



SIWEC Insight

Quarter 3, 2015

SIWEC in the new millennium....



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Thank You

SIWEC would like to thank the outgoing members of the Management Committee for their voluntary services (seva) during their tenure in office and their invaluable contribution to the progress of SIWEC.

Welcome

A new Management Committee (including a new Chairman) was elected in June 2015 and they held a Retreat with the objective of doing Strategic Planning, setting the direction for SIWEC in the years ahead and building teamwork amongst the MC members and the SIWEC staff.

SIWEC in the new millennium

As we moved into the new millennium, Singapore was faced by new set of challenges. Its economy started to grow exponentially. There was also a rapid boom in its immigrants. This led to cultural diversity, social interaction and community bonding.

Sikh Welfare Council (SIWEC) was confronted with a myriad of changes as well. Furthermore, with the rapid increase in the ageing population, there was a greater need for SIWEC services but on the other hand with the fast growing work stress situation in Singapore, the number of volunteers started to dwindle and this was becoming a concern for SIWEC.

It became crucial that in order for SIWEC to survive, it had to revamp its operations, deliverables and fund raising efforts; and to achieve this, there was a dire need for new blood in the organisation.

The Birth of A New Constitution

The year 2009 was a turning point in the history of SIWEC and a new team led by S. Jagjit Singh Sekhon, S. Gurdip Singh Usma and S. Balbeer Singh Mangat took over the management of SIWEC with Jagjit Singh and Balbeer Singh spearheading the fund raising efforts. Gurdip Singh revamped the constitution in order for SIWEC to be eligible as an Institution of Public Character (IPC), so that fund raising efforts would become easier with the additional tax benefits of donating to an IPC.

The SIWEC office was also temporarily shifted from Central Sikh Temple (CST) to Singapore Khalsa Association (SKA) to facilitate renovation works at CST.

These laudable moves bore fruit when the new IPC compliant constitution was approved by the Register of Societies in October 2009 and SIWEC was granted IPC status in November 2009. With this status, SIWEC became a registered charity and was now able to enjoy income tax exemption. This also attracted more donors to come forward to donate. These donors were able to claim tax relief from their assessable income, based on the amount donated.

As an IPC organization, any donations made to SIWEC will receive a tax rebate of 2.5 times of the amount donated. In conjunction with SG50, any donation made this year will receive a tax rebate of 3 times the amount donated.

Moving with the Times

The programmes and services offered at/by SIWEC needed a boost. The donations that came along with the IPC charter status, allowed SIWEC to start fresh programmes.



The first and foremost decision was to move the secretariat office from its temporary premises at Khalsa Association back to the Central Sikh Temple. With this move, SIWEC became closer and more approachable to the Sikh community.

Located on the 6th floor of the Central Sikh Temple at Towner Road, the secretariat team also grew to a strength of 4 fulltime personnel.

Enhanced Programmes and Services

Initially, the assistance provided to the less needy was in the form of dry provision that was donated by the public and some cash financial assistance.

With time, SIWEC felt the need to customise the provision provided to these needy families according to their needs. As a result, SIWEC partnered with NTUC to provide vouchers to families who needed financial assistance and support. This new programme was called the **Food on the Table** programme.

The overall objective for SIWEC was not just to provide financial support. It also aimed to assist these families to graduate from the Food on the Table programme to make them more financially independent. Such assistance included working with organisations like Community Development Council (presently called Social Service Offices or SSOs) and Workforce Development Agency (WDA) to find suitable job for its clients, advising clients to find tenants to rent out their rooms



to ease the financial dependency and providing medical support through Medical Social Workers (MSW) in order to enable the client to be fit for work.

Another group that SIWEC felt needed close supervision and support were those who were in prisons. A dedicated counsellor was hired for frequent counselling visits to the prison. With the new **Prisons and After Counselling programme**, visits were made fortnightly to stay in touch with the inmates and bring them to the right path. A new curriculum was established from the past visits and experiences. A well structured counselling programme was put in place and the progress of the inmates were monitored. SIWEC also coordinated religious and spiritual visits with the Gurdwaras during celebrations like Vesakhi and Guru Nanak Dev Ji's gurpurabs.

