identify employer profiles identified in the study to be approached by job

placement executives to create new job placements. Further, MINDS aims to create networking platforms with current PwID, PwD and non-inclusive hirers to reach out to more prospective employers⁵.

b) Area 2 - Explore Alternative Employment Opportunities. MINDS aims to explore alternative forms of employment avenues beyond the tradition OE pathways. New forms of economic opportunities have developed in the past years that may even be well-suited for clients with lesser mobility and greater caregiver support. Some of such income generation activities include online gig employment and micro-businesses, as well as forms of online affiliate marketing through websites and social media and NFT. Further, MINDS looks to explore growing as well as high-touch industries that will not automate easily and also emerging care and green economies. 'High-touch' work that are simple but require a human element that automation cannot replicate may also be suitable for the training of PwIDs already adept at social skills. For example, in a pilot with North-East CDC, MINDS has successfully trialed jobs within the community for PwIDs, supported by the community network. Moving forward, more jobs have been ringfenced for PwIDs- to benefit from this model. MINDS has also ramped up its 'Train-and-Place' model in partnership with specific industry employers to provide training in specific skills that eventually lead to jobs for PwIDs.

c) Area 3 - Greater Profiling of Employment Stakeholders. This coupled with identifying additional non-employment related support needs with individualised follow-up actions should help improve successful outcomes of PwID employment when crucial forms of support needs and potential challenges are identified and addressed early. MINDS is looking into the creation of employer profiling tools and standard procedures that align with information provision and action plans

⁵ There are currently, platforms available where communities of businesses which come together to share best practices and experiences, to learn from each other, and to collectively help make Singapore a more inclusive society by promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace. An example is Singapore Business Network on Disability (SBNOD), and MINDS could more actively participate in such platforms to advocate for greater inclusive hiring of PwIDs. MINDS could also create its own platform, bringing together current PwID hirers to rally not just other business owners who have not yet but are considering greater inclusivity in its hiring practices, but also encourage current hirers of PwDs to also consider PwIDs as well.

required, creation of additional, more differentiated training and support pathways to accommodate underserved profiles of clients as well as the creation of profiling tools of caregivers and their home environments to designate appropriate extended support.

d) Area 4 - Greater Awareness Among Stakeholders to Better Manage Expectations. Much misalignment of expectations was found where there was a lack of information and understanding on intellectual disability, current availability of job positions and varying vocational strengths and skills of each PwID job applicant. Mutual understanding and accommodations by all parties were also seen as crucial to ensure sustainable employment. MINDS aims to create an online portal where key information on available jobs and job expectations, with statistics on employment trends as well as clients looking to be hired and their profiles so stakeholders will be able to see and better understand the current job and skills demands. MINDS also aims to create an online one-stop platform for acquiring information and resources for employers to help reduce man hours on forms of support.

14. Participating in Cultural Life, Recreation, Leisure and Sports. MINDS recognizes that leisure, recreation, culture and sports contribute to social and emotional well-being of PwIDs. Hence, MINDS is committed to enabling more PwIDs to access and benefit from the wider community's platforms in an inclusive manner. This is aligned to Article 30 of the CRPD, which specifies that states parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life, recreation, leisure, and sport.

14.1 MINDS engages our continuous efforts to promote an active and healthy lifestyle for PwIDs in an inclusive manner. MINDS schools, in collaboration with Active SG!⁶ Participated in the GetActive! Star Challenge, with activities to support building healthy habits. The collaboration also culminated in Active Health Workshops to engage PwIDs to learn how maintain an active lifestyle. Further, in collaboration

⁶ ActiveSG! is a sport portal to collate sports news, events, facilities and coaches for every Singaporean to watch and play sports.

with Sport Singapore⁷, in 2022 MINDS provided a platform for PwIDs to experience different types of sports in an inclusive manner.

- 14.2 Another collaboration is with the National Library Board (NLB). In tandem with the upcoming opening of Punggol Regional Library in late 2021, MINDS Fernvale Gardens School (FGS) has been working with the NLB on two related projects: Overdrive & Tumblebook — NLB’s Digital Resources Thirteen students aged 16 to 18 supported NLB’s efforts in developing its digital resources for persons with autism and intellectual disability, tackling online hands-on user experiences of Overdrive and Tumblebook Library using myLibraryID. Overdrive serves as a platform for borrowing digital content such as e-books and audio books online.
- 14.3 Tumblebook Library is a collection of animated talking picture books and videos. FGS students have since become competent in accessing the different digital resources available at NLB. The collaboration has also given NLB insight to curate a better user and reader experience through the eyes of a child with special needs.
- 14.4 Toy Library NLB also donated toys for different kinds of play — creative, dramatic and sensory play, as well as costume sets and hand puppets for a “Toy Library” trial. This trial incorporates both “play” and “work” elements. The “play” element allows for our younger students (aged 7 to 10) to explore educational toys during recreational time. The Toy Library aids in the development of children’s communication and language skills and improves their ability to focus and concentrate at an early age. Students are able to browse NLB’s digital resources online The MINDS FGS-NLB Toy Library. Students can also take stock of the Toy Library’s inventory Royce explores an activity cube, one of the toys available in the toy library.
- 14.5 The “work” element provides opportunities for our older students (aged 13 to 18) to be trained in acquiring the skills needed to organise the Toy Library after each play session. Such tasks, including sanitising the toys,

⁷ Sport Singapore is about empowering people to love better through sport and helping to bring sport into the lives of all Singaporeans.

packing, setting aside damaged items, stock taking, and keeping the library clean, help prepare the older students transition to working life in future. MINDS FGS is also encouraged that NLB has plans to hire persons with disabilities at the upcoming Punggol Regional Library.