SIWEC also partnered with Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE), a statutory board under the Ministry of Home Affairs that plays an important role in Singapore's correctional system by creating jobs for inmates and ex-offenders. With this partnership, SIWEC was able to help our Sikh inmates with employment assistance.

With the high rate of ageing population, a group of volunteers initiated the **Sunehri Sahelian** and **Sunehray Pal** programmes. In these programme, SIWEC called out all those aged 65 and above to get together and increase their knowledge, understanding of healthy ageing and ageing gracefully.

Another partnership was established with Council for Third Age (C3A), to organise talks, workshops and programmes to instil life long learning in our elderly folks.



A crucial group that required some tender, loving and care were those who were in elderly or nursing homes or were hospitalised for their ailment. There is dedicated healthcare personnel, who makes frequent visits and gives a listening ear and emotional support.

Since the leadership change of Singapore Sikh Education Foundation (SSEF) in 2014, SIWEC has been working closely with them and has been able to provide the following **assistance to SSEF**:

- Financial aid to pay for school fess, books and uniforms for over a 100 needy students in the Punjabi language programme.
- Helping to identify students who need assistance in all their subjects and working out programmes to address these needs, ensuring they do well in school.

SIWEC's status as an IPC was further enhanced in July 2014 when it was admitted as a **full member of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS)**. SIWEC is now able to offer even more programmes and services to the community.

Continued Leadership Renewal

In line with SIWEC's philosophy of continued leadership renewal, S. Amarjit Singh Wasan took over as Chairman from S. Jagjit Singh Sekhon in June 2013 and in June 2015 S. Gurdip Singh Usma took over as Chairman.

New Management Committee's Vision for SIWEC

The new Management Committee started working out its strategies and plans during a retreat held in September 2015. The focus over the coming few years is going to be:

1. Enhancing the profile of SIWEC and building greater awareness of SIWEC's services within the community to ensure that anyone and everyone who needs help is aware that help is available.
2. Expanding SIWEC's current programmes and initiating new programmes, as required, to ensure that we are able to cater towards more for the needy.
3. Working more closely with SSEF in ensuring that due attention is provided to children who need help in all academic subjects and to assist them to excel.
4. Develop our staff professionally to enable them to enhance the services offered by SIWEC.
5. Work closely with the relevant government agencies in getting maximum benefit for our needy clients.
6. Working closely with Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) to ensure we can fully capitalize on the Care & Share grants in expanding our services.
7. Developing a stream of steady income flow from monthly GIRO contributions and passive investments to support our activities.

More programmes and initiatives by SIWEC can be found on their website.

Sunehray Pal makes a hit and helps our senior men

Growing old is something very inevitable. Ageing is a process that involves a progressive change of every organ, structure, tissue and cell in the body. The body's ability to generate, produce and replace its cells reduces gradually and this starts to perform at a slower pace.

It is important to nurture and nourish the ageing body the same way as we do for babies for their growth.

Ageing not only affects the physiology of the person. It also deals with the mental and emotional well being. Thus it will show signs of ageing during this process.

Interestingly, a lot of effort has been put in by various communities and institutions to provide support and facilities for our silver society.