14.6 Moving forward, MINDS looks to engage with more community partners in the leisure and recreation space beyond community libraries and sports.

15. Improving Statistics and Data Collection. MINDS recognizes that it is important to be evidence-based in practice as well as data-driven in the sensing of PwID needs, supports and progress. This is aligned to article 31, which posits that state parties shall collect appropriate information, including statistical and research data, to enable them to formulate and implement policies to give effect to the present convention.

15.1 There has been a lack of an updated and comprehensive database for the disability sector in Singapore. This has often resulted in policies, practices and programmes being informed by subjective observations and interpretations of needs and gaps as well as a 'plug-and-play' approach to international best practices. This has often resulted in services and programmes which are not optimally serving the true needs of PwDs in Singapore and are not aligned to the notion of person-centricity. This gap has been recognized by the government and it has started efforts to build the disability database. For example, the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) recently launched the Sector Evaluation Framework (SEF). The SEF allows social service agencies to validate their programmes and services, ensures programmes are effective and resources are allocated appropriately, therefore leading to better service quality and outcomes for the service user. Nevertheless, this has often resulted in existing services and programmes playing 'catch-up' as services and programmes may not have been designed and implemented based on evidence. Further, the lack of focus on outcome and impact evaluation had resulted in a lack of transformation and enhancement to meet the evolving needs of PwDs.

- 15.2 From an impact measurement perspective, it will be beneficial if SSAs like MINDS adopt a structured and streamlined process for data management, governance and knowledge management. To that end, MINDS had embarked on a data science capability development framework to anchor processes like data collection, storage, exploration and transformation and eventually analytics and visualization to drive impact measurement. This framework will be compliant with international conventions like Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as well as Singapore Multi-Tier Cloud Security Standard (MTCS) tier 3 local guidelines by Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) so that the data of the vulnerable population can be kept private and confidential. The benefits of implementing a data architecture are multifold: on an organization level, we could plan for resource optimization; on a governmental level, impact measurement will lend value to the return of investment of public funds and on a personal level, caregivers and beneficiaries will appreciate where they are at in terms of impact especially from a quality of life standpoint.
- 15.3 In recognition of this gap MINDS started its own research, innovation and advocacy arm for the PwID sector, called the MINDS Institute (MI). This is in line with MINDS' 'Data driven MINDS' strategy. For example, MINDS conducted an organization wide study on QoL impact of services and programmes. MINDS adopted the Measuring Impact and Service Outcomes (MISO) tool to measure the impact of programmes and services on different areas of PwIDs' lives. The study showed that MINDS programmes impacted clients' QoL in one or more domain areas, including social relationships, leisure and physical well-being. Moving forward, MINDS aims to make more data-driven decisions to service transformation and development. Additionally, MINDS looks to implement a case management and document management system to enable professionals to support PwIDs more effectively in the programmes through digital collaboration, analytics and visualization.

15.4 Additionally, MINDS is a country member of the International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IASSIDD). Over the last four years, MINDS has contributed nine conference presentations at IASSIDD, covering areas such as PwID aging, QoL, advocacy and employment.

Future Developments

16. This report has provided an overview of the progressive realization that Singapore has made with regards to the UN CRPD, from the perspective of MINDS as a civil organization. Moving forward, MINDS continues to be guided and aligned to the Singapore government's refreshed '4ST' (2022-2026)⁸, which lays out four strategic thrusts to pursue our shared vision:

- a) Thrust 1: Empowered and included individuals, families and communities
- b) Thrust 2: Effective and impactful social purpose entities
- c) Thrust 3: Caring, collaborative and impactful social service ecosystem
- d) Thrust 4: Future-directed social service sector

These strategic thrusts guide policy and inform practices in the disability sector and are, crucially, aligned to the CRPD. With the government's greater emphasis on planning capabilities to enable the sector to become more future-oriented, the new fourth thrust would enable the disability sector to be future-directed, emphasising the need for leaders in the sector to be future-oriented and better plan ahead for the sector's services and capability needs, e.g., through the use of data and digitalisation. While MINDS has started work in this area to build a 'Data-driven MINDS' where technology is a key enabler to improving service and programme outcomes (e.g., the use of immersive mixed reality in schools to allow students with ID to engage better for improved learning outcomes), MINDS looks ahead to ramping this up in the coming years so that more PwIDs can benefit.

END OF PAPER

⁸ National Council of Social Service (NCSS) '4ST' - [https://www.ncss.gov.sg/our-initiatives/social-service-sector-strategic-thrusts-\(4ST\)](https://www.ncss.gov.sg/our-initiatives/social-service-sector-strategic-thrusts-(4ST))