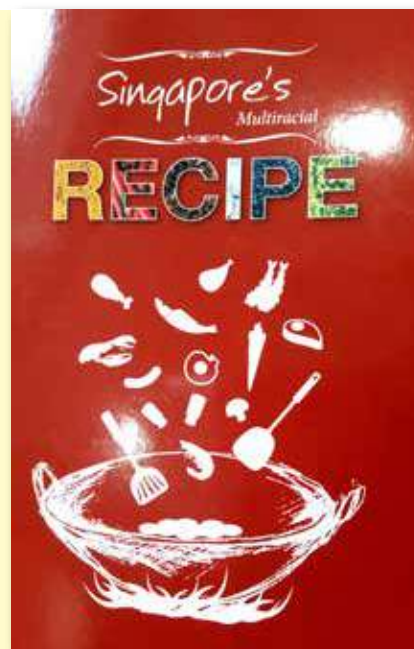
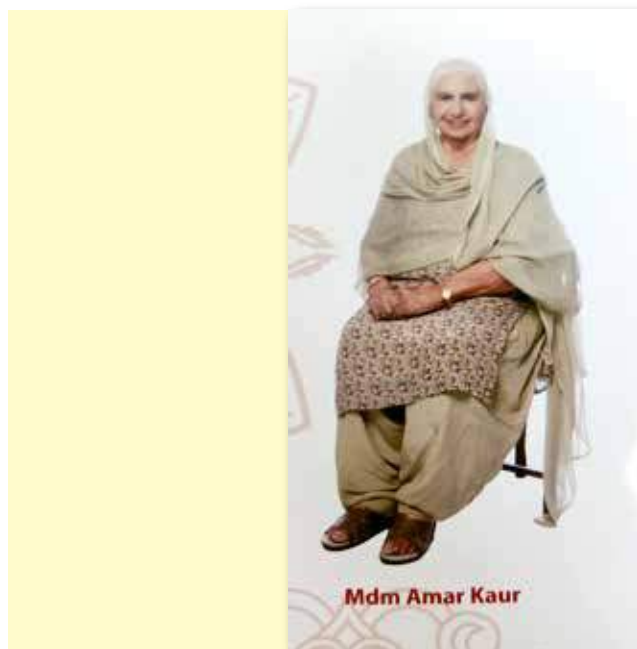
Previously, we highlighted the Sunehri Sahelian programme, that was for women above 65 years of age. This programme has been well received by the community and there are currently 50 ladies who have joined this programme.



There is a similar programme for the men aged 70 and above. It is called the Sunehray Pal. The group holds its weekly activities at the Sikh Centre every Wednesdays.

Both the Sunehri Sahelian and Sunehray Pal programme is organised by a dedicated group of volunteers led by Mdm. Sarjit Kaur Khosa.

Sunehri Sahelian's Mdm Amar Kaur sets new achievement



Madam Amar Kaur from Sunehri Sahelian has made the Sikh community and her peers proud with her latest achievement. Recently, her contribution was acknowledged by Minister S. Iswaran at the Self Groups Joint Tuition Award Ceremony held at ITE College Central. Madam Amar Kaur's authentic homemade recipes were featured in the Singapore's Multiracial Recipe book.

This book is available at all major bookstores.

SIWEC creates health awareness focussing on the young



Early education and exposure towards healthy living creates an awareness for the young about the importance of a sedentary and active lifestyle. It also helps to cultivate good practices.

On 4th of July 2015, a Health Screening session was organised by SIWEC in partnership with NKF at the Silat Road Sikh Temple. This time, a step further was taken to create awareness for healthy living targeted towards the young.

A mobile NKF van for kids was brought to the gurdwara. Interestingly, the response received was overwhelming. We had lots of kids coming after their Punjabi school.



It was a great experience for them, as they learnt the basics of healthy eating and exercise through customised games on tablets.

Some of the games included the differences between healthy and junk food. How such food affects the kidneys and ways for prevention was also highlighted through these game.

SIWEC will be organising more of such activities and talks for the younger generation. Do lookout for our activities through the Facebook page and mailers.



OUR PROGRAMS

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE PROGRAM (AEP)

This programme was initiated this year to look into the issues of improving academic performance of Sikh students who are not doing well in Primary 1, 2 and 3. The aim of this program is to holistically review reasons for student's underperformance. Customized support/ coaching/ mentoring/ counselling will be provided in order for the child to improve his/her performance better academically. To date, SIWEC has approached 18 pupils targeted for the AEP. Out of these, seven pupils are agreeable and are now on the program, with six professional tutors engaged to assist them. SIWEC is now taking a proactive approach to determine if these families need any other form of assistance.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR PUNJABI EDUCATION

SIWEC is at present supporting about 84 students who are under the MOE's Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) for the Punjabi education. Each student is given financial support of up to \$400 per year. This assistance covers the school fees, books and uniform for the Punjabi school.

BE A BEFRIENDER!

The Befriending Program is a service undertaken by trained volunteers to give offenders the necessary support and guidance before and after their release. This service is meant to give additional emotional support to participating inmates and is open to those who lack positive peers and emotional support from family and friends.

The aim of this program is to encourage greater involvement from members of the community, specifically the various ethnic groups. As the community realizes the importance of their involvement in the reintegration of ex-offenders, program such as this can be an important platform to inspire, empower, educate and equip both the ex-offender and society at large. To know more about the program, call us.

FAMILY BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

Under this program, individuals and families will be assisted during the bereavement program. Our qualified team of professionals will provide social and emotional support during the trying times.

We will also arrange and coordinate for religious and spiritual support is required by the family(ies).

FAMILY SUPPORT & HOME VISIT PROGRAM

The purpose of these visits are to gather information and determine the needs of the families. Regular visits and interactions take place to ensure the basic needs of these families are met. The families will also be given advice to approach relevant institutions for further support as and when required.

FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

Every child has the right to be loved, and every child deserves a home. SIWEC works closely with Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) to promote fostering scheme for children aged 18 years and below. We assist families within the community who are keen to be a foster family for our Sikh children. We work with Fostering Coordinators to provide regular support and advice to those in the scheme. Assistance such as home visits, training, child management issues are provided together with MSF.

SUNEHRI SAHELIAN & SUNEYRAY PAL

This program is targeted to men and women aged 65 and above to promote healthy ageing and to improve the seniors' quality of live. Special talks and workshops relevant for the group are organised by a pool of volunteers. Activities conducted include talks on wellbeing and wellness, awareness on basic issues (PGP, MediShield, fall prevention, grand parenting), art & craft, movie screenings and even group outings.

OTHER PROGRAMS

Other programs that have been mentioned in the first article include:

FOOD ON THE TABLE

PRISONS AND AFTER CARE COUNSELING

ELDERLY HOME AND INSTITUTIONS VISITS

HOSPITAL VISITS

FUND RAISING EVENTS

HEALTH SCREENINGS

Did you know?

From July to September 2015:

- ❖ SIWEC and its volunteers have conducted about **125 counselling sessions** for Sikh inmates in the Prisons.
- ❖ We have assisted **9 families** in bereavements.
- ❖ **41 individuals** have been assisted either through counselling or by referrals to other governmental agencies.
- ❖ **67 families** were assisted with food rations/financial assistance
- ❖ **60 individuals** in homes/hospitals have been visited by our Health Care Ambassadors

How you can help:

The Sikh Welfare Council is a Volunteer Welfare Organization (VWO) that depends on the community for volunteers as well as the funds necessary to carry out its various assistance programs. We are presently assisting more than 20 deserving families on a regular basis so that they can tide over difficult times; we also do a host of other programs. Obviously, this requires a great deal of resources on the part of SIWEC. We would therefore like to appeal to the community at large to help us support the less fortunate. You can do this in various ways, including:

- ❖ Giving a one-off donation (e.g. on-line via PayPal, cheques, bank drafts, Give Asia etc).
- ❖ Making a GIRO application to provide a monthly (recurring) donation. Please contact us for the GIRO Form.
- ❖ Making a Bequest (Will).
- ❖ Giving a Memorial Donation - a thoughtful way to remember a loved one while giving support to others.
- ❖ Volunteering your time and participating in other activities, such as ferrying elderly/disabled Sikhs to and from gurdwaras.

To donate online please visit us at

<http://www.siwec.org/donate/support-our-work/how-you-can-donate>.

Sikh Welfare Council

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Sikh Welfare Council is a registered charity (UEL S985S0018L) with IPC status (IPC No. IPC000683, IPC Period: 05/11/2013 - 30/09/2015)